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Moody Tongue Brewing Co. brings elevated sushi and beer pairings to New York City



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After opening two food and beer pairing restaurants in Chicago, Moody Tongue Brewing Co.'s founders set their sights on New York City.

“There are not a ton of beer-centric establishments in the city,” CEO [Jeremy Cohn](#) told the New York Business Journal. “If you look at those that are, there is nothing like what we do. There aren't other breweries or restaurants showcasing beer and food together at an elevated level.”

On Feb. 9, the brewery opened its first New York City restaurant Moody Tongue Sushi, located at 150 W. 10th St. in Manhattan’s West Village neighborhood.

The menu offers a selection of nigiri sushi from Chef [Hiromi Iwakiri](#), who has 25 years of experience in sushi and Japanese cuisine in the New York area, with curated beer pairings.

“Seafood generally pairs very well with beers because of its delicate profile,” Cohn said.

Menu highlights include madai with orange zest and sea salt paired with an Orange Blossom Belgian Blonde beer and A5 Miyazaki Wagyu Ribeye and tuna paired with a Shaved Black Truffle Rice Lager.

This is Moody Tongue's third food concept and its first in New York City.

The idea for the business was sparked in 2012 when Moody Tongue President and Brewmaster Jared Rouben asked his cousin Cohn for help putting together a business plan for his own brewery.

Having grown up with him and tasted a lot of Rouben's beer and food over the years, Cohn recognized that his cousin had a unique approach to brewing. That, coupled with the opportunity to join a nascent industry, convinced Cohn to get involved in this venture.

"It became apparent to me at that point in time that what we were seeing in the craft beer industry was really akin to traditional industry lifecycle," Cohn said. "How often do you have the opportunity to open a business when you can simultaneously catch an industry as it is becoming significantly more popular, with a partner who has a differentiated strategy and background?"

Rouben had previously worked in New York City's Michelin-starred restaurant Per Se and served as brewmaster at Chicago-based Goose Island Beer Co.'s Brewpubs where he started to develop his culinary brewing philosophy.

Culinary brewing, which is the application of a chef's mindset to the brewing process to highlight flavors, aromatics and balanced beers, would be their niche.

The pair launched Moody Tongue Brewing Co. in the summer of 2014 in Chicago as a wholesale production brewery. They settled on the name Moody Tongue because the brand aims to appeal to those with a discerning palate.

Cohn and Rouben spent the first couple of years growing their beer distribution nationally and internationally. New York was their second market outside of Chicago.

“We grew our brewery business very different from other breweries,” Cohn said. “For us, it was interesting to jump to a second location that wasn’t in a neighboring state because we thought it was important for our beer to be showcased in a coveted culinary destination.”

After relocating Moody Tongue’s production facility to Chicago’s South Loop neighborhood in 2019, they partnered with Chef [Jared Wentworth](#) to open two full-service restaurants above its facility, located at 2515 S Wabash Ave.

They opened a la carte-style restaurant The Bar and fine-dining restaurant The Dining Room, which offers a 15-course tasting menu with beer pairings.

Moody Tongue received two Michelin Stars in 2021 and 2022, making it the first beer-centric concept to achieve two Michelin stars.

Expansion brewing

In early 2021, Cohn and Rouben began looking for locations across New York City. After finding an available space in the West Village, the pair knew immediately that they wanted to open their next concept there.

“We are in a culinary hotbed of well-regarded businesses that have done well for awhile,” Cohn said. He points to Van Leeuwen Ice Cream, Via Carota and Joseph Leonard as examples.

They ended up negotiating a 10-year lease directly with Jonis Realty, the landlord.

Before committing to the 2,000-square-foot space, Cohn said they met with the community board as well as block associations to gauge the level of enthusiasm for their concept.

“It is an attractive destination because the community there is supportive of a concept like ours,” Cohn said. “They will come in on a Tuesday night or Wednesday night, not just a Saturday night.”

To finance Moody Tongue Sushi, Cohn and Rouben raised \$1 million in investments from friends and family who live in New York City.

Before opening Moody Tongue Sushi, Rouben spent several weeks last year in Japan doing research and spent a long time with Chef Iwakiri working on pairings.

"You are not just walking into a concept where we are saying, 'just pair a Märzen, a German-style beer, with a Bavarian pretzel,'" Cohn said. "There is another level of thought that goes behind the pairings."

Since opening its doors in February, the restaurant has received a strong reception from the community. Cohn said that on a recent Saturday, the waitlist was about 650 people.

He attributes the success of Moody Tongue's restaurants in part to the brand's commitment to offering an elevated level of service.

"How many breweries require reservations in advance?" Cohn said. "Our goal is that every guest that comes in has an exceptional experience. We have extensive service notes every single evening. The minutiae of detail is what elevates that experience."

Looking ahead, Cohn is optimistic that Moody Tongue Sushi will attract a wide range of New Yorkers.

"My hope is that it opens more guests to enjoying beer in a format that they haven't done previously," Cohn said. "We are great for a night out or for your 30th anniversary."

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