

On the Culture Front: New York Craft Beer Week, The Head and the Heart and Radiohead

By [Chris Kompanek](#)

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Craft Beer Week often becomes a blur of awesomeness as one brew flows freely into the next, and the precise event locations fade from memory. Where did you have that aggressively hoppy IPA that felt like a thrilling battle of wills to finish or what was the name of that new Belgian-style brewery that blew you away?

This year, there were many notable highlights beginning with the Ultimate Brewmaster's Degustation dinner at Resto that was as grand as it sounds. The five-course meal had plenty of meat and potatoes, but the standout dish for me was a plate of kale accompanied by razor thin slices of prosciutto, which was paired with both the Coney Island Albino Python and the Ommegang Rare Vos. I'm generally skeptical about white ales, but the Albino Python won me over. Brewed with coriander and served in a wine glass, it possessed the kind of complexity that warrants all the swirling and sniffing that could be observed throughout the evening. The next course, a smoked kielbasa with roasted corn hash, was particularly good as well. This time the pairing options were Empire's IPA and Brooklyn's Sorachi Ale. I went with the latter but appreciated all the choices throughout the night. It made the evening feel like a "choose your own adventure" story.

After taking a day to recover, I delved into the culinary circus that was "Let Us Eat Local." The Just Food benefit gathered some of the most talented chefs in the city together for hours of mind-blowing tastes. My favorites included a pork shoulder with plums, tomatillos, and crème fraiche from Rosewater, a roasted sweet corn soup with blue crab from The Harrison, and a Montauk fluke ceviche from Rouge Tomato created and served by their executive chef Jeremy Bearman. Served in just a tiny cup, it's a deceptive dish. One bite contained as much flavor as many full plates yet the ingredients blended rather than competed against each other, augmented with a touch of spice. I recently profiled Bearman for the [New York Post](#) and found him to be particularly contemplative when coming up with dishes.

The disappointment of the evening came surprisingly from Gramercy Tavern, who served a single bite of watermelon and pickled beet salad. It was an odd combination that could have packed a punch with a little effort and follow through but instead felt like an afterthought. Luckily there were many great craft

beers to wash it down with, including my favorite local brewery, Sixpoint. They poured the Brevity Belgian Wit (the best name for a beer) and the Signal IPA. I've had a number of their IPA's, and this is by far my favorite.

It was also on tap the next evening when Brewers' Choice took over City Winery for another evening of overindulgence. Taking a more casual approach, 21 stations paired comfort food dishes like the Crooked Knife's pulled pork sliders with Sierra Nevada's Torpedo Extra IPA, which is exactly as potent as it sounds. Some standouts included Betty Brooklyn's homemade duck confit rilette and a fine cheese station (including bacon-wrapped, goat cheese-stuffed dates) from Murrays, while my favorite beer discovery came in the form of Wandering Star's Zingari Wit, a full-flavored Belgian-style saison that finds a perfect balance between intensity and subtlety.

After a week of food and beer, I cleared my palate by indulging my sonic palate at a pair of shows this past week. The first was Seattle-based indie folk group, The Head and the Heart, who I missed at Newport this summer. I was happy to hear them play live the album I've been listening to pretty consistently for the past few weeks. They're the kind of band who sound instantly familiar but retain their vitality listen after listen. Their self-titled debut features many memorable tracks like the morbid yet uplifting "Ghosts" and "Heaven Go Easy On Me," which begs for a sing-along, but "Lost in My Mind" is the most tightly constructed from both a lyrical and musical standpoint. Articulating a wandering soul with an upbeat tempo, that sums up The Head and the Heart.

The second was Radiohead, a personal favorite for as long as I can remember. In ninth grade, I reviewed *Kid A*, for my high school paper, but didn't see them until All Points West a few years back during the *In Rainbows* tour. They played a lot from *Kid A* and even some from *Ok Computer*, so I was excited to see them play the much more intimate space of Roseland. Highlights from Thursday night's show included an upright piano being wheeled on stage for Thom Yorke to play "Everything in its Right Place," the sole *OK Computer* song, "Subterranean Homesick Alien," and "Reckoner," which closed out the show before the two encores.

The two-hour show had many pleasures, but something was off. Thom Yorke felt it too, uttering once something to the effect of "go ahead and talk. it's Thursday night" and later telling a guy he can stop "whooping." One older inebriated man next to me screamed during ballads, applauded randomly during songs, and dropped his gin and tonic on a teenager who danced like he was at a Lady Gaga concert. Obviously, these people didn't represent the sold-out crowd, but there were clearly enough of them for Yorke to notice. Oddly, it felt more intimate a few years back standing in a crowd of 20,000.