



Forked & Corked

The Draft: MateVeza Solves the Caffeine-And-Hooch Conundrum

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Uppers and downers are the yin and yang of civilized drinking, and for centuries drinkers have sought that elusive holy grail—a palatable blend of caffeine and hooch.

Brewers have tried and failed. Miller bought tongue-staining Sparks, but removed the caffeine after a lawsuit. [Moonshot](#) bills itself as the first beer to contain caffeine—it's been around since 2004—but it still [hasn't caught on](#). Even so, Budweiser knocked it off with B(e) (that's "B-to-the-E"). It failed, too. (Mixing beer and coffee has been [slightly](#) more successful. Coffee stouts contain negligible caffeine, but [MadCap Cafe](#) in Grand Rapids, MI made an espresso-IPA cocktail with a beer from [Founders](#) that worked well.)

In [MateVeza](#) we may have finally found the answer. This isn't the vodka-and-Red-Bull of beers—unlike some souped-up Stoli, MateVeza is flavored with a natural yerba mate (that Argentine tea you slurp from a gourd) which goes surprisingly well with beer. Mate is naturally bitter. But so are hops, thought Jim Woods, who created MateVeza in 2007. Woods mixes in mate with the malted grain to make MateVeza, because adding it at the boiling stage, as you would with hops, would make the mate too astringent, like over-steeped tea. And it works. Their IPA and black lager (made with toasted mate as well as regular, air-dried tea) are both pleasantly bitter up front, and have a dark, leafy, slightly grainy finish. It's a little too prominent in the lager, but in the case of the IPA, the mate mellows what would otherwise be a very angular, hop-forward beer. There's no taurine or guarana here, and while the caffeine is noticeable (I'm writing this at 3 A.M.), it's not overpowering (my hands aren't shaking). So, enjoy this like a beer—after all, it tastes like one—and save the Sparks for the morning after.



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- [William Bostwick](#)

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