

## Beer & bites: Fish and chips and ale



Fish & chips meets Mikkeller San Diego's Shapes ale at Westroot in Carmel Valley.  
(Howard Lipin / San Diego Union-Tribune)

**Where:** Westroot Tavern, 6025 Village Way, San Diego

**Bites:** Local Fish & Chips (\$22). Locally caught halibut fried in beer batter, with root slaw, seasoned fries and jalapeno tartar sauce.

**Beer:** Shapes (\$7.50, 5.6 percent alcohol by volume), a blonde ale from Mikkeller San Diego.

**Why it works:** Tricky numbers, this bite and this beer. Just about everyone serves fish and chips, yet this standard so often goes wrong — the filet can be fishy or tough, the batter slick or bland. Blonde ales, too, are classics yet so many are stale or dull.

Thankfully, sous chef Mark Enciso displayed a sure hand with thick pieces of halibut and the crispy batter, which is made with a splash of Shapes. I'm ordinarily no fan of seasoned fries, but Enciso rubbed them with chili flakes for a nice bite.

Shapes is an ale, yet has a solid lager-like character. There's an enjoyable touch of Belgian spicing in the nose and on the tongue, plus a hint of lemon that complemented the fish.

**Comment:** Located in Carmel Valley, nowhere near my home, Westroot has such a relaxed vibe that it keeps pulling me back. The beer list is intelligently curated and the food is several cuts above your usual tavern fare. While \$22 is more than I usually pay for fish and chips, I enjoyed everything on the plate. Everything I could eat, that is. Portions were so generous, this Clean Plate Club charter member couldn't finish.

**Beer geek confidential:** Westroot's 30 tap handles are dominated by hometown beers. The SD-centric nature will be even more pronounced soon, as the tavern is planning a "Brewery of the Month" feature, devoting six taps to a single local outfit.