

Hard Science, With a Twist

Tired of inane bar debates? You're drinkin' in the wrong place. Inspired by Britain's Café Scientifique movement, a slew of US watering holes now host science nights, gatherings where brainiacs from universities and labs give talks and booze it up with the locals. Check one out for, say, an up-close explanation of string theory—and maybe a game of pool with a Nobel Prize winner. —NEAL UNGERLEIDER

Chicago

CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE

Where: The Map Room

When: Quarterly

Gestalt: Folks who aren't here for the top-notch lecturers are here for the beer: The travel-themed Map Room has more than 25 selections on tap. Recent speakers include the University of Chicago's Pamela Martin on global warming and Caltech's Sean Carroll on entropy.

Portland

SCIENCE PUB

Where: Bridgeport Brewpub + Bakery

When: Last Monday of the month

Gestalt: Science Pub speakers often draw on Pacific northwesterners' love of the outdoors (the USDA Forest Service's Peter Frenzen recently gave a history of Mount St. Helens). Toss back a few glasses of Old Knucklehead ale (9.1 percent alcohol) and challenge the saying "There are no stupid questions."

St. Louis

SCIENCE ON TAP

Where: Schlafly

Bottleworks

When: Last Wednesday of the month

Gestalt: Beer makes arguing more fun. You'll fearlessly tackle topics like genetics with the likes of Washington University's Ursula Goodenough.

Washington, DC

CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE

Where: The Front Page

When: First Tuesday of the month

Gestalt: Pop in to see geeks like anthropologist Doug Ubelaker explain forensic science. Sound good? Thank the National Science Foundation for cohosting.

Boston

CAFÉ SCI

Where: The Thirsty Scholar

When: Monthly

Gestalt: With a glut of local universities and a partnership with the TV show *Nova scienceNow*, Café Sci gets top researchers stopping by for a beer or three. This includes Harvard's David Sinclair, who gabbed about red wine and human aging, and MIT's David Kaiser, who pondered element 114.

San Francisco

ASK A SCIENTIST

Where: The Canvas Gallery (and other venues)

When: Whenever they feel like it

Gestalt: Events mix hotshots from Stanford (Shamit Kachru on string theory) and Berkeley (Michael Eisen on gene regulation) with wacky themes. You should have seen the throwdown on Pi day (March 14).

New York

SECRET SCIENCE CLUB

Where: Union Hall

When: First Wednesday of the month

Gestalt: In addition to talking, scientists show off their musical side projects (medieval Sephardic Jewish music played by a neuroscientist, anyone?). Speakers have included author Janna Levin on cosmology and Columbia's David Sulzer on the science of the soul.

Seattle

SCIENCE ON TAP

Where: The Pub at

Ravenna Third Place Books

When: Last Monday of the month

Gestalt: Along with the usual university eggheads, Science on Tap attracts brainy industry types. Some highlights: Boeing Phantom Works' Minas Tanielian on *Star Trek* and physics, and the LiftPort Group's Michael Laine on space elevators.

