

Hartford Courant

# PRIME LIVING

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## Festival to connect brewers, beer lovers

### Connecticut's first virtual brew fest brings tasting experience home

By **Leeanne Griffin**  
Hartford Courant

Connecticut breweries would normally be readying for a full slate of fall beer festivals, but COVID-19 and restrictions on large gatherings have effectively canceled these events. Beer enthusiasts can instead look forward to a “virtual” festival, featuring an interactive online tasting experience and live Q&As with Connecticut brewers and hosts.

BeerFests.com hosts the virtual event Sept. 18 at 7 p.m., with tastings of 10 beers from western Connecticut breweries. Participating brewers include Broken Symmetry Gastro Brewery in Bethel, Great Falls Brewing in North Canaan, NewSylum Brewing and Reverie Brewing of Newtown and Woodbury Brewing in Woodbury.

“We all wish we were at a beer festival slamming little tasting glasses with our

fellow beer lovers. But my friends, that isn't going to happen this year,” said Kevin Mardorf, BeerFests.com's founder, in a email. “So, we've been working with the absolute best brewers in Connecticut to bring you virtual events that allow you to connect with the brewers, directly.”

The 7 p.m. virtual event, limited to 250 guests, will feature guided tastings and opportunities to interact directly with the brewers, hosts and other beer lovers. Tickets are \$45, including a 10-pack of beer and swag like stickers and koozies. Guests will receive an email with the link to the Zoom event.

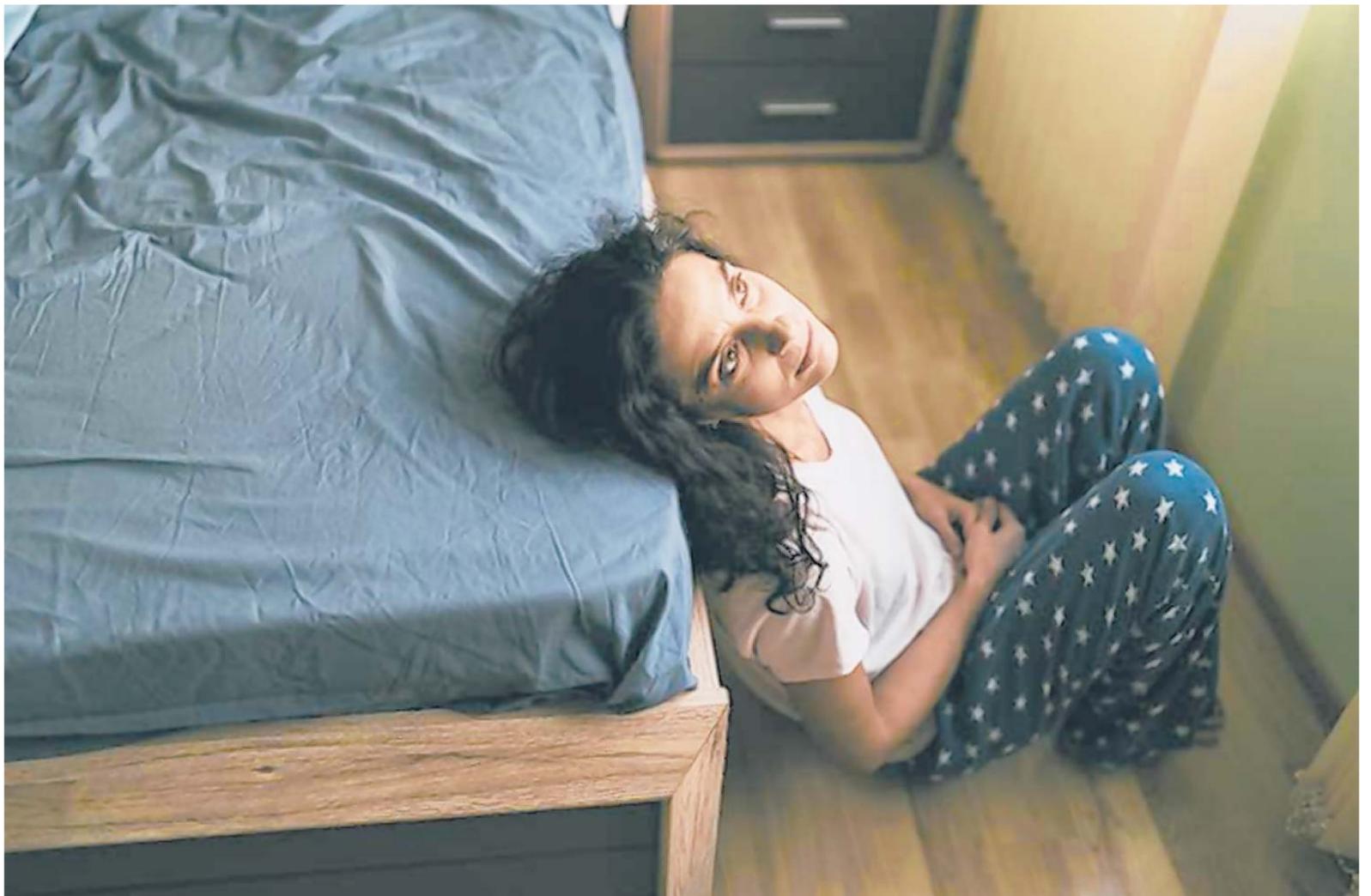
Attendees can pick up their beer package, with 10 full 16-ounce cans, at any participating brewery from Sept. 15 to 17 between 2 and 8 p.m. Guests must be 21+ or older to pick up and valid ID is required. Please also bring your ticket and credit card used for purchase.

More information, a list of beers and tickets are available at [tickets.beerfests.com/event/western-ct-beer-fest](https://tickets.beerfests.com/event/western-ct-beer-fest).

Leeanne Griffin can be reached at [lgriffin@courant.com](mailto:lgriffin@courant.com).



WITTHAYA PRASONGSIN/GETTY



Women going through menopause frequently don't know what to expect because the subject is rarely discussed by family or doctors. Nathalie Bonafé launched Connecticut's first Menopause Café to offer women education and support. **ISTOCKPHOTO.COM**

## A need for education

### Connecticut's first Menopause Café lets women gather to talk about their health

By **Susan Dunne**  
Hartford Courant

**N**athalie Bonafé specializes in uncomfortable topics. Bonafé, who is based in New Haven, makes her living as an end-of-life doula. She works with individuals and families who are dealing with an impending death, helps them navigate the systems, provides comfort and support, makes sure their needs are met.

On the side, Bonafé holds Death Cafés, where people gather – now online – to discuss their concerns about death. Since August, she has added another virtual side-project: Menopause Cafés.

“Menopause is a major taboo. Hot flashes and other brain fogs, nobody wants to talk about them in the workplace or at home. People roll their eyes,” Bonafé said. “An entire generation of women don't know how to take care of ourselves. We're missing opportunities to educate ourselves to decide what to do the rest of our lives.”

Menopause Café Connecticut Online meetings are held on Zoom. Appropriately, they happen once a month, on the 15th, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Tickets are at [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com).

Menopause Cafés were founded by Rachel Weiss in June 2017 in Perth, Scotland, then the idea spread worldwide. Since then, almost 500 Menopause Café events have been held in Scotland, Ireland, Kenya, Denmark,

Canada and the United States, in Virginia, Wisconsin and now Connecticut.

Bonafé got a doctorate in molecular biology, biology and health from Montpellier Medical School in her native France. She then moved to the United States, where she did research at National Institutes of Health, Yale Medical School and in the biotech industry.

Bonafé sees Menopause Cafés as an extension of her doula work. Most of her doula clients are older women without children.

“I came across an article by [Alzheimer's researcher] Lisa Mosconi. ... What she realized is that women are more prone than men to have memory problems, especially Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is not an old-age situation. Rather, it's a middle-aged situation, triggered at menopause,” Bonafé said. “I had an epiphany here. I serve at end of life but there is a great need for education at middle age.”

The women at the August gathering talked about their experiences and concerns about menopause. Bonafé shared information about ways to ease the transition when ovaries stop producing estrogen and progesterone and to proceed with a lifestyle – nutrition, exercise, stress relief, etc. – that may prevent health complications later in life.

“Ovaries not the only organs that are producing estrogen, but the main organs. Less hormones means less

communication between hormones. That affects your static balance. All the organs that require estrogen are being affected,” she said.

“Women after menopause are more susceptible to heart attacks. Also the muscles are affected. We have to work out twice as much to keep our muscles tight and firm. Skin is affected. The urinary system gets looser. That means some leaks. The brain is really much affected.”

Ingrid Harrison of Woodbridge attended the August Menopause Café. She participated because people don't usually want to talk about the subject.

“The family doesn't prepare you. Doctors don't prepare you unless you have a specific problem but even then they can't really break it down and give you definitive answers and what to expect,” Harrison said. “I have an older sister. It's not really talked about much. I don't know if it's because it's embarrassing. We're close but we don't talk about things like that.”

Shelly Owens of Milford said all of the older women in her life, friends and relatives, had had hysterectomies. “There was no one who went through it naturally to talk about it,” Owens said.

Owens said when she started going through perimenopause – the start of the menopausal transition – “I felt like a bird who had hit a window.”

“I went from being completely happy and feeling like myself to feeling liter-

ally like I was crazy, panic attacks, mood swings, hot flashes, not sleeping,” she said.

Harrison said she was experiencing health issues and didn't know if they were related to menopause. Attending the café was eye-opening, she said.

“There are many other people out there who are like-minded and experiencing the same things and are also not properly prepared,” she said. “There are a lot of things you're dealing with at this age that we had no idea was a result of going through menopause.”

Owens said “It was nice to get together and talk. It's nice to have a tribe.”

Weiss, who founded Menopause Cafés, said she has learned through her project that “women are incredibly strong, resilient, kind and determined. They cope with huge demands on their time and their energies, very often without complaint.”

Bonafé said her concerns are not just for women's health, but their economic independence.

“Women at 50 are at the peak of their careers. They can't afford to feel tired. They need that form of support. ... Having that support will retain strong and intelligent women in the workplace,” she said. “I want to help women keep it together and process things. It's not life coaching. I help them reassess and then let them go. I'm more like a catalyst in that regard.”

Susan Dunne can be reached at [sdunne@courant.com](mailto:sdunne@courant.com).



Bonafé