



## Feeling brewtiful?

*Our writer hops feet first into foamy pampering*

By Matt Pais

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It's a few hours before the first pedicure of my life--a beer pedicure, no less--and I'm seriously concerned about falling asleep during the service and waking up with pretty pink polish glistening at the end of my toes. Besides, my feet look fine to me, and I've never been one for salon-style pampering. But, since beer is involved, I'm willing to give it a go.

That's right. Beer and feet: two things that seemingly have nothing to do with each other. But according to the Exsalonçe Salon & Day Spa, the enzymes and the hops in the beer are supposed to work wonders on calluses. Since I'm a pedicure virgin, I'll be more able to compare this experience to the act of drinking a beer than to receiving a regular pedicure. And I'm not expecting to enjoy this as much as I do downing a cold one.

Just to make sure I don't offend my pedicurist, I cut my nails in advance and, at my sister's recommendation, I wear open-toed sandals in case I need to air anything out afterwards. I arrive early for my appointment, so I take a seat in Exsalonçe's waiting area and immediately feel out of my element: There's an astounding number of pillows on the couch, and a flat-screen TV that plays--nope, not movies--salon promos. I can hardly hear the jazz music playing in the background over the buzz of hair clippers and the whoosh of blow-dryers.

After a few minutes of waiting without decent reading material--the only option is Woman's Day magazine and, considering I'm already feeling a little over the line on my feminine side, I'm definitely not picking that up--my pedicurist, Isabell Gorr, is ready. Formerly the owner of her own salon in Russia, Isabell's been giving pedicures for 32 years.

She walks me toward the back of the salon, to a chair with a tub at its foot. The water is running. "Should I take my shoes off?" I ask.

"Of course," she says, like I'm a complete bonehead. Which, in this situation, I suppose I am.

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I slip off my sandals, sit in the chair and put my feet in the water. "You can watch TV if you want to," Isabell tells me. Hell, yes, I want to. I grab the remote next to my chair and click on the flat-screen. Seconds after I turn on the Cubs game, my caretaker asks me if I want a beer. Sure, I tell her. Maybe beer is only an element in a "beer pedicure" as much as it is in a "beer pizza football game."

Isabell disappears, returns with a can of MGD (not the usual Cubs pairing of Old Style, but I'll let it slide), pours the majority into the tub and the remainder into a small Styrofoam cup. It's a far cry from the frosty cold mug the salon normally uses, but I can deal with it. Unfortunately, while Isabell's a veteran pamperer, she's a rookie bartender; her pour's so poor, the head quickly rises over the top and onto my shorts. She's very apologetic, but she also says cheerfully, "It's just beer." Just beer? When you spill water, it's "just water," but when you spill beer, you never get it back!

I take a deep breath, though, and realize I'm starting to relax. After all, my feet are soaking in gentle, warm water; there's jazz playing in the background, a Cubs game in front of me, and a beer in my hand.

Isabell begins trimming my toenails and remarks that I keep them short (I don't tell her I just cut them an hour ago). She's precise and careful, buffing the nails and evening them out better than I ever could.

For much of the procedure, I'm not really sure what she's doing: There's cuticle clipping and callus sanding, but Isabell takes care of business so quickly, it's a bit of a blur. Thankfully, I'm able to control my ticklish impulses and only feel slight discomfort when she scratches the areas just below my nails, which I never even knew needed attention.

She finishes up by rubbing a thick moisturizer on my calves and feet, which feels surprisingly refreshing. Isabell is good with her hands, and by now, after about 25 minutes of foot and leg pampering, I'm totally at ease. But it's time to go.

I pay and don't leave a tip because--honestly, as a spa rookie--I had no idea I'm supposed to (which, in retrospect, I feel badly about). I walk out of the salon and feel a very, very minor boost of foot-related confidence. I suppose my calluses are a bit smoother and less irritated, but I enjoyed the beer less for my feet and more because, well, it's beer. My toes, however, do feel pretty, and my legs are totally relaxed. Everything is a little wet and a lot smoother.

Maybe I should stroll around Roscoe Village and show off my newly pampered toesies and moisturized calves! Nah, I'd rather go home to my couch, pop open a full can of beer, keep my feet dry and watch the rest of the game.

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