

TEX-MEX BEER BRUNCH

DEFINING A BEER CONNOISSEUR

The *PR* Connoisseur[®]

Beer's New Billionaires

by Jonathan Ingram

Keith Schlabs

Crafting Perspective with Flying Saucer's Captain

**Antebellum Brews
at Carillon Brewery**

Spring 2016, Issue 23

The Beer Connoisseur®

Spring 2016, Issue 23

Busy bees, fizzy beers, Spring is here, and with it comes another issue of The Beer Connoisseur.

We'll make contact with an extra-beerrestrial in our Innovators Series, featuring the Flying Saucer and Meddlesome Moth's resident "Beer Guru" Keith Schlabs, before striking west to hear from one of Utah's most experienced brewers to see how he stays busy in the "Beehive state."

Jonathan Ingram talks craft beer billionaires and tracks down the head of Breckenridge Brewery to discuss its recent acquisition by AB InBev. The journey continues in Buckeye Country, where Kevin Gray explores an Antebellum-era brewery that makes beer "the really hard way." Sherry Dryja spices it up with a Tex-Mex Beer Brunch, and Greg Nagel jams with The Brews Brothers: Coffee and Beer. We also ask our friends in the beer industry: "What is a Beer Connoisseur?"

As usual, we have our expert Beer Review, Brewer Q & A and a "tun" of other great content. Skip the allergies this spring and sip a scrumptious craft brew instead with the 23rd issue of *The Beer Connoisseur!*

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From the Editors

Spring has sprung! And with it comes another issue of The Beer Connoisseur.

In addition to the stories and news you've come to expect, our Innovators Series features Flying Saucer and Meddlesome Moth's resident "Beer Guru" Keith Schlabs, who shares his unique vantage point on the business of the fizziness and where beer and life intersect.

Jonathan Ingram opines on the growing number of craft beer billionaires in Connoisseur's Corner before tracking down the head of Breckenridge Brewery, Todd Usry, to discuss its recent acquisition by AB InBev, while Sherry Dryja stirs up some spicy brunch ideas with a caliente Tex-Mex Beer Brunch, and Greg Nagel is on a "mission from God" to play with The Brews Brothers: Coffee and Beer.

We'll then strike westward to commune with Jon Lee of Utah's Wasatch Brewery and Squatters Craft Beers, to see how he stays busy in the "Beehive state" before we pack our bags for Ohio, where Kevin Gray showcases Carillon Brewing Co., a brewery that makes historical ales "the really hard way."

We also get a little introspective, asking some of our friends in the beer industry: "What is a Beer Connoisseur?" Their answers may surprise you.

As usual, we have our expert Beer Review and accompanying Brewer Q & A's with a whopping five world-class brews leading the charge, including Great Divide's Espresso Oak Aged Yeti and DESTIHL Brewery's Flanders Red.

In addition, this issue marks the debut of our Editor's Choice festivals and events. We lead with the Bacon and Beer Classic in New York, the Wild West Brewfest in Texas and the Southern Brewers Conference in Tennessee.

Skip the allergies this spring and sip a scrumptious craft brew instead with this, the 23rd issue of *The Beer Connoisseur!*

Cheers!

Jim & Chris



Contributors



Sherry Dryja

Sherry is a travel writer, lifelong traveler and taster of life. A reformed cookie scorcher, she now shows others how to avoid kitchen failures, occasionally teaching baking classes and catering small events. To know her is to be recruited as a taste tester for the recipes she develops for *The Beer Connoisseur*[®] and her blog, Kitchen Dilettante. She and her husband split their time between Seattle and Phoenix with their miniature schnauzer, Lukas.

Jonathan Ingram

A freelance writer for 32 years before crossing over to the dark side of editing, Jonathan's original "I Write for Beer" T-shirt was a tie-dyed model. He also enjoys running – yep – for beer. He's written six books on motor racing, a sport pursued to the ends of the earth because he enjoyed being paid to travel and write stories daily about danger and passionate individualism. A perfect day ended at the nearest emporium holding good food, beer and conversation.



Kevin J. Gray

Kevin is passionate about promoting Midwestern craft beer. Located in Dayton, Ohio, Kevin helps run two local festivals (Montessori School of Dayton's Brew Ha-Ha and Big Beers and Barley Wines), writes beer columns for the local alt weekly, and contributes to a variety of national publications. When not exploring breweries, Kevin can be found playing in the woods—hiking, backpacking, or kayaking.

Carolyn Smagalski

A frequent contributor, Carolyn won the Brewers Association's Beer Journalism Award in 2006 for her work on the website BellaOnline, where she is known as "the Beer Fox."



Carl Kins

An active member of the European Consumers Beer Union, and Zythos, Carl is an international beer judge, educator, a scholar, and a frequent contributor to *The Beer Connoisseur*.

Max Bahnson

An Argentine living in Prague since 2002, Max is a translator, beer writer and beer philosopher who is a Contributor to the Spanish magazine *Bar & Beer*, the Czech magazine *Pivo, Bier & Ale*, and *The Beer Connoisseur*.



Greg Nagel

Greg Nagel is the founder of gonzo-crazed OCBerBlog.com and Firkfest Cask Beer Festival in Anaheim. When not podcasting, writing or photographing beer, he finds relaxation by drinking a beer while homebrewing.

Industry News

Tiers for Beers

Northeast players Victory Brewing Company and Southern Tier Brewing Company have allied under parent company Artisanal Brewing Ventures, or ABV.

The move marks a new strategic model for craft breweries hoping to remain independent while pooling resources such as capital and distribution networks.



Under the ABV umbrella, Victory and Southern Tier will command a joint capacity of over 800,000 barrels of potential annual production, putting the ABV within the top 15 craft brewing companies in the United States, according to the 2015 Brewers Association criteria.

“The craft beer community is at its most critical moment since its inception as larger brewing corporations have bought into our grassroots movement, irrevocably changing the marketplace,” said Bill Covaleski, founder and brewmaster of Victory Brewing Company. “Like-minded brewers such as Victory and Southern Tier can preserve our character, culture and products by banding together. Allied we can continue to innovate and best serve the audience who fueled our growth through their loyal thirst.”

The transaction is expected to be finalized by the end of April.

Crafty Moves

The Massachusetts beer wholesaler Craft Beer LLC, also known as, has agreed to pay around \$2.6 million for “unfair trade practices and illegal activities,” according to the Boston Globe.

The fine is a result of 15 months of investigation, which concluded with the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) slapping Craft Beer Guild LLC with a 90-day license suspension for engaging in “pay-to-play” practices, offering discounts and incentives in exchange for tap or retail placements. During a hearing, Craft Beer Guild, which also uses the name Craft Brewers Guild, admitted to paying up to \$2,000 per tap handle.

Rather than serve the suspension, Craft Beer Guild agreed to pay “a fine equal to 50 percent of its daily gross profit, multiplied by the number of days its license was scheduled to be suspended”, according to a Brewbound report.

The fine is the largest paid by any alcoholic beverage license holder in the state of Massachusetts.

If left unchecked, unchecked pay-to-play violations could leave smaller breweries unable to compete, with prime retail locations going to more deep-pocketed rivals.



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PHOTOS COURTESY FLYING SAUCER

Schlabs has spent the last two decades helping to spread the craft beer gospel to the uninitiated.

Innovators Series: Keith Schlabs of Flying Saucer

By: Jim Dykstra

There are infinite points of entry into the beer business, but one you won't see too often is "Beer Guru." As a successful beer-focused restaurateur with more than twenty years of experience, Keith Schlabs has watched the metamorphosis of craft beer from a one-of-a-kind vantage point – interacting with brewers, distributors and the public at large – and gauging the ever-changing tides of taste. He spoke with *The Beer Connoisseur* about the state of the industry, and what it takes to be successful in life and beer.

“EXTRA-BEER-ESTRIAL”

Before co-founding the Flying Saucer Draught Emporium, The Meddlesome Moth, and four other restaurant concepts,

Schlabs was a young restaurant manager in Texas. The year was 1993, and the beer universe was still fighting its way out of the primordial booze.

“A friend told me about the first brewpub in Texas,” said Schlabs to BC in a recent interview. “It was called Yegua Creek Brewing Company. I went to check it out, met the owner, and we pretty much made a handshake deal right there and then that I would co-manage for him.”

At that point, Schlabs was relatively inexperienced when it came to beer.

“One of my favorite beers was Sierra Nevada at the time,” he said. “So I had at least a foundation, but I realized there was a lot to learn.”

Sensing the value of a knowledgeable brewing team,

Schlabs began to come in early to learn what really went in to making quality beer. It was a pivotal moment marking the beginning of a lifelong education, and Schlabs had chosen a great place to begin. Yegua Creek was ahead of its time.

“It was interesting to learn about the beer culture and how people wanted to talk about beer and share their passion,” he said. “We had a pils, a wheat, a pale ale, a brown ale, an IPA, a stout, and the occasional curveball, like a Habanero IPA. That was 1993. What those brewers taught me is that you need diversity, and I think their attention to detail and quality made me realize you’ve got to do things right.”

Schlabs continued his working education, and the idea of a beer-centric restaurant began to take hold.

“We were so busy in a part of Dallas that was hard to get to that I knew there was an attraction to beer,” said Schlabs. “They harvested a lot of excitement for beer in Texas.”

Yegua Creek would close a few years later, but not before taking home GABF Gold in 1996 for its Scotch Ale.

A WYNNE-WIN SCENARIO

Sensing the impending boom, Schlabs began scoping out locations for a possible brewpub concept. While visiting the location of what would become the first of 16 Flying Saucer restaurants, he went across the street for lunch and happened to meet Shannon Wynne, the owner of the establishment. Wynne had his eye on the same building, and realizing they had similar interests, the two began hashing out what would become Flying Saucer. With an emphasis on quality and choice, their philosophy mirrored the craft beer movement.

“Early on we had to educate ourselves – then our customers – on what beer should taste like, smell like, and how it should be presented,” Schlabs said. “We wanted breweries to count on us to serve their beer the way they want it to be served ... I think we were able to make people smarter so when they went out into the marketplace they made good decisions.”

Schlabs would be Flying Saucer’s Beer Director and keep a close eye on the 60-plus taps because Wynne doesn’t drink. This required a constant finger on the beer pulse and the ability to simultaneously maintain relationships with brewers, distributors and the general public.

Initially, keeping the tap wall stocked meant relying on imports; there simply wasn’t enough local craft beer to go around. In 1995, there were around 600 small brewers, many of which had neither the quality, quantity nor ability to distribute. Now, with more American craft brewers than



Schlabs, (pictured here with former Flying Dog CEO and current Karbach Brewing brewmaster Eric Warner) cites relationships as the cornerstone of the beer industry.

ever before, importers are experiencing a downturn, forcing Schlabs to make some tough decisions in accordance with the times.

“I have relationships with a lot of suppliers, importers like BELUKUS, Manneken-Brussel Imports, Merchant Du Vin & B. United,” he said. “I love these guys and they’re picking up beers that are interesting, well-made and have a vast, colorful history and I respect that. There will always be a place for Samuel Smith, Orval or Chimay. Young’s has been a big beer for us for a long time. Things change and we must stay on top of our game. People want new beers. So I’ve got to balance protecting people that brought us to the



“It’s exciting to be in an industry where there’s always something to learn,” said Schlabs, pictured here installing taps at the recently opened Mud Hen Meat and Greens.



Flying Saucer just celebrated its 20th anniversary, and he's worked and learned with many of his employees for well over a decade. He can't do it alone.

dance, because I won't forget that. When we needed help with good beer, a lot of these older breweries from across the pond stepped up."

Although the U.S. market represented a small portion of their sales, the breweries were excited to see their beers enjoyed in the US. Now, imports still play an important role in any well-appointed beer joint, but the market focus has shifted toward American beer.

"In the first decade, importers were tremendous supporters [of Flying Saucer]. But now, more national and local brewers are so talented ... It's right there, and it feels good to spend money with these people that need us, and to showcase their beers to an audience that wants to learn more about them."

Schlabs stresses relationships as one of the cornerstones of the beer industry. In order for business to thrive, he must be collaborative and forward-thinking without forgetting the past.

LOOKING OUT FOR BUDS

With 25 beer-focused restaurants under his belt and more in the pipeline, Schlabs pinpoints developing relationships with knowledgeable personnel as a key to success in the beer industry. Flying Saucer just celebrated its 20th anniversary, and he's worked and learned with many of his employees for well over a decade. He can't do it alone.

"It's pretty important that you vet out a good beer director," he says. "You have to be very careful when you're running a beer joint; that you're buying it right, you're checking your collars and looking at bottle dates, aging beers that should be aged, serving them properly, keeping glassware clean ... All of that is important. The liquid today is not cheap. I had a distributor tell me the day of the \$1000 dollar keg is near, and I believe it."

The rise in price of beers means every keg is an investment, which means trusting beer directors to maintain a well-rounded portfolio.

"I've gotta be careful that we don't lean too far into IPA-land, but for the most part, I trust the team," he said.

The element of trust is paramount in the beer industry, and this past year's flurry of acquisitions have many people questioning the motives of buyers. Though Schlabs is a proponent of "small beer" and does not sell Budweiser at Flying Saucer or Meddlesome Moth, he doesn't condemn those who have sold to macro-brewers.

"I have relationships that go 20-plus years in this business, and they mean a lot," he says. "They're brothers within the culture. I can't lay judgment on someone who's busted their ass for 25 years to build a brand and expand, if they sell. I like knowing that their families won't have to work their asses off for the rest of their lives."

Essentially, as long as the purchased breweries maintain their quality and take care of their employees, Schlabs won't abandon them.

"There are people that we've bonded with, throughout our journey, and I think we have an obligation to take care of those people."

Schlabs points to Breckenridge, which he has worked with for decades.

"They're going to take care of their people," he says. That's who they are. If my 471 [IPA] continues to taste as good as it does now, I don't have a problem with it."



Schlabs with good friend and Breckenridge President Todd Usry. "I can't lay judgment on someone who's busted their ass for 25 years to build a brand and expand, if they sell."

When it comes to big beer, Schlabs acknowledges it has a place, but doesn't feel beholden to it.

"I've had fears that big conglomerates are going to buy up breweries and shelf space," he says. "If that means I can get a Lagunitas at the airport or the stadium, which I couldn't before, that would help ... But no one can influence what we do."

He also points out that former Budweiser employees have gone on to found or brew at craft breweries.

"I try to wean people from it but I certainly respect [macro-brewers'] knowledge and abilities," Schlabs said.

THE BUBBLE

Another oft-discussed topic is the craft beer "bubble," and its impending burst. How can craft beer sustain such a high rate of interest, market share and brewery openings? Schlabs offers a simple opinion: "Customers aren't going to go backwards with their tastebuds, no more than those who find real food will go back to fast food."

The statement seems obvious, but the implications are myriad, and deeper than might be expected. Everyone remembers their "gateway beer." For the craft beer drinker, it's akin to a baptism. Though Schlabs remains modest (he was content after opening one restaurant, calling Wynne "the visionary" of the group), the restaurants he has helped create played an integral part in bringing quality beer from around the country to the Bible Belt.

Areas like Memphis or Raleigh simply didn't have access to better beer until Flying Saucer helped open the pipeline by negotiating a more diverse portfolio through distributor connections.

"When we started looking at the landscape," said Schlabs, "some of the most exciting beers were Guinness and Newcastle. Mostly imports. We found a distributor in Tennessee that believed in what we were doing and wanted to help. They picked up 40 different beers to sell on draft. They worked with other craft beer distributors in Texas that we knew to determine which [beers] were good fits."

As the beer rolled in, people came alive.

"We brought a small San Antonio brewer, Yellow Rose Brewing Company to Memphis, and would sell their Bubba Dog wheat beer, and everybody would yell 'Bubba Dog' when we poured one. It was the craziest thing. Here's this sleepy downtown, people are coming out of the offices,



even driving downtown to come down to the Flying Saucer and have good beer. So I think it may have awakened people in a sense. They got excited, we would have beer events and they would pack it in. I think we proved to ourselves we could get outside of our comfort zone, and that we could bring beer to a city that was thirsty.”

In some cases, Schlabs was even able to call on Flying Saucer’s UFO Club, a group of beer enthusiasts now over 150,000 strong, to successfully petition against prohibitive beer legislation.

“There was a guy who now owns Fullsteam Brewing Company in Durham, Sean Wilson,” said Schlabs. “People may not give him enough credit. He was part of the Pop The Cap campaign, (combatting the state’s 6% ABV cap) Sean initialized this Pop The Cap campaign in North Carolina, and we united the Beerknurds and helped support that legislation.”

It worked, and then they went to South Carolina and did it again. Schlabs no longer had to smuggle Chimay Grand Reserve into a beer dinner just to give beer drinkers a taste of the good stuff. With quality local beer at their fingertips, drinking American never tasted sweeter.

The thrill of a new sensory experience is integral to craft beer, and something that macro-brews will never be able to wholly replicate, but what Schlabs seems to love most about the industry is the people it attracts.

“Beer lends itself to camaraderie and community,” he says. “There are so many good people involved, and I hope that we keep doing our part. Presenting beers the way the brewers intended; giving folks a place to talk about a new beer or style. It’s exciting to be in an industry where there’s always something to learn. What’s important to me is that we’ve made a lot of relationships along the way. I met my best friends in the beer business, I met my wife in the beer business ... These are lifelong relationships, and I think beer brought us together. It’s been a blessing.”

As for the future of the industry, Schlabs predicts craft brewing’s meteoric rise will taper, but not implode. Either way, he’ll be there for his buds in the biz.

“We are at a peak,” he says. “We’re enjoying what we all wanted to happen – widely available fantastic beer, anywhere. There will be some fallout, but we should all work hard to protect those who deserve it.”

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Brewing With: Jon Lee *The man behind Wasatch Brewery and Squatters Craft Beers answers questions about his storied brewing career.*

By: Jim Dykstra

BC: What life lessons have you learned from brewing?

Lee: I think perhaps the biggest life lesson would be patience. Prior to developing my career in the industry, I don't want to say I had none – but it wasn't very much. Since we have to wait so long to taste and enjoy our hard work it's something that has become integral to my success as well as the breweries'. I think my family might back me up on this one as well!

BC: Aside from quality and consistency, what are the keys to a successful brewery?

Lee: The number one key has to be the people. First and foremost we need to find the right person for the position and they have to be in a rewarding position. They can then go home and be proud of a full day of hard work. That means good compensation, benefits, and a good work environment that treats them with respect. Also, making great beer that we want to drink. If we don't like it, why should we expect someone to want to give us his or her hard-earned money? The beer has to be good!

BC: On paper, Utah is around 60 percent Mormon, and Mormons are supposed to abstain from alcohol. How does this dynamic play out?

Lee: It definitely limits the customer base since the majority of the population doesn't drink. But if you look at the possible numbers that are non-Mormon you're looking at around 1.2 million people. That means that the competition for beer drinkers in the state is fierce. Over the years we've had a lot of fun and success by playing on this dichotomy between those that are part of

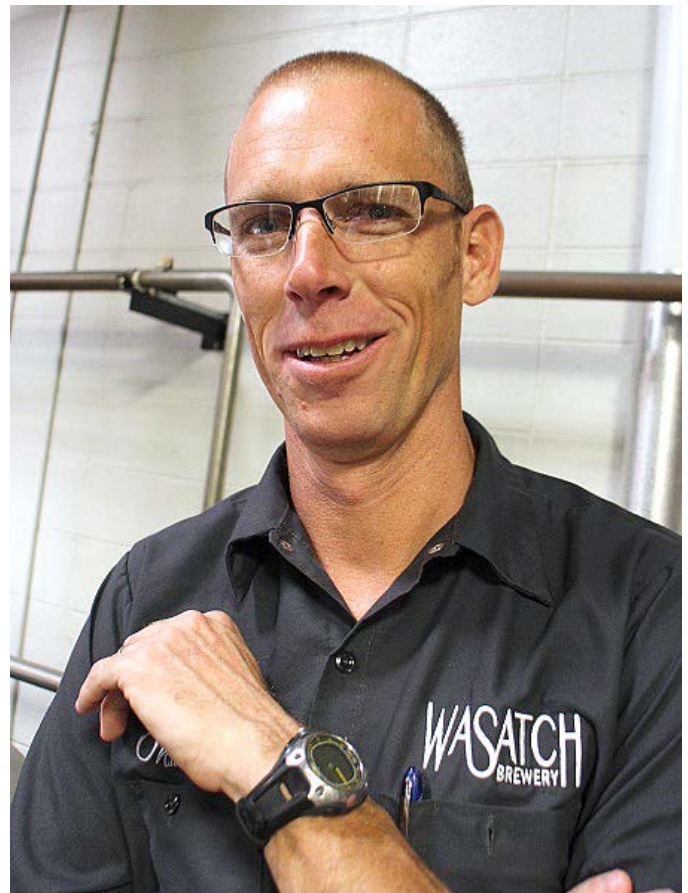


PHOTO COURTESY JON LEE

the club and those that aren't (Polygamy Porter, also the image on Devastator Double Bock). We have numerous fans that have grown up in the religion only to realize in their adulthood that beer is awesome and they should totally drink it!

BC: What's a common misconception people have about your state?

Lee: A common misconception might be that we don't have bears in the state. We totally do. Also that it's hard to find a good bear. Also false – we have some of the best bears in the nation. Bears? Sorry, I meant beers.

Utah brewers have historically done very well in competitions all over the nation as well as internationally. This includes the bigger national competitions of GABF and World Beer Cup. In fact we won the GABF Mid-Size Brewery of the year in 2010, which is something I'm very proud of.

BC: What are some advantages of brewery cooperatives? Do Wasatch and Squatters brew differently?

Lee: The sharing of knowledge in making better beer was absolutely a huge benefit in the early days. It was also quite helpful in boosting our purchasing power, which helped us survive the last turndown in the industry. Back at the end of the 90s and early 2000s it was difficult to survive if you weren't over about 10,000 barrels in production. With the co-op forming it was able to put us as a whole around 14,000 and made it so we could be here today cranking out phenomenal beer! When it comes to the beer itself, there isn't really any different approach to a given brand's production. We focus on a daily basis to make quality, consistent beer that we want to drink. The early slogan for Wasatch Beers was "We drink our share and sell the rest." That's a philosophy that we still live by 30 years later (Wasatch was founded October 24, 1986). Again, if we don't like it why should we expect a customer to enjoy it as well?

BC: What's the beer palate like in Utah?

Lee: It's quite advanced. People here are fans of everything that is thrown at them. American Lagers to big hoppy ales, Belgians and the sours are all welcome. One advantage we do have here is that we have four distinct seasons. It's not always winter and not always summer. Because of that we see changes in beer preferences throughout the year. We see people enjoying fruity beers in the warmer months and darker beers in the cooler months. However the most popular beers mirror what is happening all over the rest of the country... HOPS and lots of 'em!

BC: What's the worst beer you've ever had and why?

Lee: Newcastle's Brown Ale is horrible. Beer in a clear bottle with light-struck skunked flavor and a ridiculous amount of diacetyl is just bad beer. There is just so much wrong with that combination of flavors, it really needs to stop.



PHOTO COURTESY HEATHER LEE

"The number one key to a successful brewery is the people. They should be able to go home and be proud of a full day of hard work, making great beer that we want to drink."



PHOTO COURTESY SAM OLIVER

"The early slogan for Wasatch Beers was 'We drink our share and sell the rest.' That's a philosophy that we still live by 30 years later."

BC: What's your beer-drinking philosophy?

Lee: During the week I try to keep it to one or two a night. If I'm at a party or one is at my house, different story! I do like one while I'm cooking dinner for the family and then usually another after dinner while relaxing before bedtime. As a general rule though, I try not to get drunk during the work week. Another thing that might seem a bit off coming from the craft background is that if I'm drinking a beer from a can, I don't normally pour it into a glass. I will if I've got a bottle but there's something about a canned beer that I really enjoy drinking straight from the can.

BC: As someone who enjoys beer and is constantly surrounded by it, how do you find a healthy drinking balance?

Lee: For me getting older really reduced my consumption, I didn't really plan on drinking less, I just got old! Kidding aside, I've always been quite active. Biking, skiing, snowboarding, hiking, camping, car racing; you name it, I've likely tried it. Because of these activities, my competitive nature and the desire to be as good as I can be, in whatever I do, if I drink too much I'm just not going to be performing my best. That doesn't mean that I'm not pounding beers at the finish line (because I am). It just means that I might only have one or two. In fact, during some bike races I've ridden in I've been handed beers while approaching the finish line, so I'm actually starting to relax while I cross the line (please don't tell my mom).



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The Brews Brothers: Coffee and Beer

Story and photos by: Greg Nagel

I'll never forget the 2012 Great American Beer Festival. That was the year I went on a four session coffee beer bender in search of the country's best. Up since 5 A.M., fueled by greasy airport food and adrenaline, I nervously gripped my plastic tasting cup and followed the freshly-practiced bagpipers into the vast, nearly empty festival floor – a good 15 minutes before 12,000 thirsty beer drinkers entered the festival to sample, trample and fart.

Needing a jolt, I stopped at a familiar face, Jon Porter of Smog City Brewing, who at the time was brewing out of Orange County's Tustin Brewing Company. "Got any coffee beer?" I asked with a junkie's smile. He nodded, nabbed my virgin cup and filled it full of foam. "Let it settle," he said knowingly. The beer was Groundwork Coffee Porter, a near-black beer that settled quickly into a crema-like espresso head. One whiff and the words "coffee aromatherapy" are what got jotted down on the first page of my crisp, new GABF media notebook.

"This beer has gold written all over it," I said to Jon, licking my lips of every last drop. "Good luck," I yelled, skipping away revived.

Coffee beer at the Great American Beer Festival isn't something one usually thinks of as a popular style, however entries into that category have nearly tripled over the past five years – from 52 in 2010 to 149 last year. Clearly, I'm not the only one with a coffee beer addiction.

The style was the sixth most-entered category in 2015. Regular old American Stout? Shockingly, that style



PHOTOS COURTESY GREG NAGEL



Entries into the Coffee Beer category at the Great American Beer Fest have tripled over the past five years.

only featured 39 entries. Perhaps the most telling fact about the numbers is that the top six categories (by number of entries) are all highly aromatic beers, and with that in mind, perhaps it's no shock that coffee beer is on the rise.

I can almost smell the six most-entered style categories at GABF 2015:

- American IPA – 336
- Imperial IPA – 208
- Wood and Barrel Aged Beer – 179
- Session IPA – 161
- American Pale Ale – 160
- Coffee Beer – 149**

What's the Aroma Allure?

Science has proven that scent memory is the strongest,

most evocative sense that humans have. The smell of freshly cut grass, a stack of new dollar bills, or even sizzling bacon can conjure deep memories of life experiences. To a beer geek, an overripe IPA, a boozy, barrel-aged stout or wet hops at a brewery can trigger daydreams of leisure or thoughts of friends; each sip is a conscious connection to the past.

The aroma of coffee can be even more than that. For many, the smell of coffee can represent numerous things: a ray of sunshine the morning after a rough night, a delightful daytime delicacy, or even something that keeps the midnight oil burning. The aromatic process of making coffee can feel cathartic and ceremonial, and in many cultures such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, it is.

Coffee + Beer = Collaboration

Brewers don't simply walk into Starbucks and buy a bag off the shelf in order to make a coffee beer. Just how other collaborations are born in craft beer, the relationship with a roaster is critical to nailing nirvana in the glass.



Origin, roast level, blend, dosing rate and production method can create vastly different effects in coffee beers, including color, such as in Noble Ale Works's Naughty Sauce - a Nitro Golden Milk Stout with coffee.

Jeff Duggan, co-owner of Portola Coffee Lab in Costa Mesa has been involved in well over 60 coffee beers. Aside from winning microroaster of the year in 2015, brewers see Jeff as an asset after winning six medals at the GABF and World Beer Cup with Pizza Port Carlsbad and Beachwood BBQ & Brewing. Being a homebrewer himself has enabled him to hone in on nuance while testing intuition.

“If the coffee is fresh, it will make a big impact on the end product,” says Jeff. Coffee, like hops, are susceptible to oxidation. Achieving a beer where coffee pops out of the glass relies on timing. Jeff advises using fresh, green coffee beans prior to roasting and introducing those beans to the beer within 10 days. Packaging or serving of the beer also relies on some level of speed to achieve perfection, as coffee aromas fade over time.

But what kind of coffee is right for a beer? From a brewer’s standpoint, a conversation with a roaster should start with a picture of the desired finished product. Does the brewer want a coffee-forward roast bomb? Or does he or she want to create something balanced with a more fruity and delicate coffee presence? Origin, roast level, blend, dosing rate and production method can create vastly different effects in coffee beers.

Not All Coffee Beers are Black

For Evan Price, head brewer at Noble Ale Works in Anaheim, California, a vision of making a beer that “drinks like a super creamy cappuccino” was the inspiration behind “Naughty Sauce,” a Nitro Golden Milk Stout with coffee. “People that don’t necessarily enjoy beer end up loving it; it’s a super-approachable gateway beer,” says Price. Stripping out roasted malt from the beer, the perceived stoutiness comes from the coffee alone. Although fresh batches may have some degree of coffee dust haze, the beer is lighter than a hefeweizen and has more coffee aroma than a 24-hour diner at 3 A.M.

Once Naughty Sauce’s nitro cascade settles, creamy carbonation caps the beer like cupcake frosting, and ends up creating coffee-scented beer mustaches after the first few sips. “We let Portola Coffee Lab geek out with the blend ... we know beer; they know coffee,” Price continues. For a special event, Noble brewed a batch of Naughty Sauce using famed Don Pachi beans (\$100/lb), which are full of coffee richness and mindblowing aromatics.

Honing in on the Grind

Once the origin characteristics are decided on for a beer, the real decisions are made at the cupping table. This is where cold-brew coffee is produced to blend into live beer. At the cupping table, generally three to six bean choices are laid out for evaluation. Pre-grind and post-grind notes are taken, then 200-degree water is added and left to settle for exactly 13 minutes.

With a deepwelled, nonreactive metal spoon, the brulee-looking coffee froth is broken while one inhales deeply with the nose a pinkie finger’s length away from the hot liquid. Raking the spoon back and forth, intense aromas explode into your olfactory receptors, or don’t, depending on the bean. Finally, coffee is slurped loudly off of the spoon with the idea of coating the entire tongue. Flavor, taste, and mouthfeel are evaluated, scores are taken, and a decision is made.

When cupping, the ratio of 8.25 grams of whole bean coffee to 5.07 fluid ounces of water are precisely measured out. The idea is to be exact as possible, leveling the playing field for each cup.

Sean Flannery, brewer at The Bruery and founder of nano-roaster Coldbot Coffee, mentions that the cupping table can be misleading. “Cupping uses 200-degree water to extract



Once the origin characteristics are decided on for a beer, the real decisions are made at the cupping table.

the flavor compounds and oils from the coffee. In the beer process, the coffee is cold-steeped anywhere from 34 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit.”

Other coffee beer brewers agree that there are differences in what the cupping table achieves, but it helps evaluate overall quality and how it may fit into the beer’s desired characteristics. “For my coffee beers, I want the coffee to be in symphony with the other flavors and not overly dominant,” says Julian Shrago, brewer of Beachwood BBQ & Brewing’s award-winning Mocha Machine Imperial Porter.

Adding chilled shots of espresso or cold-brew coffee into a pint is yet another method one can use to evaluate, but it may also not necessarily translate to the finished product.

Dosage Best Practice

After the origin, blend and roast are done, it’s time to brew some coffee beer. Post-fermentation, the burr grinder is cleaned and fine mesh bags are filled. For coffee-forward beers, a ratio of one pound of coffee per 10 gallons of beer is

used. For the lighter side, one pound per 20 gallons is used. Since coffee extraction is a time-per-temperature equation, on average three days contact time yields the best results. There’s no danger of overextraction. After 24 hours, the beer is pulled off and sampled; if it’s perfect, it’s sent off for packaging.

Noble Ale Works head brewer Evan Price has a chuckle after sipping a fresh coffee beer.

Enjoy By?

Furthering the hoppy beer parallels, coffee beer is best enjoyed fresh. When purchasing, it’s best to check the date. Just as a bottle of cold-brewed coffee has a shelf life, time slowly chips away at the volatile aroma compounds found in coffee beers. It’s best to store coffee beer in colder temperatures, and cellaring is highly frowned upon.

If you’ve got the “12-bar blues,” seek out The Brews Brothers, coffee and beer, for a harmonious taste performance guaranteed to get your foot tapping.

WHAT IS A BEER CONNOISSEUR?

By: Chris Guest

Connoisseur. It's a difficult word to pronounce correctly, let alone spell. Is it two "s's" and one "n"? Is there an "a" in there? And it doesn't help that it's a French word – if you've ever heard someone try to pronounce *monsieur* without sounding ridiculous, you know what I'm talking about.

The word's dictionary definition, however, leaves little room for ambiguity. A connoisseur is "an expert judge in matters of taste." While this definition works perfectly as a descriptor for the expert judges who rate beers for us every day, it seems a bit one-dimensional when it comes to craft beer fanatics.

Sure, I like making judgments about beer as much as the next Master Cicerone or Grand Master IV BJCP expert, but sometimes I just want to sit back with a hefty brew and ponder life's complexities. Why are we here? Why did they create a sequel to Full House? Most importantly, what is a beer connoisseur?

When you hear the word, what image does your mind conjure? Is it just a word, or is it more of a way of life? We posed this question to industry professionals, craft beer enthusiasts and ourselves.

Read on fellow connoisseurs, and discover for yourselves.

Katy Tilley
(DESTIHL Brewery
Ambassador)

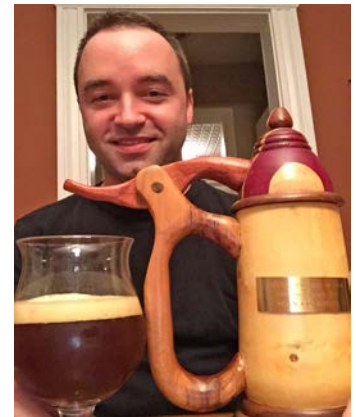
"For me, it equates to a sense of adventure – collecting sensory experiences through flavor profiles like Indiana Jones collects priceless artifacts. The excitement of a satisfying brew, falling into off-flavors – these experiences belong in the museum of your mind! Being a beer connoisseur requires an open mind and a discerning palate. It is a never-ending search for delicious beer antiquities."



Sean Coughlin
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

"Being a beer connoisseur is more than being a beer enthusiast. While both may be consumed by all things beer all the time, the connoisseur will be able to make the distinction between a great beer and a world-class beer that

you should plan a vacation around. This capability comes through sensory development, palate awareness, and being a student of all things beer: history, current and future trends are all important. A true connoisseur will appreciate a well-brewed macro American Light Lager for what it is and can validate its worthiness as much as a well-made



Imperial Stout aged in Woodford Reserve barrels. A connoisseur does not discriminate or let their personal feelings get in the way. Being cognizant of the immense complexity of beer and journeying on a never-ending quest for more knowledge is a key component of connoisseurship. However, sharing this knowledge and passion of beer with others is the essential component. Cheers to all the beer connoisseurs who celebrate world-class beer (be it imperial stout or American lager), share their insights with others, and raise the bar across the beer industry."

Ale Sharpton
(beer blogger and craft beer personality)

"A beer connoisseur learns to discover how different beers complement various types of cuisine and recognize how beautifully complex a beer can be – along with the various flavors it can emulate.

Also, a beer connoisseur recognizes the importance and functionality of glassware, the proper temperatures at which to store beer, and conversely, the clues to when a beer is off due to numerous factors such as temperature, light, infection and storage.

Lastly, a beer connoisseur respects those who brew beer, the packing team, marketing team as well as the writers who promote the craft!"



Photo Credit: Hannibal Matthews

Joel Armato
(National Sales Operations Manager at New Holland Brewing Co.)

A beer connoisseur places value in quality, flavor and experience. They know there are lesser options, yet they choose more. That choice alone opens door upon door of adventure and friendship.

Behind one door lies the ingredients and process that go into every glass of beer they drink. Behind another are the hard-working people and personalities that make enjoying beer so rewarding. A beer connoisseur knows that the first sip is for themselves and all those that follow should echo out to the people around them to spread the good word of good beer. Spreading the word and sharing beer is essential to perpetuate this thing that we all love so much, which is the quality, flavor, and experience that drew us in in the first place.

John C. Tull
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

“A beer connoisseur is someone who picks up a glass of beer and smells it before they drink it. It is someone who looks at the color, texture and head to compare that with the qualities they experience in their mouth. It is someone who strikes up a conversation with a complete stranger to help guide them to a beer they might enjoy based on a few questions and a long list of beers on the menu. A beer connoisseur gets excited to discover new flavors and aromas in unique combinations in an endless and enjoyable quest for the perfect beer.”



Hugh Sisson
(founder of Heavy Seas Beer)

“In my opinion, a true beer connoisseur is someone who has a genuine enthusiasm for the product, takes the time and makes the effort to learn about different styles, comes to understand what they personally like (and don’t like – this is subjective after all), and then doesn’t become a judgmental jerk trying to impress everyone with how much knowledge they have. In other words, a positively-focused, educated enthusiast – not a pedantic beer Nazi!”

Greg Papp
(brewmaster at Tallgrass Brewing Co.)

“As a professional brewer, being a beer connoisseur takes on a lot of different meanings. It’s much more than being a Cicerone, having a vast collection in your basement, being able to describe the difference between Saaz and Simcoe hops or spending your vacation traveling the world in search of amazing beer. All of those are wonderful, but it goes further than that.

It’s about having a vast knowledge of the science and business of brewing, a respect for the industry, a respect for the past and the ability to look toward the future. It’s about paying your dues, learning from your mistakes and being a professional. It’s a never-ending addiction that keeps all senses on alert 24/7 and an underlying devotion to the past, present, and future of our craft.”

Jim Dykstra
(Editor of *The Beer Connoisseur*)

“A beer connoisseur is a sensory thrill seeker who understands that beer is a means to communion with others, or oneself. They are discerning yet non-judgmental of others’ choices, and hoard only to share with others when the time is right. They understand styles, etiquette and hierarchies but don’t get hung up on them, and know when it’s time to sip or guzzle. To ascend to true connoisseur-dom, one must seek out a three-ounce crystal snifter, to be stowed in a velvet pouch tucked safely under the belly, and must wield it with a reverence afforded to the holiest of artifacts.”

Jeffrey Stuffings
(founder of Jester King Brewery)

“Someone who appreciates the history, techniques, philosophy and nuance behind beer, but ultimately realizes that it’s just a conduit to great conversation and human interaction.”

Nick Burgoyne
(lead wood cellar brewer at Sweetwater Brewing Co.)

“A beer connoisseur is someone who goes to buy beer and gets two things: something they’ve never tried before and something they already know is good.”



Jester King founder Jeffrey Stuffings stirs the mash (Photo Credit: Wes Morrison).

Rick Franckhauser
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

“One who perceives and understands the differences between good beer and great beer and can explain why.”

Andy Parker
(Chief “Barrel Herder” at Avery Brewing Co.)

“When I think of a person that I consider a beer connoisseur, I don’t think of someone who has rated 10,000 beers or tried a beer from every country in Africa or stands in line all night to get the newest \$100 bottle release. I think of people who put



thought into what they’re tasting, but don’t necessarily need to use extravagant, flowery adjectives to describe it. Most of the best tasters I know can accurately describe a beer in 10 words or less. They can nail the flavors of a beer so well in those 10 words that I don’t even need to try it! I already understand what’s going to happen if I put it in my flavor hole. Then I try it anyway, because beer is good for you.

A beer connoisseur is aware that there’s no ‘Greatest Beer in the World.’ After a while, beer fits into three categories for experienced tasters: top-tier, decent and drainpour. Arguing over the best IPA or sour beer is just silly. There are dozens or even hundreds of IPAs in that top tier, and anyone declaring that a single beer is miles ahead of the rest is only telling you that they think very highly of their own opinion. I can be equally happy with a Westvleteren 12 for a food pairing or a Coors Original on a hot summer day. They’re both impeccably well-made beers, so at the right time and place they’re both top-tier.

A beer connoisseur spends time learning to appreciate a technically solid beer even if it might not be something they necessarily prefer. While some subjectivity is bound to seep in, a competitive beer judge does their best to stay as



PHOTO COURTESY AVERY BRWING CO.

objective as possible. A little training in technical off-flavors definitely helps, but isn’t necessarily required as long as the potential beer connoisseur is aware of this simple fact – you’re never going to know everything about tasting beer. There will always be flavors that your palate is simply unable to taste and there will always be flavors you prefer or try to avoid. No matter how highly you’re trained, your palate will never be perfect every time. The best tasters are always ready to say that they could be wrong about a particular beer or that their opinion could change.”

James “Nick” Nock
(head brewer at Sweetwater Brewing Co.)

“Being a beer connoisseur means you are able to go out and drink 15 different beers, then get a 16th beer, find out that it sucks, and then quickly ask for a 17th beer.”

Joe Formanek
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

“For me, a beer connoisseur is someone who can appreciate the entire world of beer – and the differences, similarities and variations of the different styles found therein. A beer connoisseur has an understanding of the styles and what makes them different, and has the ability to articulate the differences. This isn’t saying that the connoisseur actually likes all of the styles. The connoisseur will undoubtedly have certain styles that he prefers over others, but at least there is that understanding to differentiate between styles.

A beer connoisseur is not judgmental regarding beers that others might prefer, and appreciates that peoples’ palates are different. This is in diametric opposition to a beer snob, who has a narrow appreciation of different beers and styles and tends to fervently make their opinions known regarding what they feel is “the best beer out there,” which is typically their favorite beer at that time. Snobs also have little appreciation

of other peoples' palates and preferences."

Jon Wojtowicz
(Beer Liberation Specialist at Short's Brewing Co.)

"A beer connoisseur should be a welcoming ambassador to beer, happily taking those who know little about beer "under their wing" to be enthusiastically educated and shown the endless possibilities that exist in beer, literally making it the beverage for everyone. A beer connoisseur should be a passionate educator who never uses their knowledge for exclusion, but rather, they are always looking for the future craft beer drinkers of the world to share in the excitement of one of the most integral beverages responsible for shaping human civilization."

Nelson Crowle
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

A beer connoisseur has a very broad knowledge of many beer styles, appreciates quality, and is trained to pick up on all of the nuances that go into making a beer: the beer style, the malts used, the hops used, the yeasts used, the brewing technique, etc.

Now that we have the "formal" definition out of the way – Being a connoisseur means doing research (yep, that means drinking beer) as much as possible – always learning, always expanding your knowledge base. Be nerdy and take notes, or don't. Be open-minded. Try everything to find your favorite styles, and you'll determine what beer to order with different foods. Share your experiences – be an evangelist (but try to not be a beer snob) and help others by sharing your knowledge.

Don't expect everyone to have as much enthusiasm as you do. You'll encounter people who are perfectly content to drink near-tasteless fizzy yellow water. You can try to get them to sample other beers, but if they're happy, then don't worry about it; enjoy those tasteful, hoppy, malty, bitter, fruity, sour or spicy beers yourself! Your reputation as a connoisseur will grow and your friends will start coming to you for recommendations. Stay upbeat and excited about the beer – your enthusiasm will be contagious!

Beer connoisseurs can start at any level of knowledge – so if you're not one yet, start now! Sample as many types and styles of beer as you can. Try homebrewing. It's amazing how much you can learn about beer by making it. When you go to a brewpub, get the flight instead of a pint. Talk with the brewer, get a tour of the brewery. Hobnob with fellow



beer connoisseurs, learn, and share your knowledge and experience. It's a win-win for everyone!

Josh Weikert
(expert judge at BeerConnoisseur.com)

"Certainly not being a beer snob (at least, it shouldn't be). It means that you make an effort to appreciate what you're drinking and not be a passive observer in your own drinking life. Beer doesn't exist to get you drunk; it's a culinary experience, and being a beer connoisseur simply means that you're aware of what you're tasting."

As you can see, there are some differences of opinion on the matter. Most of the answers have been colored by whatever role the respondent has in the world of craft beer – be it judge, brewmaster, journalist or PR rep.

However, one common thread that spins through all of the responses is the ability and desire to discern quality in everything they do that's beer-related. They are always searching for the newest, tastiest craft beer. They are always digging deeper, discovering that craft beer can be a viable hobby, career and lifelong pursuit. Most of all, they are all chasing their passion.



So keep on searching for the best beer you can. Go out to your nearest bottle shop, brewpub, brewery or bar and strike up a conversation. Chances are you'll learn something – about beer, about the person you're talking to, or even about yourself. The world of beer is vast, and sometimes all it takes is the will to explore.

Style Studies



By: Chris Guest

ALTERNATIVE GRAIN BEER

When one thinks about beer, a few simple descriptors immediately spring to mind: carbonated, alcoholic, crushable, etc. When one thinks about the ingredients found in beer, the same could probably be said: water, barley, hops and yeast. These four simple ingredients have led to thousands of years of beverage experimentation and they continue to be the baseline for the wonderful, avant-garde brews that pop up every day in the world of craft beer.

However, there is a growing cache of brewers that do not

follow the ancient belief that to make a “capital-B” beer you have to use some combination of those ingredients. It also happens to be in-line with the general pushback against gluten in modern society.

As the son of someone who suffers from Celiac Disease (a disease that causes digestive problems and small intestine infections if gluten is digested), I know a thing or two about gluten-free products. While most people think of barley and wheat as essential ingredients in beer, Alternative Grain Beers buck this belief.

Alternative Grain Beer is a style in which additional or non-standard brewing grains are added or used

exclusively in the making of the beer. A few of the grains that may be employed are corn, oats, buckwheat, spelt, millet, sorghum, rice and quinoa. As long as the beer contains one of these ingredients in some form, it's an Alternative Grain Beer.

While the base style of the beer will greatly affect the qualities of the beer, a few common threads are found in all Alternative Grain Beers. Firstly, no matter what the base style is, some additional haziness may be present. The alternative grains will also provide almost all of the aroma of the beer, and they almost always evince an unidentifiable nutty or grainy character.

When it comes to flavor and body, different grains have different effects on the finished product. Gluten-free grains will almost always decrease the body of a beer, making for a lighter mouthfeel; however, they often create additional creaminess in the mouth, making up for the beer's lack of body. Additional alternative grains should never overpower the base beer style's flavor hallmarks and should always enhance the overall flavor and drinking experience.



While many people think that gluten intolerance and gluten allergies are just a myth cooked up by sensationalist media monoliths, I can tell you from personal experience that Celiac Disease is indeed very real, and it makes eating bread or drinking beer a deadly gamble. It's nice to be able to find tasty craft beers that cater to this ever-growing audience yet still find ways to push the envelope with interesting flavors and ingredients. Also, even if you don't have a gluten allergy, give an Alternative Grain Beer a try. The lighter mouthfeel and lower calorie count might make you an Alt-Grain believer.

STATS

OG, IBU, SRM, ABV: all vary by base style

Commercial Examples: Bards Tale Dragon's Gold, Sprecher Shakparo, Green's Great Discovery Amber, Green's Grand IPA, Lakefront New Grist, New Planet Pale Ale, Two Brothers Prairie Path Ale, Ground Breaker Olallie

BLACK IPA

It has been widely stated (including in this very publication) that this is the "day of the IPA." Every brewery, brewpub and bar under the sun proffers an endless array of the hopped-up, orange-amber beverage du jour. While some are better than others, the general theme of IPAs reduces them to a string of adjectives describing their flavor: citrusy, resinous, dank, sticky, hoppy, etc.

The rise of popularity in IPAs has also given strength to rampant experimentalism. In this case, Specialty IPAs (Red, Belgian, White, etc.) have risen from the "normal" hoppy creations of breweries nationwide to gain a large foothold on the marketplace. One of the more popular and more interesting variants is Black IPA.

While the term Cascadian Dark Ale is also used to refer to Black IPAs, this term originated on the West Coast, specifically in the Cascade mountain range that extends from Washington to California. The first commercially available Black IPA is credited to Stone Brewing Co. and the release of its 11th anniversary beer, Sublimely Self-Righteous Ale. Stone's Black IPA was the first beer widely produced in the style, but the brewery later admitted that it was inspired by earlier East Coast creations; notably, Shaun Hill's (of Hill Farmstead Brewery) first foray into Black IPAs, which was in turn inspired by Greg Noonan's 1990 creation (of Vermont Pub and Brewery), Blackwatch IPA.

Despite the muddled history of its origins, Black IPAs have a fairly standard set of ingredients. Created mostly as a middle ground between stouts and IPAs, Black IPAs should

have the hop-forward qualities of the best IPAs while retaining the deep, dark brown and black colors that make stouts so enticing and mysterious. This coloration is Black IPA's calling card and is attained through the use of roasted malts, which not only provide the color for the beer, but also serve as a foil to the style's inherent hoppiness.

It would be easy to overroast the malts during brewing, but the hallmark of a Black IPA is the restrained roastiness of the malts coupled with the ample hop profile. An analogous style is Schwarzbier, though this German classic doesn't feature the same hop level that a Black IPA will uniformly have.

In terms of flavor, the usual tropes of IPA are prevalent, including citrusy, tropical, piney and resinous aspects combined with high bitterness, which are partially contributed to by the use of dark malts. Clean, low-intensity toffee and caramel malt characteristics highlight the de-bittered malt base, which should never be smoky or ashy and should never clash or overpower the hop highlights.

It should be noted that the ABV range for Black IPAs is vast, especially for the IPA style, ranging from 5.5 percent (the upper end of session-strength) to 9 percent (Double IPA territory). Black IPAs serve as an excellent standalone crusher, especially on the upper level of ABVs, but they also make for an excellent accompaniment to spicy barbecue ribs, fish tacos and sharp, flavorful cheeses.

STATS

OG: 1.050 - 1.085

IBU: 50 - 90

SRM: 25 - 40

ABV: 5.5 - 9.0%

Commercial Examples: Harpoon Black IPA, Southbound Black Circle, 21st Amendment Back in Black, Upland Komodo Dragonfly, Hill Farmstead James, Smuttynose Noonan Black IPA, Peak Organic Hop Noir



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USRY TAKES UP NEW CHALLENGES AS PRESIDENT AT BRECKENRIDGE



PHOTOS COURTESY BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY

By: Jonathan Ingram

Todd Usry is one of the new faces of craft beer, even though he's been working at Breckenridge Brewery since 1990 when he started as a delivery truck driver for what was then a 3,000-barrel brewpub in one of Colorado's ski towns.

As the recently named president at Breckenridge, Usry is committed to maintaining the quality and innovation that helped the brewery become one of the top brands in its beer-crazy home state and on the national scene. And, oh yes, he'll be working in The High End division of Anheuser-Busch InBev.

It's the recent acquisition by the world's largest brewery that has reshaped Usry's role in the brewing world. He's still committed to flavorful and authentic beer, but many people who support craft beer think ownership by a mega brewer is anathema to the mission. There is the fear that mega brewers will try to muscle out independent regional operations as they did midway into the 20th Century, when America was turned into a light lager desert.

That lagging of the beer universe ultimately created the craft beer counter-revolution led by independent brewers who fought for two decades to gain a foothold against the

big brewers. Working his way up to brewmaster and then brewery director at the new \$36-million Breckenridge farmhouse-style brewery in Littleton, Colorado by "hard work, initiative and luck," Usry was a front line soldier in the revolution.

Then came the offer from AB-InBev and The High End division, which already operated formerly independent brands such as Elysian in Washington, 10-Barrel in Oregon and Goose Island in Chicago. In a classic case of how the craft mission suddenly gets turned upside down, Usry was outvoted by partners who wanted to sell.

Having combined two Denver-based brewpub operations in 2010 to create Breckenridge-Wynkoop LLC, owners Ed Cerkovnik and Lee Driscoll decided to sell their interest in the production brewing business to concentrate on the restaurants.

Other shareholders were involved, but essentially Usry was outvoted. Having just spent the better part of two years building a new, state-of-the-art destination brewery on the banks of the Platte River south of Denver, Usry was angered by his partners' decision to sell. Then the strongest offer came from The High End.

"I had mixed emotions for sure, especially when I learned we were sitting down with Anheuser Busch's High End team," said Usry. "I've been fiercely craft my entire career – a quarter of a century – you can imagine my first, initial thoughts. After meeting with those guys several times I absolutely became a believer in what they're trying to do. What they're trying to do is not take over the craft world. That's not their ambition. They're trying to participate in it. I think it's a smart play on their part."

The easy conclusion is that Usry, who became president as a result of a deal conservatively estimated to be worth \$100 million, sold out. But he sees it as an opportunity to sustain the commitment to the employees at Breckenridge and to bring more flavorful beer to the marketplace.

"The most important thing to me is my people, as clichéd as that might sound," he said. "I'm incredibly proud of the people here. I've got people who have been here 24 years and I've got several people who have been here over 15 years. We're extremely close. We go through all the highs and lows of life together. I'm really proud of the beers we make, I'm really proud of the creative steps we've made with our beers over the last five to seven years with all the

new entries and all the barrel-aging stuff we've done. I'm real proud of all of that, but what I'm most proud of is my co-workers and the team of people here. When The High End was here, I know they noticed that and they told me they noticed. That probably is the best compliment I can get."

Being owned by a brewery, said Usry, is a better option than being owned by private equity or bankers. There was shock, he acknowledged, when he informed his employees of the acquisition and not much awe. There were the anticipated vindictive messages in social media. A sustained effort to communicate with the Colorado media – as throughout the brewery's more than two decades of growth – resulted in some negative stories. But Usry stood his ground and rallied his employees. There were no immediate notices to quit or move elsewhere.

Usry said he's not worried about losing the brewery's independence and that he believes it can continue to be well-connected to the Colorado lifestyle that helped inspire Vanilla Porter, Avalanche Amber and, more recently, Ophelia Hopy Wheat plus a nitro version of Vanilla Porter.

Andy Goeler, VP of Marketing for The High End, said the acquisition of Breckenridge was focused on innovation. "Breckenridge Brewery has a long history of innovation and they continue to brew new and exciting beers, from their specialty brews like the Mountain Series that celebrates the brewery's origin as a ski town brewpub, to their planned nitro can series," said Goeler. "They are innovative and have built an amazing business that's enabled them to get their great beers to fans across the country. We look forward to even more growth together."

"They want me to do what I do and to remain focused on growing Breckenridge Brewery within the culture we have created here throughout the years," said Usry of the meetings with executives from The High End. One of those on hand to help with the acquisition was J.B. Shireman of the investment banking firm First Beverage Group. Shireman spent 13 years helping to grow New Belgium Brewing Company and is a friend of Usry.

"They're into individual stories, which I think craft is built on completely," said Usry. "That is all that you hear out of them. One of my first questions was autonomy. What's going to happen to decision making? They said, 'We don't want to run your brewery. It's all yours. We want you to run it as you have. We're just looking to help you grow it and to give you all the resources necessary to do that and to maintain quality.'"

Usry vows the commitment to innovation and quality will determine the course of Breckenridge's future, which continues to be aligned with the same themes of fun and

connection to the Colorado lifestyle that have characterized a company that once brewed near Coors Field and made special beers for Comic Con such as Brews Wayne and Caped Brewsader. For years Leftover Salmon, a local group, has been the "house" bluegrass jam band.

One of the objectives of The High End is to purchase breweries that have brewpubs and tap rooms that are a destination in their own right. The new Farmhouse Restaurant that adjoins the brewery in Littleton and its access by car, bike or the river made Breckenridge very attractive once Cerkovnik and Driscoll, experts in restaurant development, decided to sell and focus on their seven other eateries in Denver and Colorado Springs that remain under the Breckenridge-Wynkoop banner.

"Our beer garden was in full swing, our restaurant was jammin' (during transition talks)," said Usry. "When they were here everything was buzzin' with life and they brought it up. They're big on the experience. They're improving beer gardens and pubs in some of the other locations."

The brewery's new Steinecker system, which car lover and NASCAR fan Usry likens to having a hot new performance vehicle, has helped the transition. The 400-barrel system



The Breckenridge crew circa 1993. Usry (in center, seated) started working for the brewery in 1990 as a delivery truck driver.



Usry said he's not worried about losing the brewery's independence to AB-InBev and that he believes it can continue to be well-connected to the Colorado lifestyle that helped inspire Vanilla Porter, Avalanche Amber and Ophelia Hoppy Wheat.

is fully automated, allowing control by the brewing team from a computer screen. Having produced 70,000 barrels in 2015 following a move from the Denver brewery in May, the facility is capable of producing 120,000 barrels currently and can be outfitted to produce 300,000.

The use of recycled materials, LED and natural lighting, plus the German brewing system's efficient use of water keeps the brewery in line with Colorado's emphasis on green technology. The ability to produce beers in 100-barrel batches helps sustain creativity. Last year, the brewery introduced 13 new beers, including a whiskey barrel-aged version of 471 Double IPA and a tequila barrel-aged version of Ophelia Hoppy Wheat, which first arrived last spring as a new seasonal.

There's no mistaking the Colorado theme to the brand, which distributes a Rocky Mountain Sampler, and Usry says the Breckenridge beers are made with balance as well as innovation to keep them approachable. (The company bucked trends to stay with lagers longer than most craft

breweries and even had a 3.2 percent ABV "active lifestyle" beer sold only in Colorado, which has been discontinued.) It was fairly amazing that the company introduced so many new beers in the same year it transitioned from its previous brewery on Kalamath Street in Denver.

"We have a very dynamic R&D team comprised of pub and packaging brewers, quality control, and sales & marketing team members," said Usry. "That diverse group of contributors brings recipe and style ideas from a lot of different angles. We use our (original) pub in Breckenridge as our ground zero R&D lab, and then we bring qualifying ideas to Littleton to share in our Mountain Series, Brewery Lane series, and Small Batch line."

An alignment with The High End will boost creativity, said Usry, because collaboration with the division's other brewing operations is now built into the process.

"I will sit on the craft advisory board with principals from all those breweries and I'm psyched about that," he said. "I

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One of the objectives of ABInBev's High End line is to purchase breweries that have brewpubs and tap rooms that are a destination in their own right, such as Breckenridge's new Farmhouse Restaurant in Littleton.

think that will be good for our brewery and challenging for me in the next phase of my career. I'm also looking forward to collaborating with Anheuser-Busch. Say what you will about Anheuser-Busch, there are decades and decades of research when it comes to quality and when it comes to everything from malt to carbonation. Never have I had these kinds of resources at my fingertips. Again, I'm very excited about that opportunity."

It will be a challenge for the former delivery man who learned how to brew on the job. "What they expect of me is probably a lot. I'm sure it's a lot. It's not different from what I've been doing all these years. We're going to grow. There's going to be pains. We're going to grow faster than we could have done without the help. I'm going to have to up my game to keep up with that. That's going to be adding tanks, construction, adding warehouse space, working with new wholesalers, I'm sure, as we kind of align our footprint."

It might have been easier to take the money and walk away, find a job at another independent brewery or join one of the new "craft conglomerates" designed to create more size in order to do battle with the macro brewers. Or, instead of driving a Ford Explorer to work every day, Usry might have found a snazzy new car or pick-up truck and headed to the Daytona 500 and other NASCAR events at his leisure. But that's just not Usry's style.

For one thing, he doesn't believe The High End division will lead to the end of independent craft brewing. "The High End enjoys obvious distribution and logistical benefits that come from being a part of the world's largest brewer," he said. "This allows The High End to put craft beer in more consumer hands than ever before. New consumers experiencing craft beer – owned by The High End or otherwise – will continue to seek out craft beer in their local markets and beyond."

Like most brewers, Usry likes the idea of creating, brewing and selling more beer. "It's not like I get to kick back now and reap the benefits," he said. "Our whole team is going to have to ratchet it up a bit, but not in terms of 'walk between these lines.' They don't want us to do that. They want us to wiggle around the lines as we've been doing at Breckenridge."

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Connoisseur's Corner:

Is Craft Going the Way of Billionaire Hipsters?



By: Jonathan Ingram

A U.S. Senator, who long ago seemed to have a handle on what disturbed people most about the political process in Washington, once offered this line about the problem of budgets. “A billion here, a billion there,” he said, “and pretty soon you’re talking about real money.”

That’s the tune that now seems to be humming through the craft beer community. A billion dollar deal here, a billion dollar deal there and pretty soon you’re talking about real beer money.

Last year, according to respected individuals who work on the financial side of the beer business, there were three major deals that figured in the billion dollar range. The best known was the purchase by the publicly-traded Constellation Brands of Ballast Point Brewing Company for \$1 billion. Using the current metric of \$3,000 per barrel as a pricing guide for breweries in demand, Tony Magee brought in \$1 billion by selling a 50 percent stake of Lagunitas Brewing Company to Heineken International.

Given similar metrics, Firestone Walker would have been worth close to \$1 billion prior to Duvel Moortgat taking a majority interest.

If people were stunned by the actual sales, the pricing should give them a double stunner, if not an imperial pause. Homebrewers-turned-brewery owners that every serious beer lover could relate to have suddenly started turning into billionaires. On top of this, the countervailing forces of macro beer and a Belgian company with financial expertise were behind the deals.

Given that Anheuser-Busch InBev and MillerCoors were also snapping up smaller breweries last year, likely at similar price points per barrel, should craft drinkers be worried?

Personally, I’ve started seeing a helluva lot more six-packs priced at \$14.99 since the Ballast Point sale, where the company’s purchase price was motivated in part by its ability to not only grow fast but command 50 percent higher profit margins than most craft brewers. This pricing falls in

line with those four-packs that would work out to the same cost per bottle, sure. But still, prepare for the higher pricing of six-packs in demand, especially IPAs and those with higher ABV.

It seems the consumer can't win. Either you can't get a popular shelf whale, and even if you can get a craft brew that is consistently popular and stacked high on the shelves, it could cost considerably more.

The issue of finding craft beers on the shelf is the other "whale in the room." At the same time the number of craft breweries is increasing – 5,000 now looks to be a reasonable number for the near future – the number of wholesalers and distributors is shrinking. Yep, the same consolidation that we're seeing on the corporate and craft level in brewing is taking place among wholesalers. That means more craft brewers seeking deals with fewer decision-makers. It also means more distributors in the hands of macro brewers in states where laws allow such relationships. (Beware the relaxing of the three tier rule that prohibits brewers from distributing.)

With craft self-distribution limited in most states and with the ability of wholesalers to buy and sell the contracts they made with brewers in some states, it is the best of times and worst of times. There's lots of creative, independent brewing and a tighter squeeze when it comes to selling it in retail outlets.

Call me Alfred E. Newman-ish, but I'm not worried when it comes to getting craft. Craft brewers have always been able to outsmart their bigger rivals as well as the hang-ups in the distribution networks.

There's no reason craft can't continue to grow and have more clout in the marketplace by acquiring other craft breweries or building more production breweries using a combination of bank loans and private equity. Colorado-based Oskar Blues Brewing Company is now pursuing both models after expanding to North Carolina and soon to Austin, Texas. In between, Oskar Blues purchased Perrin Brewing Company in Michigan. This follows on the heels of a deal to sell a majority interest to private equity group Fireman Capital.

Does that mean Oskar Blues is no longer craft or that its beers are no longer creative? I'm OK with this evolution as long as the prices don't also start jumping – and especially if breweries closer to drinkers result in fresher beer.

Brooklyn Brewery is building a huge new facility on Staten Island – in part to increase exports to Europe. Does that mean it's no longer Brooklyn or a craft brewery?

Firestone Walker sold to Duvel Moortgat of Belgium, which also owns the Boulevard and Ommegang brands in the U.S. The combined total barrelage of these four is less than the output of the Sierra Nevada brand per year. So are they no longer craft?

Ultimately it means that demand for craft continues to grow at an amazing pace, but that the ground rules for how independent brewers battle for market share with major corporations – and where – are evolving rapidly.

There are some interesting angles. Heineken cut a deal with Magee for the privilege of doing battle against newly enlarged ABI around the world using American craft as a growth vehicle. ABI, meanwhile, is using its macro Stella brand as a premium alternative around the world to its strategy of promoting lagers like Budweiser. Given that the world seemingly cannot get enough of American craft, it will be interesting to see how privately-owned Heineken fares with its new strategy versus the publicly-traded behemoth. And it will be interesting to see how many of Heineken's breweries around the world start producing Lagunitas brews in order to increase velocity.

Americans, apparently, can't get enough of American craft. Everybody wants to be in California, which is bourgeois with bling as opposed to the latter-day hipsters found in so many other craft strongholds. California is where all three of the newest billionaire brewers who sold last year started. Lagunitas is even building a second facility in a state where craft brewers – some of whom have sold to ABI and MillerCoors – can't get their beers across state lines such is the demand within them. Look for Sweetwater Brewing Company of Atlanta, which managed to stay independent in a 2015 private equity deal, to become the first brewer to go from the East Coast to the West, quite possibly to California.

What is the everyday craft consumer – Joe and Jill 4-Pack – to do? For those antagonized by the sudden emphasis on money in what has always been a capital-intensive business, well, there's always the local brewpub and/or brewer's tap room. Homebrewing is also a prime alternative.

One thing for sure is that flavorful, creative beers loaded with quality ingredients are here to stay, because beer drinkers know them when they taste them. Taste along with American hops have turned the tide. The renewed competition with macro brewers, who are experts at delivering fresh beer, and the increase in prices might even put more pressure on all independent brewers to use "best by" dates. If asked to pay premium dollars for beer, it's unacceptable for the consumer to bet on a beer's freshness. Better fresh delivery by wholesalers and brewers ought to be a silver lining amongst all that gold.

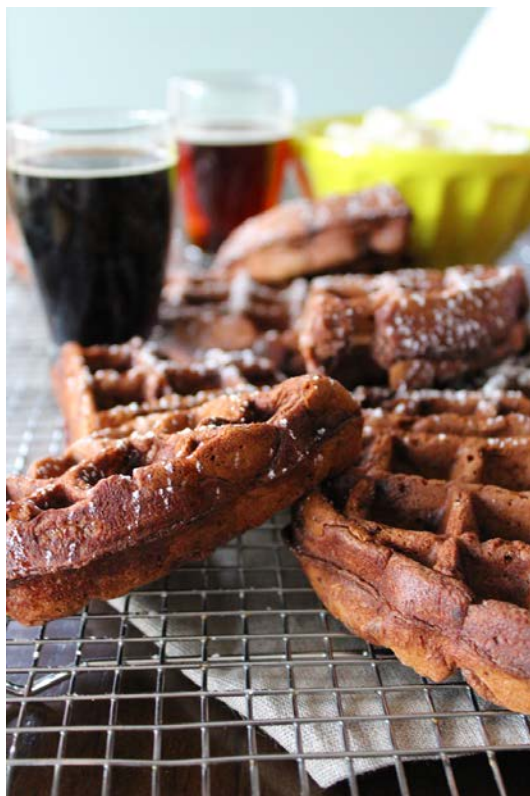
A TEX-MEX BEER BRUNCH

Story and photos by: Sherry Dryja

Brunch has a reputation for being reserved for special occasions, like Easter or Mother's Day. While those are excellent reasons to enjoy it, the beauty of brunch is that it's perfect for any occasion that allows for relaxed indulgence with friends and family. We created our Tex-Mex Craft Beer Brunch menu and paired it up with delicious brews to provide the perfect excuse to enjoy brunch any time of year.

Our Migas Quiche comes straight out of Austin where we first experienced the flavors of this Tex-Mex version of scrambled eggs. We've added a corn tortilla crust and turned the scrambled eggs into a savory pie filled with onions, bell peppers and green chilies. If you make it a day or two ahead of when you plan to serve it, reheat it in the oven or serve it cold with salsa and salad.

This dish goes well with a malty ale, such as



Chocolate Waffles + Maple Bourbon Pecan Pie Beer = Yummy

The Pike Brewing's Kilt Lifter Scotch Ale. The sweetness of the malt and the light smoky flavor of this brew brings out the comforting flavors created by the Maillard reaction in the quiche.

Something just a little more balanced between malt and hops is needed to pair up with the spicy Fajita Breakfast Tacos on our menu. Base Camp Brewing's In-Tents IPL hits just the right note. It starts out strong on the palate and then surprises when the heat and other spices from the fajitas rise up and blend perfectly.

Spicy heat makes an appearance in our Mexican Chocolate Waffles as well. Inspired by the hot chocolate of the same origin, these waffles have a kick to them thanks to the chili powder and chunks of guajillo chile-laced chocolate mixed in. It may be tempting to pair this dish with vanilla ice cream and maple syrup, but we recommend simply pairing it with High Water Brewing's Sugaree Maple Bourbon Pecan Pie Specialty Ale. The taste sensation will make you smile to your toes, just like you did when you were a kid eating waffles for the first time, only now you're an adult and it's beer.

If that's too sweet for you, Hopworks Urban Brewery's Survival Stout is a good alternate choice. They've added coffee to the brew, which makes the flavor combinations of this match a little more adult.

It's hard to be very adult when there's cinnamon and sugar around, but our Caramel Apple Chimichangas have a certain refined taste that raises their sweet status beyond what their sugary coating might lead you to believe. Still, just to be sure this brunch doesn't go the way of the playground, we paired our chimichangas with a bold espresso stout from Two Beers Brewing. If you know how comforting a dark roasted cup of coffee can be with apple pie, then you already know how good this combination is.

Now that you've got the menu and the brews to match, you have all the excuses you need to invite the gang over for brunch.





Caramel Apple Chimichangas

This soup adds a beautiful splash of color to the holiday table. The length of the recipe can be a little intimidating, but each part can be made separately to create a soup that becomes a delicious vegetable-type broth with pierogies that add hearty meatiness thanks to the mushrooms. This recipe can also be made vegetarian by using vegetable broth or water in place of the chicken broth.

INGREDIENTS:

2 granny smith apples, peeled and diced into ¼-inch pieces

1 teaspoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons caramel sauce

A good pinch of salt

1 tablespoon flour

½ cup sugar

½ tablespoon cinnamon

8 flour tortillas

Vegetable oil, for frying



Directions:

Prepare the filling: Combine the apples, lemon juice, caramel sauce, salt, and flour in a bowl and stir until the caramel sauce thins out and is incorporated evenly throughout the mixture.

In a shallow dish, such as a pie plate or cake tin, mix together the sugar and cinnamon. Set aside to use after the chimichangas are fried.

Make the chimichangas: Scoop about two tablespoons of the apple mixture down the center of a tortilla. Fold in the ends and then roll like a burrito, making sure it is rolled tightly. Place seam-side down on a baking sheet. Continue with the other tortillas.

Heat about an inch of oil to 350°F in a deep heavy-duty skillet or Dutch oven. Add the empanadas, 2 or 3 at a time, to the oil and cook until browned on one side. This should only take a couple of minutes. When browned, flip the chimichangas and brown the other side.

Once fried, remove from the oil and place immediately in the cinnamon-sugar mixture. Using tongs or spoons, roll the chimichanga until it is covered on all sides, and then place on a wire rack.

Serve warm with vanilla whipped cream or ice cream.

Makes 8 chimichangas.

Migas Quiche

INGREDIENTS:

6-8 hard corn taco shells
½ cup fine cornmeal
¼ cup all-purpose flour
5 tablespoons butter, melted
1 small red onion, chopped
1 bell pepper, chopped
1 4-ounce can of diced green chiles
10 eggs
1 cup Mexican blend shredded cheese
¾ cup sour cream
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper



Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400°F. In a food processor or blender, grind the taco shells to create a lumpy flour. Don't process until it's completely pulverized. Leave some small pieces of shell interspersed through the flour to create texture.

Measure 1 ½ cups of taco shell flour into a bowl and stir in the cornmeal, the all-purpose flour, and butter until all the dry ingredients are moist from the butter. Press the mixture into the bottom of a spring form pan. Bake for 10-12 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Set aside to cool.

In a large skillet, brown the onion and bell pepper for about five minutes, until the onion is translucent. Pour in the green chiles, including the liquid from the can, and stir until the most of the liquid has been absorbed or cooked off. Set aside to cool.

When the onion mixture is cooled, beat the eggs with the cheese, sour cream, salt, and pepper. Add the onion mixture to the egg mixture and stir to combine.

Pour into the spring form pan over the taco shell crust. Set on a baking sheet lined with foil and bake for 30-40 minutes, until the quiche is set and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and let stand for 15 minutes.

When ready to serve, run a knife around the edge of the quiche to loosen it from the sides of the pan. Carefully loosen the spring and remove the quiche to a serving platter.

Serve with any of your favorite Tex-Mex toppings, such as guacamole, hot sauce, salsa, and sour cream.

Mexican Chocolate Waffles

INGREDIENTS:

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons sugar

½ cup cocoa powder

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

½ teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking soda

3 eggs, beaten

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1 teaspoon almond extract

2 cups buttermilk, room temperature

¾ cup chile-spiced Mexican chocolate, chopped into small pieces

Directions:

Whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, chili powder, baking powder, and salt until well blended. Set aside.

In another bowl, whisk together the eggs, melted butter, almond extract, and buttermilk.

Add the egg mixture and chocolate chunks to the flour mixture. Stir until everything is just combined. Allow the batter to rest while the waffle iron preheats, or for 5 minutes, whichever is longest.

Depending on the manufacturer's instructions for the waffle iron, ladle the recommended amount of batter onto the center of the heated plate. Close the iron and cook until the waffle is crispy on both sides and is easily removed. Serve right away or keep waffles warm in a 200°F oven until ready to serve.

These may also be cooled on a rack and frozen for use at a later date. To reheat, toast in a toaster or heat an oven to 400°F. Place the waffles in a single layer on a baking sheet and heat for about 5 minutes on each side.

Makes about 4 8-inch waffles.



Fajita Breakfast Tacos

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound beef skirt or flank steak
2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 teaspoon salt, divided
½ teaspoon black pepper, divided
½ teaspoon chili powder
1 medium onion, cut into thin strips
1 medium bell pepper, cut into thin strips
½ teaspoon ground cumin
1-2 chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, chopped
8 eggs, beaten
3 tablespoons whole milk, half-and-half, or sour cream
2 tablespoons butter
6 flour tortillas

Directions:

Marinate the steak: Add the lemon or lime juice, 1 tablespoon of olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, and the chili powder to a sealable bag large enough to fit the steak. Seal the bag and shake until all the contents are mixed. Add the meat to the bag, shake again, and set in the refrigerator to marinate for 1 to 24 hours.

When the steak is ready, heat a stovetop cast iron griddle with grid lines over medium-high heat. (You can also do this on an outdoor grill.) When a drop of water dropped on the griddle sizzles and evaporates, the griddle is ready.

Place the meat on the griddle and leave it for about 3 minutes, or until the underside is just starting to turn brown. Flip the meat over and grill for another few minutes, to preferred doneness. Remove the meat from the grill and allow to rest for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook the onions and peppers. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium high. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until the onion is translucent. Stir in ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, the cumin, and chipotle chiles until everything is well incorporated. Remove to a serving plate and set aside.

Make the scrambled eggs: Whisk the milk into the eggs, and add a good pinch of salt and pepper to taste.



Add the butter to the skillet used for the onions and peppers. It's okay if a few peppers or chile bits get combined with the eggs. It adds flavor. Set the pan over medium heat. Allow the eggs to whiten around the edges of the pan before stirring, then stir occasionally until the eggs are cooked to preferred doneness.

Slice the meat in thin slices against the grain of the meat. Load up each flour tortilla with a little bit of everything and serve with toppings, such as salsa, hot sauce, avocado, guacamole, and sour cream.

Makes about 6 servings.

Antebellum Ales

Go back in time with the Carillon Brewing Company



PHOTOS COURTESY CARILLON BREWERY

By: Kevin Gray

Ever thought about time travel? If visiting the past were possible, it's likely that most readers would wander into a pub to try the beer. Imagine comparing today's beers with their predecessors, discovering how they smelled and tasted.

Time travel doesn't exist, but one can fly to Dayton, Ohio to delve into beer's past. Dayton is home to the country's only historic production brewery, Carillon Brewing Company. Part museum, all brewery, Carillon is a unique product of Dayton History, a non-profit committed to preserving the Gem City's past. The brewery is the latest addition to the 65-acre Carillon Historical Park, which features buildings and exhibits that date from the city's founding in 1796 to the present, including one of the Wright Brothers' flyers.

After years of painstaking research into historical construction, brewing techniques, and recipe formulation, Carillon Brewing Company opened in 2014. Brewster Tanya Brock (one of Ohio's few female head brewers) resurrects historical styles from the 1850s, employing the same processes brewers of that time would have used. Beers such as Coriander Ale, Squash Ale, and Beet Rye ale, as well as a "small beer" that approximates what everyday citizens would have consumed rather than the unsafe, cholera-infected water of that time period, provide an experience unlike any brewery in the country, possibly the world.

The Brewery

The time travel starts with the building itself, which replicates a mid-19th century Midwestern brewery. "Everything from the nails that hold the building

together to the food that we serve and the beer that we make takes you back to the 1850s,” describes Brock. All of the details are designed “to give you an idea of not just what beer tasted like at the time and the process of how it was made,” Brock explains, but also to provide “an immersive experience, to let you experience all the sights and sounds and smells and the feeling of what was going on in the 1850s with brewery production.”

Brock’s brewery achieves its goal, pairing a sensory experience with her historic ales. The first impression is the smell. The beer is brewed over charcoal hearths, and opening the front door yields campfire mingling with the sweet aromas of mashing grains and baking bread. The next impressions are visual. Volunteers in period costumes work the kettles, while others churn butter or tend the fireplaces. The walls are exposed brick and wood, and all of the hardware, down to every visible nail, authenticates the experience.

A large, three-tiered hearth dominates the main room. One look tells visitors that this is not a modern

brewery – there are no stainless tanks, no pumps, and no hoses. Instead, atop each brick tier rests brewing vessels, kettles clad in wood. This system approximates a historic brewing approach that would have spanned multiple floors. Carillon’s system is a cut-away that allows visitors to view the full scale of the operation at once.

As would have been true in the 1850s, Carillon produces beer the really hard way, doing much of the work by hand. Brock explains that the process begins at the top tier, where a charcoal-fired hearth heats strike water. “We start at about 9:30 a.m., bring it up to temperature. Then we hand-ladle it, one gallon at a time, through a trough that feeds into our mash tun, so we can start our mashing. From there, in that isolated, insulated vessel, the wort will then be drained off. We fly-sparge, so again, one gallon at a time, sprinkling over the top. We laut right into our boil kettle, which is the third layer. The boil kettle has yet another firebox under it for charcoal and wood fire. We bring it up to a boil, adding the hops at that point.”



Brewers at Carillon resurrect historical styles from the 1850s, employing the same processes brewers of that time would have used.



Volunteers in period costumes work the kettles, while others churn butter or tend the fireplaces. The walls are exposed brick and wood, and all of the hardware, down to every visible nail, authenticates the experience.

Then, they flame out, literally shoveling the fire out.

The final steps extend the use of manual labor and gravity. “Then [we] whirlpool in the boil kettle, ladle it once again into our cooling spiral, our cooling barrel,” Brock continues. “That barrel fills with ice-cold water via the long trough in front of the furnace. Hot wort travels through the spiral, and there, at that point, we use the gravity to let it flow into the top barrels to ferment for one week, rack it down into a bottom barrel and condition for two more weeks.”

The Beers

As with the building and the brewery, Brock’s recipes are the product of intense research. “I looked at

commercial brewing cookbooks,” Brock explains, “and then also looked at housewife cookbooks and handwritten diaries to find out what are the styles from each of those [sources]. What were the similarities, what were the differences?”

A certified master food preservationist with a degree in cultural anthropology, Brock dove deep into the nature of the recipes themselves: “I looked at the ingredients that they were using, and how that was reflective of the seasonality of those ingredients, where those ingredients would have been grown ... going back to the canal and agricultural reports, to find out, ‘Where was the last shipment of spelt in the Dayton area. Or, barley?’... which could help me understand, with the [help of the] Department of Agricultural at Ohio State, what strands of barley they were using. So it wasn’t just, ‘let’s find a recipe and make the beer.’ I knew that the ingredients had changed, so I wanted to find out where those individual ingredients were, what were the species and varieties that they were using, and then find sources that could match that. Or at least be smart enough to say, ‘yeah, I can’t get that anymore but here’s the sugar difference, or here’s the protein value difference.’”

The building itself also contributes to the flavor of the beers. Despite the old recipes, Brock’s initial batches tasted fairly modern – clean beers fermented with *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Eventually, the ambient flora and fauna, including *Brettanomyces*, *Lactobacillus*, and *Pediococcus*, started finding its way into the beer and changing its flavor. Because these flavors are true to the historic style, Brock made a conscious decision not to fight it. “I could control it, but then I would be a modern brewer,” explains Brock.

The History

Modern craft breweries are nothing new to Ohio, which has seen exponential growth of craft breweries in the last five years. But a brewery museum is one of a kind. How did it come to be? And why pick the 1850s? Brock explains that “1850 was a turning point for many, many stories.” It was a time of change for the Miami Valley, as residents moved from homesteads into cities and towns, and German and Irish immigrants started settling in the area. Industrialization and commercialization were starting to take root, consolidating jobs typically done in the home, including beer brewing.

This time period, Brock explains, “gave us several points of conversation to use the beer as a hook, [to] get people in here because that’s an easy sell.” Brock

notes that the beer, and the restaurant's historic food, allows the museum to show how "one little thing is relevant and impacted by so many different points of history and innovation and science."

The time period also filled a hole in the structure of Dayton History's Carillon Historic Park. In 2007, Brady Kress, Dayton History's Director, was updating the master interpretive plan for the park and realized that there was more demand for an expanded restaurant.

"I'm a fifth-generation Daytonian of German-Catholic descent," Kress explains. "My family has made wine since arriving in Ohio in 1841, and my grandparents brewed beer at the house. As I've developed stories and grown Carillon for the last dozen years, I have always been attracted to telling Dayton's stories of beer, wine and spirit production. I first put a brewery in our master plan for the museum in 2007. As we looked at our expanding audience, we knew they were demanding more hands-on, unique, production-type experiences ... I determined it was time to pull the trigger on this project. A historic, full-scale operating brewery with everyone in costume using historic tools and techniques. The first and only museum in the country to do so; where guests could watch the historic methods, taste the product, and then buy it and take it home."

Thanks to gifts from Heidelberg Distributing Company, Rieck Services, Schiewetz Foundation and other donors and the historical research led by Brock and her team, the plan worked. The brewery just celebrated its first anniversary, and continues to grow and find new ways to engage the public, including food and beer tastings and "brewer for a day" opportunities. "I'm so pleased that our brewery has been well received by the public," Kress explains, "that it has provided a good authentic understanding of the brewing process, and I hope my grandparents, who are buried less than 700 yards from the brewery, would be smiling."

Carillon Brewing Company

1000 Carillon Boulevard
Dayton, OH 45409

Open daily from 11:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Call 937-910-0722 or find them online at <http://www.carillonbrewingco.org> for details and to plan your visit.



The beer, and the restaurant's historic food, allows the museum to show how "one little thing is relevant and impacted by so many different points of history and innovation and science."



FESTIVALS & EVENTS, SPRING 2016

Skip the seasonal allergies and sip some brews at these springtime events!

Editor's Choice

Bacon and Beer Classic

New York City, NY

April 22 - 23

In the world of culinary arts, there are some flawless combinations. Peanut butter and jelly? Yummy. Strawberries and bananas? Yes please. Tortilla chips and salsa? Can't get enough. However, there is one pairing that inspires extreme devotion and has also birthed an entire genre of festivals nationwide. I'm speaking, of course, of the almighty duo of bacon and craft beer.

In fact, this combination is so revered that one of our Editor's Choice events this issue focuses solely on that pairing. We're proud to announce that the Bacon and Beer Classic is an Editor's Choice for our spring 2016 issue!

The event will be held at Citi Field from April 22-23 and will feature over 50 bacon-infused delights, over 100 craft beer samples, contests, games and more. Organized by Cannonball Productions, "a New York City-based event production company dedicated to creating big, bold, one-of-a-kind experiences," this will mark the third year they have helmed the Bacon and Beer Classic.

General Admission tickets start at \$69 and VIP access will cost you \$129, but prices will increase in the weeks leading up to the event. All tickets include a complimentary Bacon and Beer Classic tasting glass.

Kate Levenstien, founder of the Classic, says the combination of bacon and beer was always bound to be a success. "Nothing brings Millennials together better than sharing great beer and grub," Levenstien said. "The perfect marriage of food, drink and adventure, our festivals give attendees the opportunity to experience something they already love in a completely new way."

"Foodies and baseball fans alike will have the opportunity to explore the iconic home of the Mets while indulging in delicious bacon dishes and craft beer," says Levenstien. "Guests can also try their hand at giant Jenga, strike a pose at the photo booth, battle it out on the bungee run, brand themselves with temporary tattoos and more."

Chefs from Bareburger, Route 66 Smokehouse, Schmackary's Cookies



Bacon and Beer Classic

www.baconandbeerclassic.com

and more will bring their most inventive bacon-infused dishes to the plate. As with any great food and beverage festival, a panel of judges will also be on hand to rate the best dishes and beers.

Don't feel bad about splurging on that VIP ticket; a portion of proceeds from ticket sales will go to local charities in order to better the surrounding community. The Classic has partnered with local food rescue organizations as well as national charities like City Harvest, Citymeals-on-Wheels, Zero Percent and more.

Most events of this size are held in civic centers or local event halls, but the Bacon and Beer Classic eschews these locales in favor of iconic sports stadiums. "I conceptualized the idea for the Classic after throwing themed dinners in Chicago," Levenstien explains. "I realized I needed a bigger venue than the typical corner pub. Sports stadiums seemed like an ideal fit for our foodie spin on the classic foot-long hot dog and tall-boy beer."

There will be three sessions spread out across two days: Friday from 8-11 p.m., Saturday from 1-4 p.m. and Saturday from 7-10 p.m. The 2015 iteration of the Classic was sold out, so don't wait to get tickets or you might miss out on all the terrific pork delights and tasty craft brews!

If you can't make it to Citi Field, don't worry; there are seven versions of the event held throughout the year around the nation, including Denver's Mile High Stadium and Seattle's Safeco Field. Find a city near you at www.baconandbeerclassic.com.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS, SPRING 2016

Wild West Brew Fest

Katy, TX

April 22 - 23

The 2016 Katy Wild West Brewfest will be held at the Katy Mills mall in Katy, TX – a suburb of Houston. This will be the fifth annual occurrence of this non-profit event, and the first held at Katy Mills mall. According to event organizer David Loesch, the reason for the move was simple: “We outgrew our old space; it simply could not handle our capacity anymore.”

All net proceeds of the event go to both local charities in the Houston-Katy area as well as other charities around the world. A few of the charities represented are: The Rainbow Room, Future Farmers of America, The Shaw Center, along with various disaster relief efforts and fine arts programs locally. The event is fully staffed by volunteers, which means that no one works the event to turn a profit, and 100 percent of the net gross goes back to the community. Not many events can say that.

While showcasing the philanthropic expertise of the WWBF is certainly important, it is still a beer event first and foremost. Over 6,300 people traveled from as far as the Netherlands to enjoy the raucous atmosphere and wide beer selection at the WWBF in 2015, and event organizers are hoping for an even better turnout this year.

The 2015 WWBF featured a whopping 125 breweries pouring over 400 delectable beer selections. Many of the biggest craft breweries in America were featured, such as New Belgium, Boulevard, Ballast Point, SweetWater, Sierra Nevada and Deschutes. Many smaller breweries were given equal footing and there were also cideries and meaderies on hand to offer samples. 2016 promises to bring even more breweries to the WWBF, proffering their finest wares to enthusiastic beer drinkers from around the nation.

The festival officially begins on Friday, April 22 at 7 PM with the WWBF launch party. This event, while technically still part of the WWBF, will feature different musical artists and a different beer lineup. Also, the launch party will be far smaller in scale, allowing for attendees to mingle and talk one-on-one with brewers and brewery reps from many of the most popular breweries in America.

The true exodus begins the next day, April 23rd, at 4 PM (3 PM for VIP admission) when the event opens to the public. For



Wild West Brew Fest

www.wildwestbrewfest.com

those that don't want to make the drive to Katy Mills Mall, the “Texas Beer Bus” will pick up throughout the day at various locations around the event. While Uber or a designated driver is always an option, why not hop on a bus with fellow festgoers and perform an out-of-tune version of “99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall” before or after the event? Sounds like a blast to me.

Expanding upon the festival's 2015 iteration, the 2016 WWBF will feature over 150 breweries bringing over 500 (!) beers for your perusal. “With over 143,000 square feet of beer nirvana, every style you can imagine will be represented,” according to a WWBF press release. The VIP tent alone is over 10,000 square feet and will feature rare and one-off beers that will be made available for this event only.

While all of the major, BA Top 50 breweries will be returning, numerous smaller breweries have already committed to attending the event and bringing some of their finest releases along to titillate the taste buds of attendees. According to Ralph Brock, another event organizer, these breweries will make their fine wares available at the 2016 WWBF: Rahr & Sons Brewing, Lazy Magnolia Brewery, Santa Fe Brewing Co., Live Oak Brewing Co., Lone Pint Brewery and Southern Star Brewing Company. This list is sure to grow as more breweries confirm their attendance.

The fifth annual Wild West Brew Fest is sure to be one of the premier beer events of the year, so hitch up your wagons, head out west and fulfill your manifest beer destiny!

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS, SPRING 2016

Southern Brewers Conference

Nashville, TN

August 3 - 6

Craft beer is an industry replete with events and festivals. Many of them are a well-established and highly entrenched part of the fabric of the industry, but as the movement grows, so too does the desire for enjoyable, informative and interesting beer events. Many new beer events crop up every year, and 2016 is certainly no different.

It is my honor to introduce the Southern Brewers Conference as one of our Editor's Choice events for our spring 2016 issue.

This is the inaugural rendition of the Southern Brewers Conference, which is a regional, industry-only event featuring a two-day trade show, educational seminars, social events, and more. The event begins on August 3 and lasts until August 5, and is located in Nashville, Tennessee. "The Southern Brewers is meant for education, networking and the growth of the craft brewing industry in the South," according to an event spokesman.

Organized by Candace Price, founder of Half Full Productions, and Matthew Leff, founder of Rhizome Productions Inc., the Southern Brewers Conference will highlight beers brewed in the southern region. Specifically, beers and trends from the following states will be highlighted: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas.

Price and Leff are sure that Nashville is the best place for this event to succeed and it perfectly represents the southern region. "Nashville has been voted the number one city to visit by numerous travel magazines, and it provides a unique mix of entertainment, history and character," said Price and Leff. "Our craft beer scene has grown significantly over the last decade and is home to some amazing breweries, taprooms, restaurants and bars. Nashville is also home for the producers of SBC; we would love to show our guests what our city has to offer while providing a quality, industry-focused event that also ends with the longest running consumer event in middle Tennessee: the 15th Annual Music City Brewer's Festival."

Linus Hall, founder and head brewer at the highly acclaimed Yazoo Brewing Company (also in Nashville) is involved with



the event in his role as the founder of the Tennessee Craft Brewers Guild.

According to a press release from the SBC, "the Southeast region of the United States is the fastest growing market for craft beer." The SBC plans to take advantage of that impressive growth by hosting a variety of industry insiders. Important connections can be made with on- and off-premise business owners, over 50 allied trade businesses, over 60 distribution companies, as well as many of the over 1100 craft breweries currently operating in the region.

As this is an industry-only event, many of the talks and seminars will focus on management, quality assurance and other hot topics around the craft beer world. Here is a short rundown of some of the major seminars:

"Selling Craft Beer in Nascar Nation," a panel discussion with Emily Curry of Southern Prohibition Brewery, Michael Sellers of Good People Brewery, Phil Dearer of Good Wood Brewery, and Neil McCormick of Yazoo Brewery. "Taming the Flavors of the Southeast-Regional Flora Cultivation and Use," a talk by David Thorton of Southyeast Labs and Carolina Bauernhaus Ales. "Distributors vs. Brewers Battle Royale," hosted by Jason McMurry of R.S. Lipman Co. and several panel members from breweries and distributors all over the Southeast. "PR Presence Within the Industry and Finding Appropriate Outlets," hosted by Abby Dickinson of High-Wire Brewing. "Pink Boots Society – Unique Challenges for Women in Brewing," a talk by Bailey Spaulding of Jackalope Brewing.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS, SPRING 2016

Beyond the talks, numerous pub crawls and brewery tours are planned for the event starting on Wednesday, August 3. After the first attendee check-in, the Nashville Brew Bus is set to take attendees to “all of Nashville’s best breweries,” according to the SBC attendee guide. On Thursday, a welcome breakfast will take place featuring keynote speaker Spike Buckowski of Terrapin Beer Co. Also on Thursday, the SBC trade show opens where 60 exhibitors can plie their wares, ranging from breweries, distributors and PR agencies.

On Saturday, a day after the conference ends, Nashville is also host to the 15th Annual Music City Brewer’s Festival. According to the SBC attendee guide, the Brewer’s Fest is a “consumer-focused event and the longest-running and largest beer festival in Nashville. This festival will close the week with an opportunity to

expand interaction from business partners to consumers with two separate sessions.”

According to Price and Leff, the SBC “was designed to provide an affordable and centrally-located option for brewers, distributors, manufacturers and service providers in the [southern] region to connect, learn and grow their businesses in the ways most meaningful for whatever stage of their business they’re in.”

If you’re in the industry and you’re looking to expand your business (or your horizons), check out the Southern Brewers Conference.

March

Boulder Strong Ale Fest
Boulder, CO
March 5

Kona Brewers Festival
Kailua-Kona, HI
March 12

Red Wing Wings and Brew Fest
Welch, MN
March 12

The Art of Beer Festival
Benton Harbor, MI
March 19

Collaboration Fest
Denver, CO
March 19



Collaboration Fest



The Great American BBQ & Beer Festival
(Photo Credit: Kelli Tresgallo)

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS, SPRING 2016

The Great American BBQ & Beer Festival
Chandler, AZ
March 19

Heidel House Brew Fest
Green Lake, WI
March 19

FirkFest Cask Beer Festival
Anaheim, CA
March 19

April

Great Vegas Festival of Beer
Las Vegas, NV
April 9

Classic City Brewfest
Athens, GA
April 10

The Bay Area Craft Beer Festival
Martinez, CA
April 16

Southwest Festival of Beers
Scottsdale, AZ
April 16 - 17



Heidel House Brew Fest
(Photo Credit: Heidel House Resort & Spa)



FirkFest Cask Beer Festival
(Photo Credit: John Holzer)

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS, SPRING 2016

NOLA Crawfish Festival
New Orleans, LA
April 25 - 27

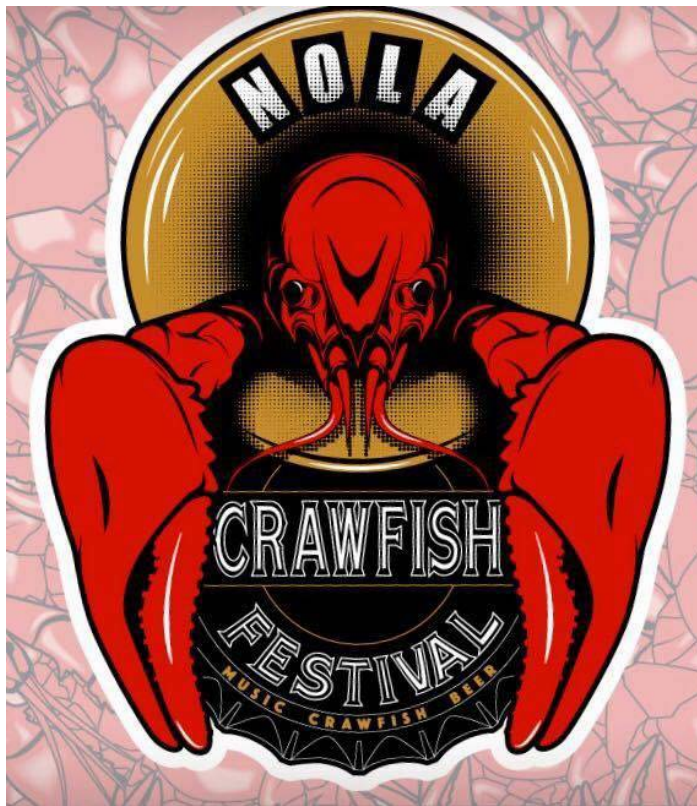
Missouri Beer Festival
Columbia, MO
April 23

Dark Lord Day
Munster, IN
April 30

Legendary Boonville Beer Festival
Boonville, CA
April 30



Classic City Brewfest
(Photo Credit: Phil Farrell)



WORLD CLASS



THE HIGHEST-SCORING BEERS FROM OUR EXPERT PANEL OF JUDGES.

Meet our judges at BeerConnoisseur.com/judges

Judging Process

Our reviews are conducted in a single-blind tasting format. This method provides the best opportunity to rely on facts and to avoid favoritism, ensuring a level playing field for all brewers. It serves both the industry and the consumer to have unbiased and objective scores from qualified experts. To best implement this approach, the Judges Review is open to those with established experience as a Master Cicerone® from the Cicerone® Certification Program or as a judge that has accomplished the rank of National or higher from the Beer Judge Certification Program. In the single blind tasting format, judges are presented with a chilled, properly poured beer and given its style category. Scoring is then done on the following basis using a 100-point scale:

Score Breakdown

- 100 to 96: World Class – You need this beer in your life.
- 95 to 91: Exceptional – Don't hesitate.
- 90 to 86: Very Good – A brew to savor.
- 85 to 75: Average – Somewhat unimpressive.
- 74 and below: Not Recommended – Just walk away.

97

by *Josh Weikert*

Wild Sour Series: Flanders Red DESTIHL Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This is a world-class Flanders Red despite hailing from the American Midwest. Sours can be challenging, and the Flanders Red particularly so given the kind of balance drinkers expect between fruit, acid and malt, but this one nails it. The beer pours a brilliant amber color with a low tan head. The initial aromas are of dark cherry, blackcurrant and a low earthy background funk that accentuates the deep and dark fruit notes.

That same fruity character carries through to the aroma and pairs beautifully with the medium-high level of sourness. There's a slightly jammy flavor in the aftertaste after a balanced finish, and a hint of smoke that lingers after all of the other

flavors have fallen off. I went right back in for another sip, and once my palate had broken in a bit, it was even better and more complex, and I noticed a fairly delicate mouthfeel and a bit of warming from the alcohols.

The bottom line here is that this is one of the best beers I've ever tasted from a commercial brewery. Try one – I feel very confident that you'll come away impressed.



97

by *Josh Weikert*

Espresso Oak Aged Yeti Great Divide Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Wow. Great Divide really parked this one. Not only is this beer a technical masterpiece with virtually no detectable flaws, it brings together a lot of unruly elements (oak, coffee, high alcohol, intense roast) and makes them all play well together. This is a beer you don't want to miss.

The beer pours an opaque and near-black color with a dense brown head. The aroma has prominent roasted coffee and dark chocolate notes, with a light woody undertone along with an earthy character. It's in the aroma that we find one of the (VERY minor) areas of improvement: a touch more grain/malt character in the nose would be appreciated.

One sip, though, and you're in stout heaven. There's a rich charred coffee flavor and a nice oak

background note, with an almost mocha-like flavor. The chocolate malts and coffee do a wonderful job of drying out the beer, and while some might find it a touch astringent, I think it's balancing the sweet alcohols darn near perfectly. There's also a pleasant berry ester in the finish and aftertaste that adds some interest. This is an outstanding beer to drink even with high ABVs, high IBUs, and in the presence of roasted coffee and barrel aging. I could (and did) easily drink a bomber of this myself – so long as I didn't need to be driving anywhere.

There's a nice light warming feeling on the palate as well, with a pleasantly dry and tannic mouthfeel.

Some might find this beer a touch too bitter or acrid, but for my money, it's one of the best ever. I can't envision anyone that would order a stout being disappointed with this one. Truly a world-class beer.



96

by *Mike Castagno*

20 Year Storm Heavy Seas Beer

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Pouring reddish-orange with brilliant clarity, this beer offers an incredibly complex aroma chock-full of caramel, toffee, oak and bourbon. There are hints of cocoa with a touch of dried figs and a subtle, spicy and soft alcohol note. While an ESB may lead you to expect some earthy hop notes, these are absent in this beer, possibly due to the time in the barrel (75 days according to their website).

The flavor does not fail to live up to the aroma's promise; complex and rich with heavy caramel and toffee and undertones of biscuit. This is all followed up with a soft oak and bourbon flavor with hints of vanilla, coffee and spice. There is a moderate earthy, tea-like hop flavor but the medium-low bitterness fails to balance the substantial sweetness.

This is a real treat to savor and evaluate... there is plenty of complexity to go around and it keeps your palate busy the whole glass. The beer really opens up upon warming a bit, and all the chords work well together with no single character dominating the others (which is an all too common issue in barrel-aged beers). The barrel character here complements the malt rather than overpowers it. I'm not sure I "get" what makes this an Imperial ESB rather than an English Barleywine, but that's an inconsequential quibble. This could be a touch drier, as the sweetness does begin to weigh your palate down by the end of the beer. That being said, I'd recommend you definitely pick this up for a nightcap if you see it.



96

by *Joseph Formanek*

Hopslam Bell's Brewery

Aroma:
24 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

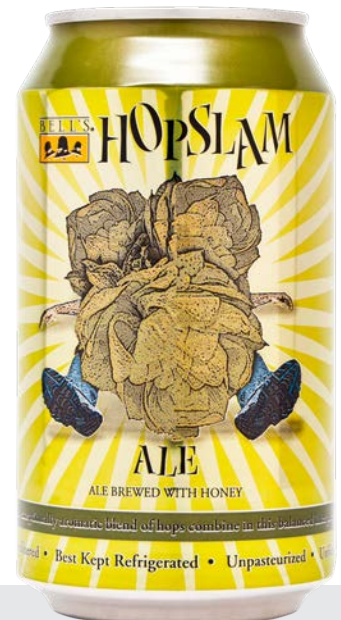
Judge's Notes

When you hear the words "Hop Slam" the immediate expectation is of a brew with an overwhelming and one-dimensional hop character assault on the senses. In fact, while there is solid hop presence in this beer, it offers much more – delivering a well-crafted and delicious overall package.

Dank hop character is the dominant aspect of the aroma, but citrus and piney notes are also evident and deliver a nice aromatic complexity to this somewhat hazy, golden-colored brew with a fair off-white fine bubble head. There is also a light background of malt aroma with a touch of sweetness – this sweetness might be accentuated by the alcohol presence (it is a 10% ABV brew!) or

by the added honey. The flavor packs a solid hit of bitterness along with piney, citrusy and dank hop characters. The moderate base malt backbone balances out the hop expression quite well. A clean alcohol note is also very evident and warming upon the swallow. The brew has a solid, medium body with a slightly sweet but not cloying finish. The aftertaste delivers a lingering marriage of hop and malt flavor and is dry enough to prepare the palate for the next flavorful sip.

Overall, this is a very impressive, well-balanced and extremely drinkable Double IPA.



96

by Tracy Hensley

Vanilla Bean Stout

Avery Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Even from four feet away, I could already smell the pleasing aroma of this beer – an intense mélange of milk chocolate, vanilla, marshmallow, freshly milled oats, cocoa powder and smooth, roasted coffee beans. The appearance is pitch-brown in color with garnet highlights, and the low tan head forms nice Belgian lace on the sides of the glass. The flavors begin as a smooth chocolate syrup-like character and then transitions into dark chocolate pieces supported by creamy, freshly foamed milk with notes of floral vanilla beans before roasted cacao nibs and oak tannins dry out the finish. The aftertaste exudes black prunes and dried figs as well as

a tart bite at first that finishes with dried iris, black dried cherry and more roasted cacao nibs. The mouthfeel is smooth, with intense but balanced alcohol warmth. This is a complex and wonderfully constructed Imperial Stout. Highly recommended.



95

by John C. Tull

Atrial Rubicite

Jester King Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

A very evident raspberry aroma, mostly from the flesh of the fruit, and a pithy quality that comes across as slightly woody is first noted in this Wood-Aged Beer. Lambic-like wild yeast characteristics are detectable as well, predominantly barnyard and horse blanket aromas. The appearance is a brilliant ruby color with no hint of cloudiness coupled with a very faint ring of bubbles that just clings to the glass's edge. The flavor is intensely sour with some grapefruit and a lot of aspirin character. The raspberry fruit is still detectable and provides a very slight fruit flavor along with the perception of raspberry tartness. The mouthfeel of this beer is defined by the puckering sourness that carries well into

the finish – and beyond. Enough carbonation is there, despite appearances, to provide some carbonic astringency as an added dimension. Overall, this is an excellent fruit lambic on par with some of the best fruit lambics from the Senne Valley in Belgium. If that is your thing, you would be remiss to pass up this excellent, American-brewed example.



95

by Rodney A. Tillinghast

Black Ops Brooklyn Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

I poured this obsidian-colored stout into my standard Belgian snifter and let it sit for a few minutes to warm towards room temperature. Surprisingly, I recognized its bourbon aroma from across the room while preparing my review notepad for use.

The beer's aroma comes across originally as a boozy "large and in-charge" imperial bourbon barrel aged stout. At the onset, I was wondering if I'd need a roll of dental floss to get through all of the anticipated chewy imperial stout goodness.

Then I tasted it.

Though still boozy (in a silky smooth bourbon sense), Black Ops features complex vanilla, dark cocoa and marshmallow flavors, supported by a very restrained amount of hop bitterness and

flavor. Lightly fruity, but also blended with an aggressive but well-crafted bourbon barrel element.

The fruity note did persist through the finish, however, and for a beer of its size, it finished pleasantly dry, which lent a drinkability factor to it that I had not expected. At over 10 percent ABV, I do not suggest sampling massive quantities of this beer at one sitting. However, this beer ends up being one of the most intriguing that I've tasted this year, and one that should be on the wish list for anyone seriously trying to expand their palate concerning barrel-aged beers.

This is a beer not only to sample today, but one that would also benefit from extended cellar aging. Do not miss it.



95

by Jim Koebel

Alter Ego Smartmouth Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

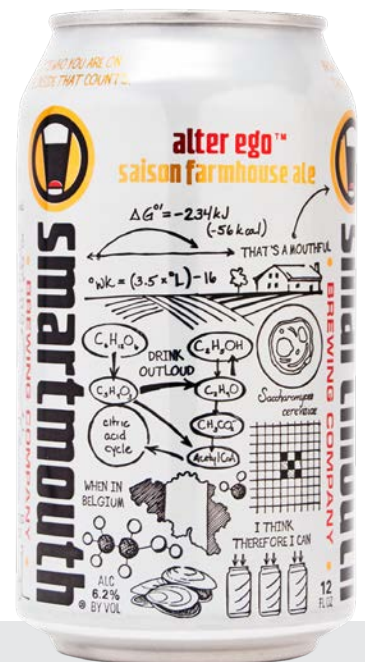
Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Due to its artisanal origin, Saison is often mistakenly thought of as a freewheeling, anything-goes kind of beer. Granted, it is a hard style to pin down, but Saison does have some hard and fast rules: They should always be fruity, spicy, bitter and dry. This example opens with fruity aromas of lemon zest and citrus rind. A peppery aroma is followed closely by spicy phenols and a low, grainy, pils-malt character. It's a very pleasant start that gets better as it warms, when a moderate acidic character becomes present. It pours a classic cloudy orange-yellow color with a moderate white head. This beer is dry

and moderately bitter throughout but does have a low, sweet malt flavor. The flavor is almost as fruity as the aroma, with an orange and lemon citrus taste that is lightly tart in the finish. Pepper and a generic, spicy, phenolic flavor are supportive but distinct. This Saison is highly carbonated and has some serious stamina – it stayed that way for forty-five minutes during this review. In addition to tartness, the finish is flavorful and carries an enjoyable sting from carbonation. Overall, this is a terrifically balanced example. This Saison follows the rules and nails them.



95

by *Michael Bury*

Death By Coconut

Oskar Blues Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
20 / 20

Judge's Notes

Medium-high coconut aromas deftly mingle with dark chocolate and earthy coffee. Very light flowery hops and a bready caramel malt backbone round out the clean aroma. It's all about the roast and coconut in this beer.

Gorgeous in any light, Death by Coconut pours an inky black with a tall, finely textured brown head that's persistent. The initially intense coconut flavor quickly gives way to bittersweet chocolate, light caramel and bready malt. Despite the lower hop bitterness, the beer is balanced from the higher level of roast. The semi-sweet finish allows the caramel, chocolate and coconut to all linger.

The higher body of the beer, moderate carbonation and smooth, warming alcohol further emphasize the dessert nature of this beer.

Death by Coconut is a sinfully delicious beer that weaves caramel sweetness, dark chocolate and coconut seamlessly into a post-dinner beer. Skip the Mounds bar and head straight to your sniffer to enjoy this delight.



95

by *Randy Scorby*

Grapefruit Shandy

SanTan Brewing Co.

Aroma:
24 / 24

Appearance:
4 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer pours a cloudy peach color with a lingering white head, and the drinker is immediately greeted with a prominent, fresh, grapefruit juice aroma with a background hint of rind. Following that citrus explosion is enough bready malt to remind you that this is indeed still a beer. The flavor follows suit with a balanced bready malt aroma and a blast of fresh grapefruit. There is a pleasant residual sweetness that appropriately dries out in the finish with the help of a smooth, tart acidity from the fruit.

Even if you are not a fan of fruit beer styles, don't pass this one up on a warm

spring or summer day as this is a very refreshing beer that is certain to please a wide variety of palates.



95

by *Michael McGuire*

Poivre Potion Terrapin Beer Co..

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
20 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer poured a clear orange color with a thick, white head and emanating a complex aroma redolent of fruity esters, malt sweetness and hops. Following this auspicious beginning, the beer really shone with its flavor profile; in addition to a Belgian yeast character and lovely maltiness throughout the taste, it began with dark spicy notes – perhaps coriander – and finished with plenty of the promised peppercorns. The positive effect of the dry-hopping was clear but subtle. All of these contributions were complementary rather than conflicting, yielding a Saison to be noted and enjoyed for its complexity. The mouthfeel was creamy with an alcohol

warmth that was gradual rather than abrupt. Altogether, this was an exceptional brew to be savored.



95

by *Jason Johnson*

Double Vision Doppelbock Grand Teton Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

The beer pours a clear brown color that shows deep ruby highlights when held up to light. The head is well-formed, tan and long-lasting compared to most doppelbocks I've had in the past.

The aroma is tremendous; I get a lot of rich, toasty malt aroma with a little bit of chocolate and some low caramel in the background. As it warms, the aroma yields more dark plum notes as well, and the malt is rich in that typical melanoidin character you want in a great doppelbock. There is a very low, spicy hop nose followed closely by a hint of alcohol presence.

The flavor is decadent. There is a lot of rich toasty malt, and I mean a lot of it. Just like the aroma I get some dark chocolate and caramel in the middle, but I'm in love with the malt profile of this doppelbock

– so rich and so well-balanced. It's not overly sweet, which really helps, but it is a decidedly malty beer, though not cloying or "worty" at all. There is no hop flavor to speak of, which is OK for the style.

A solid medium bitterness couples well with the dark malts to help cut the sweetness a bit, but there is still a lingering, pleasant, dark malty sweetness in the finish – mostly a combination of toast with hints of dark chocolate. There is a noticeable alcohol presence, but it's not hot at all. I get the impression of a very clean fermentation, with no esters or other off flavors. The beer is full-bodied and has a nice creamy texture that's silky smooth and velvety.

This beer is not only a treat flavor-wise, but it's also one of the best Doppelbocks I've had. The only quail I have is that it could stand to be a touch more dry. Still, I think this beer could stand with the best Doppelbocks on the planet and not waver one bit.



95

by *Graham L. Barron*

30th Anniversary Ale Bell's Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer pours a dark brown to black color, with high viscosity and a slight, tan-colored head that does not linger for long. Strong aromas of coffee, roasted barley, chocolate, cocoa nibs and rich, sweet malt hit you in the nose. Some dark fruit mixes in but no hops are to be found. There is some nuttiness in the background along with a punch of alcohol that lets you know this is a big beer. The taste is predominantly sweet – with toffee maltiness, chocolate and dark fruit all ending in a bitter finish. The bitterness, however, appears to come from the dark grains, not the hops, and lends the beer a bit of an astringent and dry finish. This is a big, warming and chewy

beer that, as it warms, begins to resemble a boozy chocolate milkshake. This beautiful imperial stout is the perfect way to celebrate a birthday, promotion or other special occasion... such as a 30th anniversary!



94

by *Richard Wong*

Tropical & Juicy The Hop Concept

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

The aroma of hops in this beer wasn't very profound or strong, but rather muted when compared to other Double IPAs. I still detected hints of pine and resin aromas in the nose. The beer had a light copper color that was somewhat hazy and featured nice carbonation and very good head retention. The flavor of this beer featured an even balance of malt and hops. The hop bitterness and flavor themselves were very soft and subdued. This beer had the necessary hops to make it a Double IPA, but it was still very mellow. The timing of hop additions can have a strong impact on flavor: mid- to late hop additions in the boil will make the beer more hoppy in flavor if added

in copious amounts (like a Double IPA). It appears that in this beer most of the hops were added in the initial boil (bittering) rather than the mid- to late stages (flavoring). I feel that it gives this beer a more mellow and rounded hop bitterness and flavor rather than a sharp one associated with most IPAs and Double IPAs. I also found that this Double IPA had the necessary alcohol strength, though this element was quite deceptive; again, instead of noticeable Double IPA-strength alcohol warmth, the flavor was instead very mellow and smooth. This is a very nice Double IPA approached with different brewing methods than most.



94

by *Michael Heniff*

Yeti Imperial Stout Great Divide Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
20 / 20

Judge's Notes

This opaque black ale starts with an aroma of very strong roasted coffee and dark chocolate malts that surpass most Imperial Stouts in strength and complexity. Rich, dark caramel, treacle, molasses, and dried fruit complement the dark malt aromatics. The body is very full with a strong dextrin sweetness that adds to the very strong dark malt presence of roasted chocolate, espresso, and dark caramel qualities. Appropriately, the bitterness (stated at 75 IBUs!) is strong enough to balance the sweetness of the malt yet also enough to allow the beer to finish with semi-sweet chocolate, roasted, and coffee elements. This Imperial Stout is quite

strong, rich, sweet, and powerful – even when compared to other imperial stouts – lending credence to the bottle's claims of being an “untamed” and “imposing” exemplar of the style.



94

by *Jason Johnson*

Side Trip New Belgium Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Off the pour, this beer is crystal clear and deep gold in color with a quickly fading, frothy white head. In the aroma I get a moderate amount of biscuity malt a light malty sweetness. There are some low-strength floral notes from the hops, and I get some fairly prominent banana esters and typical Belgian yeast spiciness as well. There's a lot going on here, but nothing is overpowering or too huge. The flavor is quite nice. On the front end I get a little caramel sweetness followed by toasty, biscuit-like malt. Similar to the aroma, the flavor showcases the intermingling of banana esters and yeast-derived spice, followed up by a mild bitterness in the finish – complex without a lot of overpowering flavors. Unlike most Belgian beers, I

can see myself drinking quite a few of these in one sitting. It's really well-balanced between the malt, hops, and yeast components, the mouthfeel is smooth and creamy, and the carbonation is also in the medium-strength range. From my understanding of the BJCP style guidelines, this beer really should be malt-focused with secondary notes from the yeast with the hops in a mostly supporting role. I feel that this beer exemplifies the style. Many Belgian-style beers tend to go overboard with the yeast-derived flavors, but not this one; it's easy-drinking, well-balanced and very flavorful. The one minor critique I can make is that while the hop bitterness is good, I wouldn't mind a bit more spicy or floral hop flavor in the mix, but either way, this beer is a home run.



94

by *Rick Franckhauser*

Old Fezziwig Ale Boston Beer Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

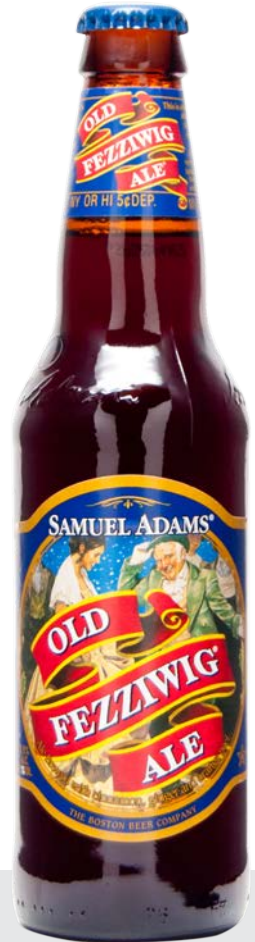
Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Dark caramel candy combines with some cinnamon spice notes in the aroma. Roasted malt, coffee, and a little molasses make a showing as the beer warms. Deep brown in color with garnet hues, this beer is topped with a creamy tan head. Belgian lace decorates the glass through to the last sip. The flavor is a four-part harmony of dark caramel, chocolate, spice and roasted malts. A pleasant hint of molasses and smoke peek through just before the long roast and caramel finish. This beer is perfectly balanced with subtle complexity, and is not a big, boozy, overly spiced winter warmer, but rather it beckons you to relax by the fire-

place and contemplate the season. Excuse me while I go pour another.



93

by *Josh Weikert*

Barrel-Aged Dosvidanya DESTIHL Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Bourbon barrels are something of a mixed blessing in beer. When breweries get it right, they add notes that are tough to get from any other source; when they get it wrong, you end up with a woody, alcoholic mess. This one gets it very right.

The beer pours an inky black with a light brown, dense head, and the initial aromas are deep and complex. There's chocolate, whiskey and coffee in excellent balance and without the harshness of any of their native flavors. The aroma is also slightly earthy, giving an impression of age and maturity.

The flavor follows suit and is both intense and (oddly) approachable. Despite the

obvious alcohol presence, the beer is never hot, nor does it ever even seem so due to the bourbon elements. The finish is dry with good tannic structure (one would assume from the barrel), and the warming is appropriate to the style. There is, on the back end, a slight "tightness" in the mouthfeel that suggests a touch of astringency, but it's a minor complaint in a major beer.

This is a delicious beer that will please a wide audience. It's like an after-dinner cocktail in beer form, and I'd be happy to share a bottle with a small group – but not with a large one, because I'd want a bigger pour for myself!



93

by *Josh Weikert*

Wild Sour Series: Here Gose Nothin' DESTIHL Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24
Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40
Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

While Gose may be a bit of a trend, there's no doubting the staying power of sour beers as an "advanced" beer drinker's choice – and any sour beer fan would be happy with this one. However, many would also rightly note that this is much more sour than classic versions of the style, which creates something of a misfit.

The appearance is fine, a light gold color with brilliant clarity, but it's missing that tall, pretty head we'd expect from a Gose. The initial aromas are of light grain and bright lemon with a slight funk, which are all par for the course.

The initial sip, though, is rippingly sour.

There's some smoky phenolics under the sourness and above the light grain, with low bittering and a slightly briny taste. The aftertaste is all lemony acidity. The high level of acid makes for a very tight and puckering mouthfeel, and the carbonation and body are both in the medium range.

This is an excellent sour beer, but it bears a much closer resemblance to a straight Berliner Weisse than a Gose. A bit less acid would make it easier to appreciate. Having said that, this is still a great sour, and once you get over that initial hit of acid, you'll have no problem finishing your beer. I certainly didn't!



93

by *Joseph Formanek*

Komodo Dragonfly Black IPA Upland Brewing

Aroma:
24 / 24
Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40
Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Upland's Komodo Dragonfly is an impressive example of a very drinkable Black IPA. A massive hit of dank hop character (presumably Simcoe) greets you upon opening the bottle, and this hop character explodes from the glass upon pouring. There is a touch of a chocolate or black malt aroma also present in the background that complements the hop nose very well. This brew is an opaque black color with ruby highlights, which become evident when tilting the glass, and has a tan-colored, long-lasting head topping it all off. This is a very attractive brew!

Interestingly, although you'd expect a massive assault of hop character during the

drink, the hop flavor and bitterness is actually quite moderate. The base malt backbone is also somewhat subtle, and is complemented by a touch of chocolate and debittered black malt flavor. The overall balance of the brew is towards the hop side of things, but it is not overpoweringly so. The finish is quite clean and somewhat dry, preparing the palate for the next taste.

Overall this is a quite well-balanced and well-thought out example of the style. The crispness seen in this brew is appreciated, making it one of the more refreshing Black IPAs that I have experienced.



93

by *Jim Koebel*

Rollcage Red Motorworks Brewing

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This appropriately red Red IPA pours very clear with an off-white head; this is a very pretty beer. It smells hoppy, bready and clean. The hop aromas are piney and earthy – a very West Coast feel. This beer's flavor is similar but with a marked hop spiciness in the finish that lingers. Inside of the mouth-coating hoppiness are caramel and bread malt flavors that lend a sturdy backbone to the mouthfeel. This beer has moderately high carbonation and finishes dry and warm. This hearty Red Ale is proof that beer drinkers don't have to choose between malt and hops when it comes to enjoyable brews.



93

by *Susan Ruud*

The Patsy Barley Forge Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer starts off with a huge chocolate aroma with a pleasant level of coconut blended in with the aroma and flavor. This is smoothly balanced with a hint of rye malt in the background giving a graham cracker perception that is quite wonderful. With all of the coconut and cracker flavors abounding, this still manages to convey all of the qualities of a very pleasant stout. The coconut is very nicely balanced rather than overpowering. A great holiday beer (for any holiday year-round)!



93

by *Michael Bury*

Bronx Belgian Pale Ale Bronx Brewery

Aroma:
24 / 24
Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40
Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

Overall Impression:
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

To properly pull off a Belgian Pale Ale – a combination of hops-, malt-, and fermentation-derived flavors – the brewer needs to blend a combination of knowledge, skill, and artistry. Bronx Brewery's Belgian Pale Ale does this remarkably well. The aroma of hay, grain, light honey, lemon, thyme, white pepper, coriander, alcohol and pear is complex but no single aroma dominates the others. Everything is properly proportioned.

The lovely, deep golden beer sits below a tall, persistent white head that leaves delicate lacing on the sides of the glass. A slight haze is all that detracts.

The flavor of the beer continues the trend of bright notes in proper balance. The moderate straw, hay and honey malt flavors help to support the medium-high lemony, herbal hop flavor and bitterness found in the beer. Belgian fermentation character comes through as a light red apple ester with hints of anise and pepper and ultimately aids in drying out the finish. Resin, thyme, and grapefruit characters linger.

Highly quaffable with a medium-light body and medium-high carbonation. Bronx's Belgian Pale Ale hits the mark for the style despite being a bit higher in alcohol than is typical.



93

by *James Link*

Big A Double IPA Smuttynose Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24
Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40
Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

Overall Impression:
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This pale, orange-colored ale was slightly cloudy and supported a medium-white head that held up nicely. Lots of fresh hop aromas are manifest here. Most prevalent are the citrus fruit and pine resin fragrances, which are accompanied by a Caramel malt sweetness.

The hop flavor was assertive – as is typical for the style. The complexity of clean hops suggests an impressive hop blend, which produced a citrus rind, piney and floral character. A slight acidity was incorporated into the mix along with a sweet malt presence, which added to its singular hop complexity. The body was smooth and

well-conditioned with alcoholic warmth evident yet not overwhelming.

This is a fine example of a Double IPA and should be considered in the top tier of beers brewed in this style.



93

by *Richard Wong*

Sorry Not Sorry IPA

Stone Brewing Co., 4 Hands Brewing Co. and Bale Breaker Brewing Co.

Aroma:

24 / 24

Flavor:

37 / 40

Overall

Impression:

18 / 20

Appearance:

6 / 6

Mouthfeel:

8 / 10

Judge's Notes

The beer had a very profound aroma of pine resin in the nose (along with secondary floral notes) due to the overwhelming use of hops. The beer poured a crystal clear copper color. The creamy carbonation was nice along with good head retention. This beer definitely fit into the Double IPA category, as it had the necessary malt, hops and alcohol to back this claim. Again, flavors of pine needles and resin from the hops featured nicely. The beer was pretty straightforward in its flavor: there were no roasted malts and/or bread-like flavors. The beer was medium in body and mouthfeel with moderate carbonation and slight creaminess in the palate.

It also had a nice, smooth and noticeable alcohol warmth in the aftertaste. The overall flavors were sharp and clean from beginning to end – a standard and tasty Double IPA.



92

by *James Link*

Tesseract

Grimm Artisanal Ales

Aroma:

23 / 24

Flavor:

37 / 40

Overall

Impression:

18 / 20

Appearance:

4 / 6

Mouthfeel:

10 / 10

Judge's Notes

This hazy, peach-colored Double IPA with a medium-white head delivered a very distinct passion fruit aroma with notes of overripe tangerines and just a wisp of citrus.

Although hops are more pronounced in the flavor than was the case in the bouquet this beer wafted, it is still defined by a myriad of fruity esters and citrus hops. Alcohol is on the low end of the spectrum and works well here as malt takes a backseat to the aforementioned fruity character.

This is a full-bodied ale with medium levels of carbonation and a subdued bitterness in the finish.

Overall, Tesseract is a fruit basket of a beer that lends its own spin to the oft-employed Double IPA style.



92

by *Rodney A. Tillinghast*

Rocky Road Smuttynose Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

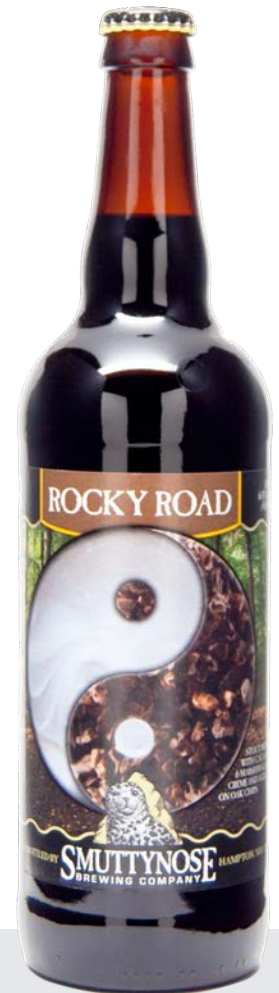
Judge's Notes

"Dark as a stormy night with a sweet kiss of chocolate bourbon;" that's the phrase that kept going through my mind as I sipped on this luscious stout. This brew poured mighty dark, and I coaxed a nice, tightly formed head into my snifter, which was followed up in the aroma by strong, dark chocolate notes supported by a light vanilla toasted scent. The aroma was a very enticing entrance into a very sweet and fulfilling Imperial Stout.

This ale's flavor was a terrific mix of sweet chocolate, dark fruit, vanilla and bourbon. It was quite balanced and was supported by a very modest hop bitter-

ness character. In the finish, this beer left you with a very silky impression – one that stayed with me throughout the sample.

This Imperial Stout seems well-crafted, and would be favored by those who appreciate a more refined, sweeter ale. The chocolate notes are very interesting, and this would be a great sipping beer next to a fireplace with the winter winds howling outside.



92

by *Jim Koebel*

Cowcatcher Smartmouth Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
4 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
17 / 20

Judge's Notes

Milk stouts are sweeter than their Irish and American brethren, often resulting from a combination of lactose additions and lower hopping rates. This example smells pleasantly sweet and roasty – like coffee or cream. It pours an opaque, very dark brown color with a low tan head that does not rouse well. This beer's flavor has some richness and roasted grain and is appropriately sweet but never cloying. It has a drying, roasty finish. Bitterness is moderately low and seems to come mostly from roasted malts. Despite the low head, this beer feels well-carbonated. Still, it is somewhat creamy from the medium-full

body, but it is missing the fruitiness often found in the best examples. Still, this milk stout is nothing but enjoyable.



92

by *Susan Ruud*

Grandpa Tractor
Barley Forge Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer has a wonderful pale malt aroma with touches of light floral hops and just a hint of DMS for complexity. All of these elements combine and invite you in to take a sip. The flavor was crisp and clean with a gentle lingering hop finish. The malt and bitterness swirl over the palate and finish dry and crisp. A great beer when you want something light and refreshing to drink.



92

by *Tracy Hensley*

Double D's
Avery Brewing Co..

Aroma:
24 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

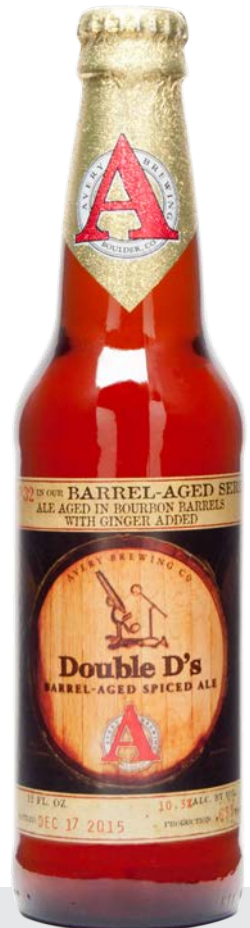
Mouthfeel:
7 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Refreshing, balanced aromas of warm, baked vanilla shortbread pair with candied ginger, which smells as if it were freshly zested. The beer is a bright, clear, golden-amber color with a creamy, well-retained, off-white head. The flavors evolve from biscuit to vanilla toffee with a hint of white oak, supported by dried ginger and a soft, floral, vanilla bean character. The flavors evolve pleasantly as the beer reaches room temperature, at which point the light bread and low, warming vanilla notes balance the twangy sensations from the ginger. Carbonation is moderate and assists in balancing the lingering heat from the alcohol. The

mouthwatering finish keeps me coming back for more.



92

by *Nelson Crowle*

Hotbox Coffee Porter Oskar Blues Brewery

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

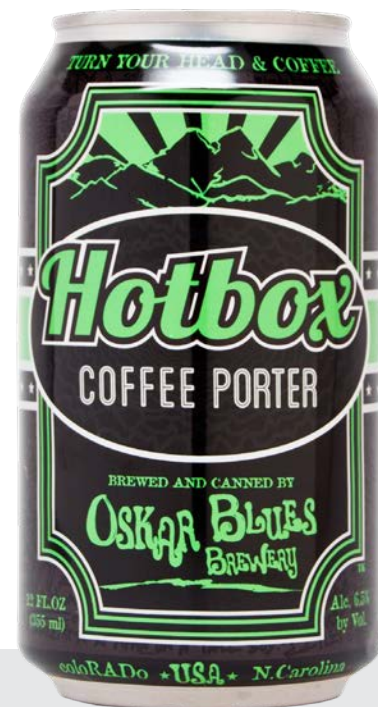
Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Pours a pretty, clear, very dark mahogany with a large tan head of tiny bubbles that hangs around for a long time and leaves a nice Belgian lace on the glass. Initial aromatic notes of hot cocoa and coffee outline a substantial medium-full body. There are some nice earthy balancing notes with a fairly dry finish that lingers with both bitter and sweet chocolate. The background malt is somewhat grainy with low levels of roastiness. The high carbonation brings out the best in this beer, as it is reminiscent of both coffee-and-cream and hot chocolate with whipped cream. Creamy and smooth with a very clean fermentation, the dryness of this beer comes across as slightly chalky, but

still, this would be a great beer to drink with a plate of sausage and aged cheeses.



92

by *Mike Castagno*

Good People IPA Good People Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A billowing cloud of hop essence hits you right as the beer is poured. Heavy grapefruit, ripe orange, pineapple, guava and a wisp of pine fill the air. Way underneath all that is a slight bready malt component and a touch of caramel. Another wave of hops appears as it warms: earthy and grassy, but also a touch cheesy. Impressive head retention covers a brilliant golden beer. Medium-high bitterness pairs with a dry finish. The bitterness lingers a little past the finish, but it does not overstay its welcome. The body is big enough to support the beer without being overwhelming and the caramel is just enough to soften the bitterness. All too often, IPAs feature caramel

malts clashing defiantly with the hop bill, but this IPA is beautifully balanced. This is a beer that is excellent when cold but begins to become pedestrian as it warms. If it weren't for the cheesy character that pokes out when it warms, this would be outstanding. Certainly a beer I would seek out when watching a football game.



92

by *Sean Coughlin*

Dragon's Milk Reserve with Toasted Chilies

New Holland Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A strong whiskey nose is complemented by elements of roasted grain and dark chocolate. There is no perceptible chili presence in the aroma, but the barrel gives it enough complexity to keep you coming back for further evaluation. The beer is jet black and pours with a small, thin, beige head that holds its ground. The flavor is dominated by bourbon, chocolate and roast and is well supported by a medium bitterness. The chili peppers make their presence known in the finish where there is substantial heat, which isn't overwhelming and complements the higher alcohol quite nicely while both linger into the finish. The chili peppers may not add much in the flavor or aroma

departments but their heat helps distract from a body that seems a bit thin for an imperial stout. Overall though, this a very nice sipper that will appeal even to those who aren't keen on pepper beers.



91

by *Joseph Formanek*

Moondance Southbound Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Southbound Brewing Company's Moondance is another one of the brewery's creative and interesting specialty beer offerings. There have been Belgian takes on a wide range of traditional beer styles by many breweries over the past few years; in this example, Southbound tried its hand at "Belgianizing" an Imperial Stout and was quite successful at doing so.

This opaque, black ale with a fair tan stand of head delivers roasty, chocolate and black malt characters in the aroma with a funky, typically Belgian bite in the background. The flavor has the typical compounded dark malt expression (as would be expected in an Imperial Stout), but it is somewhat low in complexity for the style. Subtle brown spice notes

of cinnamon, nutmeg and citrus-like coriander are also evident. A funky Belgian fermentation character behind this complements the package quite well. The middle and finish retains the flavor balance, with a very clean yet warming alcohol note that makes itself more and more evident upon swallowing. The blend of dark malts delivers a nice balance and an enjoyable, moderately lingering aftertaste. The body of this brew is, surprisingly, rather light for the style. This is not a big, chewy Imperial Stout, but rather one that is quite smooth and dangerously quaffable – especially for a brew pushing 11 percent ABV!

This is a well-thought-out and well-constructed brew, and it delivers what it promises. If you're an Imperial Stout fan, this is definitely recommended!



91

by *Nelson Crowle*

Twenty Five Breckenridge Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer features lots of complexity in the aroma: cookie dough, vanilla, wood, slight caramel, slight chocolate, nuttiness, some roast, and a bit of orange all make an appearance. Its appearance is deep brown with a slight red-dish tint, but very clear, and it also has a nice, light tan head of very fine bubbles that hangs around for a while, leaving a little Belgian lace. First taste is big sweet chocolate, black raisins, vanilla, and woody with a slight carbonic bite with an earthy finish where the chocolate and confectioner's sugar linger. A really nice creamy mouthfeel with substantial (but clean) alcohol warmth, and just a tad bit fizzy. This is a beer for a snifter –let it stay in the glass for a while to

warm up since all of these flavors and aromas truly come out as the beer gets to 55 - 60 degrees. Get a few bottles, open one, and save the rest for months or years. This is a great dessert beer –a perfect accompaniment to cherry pie and vanilla ice cream.



91

by *Joseph Formanek*

Barrel Chested Barleywine Upland Brewing

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Upland's Barrel Chested Barleywine is a big exuberant brew that isn't afraid to make its presence known. The aroma of this clear, brown-black brew with a solid, cream-colored head is loaded with bourbon and wood character, melded with a moderate level of toffee and molasses-aged malt notes. At the time of judging, the alcohol notes in the brew, particularly the bourbon character, is somewhat edgy and tends to dominate the aroma. The flavor retains the same characteristics, with big bourbon and alcohol flavor and bite very evident above the rich malty backbone. Hop expression is moderate but not overpowering, and it exists at a level that marries well with

the bourbon and malt characters. The finish of this full-bodied brew maintains all of the mentioned flavor characteristics, delivering a long lasting impressive memory of your last sip. This one is meant to be savored.

This is a very expressive Bourbon Barrel-aged Barleywine despite being quite young (bottled in 2015), and it does show its youth. This brew would age quite well, with some of the edgier bourbon barrel notes mellowing out as the malt character becomes more complex over time. I could see the rating being significantly higher with proper cellaring.



91

by *Mike Castagno*

Good People Brown Ale

Good People Brewing Co

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
7 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This version of an American Brown Ale does not disappoint. Upfront, there are moderate caramel and light toffee characters that cap off a noticeably biscuity and slightly crackery malt nose. A light nuttiness rounds out an earthy hop quality followed by a touch of floral notes underneath. The flavor is evenly balanced with a slightly sweet finish and an underlying mineral note in the after-taste. Some sweetness resides in the mouth after the finish, leaving an impression of being a bit sticky. There is an absence of chocolate and no roast component. While this dark malt component was expected, it was not missed; the flavor complexity more than makes up for

its dearth of ingredients. However, the beer is lighter, color-wise, than most other brown ales – in the area of tarnished copper rather than mahogany brown. The body is a little on the lighter side too, leaving you feeling a little flat. Otherwise, this is an approachable beer with harmonious flavor components that please the palate overall. This would be a great beer for cooler weather, especially if you find yourself outside.



91

by *Rick Franckhauser*

Sparkling Ale Boston Beer Co.

Aroma:
20 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer is grainy with a slight malty sweetness followed by a hint of caramel mid-palate. Some spicy hops combine with the malt in a near perfect balance. White grape and pear esters add additional interest to the beer. A medium-light body coupled with spritzy carbonation provide ample refreshment and a call for another. While this example lacks some of the esters and herbal hops you would expect from an actual Australian version, it certainly is quite a quaffable brew.



Beer Review

Very Good (86-90)

- 90** | Notch 9, Smartmouth Brewing Co. *by Jim Koebel*
- 90** | Rule G, Smartmouth Brewing Co. *by Jim Koebel*
- 90** | Siren Noire, Heavy Seas Beer, *by Dan Martich*
- 90** | Le Petit Prince, Jester King Brewery, *by John C. Tull*
- 90** | Bourbon Barrel Double Negative, Grimm Artisanal Ales, *by James Link*
- 90** | The Orange Curtain, Barley Forge Brewing Co. *by Susan Ruud*
- 90** | Coffee Oatmeal Stout, Good People Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 90** | Dragon's Milk Reserve with Raspberries, New Holland Brewing Co. *by Sean Coughlin*
- 90** | Chanukah in Kentucky, Shmaltz Brewing Co. *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*
- 89** | Citradelic, New Belgium Brewing Co. *by Jason Johnson*
- 89** | Glütiny Pale Ale, New Belgium Brewing Co. *by Jason Johnson*
- 89** | DESTIHL Quadrupel, DESTIHL Brewery, *by Josh Weikert*
- 89** | For Pete's Sake, DuClaw Brewing Co. *by Rick Franckhauser*
- 89** | Smuttlabs Chestnut Saison, Smuttynose Brewing Co. *by James Link*
- 88** | Xocoveza for The Holidays and The New Year, Stone Brewing Co. *by Richard Wong*
- 88** | Antiquity, DESTIHL Brewery, *by Josh Weikert*
- 88** | The Black Dahlia, Barley Forge Brewing Co. *by Susan Ruud*
- 87** | Obsidian Stout, Deschutes Brewery, *by SJ Klein*
- 87** | Pinedrops IPA, Deschutes Brewery, *by SJ Klein*
- 87** | Bearded Lady, Good People Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 87** | Snake Handler, Good People Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 87** | Moonlight Drive, Southbound Brewing Co. *by Joseph Formanek*
- 87** | Berthô, Cervejaria Colorado, *by Nelson Crowle*
- 87** | Glütiny Golden Ale, New Belgium Brewing Co. *by Jason Johnson*
- 87** | NxS IPA, Stone Brewing Co. and Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. *by Richard Wong*
- 87** | Smuttlabs Smoked Peach Short Weisse, Smuttynose Brewing Co. *by James Link*
- 86** | Samuel Adams Cold Snap, Boston Beer Co. *by Michael McGuire*
- 86** | Chocolate Bock, Boston Beer Co. *by Rick Franckhauser*

Beer Review

- 86** | Vixnu, Cervejaria Colorado, *by Nelson Crowle*
- 86** | Oak Aged Yeti, Great Divide Brewing Co. *by Michael Heniff*
- 86** | Orabelle, Great Divide Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 86** | Stoaked, Upland Brewing, *by Joseph Formanek*
- 86** | Wonderstuff, Bauhaus Brew Labs, *by Sandy Cockerham*
- 86** | Mephistopheles' Stout, Avery Brewing Co. *by Tracy Hensley*

Average (75-85)

- 85** | Friek, Odell Brewing Co. *by Dan Preston*
- 85** | Easy Chair, Upland Brewing, *by Joseph Formanek*
- 84** | Marooned On Hog Island, 21st Amendment Brewery, *by Richard Wong*
- 84** | Bronx Rye Ale, Bronx Brewery, *by Michael Bury*
- 84** | Vertex IPA, DESTIHL Brewery, *by Josh Weikert*
- 84** | Murphy's Law, Smartmouth Brewing Co. *by Jim Koebel*
- 84** | Dark Star, Fremont Brewing, *by SJ Klein*
- 84** | Snow Blind, Starr Hill Brewery, *by Dan Preston*
- 84** | Good People Pale Ale, Good People Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 83** | Hoperation Overload, DESTIHL Brewery, *by Josh Weikert*
- 83** | Fresh Squeezed IPA, Deschutes Brewery, *by SJ Klein*
- 83** | Guanabara, Cervejaria Colorado, *by Nelson Crowle*
- 81** | Bronx American Pale Ale, Bronx Brewery, *by Michael Bury*
- 81** | Rockin' Chair, Southbound Brewing Co. *by Joseph Formanek*
- 81** | Pine Mountain Pilsner, Deschutes Brewery, *by SJ Klein*
- 80** | Samuel Adams Nitro White Ale, Boston Beer Co. *by Michael McGuire*
- 80** | Cabin Fever, New Holland Brewing Co. *by Sean Coughlin*
- 80** | Shakedown, Starr Hill Brewery, *by Dan Preston*
- 79** | 77 Fremont Select, Fremont Brewing, *by SJ Klein*
- 78** | Tweak, Avery Brewing Co. *by Tracy Hensley*
- 76** | Mischievous, New Holland Brewing Co. *by Sean Coughlin*

Beer Review

Brewer Q & A

For beers that receive a score of “Excellent” or above (91+), we’ve asked the brewer a few questions regarding that beer’s origins.

97 Rating – DESTIHL Brewery – Wild Sour Series: Flanders Red

Responses from DESTIHL’s founder and brewmaster Matt Potts.

Who came up with this beer’s recipe?

I did.

What’s your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

Flanders Red is a unique representation of this style with deep flavors of tart cherries, making it one of the more unique canned sours on the market.

Where does this beer’s name come from?

The Wild Sour Series as a whole gets its name from the fact that we have never purchased a sour culture from a lab, and that our wild microflora strain used in all of our sour beers was naturally cultured from the local terroir.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

Our Wild Sour beers could also make great desert island beers since we would not need a microflora culture shipped by lab to brew the beers on the island and could just use what was naturally on the island to ferment our beers.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

A combination of tart cherries, complex malt and bold acidity.



Photo Credit: Illinois Craft Brewers Guild

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Brewer Q & A

97 Rating – Great Divide Brewing Co. – Espresso Oak Aged Yeti

Responses from Great Divide's founder Brian Dunn.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Espresso Oak Aged Yeti's recipe was developed by Ryan Fox, Great Divide's Director of Brewery Operations.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I love the coffee, and I also like what the oak does to mellow out the rough edges of the beer.

Where does this beer's name come from?

We came up with the Yeti name a long time ago. I think the beer and the name are a perfect fit. The name really represents what the beer is all about: big, bold and elusive.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

If I was stuck on a desert island, I would want more than just this one beer because I like to mix things up a little.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Coffee notes with big roasty malt character and oak overtones.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

Ground coffee can be hard to manage in the brewery. One year, we packed a 2-inch stainless pipe with ground espresso – packed it so hard, in fact, that it took hours of work to get it unplugged.



Photo Credit: Great Divide Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

96 Rating – Heavy Seas Beer – 20 Year Storm

Responses from Heavy Seas' brewmaster Christopher Leonard.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

It was a group effort. While I made the final decisions on the details, the general idea throughout the brewery was to brew a more potent version of Winter Storm as an homage to the beer that was the first-ever beer branded with the “Heavy Seas” moniker. I decided to use imported Optic malt as the base, tweak the hops more towards an English balance (Winter Storm is a decidedly American-hopped beer) and our Brewing Team Leader, Chris Schultz, suggested the bourbon barrel-aging.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The balance is what I find most appealing. All of the components came together even better than I had hoped – the nutty English malt, the herbaceous English hops with just the right amount of American hop assertiveness, vanilla and oak from the barrel-aging and the surprising drinkability despite the beer's considerable heft and ABV strength. It's a very harmonious beer.

Where does this beer's name come from?

As I mentioned, Winter Storm, our 8% ABV fall/winter seasonal, was the first ever “Heavy Seas” beer. Couple that with our 20th Anniversary in 2015 and the name was self-evident.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

Only if I were on a desert island in the North Sea.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Bold, adventurous, caramel, vanilla, oaky, slightly boozy, rich yet drinkable.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

This beer almost didn't get made. We had a substantial increase in our portfolio for 2015 in which we added more than eight new products. Also, we increased our production by almost 20 percent. So, there were some internal discussions mid-year about whether we could even execute this beer the way we wanted. If we weren't going to be able to barrel-age it and/or condition it for (what I deemed) a sufficient period of time, we were going to scrap the project. Fortunately, our production team was determined to honor the accomplishment Hugh Sisson has reached with 20 years of Heavy Seas beers. We're probably as proud of this beer as any we've ever made.



Photo Credit: Tristan Gilbert

Brewer Q & A

96 Rating – Avery Brewing Co. – Vanilla Bean Stout

Responses from Avery's "Barrel Professor" Travis Rupp

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Three years ago our Special Projects department was playing around with a couple of beers and ended up creating a flavor combination we knew we had to bottle. For the sake of experimentation, we filled a few fresh Bourbon barrels with Czar Imperial Stout and a few more with Out of Bounds Stout.

While each project was decent, neither was great... the less astringent malt bill of The Czar left some lingering heat, while the roasted malt in Out of Bounds accentuated the charred oak. We began a series of blind tasting sessions to see if we could come up with a blending ratio that improved both beers. After a few blind panels, it looked like a blend of 2/3 Czar and 1/3 Out of Bounds Stout.



Photo Credit: Avery Brewing Co.

Everyone loved the blend, but the Bourbon barrels still imparted a bit too much charred oak flavor and astringency. Thoma Ledder, our Barrel Romancer, had the idea to balance those harsh flavors with vanilla beans. In the next blind panel, it was unanimous that the blend with vanilla helped the Bourbon and charred oak notes shine without allowing them to overpower the beer. As we do with our smaller experiments, we tapped this beer in the Avery Tap Room to gather feedback from employees and customers. The night it went on tap, Adam Avery drank four pints of it and then ran up to our brewers and said, "We have to bottle this." Eventually we moved into our new beer palace and had the capacity to work on our dream projects, so we blended the malt bills from Czar and OBS, acquired an absurd amount of Bourbon barrels, and went to town.

Brewer Q & A

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

We're proud of the fact that we didn't just buy the first vanilla beans or extract we could find and throw them in the beer. Instead we tried eleven different kinds of vanilla beans, split them by hand, infused them into kegs of Czar, and had them repeatedly blind-tasted through our sensory panel until we had a handful of runaway winners. So when we were ready to go big and fill the first 300 Bourbon barrels of this beer, we felt completely confident that this combination of flavors would be great.

Where does this beer's name come from?

There was definitely some debate on this name, as some of us wanted to come up with something more exotic. But we're also trying to make this beer year-round to introduce more people to the wonderful world of barrel-aging. The one-off beers in our Barrel-Aged Series have unpronounceable Latin names because those beers are the most experimental beers produced in our experimental brewery, and because it's entertaining to watch people try to pronounce them. But the beers in our Botanicals & Barrels Series are the product of our decade of experience in barrel-aging, and we're finally to the point where we feel we can make consistent barrel-aged beers. And sometimes you're at a bar and don't want to jump through flaming hoops to figure out what you're going to order next. You can look at the menu, close one eye to solidify things, and know that you're about to buy a barrel-aged stout with vanilla beans. As it says on the labels, "Simply Named – Complex Creation."

Is this your "desert island beer?"

When I drink a bomber of Vanilla Bean Stout, my chest hair instantly turns into a shag carpet. Is that good for a desert island? I would think so.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Vanillatastic. Beany. Stouty. Smooth. Boom.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Brooklyn Brewery – Black Ops

Responses from Brooklyn Brewery's founder and brewmaster Garrett Oliver.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

The recipe is mine. We're often asked whether this beer is a "barrel-aged version of Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout." And the answer to that is definitely not – it's very different.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

That it manages to be powerful, complex and elegant at the same time. Black Ops is not a big, sweet, cloying sledgehammer of booziness. All of the flavors are well-married and intertwined in a really pleasant way, and the barrel character is fully integrated with the beer. I think that's the key to successful barrel-aging.

Where does this beer's name come from?

Back in 2006, I wanted to make a barrel-aged beer, but I only planned to make about 150 cases. The sales team told me that this was far too little, and that it would just get them in trouble with retailers. They said it would be better if I didn't produce the beer at all. So we brewed it anyway, without telling anyone at the company. So it was called "Black Ops" because it was actually a secret for about six months. We gave everyone at the company a free case during the holidays that year – we actually didn't sell it the first year.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

That would have to be a pretty chilly desert island. Maybe I would take Black Ops to a "dessert island" instead! No, I think for a desert island I'd go with our Sorachi Ace, which is very drinkable and versatile. I think Black Ops is beautiful, but it's more of an "occasion beer."

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Silky, powerful, voluptuous, complex, balanced, structured, elegant, and surprisingly agile.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

After we gave away the first batch to our employees, I started to run into people who would lean in towards me and say in a near-whisper, "I've had Black Ops." It would turn out that they had some close connection to the brewery – maybe a friend of a family member worked there. So the "buzz" about the beer grew organically until we decided that we needed to try and brew enough to sell. The other interesting story, which we have on very good authority, is that Seal Team Six actually drinks Black Ops for toasts. That's pretty cool.



Photo Credit: Brooklyn Brewery

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Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Smartmouth Brewing Co. – Alter Ego

Responses from Smartmouth's president Porter Hardy.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

The basis for this recipe came from a mix of historical research I did on Belgian farmhouse ales and several group tastings of test batches to find just the right yeast strain. It is very true historically to a non-sour version of a saison. We use German malt, German, French and Slovenian hops and Belgian yeast – all of which would have been available in 1800s Belgium.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I love the versatility of this beer. It's a great beer to pair with foods – anything from smoked sausage to seafood to stinky cheese – because it has a wide range of flavors but still manages to be refreshing without overpowering your palate.

Where does this beer's name come from?

It's a call to arms for everyone to embrace their inner alter ego. I left my job as a lawyer to embrace my inner brewer and each of our other partners and employees have followed their own passion for craft beer to be apart of Smartmouth.



Photo Credit: Ashley Lester

Is this your “desert island beer?”

Oh, that's really hard. It might just be since it goes so well with seafood and is great when the weather turns hot!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

It's effervescent, peppery, fruity, refreshing and dry.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

While the brewery was still under construction we brewed a whole bunch of batches in one of our driveways to get the recipes nailed down. We instituted a sort of March Madness of brewing where we'd take 20 gallons of wort and pitch four different saison yeasts into four different fermenters then have a blind tasting. The two winners would get pitted against two more yeasts and so forth until we had a winner. Those are still some of my favorite memories.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Oskar Blues Brewery – Death By Coconut

Responses from Oskar Blues' head brewer Tim Matthews.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

This beer's recipe was formulated by former Lyons brewer Jason Buehler in collaboration with Shamrock Brewing.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The chocolate flavor, which comes from Cholaca. That was great to work with.

Where does this beer's name come from?

It's a play on Death by Chocolate, since this is a chocolate coconut porter.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Our special seasonals are for special occasions. One can has plenty of satisfaction. I would want to bring something more sessionable to a desert island.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Delicious and crisp chocolate-covered beer candy.



Photo Credit: Oskar Blues Brewery

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

Making Death by Coconut has been a wild ride. From a successful collaboration to a GABF silver medal to the challenges of production brewing, in the end, what we all think about when drinking this beer are the strained forearms and sore backs from hauling the bags of dessicated coconut into and out of the large tanks where we steep the beer.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – SanTan Brewing Co. – Grapefruit Shandy

Responses from SanTan's brewmaster Anthony Canecchia.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Gabe Wilson, Head Brewer, sourced local grown AZ Grapefruit from Sun Orchard.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

We love that Shandy has a tart and refreshing flavor but still tastes like a beer.

Where does this beer's name come from?

A slang term SanTan borrowed from Europeans that would mix beer and fruit soda/juice. Popularized by Cyclists in order to re-hydrate after long rides.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

It's our desert island, mainland, peninsula, isthmus and archipelago beer!!!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

A tart, refreshing spring and summer alternative to boring beer.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

I lived in San Diego in 2004 and would cycle about 100-140 miles weekly. After a long ride I would get back to Ocean Beach and chain my bike up at Sunshine Company on Newport. I would order a small pitcher of fizzy yellow beer, a pitcher of soda water and as many lemons as the bartender would let me get away with taking then blend them in a pint and watch the green flash at sunset from the second story balcony.



Photo Credit: SanTan Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Terrapin Beer Co. – Poivre Potion

Responses from Terrapin’s brewmaster and co-founder Spike Buckowski.

Who came up with this beer’s recipe?

This is actually a recipe from our Homebrew Team Competition from January 2015. Each year at our Terrapin holiday party (held in January), we divide employees into teams and they brew a beer. The winner is featured as a side project!

What’s your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The surprising taste of pink peppercorns. It adds a nice complexity to the beer.

Where does this beer’s name come from?

Poivre is “Pepper” in French. The Homebrew Team came up with it themselves!

Is this your “desert island beer?”

That’s a tough one. It’s maybe a little too high on ABV side to be a “desert island beer.”

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Complex, spicy, alcoholic warmth, with passion fruit notes.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

Part of the homebrew competition involves skits – in an effort to describe their beer in an entertaining way. The team that made Poivre also made a video where they were all running around, wearing ascots and talking in bad French accents about how great the beer was (there was also some dancing involved)!



Photo Credit: Justin Evans

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Grand Teton Brewing Co. – Double Vision Doppelbock

Responses from Grand Teton's brewmaster Rob Mullin.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

This one's mine. My first professional brewing job was at Old Dominion Brewing Company in Ashburn, Virginia, which was primarily a lager brewery. While there, I learned from two of the best brewers I know: John Mallett (now with Bell's Brewing) and Ron Barchet (Victory Brewing.) Ron had studied at Weinstephan, the Bavarian state brewing school, and had very strong opinions about lager brewing techniques. His and John's bottling-line discussions about the merits of decoction versus infusion mashing are my seminal brewing memories. Though Grand Teton Brewing Company is primarily an ale brewery, we've brewed a strong lager every winter as long as I've been here. It's my tribute to the brewers who taught me most of what I know.



Photo Credit: Constance Mullin

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I was drawn to imported and microbrewed beer in the late eighties because of malt. Long before I learned to appreciate bitterness in beer I loved the traditionally malty flavors created by small brewers at the time. One of my first favorites was Samichlaus, the strongest beer in the world then at 14 percent ABV. Though nowhere near as strong as that classic, Double Vision's malt profile reminds me of my early love affair with malt. Double Vision's yeast is from a monastery brewery near Munich, and it works extremely slowly at a very cold fermentation temperature, ensuring that the smooth sweetness comes through with just a hint of alcohol. That's what I love about the Samichlaus, too.

Brewer Q & A

Where does this beer's name come from?

When we first brewed this beer it was called Illuminator Doppelbock, following the tradition of 'ator names for doppelbocks. We later discovered several other beers by the same name, so we changed ours. All the good 'ator names we could come up with were already taken, so we went with the alliterative and evocative Double Vision instead.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

If that desert island were an Arctic ice floe, then absolutely! It's my all-time favorite winter warmer.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Toffee, cocoa, raisins, molasses, and brown bread in liquid form.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

We were recently gratified to learn that one beer ratings website lists this as the number 7 doppelbock in the world. I'd love to take credit for that, but the truth is we've cheated. Our brewery water is Teton Mountain glacial runoff, filtered through Teton granite and limestone over the course of 300-500 years before it bubbles up at a spring a half mile from the brewery. When I got here in '02, I wanted to brew with that water in its pure, untreated form. Our goal is not to mimic styles from great brewing cities around the world, but to brew Teton Valley beer. As luck would have it, our local water fresh from the spring is much like Munich's water. So it's easy for us to brew Munich-style beers. We're using German malt, yeast, hops - and even Munich water!

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – The Hop Concept – Tropical & Juicy

Responses from The Hop Concept's lead brewer Steven Burchill.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Our former Head Brewer Matt Webster and I.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The aroma is definitely a great part of this beer, but I actually really love the color of the beer. It's straw-colored with a slight hint of red/orange.

Where does this beer's name come from?

The name comes from the flavor and aroma profile of the beer. With the Hop Freshener series, we strip away all the story and make the name the literal taste and smell of the beer.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

As much as I enjoy this beer, it's a bit too big to be my desert island beer. I'd have to go with Sierra Nevada Pale Ale.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Tropical, juicy, hoppy and bitter.



Photo Credit: Studio Schulz

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Boston Beer Co. – Old Fezziwig Ale

Responses from Boston Beer brewer Jennifer Glanville.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

With most of our beers, our brewers work together to create recipes. For Old Fezziwig, we really wanted to create a beer perfect for celebrating the holiday season and a beer that incorporated a variety of holiday spices like cinnamon, ginger and orange peel. Getting to the point where all of the ingredients were in perfect harmony takes a lot of experimentation, but it's always a lot of fun.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

What I love about this beer is the aroma of sweet toffee and caramel. The rich malt character creates notes of sweet toffee, caramel, & roasted chocolate while classic holiday spices like cinnamon, ginger and orange peel add warmth and flavor.

Where does this beer's name come from?

We named this beer after a character in *A Christmas Carol*, the classic holiday novel by Charles Dickens. Fezziwig is the counterpart to Ebenezer Scrooge, who we all know to be cold-hearted and stingy. Fezziwig, on the other hand, is jolly and generous, and this beer evokes the celebratory and jovial feel of the season.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

That's a good question. Old Fezziwig is the perfect beer for the holiday season because of the combination of rich malt character and holiday spices. But the beer that I would refer to as my "desert island beer" would have to be our Boston Lager. To me, it is the perfect balance of hop bitterness and malt sweetness and the beer I'd want to drink if stranded on a desert island.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Old Fezziwig is like a Christmas cookie in a bottle!

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

Old Fezziwig is a perennial favorite with my friends and family around the holidays, and particularly my dad who loves heartier, full-flavored beers like Old Fezziwig. It's sort of a tradition in our house that the first beer we drink on Christmas Eve is Old Fezziwig.



Photo Credit: Boston Beer Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – DESTIHL Brewery – Barrel-Aged Dosvidanya

Responses from DESTIHL's founder and brewmaster Matt Potts.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

I did.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

My favorite aspect of this beer is its balance of chocolate & roasted malt character in perfect harmony with the barrel character while also being so full-bodied, smooth and not 'hot' despite the 12.5% ABV... it just hits all the senses so wonderfully. It's everything we want in a barrel-aged RIS.

Where does this beer's name come from?

Dosvidanya was first brewed in 2008 in our brewpub in Normal, and I wanted to brew a special beer for a great employee who was moving & leaving the brewery. So, I came up with the name Dosvidanya to say 'goodbye' in Russian, since it was brewed as a Russian Imperial Stout.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

If Dosvidanya was my desert island beer, I would be a happy camper, and I might lose all motivation to try to find my way off the island.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Rich, robust, chocolatey, roasty... oh screw it – just simply awesome.



Photo Credit: Illinois Craft Brewers Guild

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – DESTIHL Brewery – Wild Sour Series: Here Gose Nothin’

Responses from DESTIHL’s founder and brewmaster Matt Potts.

Who came up with this beer’s recipe?

I did.

What’s your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

When we started canning this beer in the fall of 2014, it was one of only a few canned versions of this style. That bold move certainly matches the bold, lime-like sourness of this unique beer and offered people an affordable option to quench their thirst for sour beers.

Where does this beer’s name come from?

The name Here Gose Nothin’ was derived from the all-too-common saying of ‘here goes nothing’ in our brewery when we are about to embark on a Darwinism-challenging/life-threatening task or experimental activity that could easily break bad.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

Our Wild Sour beers could also make great desert island beers since we would not need a microflora culture shipped by lab to brew the beers on the island and could just use what was naturally on the island to ferment our beers.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Lime-like sourness + sea salt = perfect tequila-chaser beer.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Upland Brewing Co. – Komodo Dragonfly Black IPA

Responses from Upland's lead brewer Patrick Lynch.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Caleb Staton came up with this recipe before he shifted the majority of his attention to Upland's sour program.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The touch of lavender we add to the end of the boil really makes Komodo unique for a Black IPA. It has the hop presence and roasted malt character you would expect, but the subtle floral notes are truly unique.

Where does this beer's name come from?

At a basic level, it references our flagship Dragonfly IPA. Digging deeper, a Komodo Dragon is a large species of monitor lizard. Going further, a Komodo Dragonfly is an exotic animal that is entirely made up, yet close enough to reality to invoke a connection with the drinker. In a similar way, the beer is recognizable but does not fit neatly into a written style category.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

A true "desert island beer" can't be one-note or you would get tired of it pretty quickly. Slightly roasty, hop-forward, and with a floral touch, Komodo Dragonfly has something to suit any mood I'm in.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Unique combination of dark malts, flavorful hops, and lavender.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

For this year's batch, we were able to source locally-grown Lavender from right here in Monroe County, Indiana. A server at our restaurant put us in touch with a local grower, and that direct connection to the source allowed us to pinpoint a specific culinary variety of Lavender that really shines in the beer.



Photo Credit: Chelsea Schoch

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Motorworks Brewing – Rollcage Red

Responses from Motorworks Brewing's head brewer Bob Haa.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

I did.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The balance between the sweet caramel malts and the American hops used for bittering and flavor. This is more of a West Coast-style Amber/Red, which I prefer.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Although I really love Rollcage Red, I would most likely choose a farmhouse style for my "DIB.»

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Red Ale with sweet caramel malt and piney American hops.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

I started designing American Red Ale recipes at home 26 years ago and then commercially for Hops Restaurants starting in 2000. With Motorworks, I have changed the hop additions to better and more readily available types grown in America.



Photo Credit: Motorworks Brewing

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Barley Forge Brewing Co. – The Patsy

Responses from Barley Forge's operations manager Sean O' Shea.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Our head brewer Kevin Buckley said he had something up his sleeve when he mentioned to us that he had a recipe for a rye stout with coconut. He absolutely was not kidding around – The Patsy is our #1-selling brand.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I would say the coconut aroma is my favorite aspect of the beer. Second to that would be the dry spiciness of the rye malt that is used in the mash.

Where does this beer's name come from?

If you have ever seen Monty Python & The Holy Grail, you may remember Patsy. He is the character (played by Terry Gilliam) that made the horse hoof sounds using two coconut halves. Thus you have The Patsy – a Coconut Rye Stout!



Photo Credit: Barley Forge Brewing Co

Is this your “desert island beer?”

It would be fitting that this beer would be a desert island beer with the amount of island coconut that goes into the brite tank prior to packaging! It certainly reminds me of sitting on a beach somewhere every time I take a sip.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

It's like drinking a Mounds candy bar. No joke!

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

When we attend beer festivals, it is a must that we bring The Patsy with us. I made the mistake once of bringing different beers instead, and that was a huge mistake. Festival goers come far and wide to sip on The Patsy and it is not wise to disappoint the crowd!

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Bronx Brewery – Bronx Belgian Pale Ale

Responses from Bronx Brewery's head brewer Damian Brown.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

I developed the recipe in early 2013, and we released the beer to the NYC market as our spring seasonal that March or April. It was the brewery's fourth beer.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The yeast plays the starring role in this beer, and I absolutely love the diversity and volatility it offers aromatically. Bubblegum turns to tangerines and eventually to a subtle smokiness on the nose as it warms. It's a great beer for a slow pace.

Where does this beer's name come from?

From the fact that we're apparently not very creative.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

It comes in at 6.7% ABV so I'd probably opt for something a bit lower in strength like our Session IPA, which is super refreshing and has great tropical hop notes. If you're alone on an island, you gotta make sure you have a beer you can drink a lot of!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

A South Bronx take on a classic Belgian style.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

It has surprised the shit out of me that this has been the best-selling beer in our tasting room – thanks in large part to the guys at the FedEx Hub a few streets away.



Photo Credit: Alan Gastelum

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Smuttynose Brewing Co. – Big A Double IPA

Responses from Smuttynose's head brewer Dan Schubert.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Big A is a collaborative effort from our brewing team. It's evolved a fair bit since its debut in the Big Beer Series. We deliberately upped the hop levels each year from the 2003 debut release until the 2008 hop shortage hit, which forced us to be a bit more reactive to the hopping based on availability. Even though availability continues to be an ongoing issue in this era of chasing the newest hop varietal, we've got the recipe locked in and enough hops sourced out that we now have a set recipe.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

It's sneaky drinkability. It's deceptively drinkable for 8.2 percent ABV! Don't get me wrong, I love the juicy hops, but Big A just goes down so smooth.

Where does this beer's name come from?

The original name was Big Ass IPA, but we couldn't get label approval for that in 2002. A lot has changed since then, so it wouldn't be a problem now.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

I'd be pretty F*ck&\$%ed up on a desert island if this was the only beer I had to drink, so no.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Dank, juicy drinkability.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

I've been brewing here for 13 years, so I've had a hand in virtually all the Big A we've ever brewed. Winning the Michael Jackson Award for the Best American Beer at the Great British Beer Festival for Big A IPA in 2010 was an incredible feeling of pride, excitement and surprise. It's the biggest prize Big A has won and this was our third win at the contest.



Photo Credit: Robert Lussier

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Smuttynose Brewing Co. – Rocky Road

Responses from Smuttlabs' head brewer Charlie Ireland.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Our brewing team wanted to brew a beer that was perfect for dessert. I love ice cream and Rocky Road is one of my favorite flavors. New England has hundreds of small, local ice cream stands, so this seemed like a perfect tribute to one of my favorite pastimes. We brewed a pilot batch several years ago at Portsmouth Brewery, our sister brewpub in downtown Portsmouth, and people loved it!

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The use of Fluff while making it! Fluff is made about an hour from the brewery in Lynn, MA, so I got to slide another happy childhood memory into this beer. Besides, Fluff is just really fun to say.

Where does this beer's name come from?

We named Rocky Road after the ice cream that inspired it. There's no crazy story behind the name, but it's pretty damn descriptive.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

No, it's way too sweet and heavy for desert weather. I'm not saying it's not delicious, but it's better suited to New Hampshire weather.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Chocolatey, fluff-tastic decadence that tastes like ice cream for adults.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

The Fluff Festival takes place every September in Somerville MA where Archibald Query created Fluff in 1917. The first year we were there, we were pouring Finestkind IPA and lots of folks asked us if we had a beer made with Fluff. Of course, we didn't, but that helped build one of the wheels that went into motion when it was time to formulate a dessert beer.



Photo Credit: Robert Lussier

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Smartmouth Brewing Co. – Cowcatcher

Responses from Smartmouth's president Porter Hardy.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Our original head brewer, Greg Papp, came up with this recipe. The brew staff has tweaked it a few times over the years to try and get the balance of sweetness and roastiness just right.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

This beer is just so smooth and silky. I love the way it makes me feel on a fall or winter day.

Where does this beer's name come from?

A cowcatcher is the apparatus on the front of a train that ever-so-gently moves cows off the tracks. Our proximity to the railroad and our connection to Norfolk Southern (some of our owners work for the railroad) make railroad names a natural fit for us. That and we love clever names – cows make milk for the lactose in the milk stout and we are next to the railroad tracks. Get it?

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Only if that desert is cold and blustery. If that were the case, then yes.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Cocoa, chocolate, roasty, sweet and cozy.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

When we were first starting out and debating names for the brewery, a local radio personality/friend suggested the name "Cowcatcher" because of the train tracks located outside the front door. While we didn't go with that for the brewery name, we thought it would go perfectly for a milk stout – so we brewed one!



Photo Credit: Ashley Lester

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Barley Forge Brewing Co. – Grandpa Tractor

Responses from Barley Forge's operations manager Sean O' Shea.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Kevin Buckley, Barley Forge head brewer, came up with this recipe. It is a very clean-tasting example of an almost extinct beer style from the Dortmund area of Germany, which was traditionally enjoyed by coal miners after a long day's work.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I really enjoy the clean, crisp bite of this beer. The yeast comes off clean with a slight sulfur aroma (ok for the style) and allows the flavor of the Pilsner malt to shine through.



Photo Credit: Barley Forge Brewing Co.

Where does this beer's name come from?

This beer is named after Mary Ann Frericks' father. Mary Ann is our co-founder. Jerry Frericks (aka Grandpa Tractor) got his nickname from Greg & Mary Ann's son, Gram. You guessed correctly, Grandpa does own a tractor!

Is this your "desert island beer?"

With how clean and easy-drinking this 5% ABV Dortmunder Export Lager is, it could very well be my desert island beer.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Full-bodied, balanced, crisp and refreshing session beer.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

See above regarding the name. On a side note, we have a group of local regulars that come in almost every night just to drink Grandpa Tractor and nothing else!

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Avery Brewing Co. – Double D’s

Responses from Avery’s “Barrel Professor” Travis Rupp.

Who came up with this beer’s recipe?

Our beloved lab geek, Dan Driscoll. He spends most of his time in a rarified lab environment, but he gets very excited about beer. He brought up the idea of a beer inspired by the flavors in the ol’ Whiskey Ginger cocktail. So we made a strong, non-sour amber beer, aged it in fresh Bourbon barrels, then added fresh ginger juice. We had originally planned on adding lime zest, but we did some tastings and decided that the lime mitigated the impact from the barrels.

What’s your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

My favorite aspect of this beer is the overall flavor balance. It’s pretty easy to throw a bunch of ginger and lime into just about anything, and, of course, it’ll taste great. But we spent months aging this beer in Bourbon barrels because we didn’t want to lose the vanilla and coconut flavors from the charred oak. We had to use a light hand in the spicing too. I love that this beer smells like fresh ginger, but the aftertaste is of huge vanilla from the charred oak.

Where does this beer’s name come from?

Dan “DD’s” Driscoll, Avery Yeast Manager – a brilliant, ginger badass. We wanted to surprise him by keeping the name of the beer a secret, but unfortunately, he found out a week before we were going to bottle it because he’s a sneaky ginger.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

If I were stuck on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and I’d just caught a fish with my bare hands and I wanted a beer pairing for that fish, Double D’s is the one.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Ginger, vanilla, coconut, balanced, awesome.



Photo Credit: Avery Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Oskar Blues Brewery – Hotbox Coffee Porter

Responses from Oskar Blues' head brewer Tim Matthews.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Hotbox was formulated by the Oskar Blues brewing team.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The harmony between the fruity malts and Hotbox Coffee blueberry and cocoa notes.

Where does this beer's name come from?

It's a shout-out to the killer roasters at Hotbox Roasters who supply the coffee for the beer. It is their coffee that gets us perked up and ready to brew our beer after all!

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Our special seasonals are for special occasions. One can has plenty of satisfaction. I would want to bring something more sessionable to a desert island.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Gotta get up to get down; beer and coffee together!

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

Hotbox Porter was bound to happen. You could see the writing on the wall when people would make cold-brew coffee and Ten Fidy cocktails in the breakroom after work.



Photo Credit: Oskar Blues Brewery

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Good People Brewing Co. – Good People IPA

Responses from Good People's brewmaster and co-founder Jason Malone and head brewer Adam Klein.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jason created the original recipe.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

Jason's favorite aspect of this beer is that the hop profile is multi-layered with citrus, pine, herbal, dank, and catty notes. You can ask 10 different people to describe this beer and get 10 different answers.

Where does this beer's name come from?

With all of our core beers, or "Ales from the Heart of Dixie," the names are pretty straightforward. We want people to know what they're drinking and to know that Good People means quality.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Adam says, "Definitely, yes." He knows that there are a ton of great beers out there, but GP IPA is his go-to brew.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Dry-hopped, aromatic, herbal, earthy, crisp and refreshing.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

Funnily enough, this beer was first released at the 2008 Southern Brewers Festival in Chattanooga. Alabama didn't legally allow beer above 6% ABV to be sold in the state at that time, so our IPA made its debut in Tennessee. Jason and Michael (the brewery's other co-founder) drove up there to showcase the first few brews under the Good People name.



Photo Credit: Cary Norton

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Southbound Brewing Co. – Moondance

Responses from Southbound's brewmaster Smith Mathews.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

I did.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

My favorite aspect of this beer is the dark chocolate and caramel flavors that come together beautifully to make an exceptional mind grenade on the first sip.

Where does this beer's name come from?

This beer's name comes from the classic song and album by Van Morrison.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Coming in at 10.6% ABV, this stout has plenty of strength and flavor to make any desert island your new happy place. Sign me up!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

It is chocolaty, smooth, roasted and tastefully spiced.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

Brewing this beer was a monster. The massive malt bill tested our 30-barrel mash tun's capacity for sure. We had to dig deep and paddle hard to get this bad boy stirred up. We were nervous that the mash was going to flow over the door, but we knew it was going to be delicious!



Photo Credit: Southbound Brewing Co

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Breckenridge Brewery – Twenty Five

Responses from Breckenridge's cellar master Brandon Osha.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

John Jordon, our Quality Control brewer, and myself. The base recipe is our Vanilla Porter, but we doubled it up and swapped out some malts. The malt that really stood out is Special W. It has a lot of red fruit and raisin characteristics; it's a malt that really complements a dark, barrel-aged beer. For the barrels, we ordered 200 rum barrels from Barbados. We also ordered high-quality, fresh vanilla beans from the Veracruz region of Mexico. These beans came from small family farms – they're hand-pollinated and hand-picked. Once we had the Imperial Vanilla Porter resting in rum barrels, we added bundles of the fresh, wet vanilla beans to each barrel.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

How balanced it is, and how every element worked well together. It's a strong, very flavorful beer, but each ingredient complements the others, and there isn't one flavor that overpowers the others.

Where does this beer's name come from?

This beer is a tribute to our 25th anniversary, thus the name "Twenty Five."

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Nah, it's too dark and strong for that. I'd consider it my "stuck in a snowstorm" beer.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Twenty Five is a beer to enjoy leisurely with friends.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

This beer means a lot to me – it's the biggest project I've led since joining the brewery 7 years ago. We came up with the idea for this beer when we were hanging out together at the 2015 Big Beers, Belgians and Barleywines festival in Vail, Colorado. I was excited that Todd liked the idea enough to give me the go-ahead to do it.



Photo Credit: Breckenridge Brewery

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Upland Brewing Co. – Barrel Chested Barleywine

Responses from Upland's lead brewer Patrick Lynch.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

This recipe has evolved over the years. We used to release our Winter Warmer Barley Wine every winter and would occasionally brew a bourbon barrel-aged version alongside it. The bourbon barrel edition was so popular that, beginning in 2014, we focused solely on that, and Barrel Chested was born.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The bourbon character from the barrels is retained but not too dominant. There is a complex array of flavors and a soothing warmth from the high alcohol content.

Where does this beer's name come from?

We wanted a name that made it clear this beer was barrel-aged, but also captured the bold, strong character of the beer. Barrel Chested accomplishes both these goals, and the "Gentle Giant" on the beer label furthers the display of strength.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

To answer that literally, I probably wouldn't make it through too many of these on a desert island. On the other hand, if I were stranded in a winter cabin, Barrel Chested would definitely be my beer of choice to keep me warm, sane and satisfied.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Strong, rich flavors with an approachable balance.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

I always look forward to Barrel Chested because even though we brew it in the warmth of April, it represents the cooler temperatures in the distant future. As spring transitions to summer in the brewhouse, I'll play Christmas music while brewing Barrel Chested and feel a connection to the spirit of the winter season. This beer really does experience all four seasons. It is brewed in the Spring, aged over the Summer and Fall, and packaged and enjoyed in the Winter.



Photo Credit: Chelsea Schoch

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Good People Brewing Co. – Good People Brown Ale

Responses from Good People's brewmaster and co-founder Jason Malone and head brewer Adam Klein.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jason created this recipe.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

Adam says that this beer holds a special place in the brewery's heart because it was the first one brewed and the first one introduced in Alabama.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Adam says that we're all pretty big hop heads around the brewery, so this wouldn't necessarily be our first choice for a beer style. But, if this desert island had a grill and/or crockpot, you better believe we would want the Brown around to help marinate meat and flavor our meals.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

This is a great food beer. Slightly sweet and nutty.

Do you know a story - or have a personal story - that revolves around this beer?

The original version of the Brown Ale recipe remains carved into Michael's garage workbench ten years after being created.



Photo Credit: Cary Norton

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Boston Beer Co. – Sparkling Ale

Responses from Boston Beer brewer Jennifer Glanville.

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

This beer style was originally brewed in Scotland in the 19th century as an alternative to the heartier ales of the era, but historical recipe details have been hard to trace. Eventually, sparkling ales became popular in Australia as the Scottish moved on to brewing different styles of beer that had become popular in neighboring England. A fair amount of trial and error was required on our part in the nanobrewery here in Boston to get to the desired flavor profile.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

I really like the crisp, clean flavor profile of the beer, and love the hop character that the Noble hops contribute.

Where does this beer's name come from?

Sparkling Ale is our take on a rare historic Scottish style. Golden in color and effervescent, it combines subtle Noble hop notes with pale malts to create a slightly floral character and a dry finish. At first sip, the word “sparkling” immediately comes to mind.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

I think that if I'm going to be living on a desert island, I'm going to want a slightly heartier beer. But... because this beer is lighter in flavor intensity, its crisp and clean finish allows it to match up well with more intense and flavorful foods, like salty ham. So, if there were any wild boars on my desert island I think I would be all set!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Light-bodied, light cereal notes and tart hints of dryness.

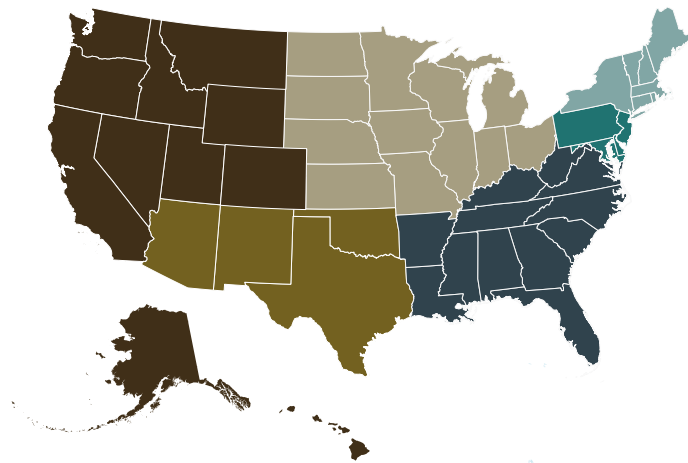
Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

For Sparkling Ale, what excited us the most was the opportunity to bring back an old and almost forgotten beer style, and we had a lot of fun throughout the brewing process.



Photo Credit: Boston Beer Co.

Spring Seasonals & New Releases



WEST

(AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

Hop Turn IPA

Alaskan Brewing Co.

Juneau, AK

Meltdown Double IPA

Midnight Sun Brewing Co.

Anchorage, AK

Pineapple Sculpin

Ballast Point Brewing & Spirits

San Diego, CA

Watermelon Dorado

Ballast Point Brewing & Spirits

San Diego, CA



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Pace Car Racer

Bear Republic Brewing Co.
Healdsburg, CA

Natura Morta Boysenberry

Green Flash Brewing Co.
San Diego, CA

Hooloomooloo

Modern Times Beer
San Diego, CA

Twenty Three Anniversary

Avery Brewing Co.
Boulder, CO

Get Hazed

Boulder Beer
Boulder, CO

Signal de Botrange

Elevation Beer Co.
Poncha Springs, CO

Scarlett on Brett

Fort Collins Brewery
Fort Collins, CO

Chocolate Oak Aged Yeti

Great Divide Brewing Co.
Denver, CO



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Belgian Style Pale Ale

Upslope Brewing Co.
Boulder, CO

Lost Continent Double IPA

Grand Teton Brewing Co.
Victor, ID

Fata Morgana

The Great Northern Brewing Co.

Whitefish, MT

Spring Reign

Ninkasi Brewing Co.
Eugene, OR

Straight Up Saison

Epic Brewing Co.
Salt Lake City, UT

Wit Beer

Epic Brewing Co.
Salt Lake City, UT

The Sister Imperial IPA

Fremont Brewing
Seattle, WA

Deluxe Malt Liquor

Silver City Brewery
Silverdale, WA



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

SOUTHWEST

(AZ, NM, OK, TX)

Grapefruit Shandy

SanTan Brewing Co.

Chandler, AZ

DIPA

Marble Brewery

Albuquerque, NM

Territorial Reserve Bourbon Barrel Aged Wild Wheat Wine

COOP Ale Works

Oklahoma City, OK

(512) English Strong Ale

(512) Brewing Co.

Austin, TX

Heavy Machinery Double IPA

Austin Beerworks

Austin, TX

Piñata Protest

Freetail Brewing Co.

San Antonio, TX

White Rabbit

Independence Brewing Co.

Austin, TX



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Here Comes The Sun

Karbach Brewing Co.
Houston, TX

Zee German Pils

Karbach Brewing Co.
Houston, TX

Red Wine Barrel-Aged Till & Toil

Lakewood Brewing Co.
Garland, TX

Berliner Weisse

Live Oak Brewing Co.
Austin, TX

Roggenbier

Live Oak Brewing Co.
Austin, TX

Iron Thistle

Rahr & Sons Brewing Co.
Fort Worth, TX

Pecker Wrecker

Rahr & Sons Brewing Co.
Fort Worth, TX

La Bestia

Ranger Creek Brewing & Distilling
San Antonio, TX



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Helles

Real Ale Brewing Co.
Blanco, TX

Saint Arnold Spring Bock

Saint Arnold Brewing Co.
Houston, TX

Red Cockaded Ale

Southern Star Brewing Co.
Conroe, TX

DR.

Thirsty Planet Brewing Co.
Austin, TX



MIDWEST

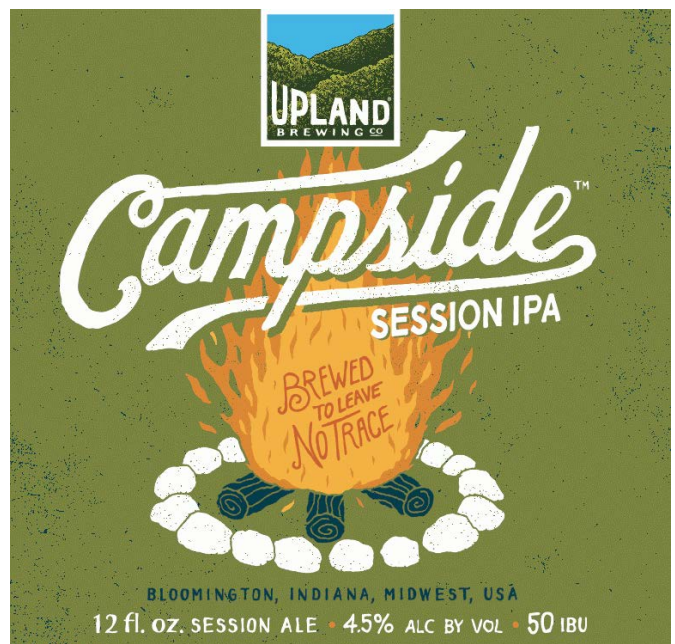
(IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)

1Z Enuff

Revolution Brewing
Chicago, IL

Campside Session IPA

Upland Brewing Co.
Bloomington, IN



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Biere de Mars

Tallgrass Brewing Co.
Manhattan, KS

Half Pipe

Tallgrass Brewing Co.
Manhattan, KS

Contemplation

Brewery Vivant
Grand Rapids, MI

Curmudgeon Old Ale

Founders Brewing Co.
Grand Rapids, MI

Incorrigible

New Holland Brewing Co.
Holland, MI

Night Tripper

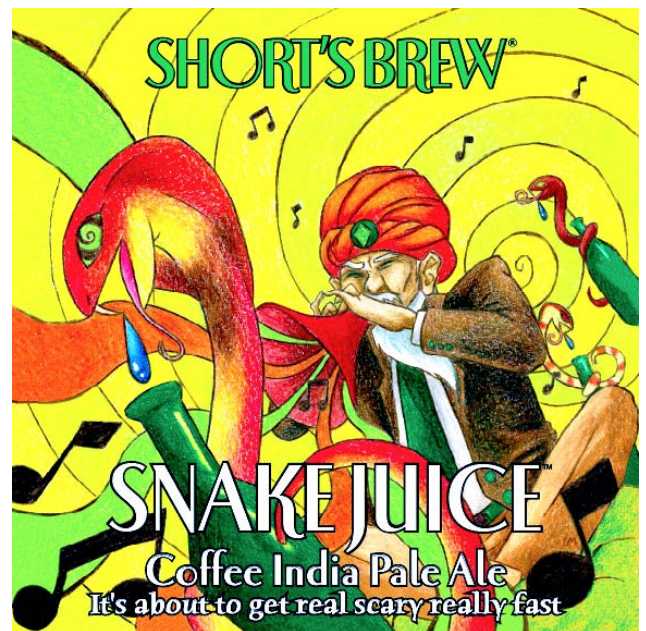
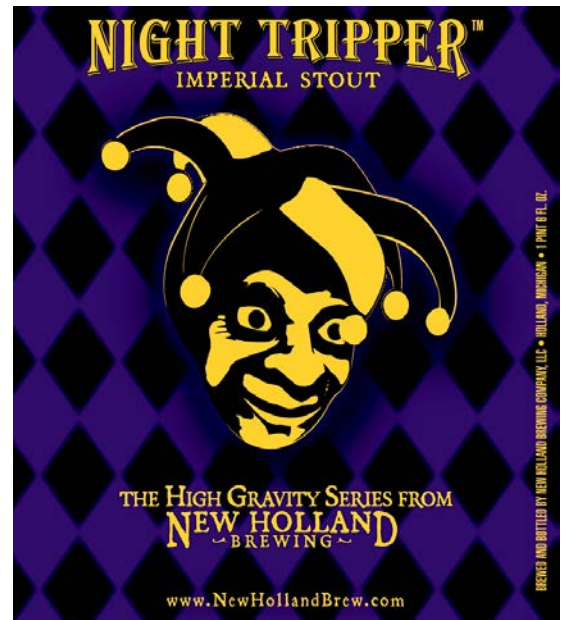
New Holland Brewing Co.
Holland, MI

Melt My Brain

Short's Brewing Co.
Bellaire, MI

Snake Juice

Short's Brewing Co.
Bellaire, MI



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

The Expat

Fulton Brewing
Minneapolis, MN

Unchained # 21: Us & Them

Summit Brewing Co.
St. Paul, MN

MILF

Mother's Brewing Co.
Springfield, MO

Tarte Apricot Saison

Nebraska Brewing Co.
Papillion, NE

Hop by Numbers IPA

Great Lakes Brewing Co.
Cleveland, OH

Turntable Pils

Great Lakes Brewing Co.
Cleveland, OH

Rounding Third

Madtree Brewing
Cincinnati, OH

Sprye

Madtree Brewing
Cincinnati, OH



Double Saison d'Hiver
Bitter Esters Brewhouse
Custer, SD

Lakefront S.M.a.S.H. Ale
Lakefront Brewery
Milwaukee, WI

Spring Seasonals & New Releases

SOUTH

(AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)

Lakefront S.M.a.S.H. Ale

Lakefront Brewery
Milwaukee, WI

Hitch Hiker

Good People Brewing Co.
Birmingham, AL

Ol' Grumpy Barley Wine

Core Brewing Co.
Springdale, AR

Roxy's Imperial Cream Ale

Bold City Brewery
Jacksonville, FL

Puppy's Breath

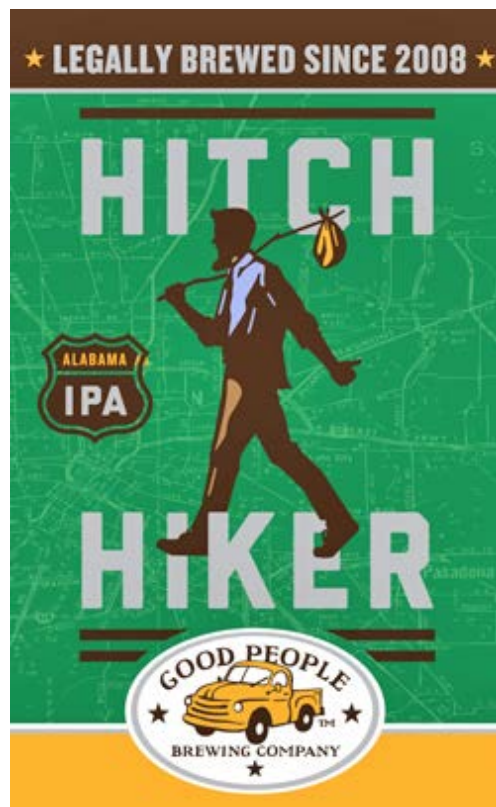
Cigar City Brewing
Tampa, FL

Honey Vanilla Wheat

Due South Brewing Co.
Boynton Beach, FL

Athena Paradiso

Creature Comforts Brewing Co.
Athens, GA



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Watermelon Gose

Terrapin Beer Co.

Athens, GA

Louisiana Spiced Ale

Abita Brewing Co.

New Orleans, LA

Backwoods Belgian

Lazy Magnolia Brewing Co.

Kiln, MS

Saison de Aviator

Aviator Brewing Co.

Fuquay Varina, NC

Blanco Diablo

Big Boss Brewing Co.

Raleigh, NC

People's BBL Aged Porter

Foothills Brewing

Winston-Salem, NC

NoDaRyeZ'd

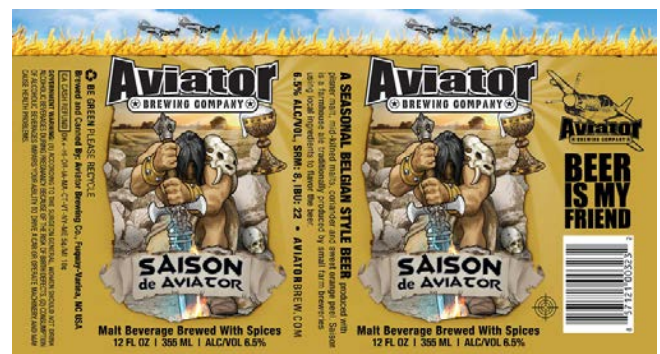
NoDa Brewing Co.

Charlotte, NC

Spring Wheat

Pisgah Brewing Co.

Black Mountain, NC



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Frederick

Conquest Brewing Co.
Columbia, SC

Smoke Beer

Holy City Brewing
Charleston, SC

Angels Trumpet

Adroit Theory Brewing Co.
Purcellville, VA

Skull Crushing Ape

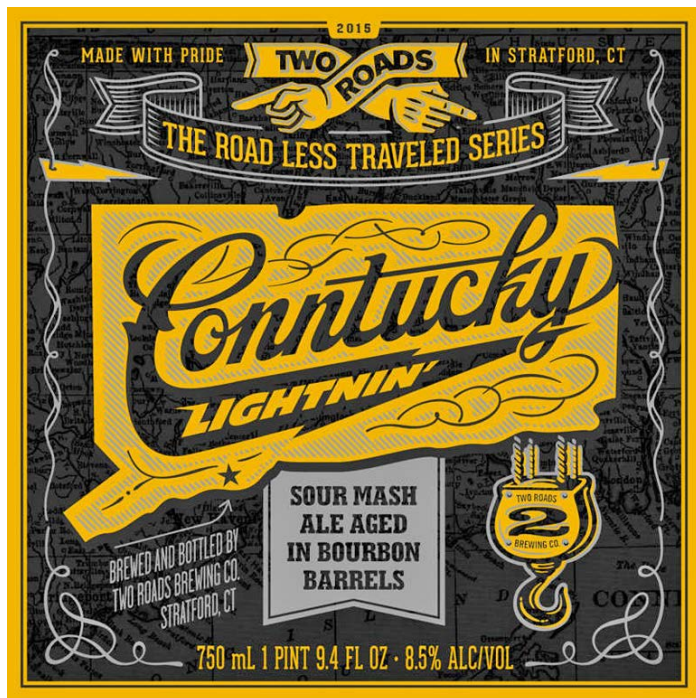
Devils Backbone Brewing Co.
Lexington, VA

Wood Aged Kilt Flasher

Devils Backbone Brewing Co.
Lexington, VA

“Ol’ Red” Irish Red Ale

Mountain State Brewing Co.
Morgantown, WV



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

NEW ENGLAND

(CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)

“Ol’ Red” Irish Red Ale

Mountain State Brewing Co.

Morgantown, WV

Lake Luke Maibock

Broad Brook Brewing

East Windsor, CT

Rhino Red Ale

Broad Brook Brewing

East Windsor, CT

Honey Berry Happiness Ale

Thomas Hooker Brewery

Bloomfield, CT

Conntucky Lightnin’

Two Roads Brewing Co.

Stratford, CT

Hizzoner

Two Roads Brewing Co.

Stratford, CT

Hop Program IPA

Maine Beer Co.

Freeport, ME



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Hop Swap

Sebago Brewing Co.
Gorham, ME

Imperial Pilsner

Shipyard Brewing Co.
Portland, ME

Celtic Red

Harpoon Brewery
Boston, MA

Framinghammer

Jack's Abby Craft Lagers
Framingham, MA

Belafonte

Night Shift Brewing
Everett, MA

Ever Weisse

Night Shift Brewing
Everett, MA

Double Dry Hopped Congress Street

Trillium Brewing Co.
Boston, MA

Biere de 'Shire

Smuttynose Brewing Co.
Hampton, NH



Hayseed

Smuttynose Brewing Co.
Hampton, NH

I Am Providence Imperial Red Ale

Narragansett Brewery
Providence, RI

Spring Irish Red Ale

Newport Storm Brewery
Newport, RI

Coniferous

Burlington Beer Co.
Williston, VT

Surfing Waves of Dopamine

Burlington Beer Co.
Williston, VT

Stand Out

Long Trail Brewing Co.
Bridgewater Corners, VT

Spring Seasonals & New Releases

MID-ATLANTIC

(DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)

120 Minute IPA

Dogfish Head Craft Brewery

Milton, DE

Romantic Chemistry IPA

Dogfish Head Craft Brewery

Milton, DE

Chupacabra

Misphillion River Brewing

Milford, DE

The Hoffeweizen

Misphillion River Brewing

Milford, DE

El Hefe Speaks

DC Brau Brewing

Washington D.C.

Lucky SOB Irish Red Ale

Flying Dog Brewery

Frederick, MD

Phantom Ship

Heavy Seas Beer

Baltimore, MD



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Umeboshi

DuClaw Brewing Co.
Baltimore, MD

X-10

DuClaw Brewing Co.
Baltimore, MD

Sprung

Evolution Craft Brewing Co.
Salisbury, MD

Sweet Wheat

Scorpion Brewing
Baltimore, MD

Seven Kingdoms Hoppy Wheat Ale

Brewery Ommegang
Cooperstown, NY

Shadow Brewer Imperial Stout

Brewery Ommegang
Cooperstown, NY

Rye Fidelity

Bronx Brewery
Bronx, NY

Choklat Oranj

Southern Tier Brewing Co.
Lakewood, NY



Spring Seasonals & New Releases

Smooth Hoperator

Stoudt's Brewing Co.

Adamstown, PA

Blasphemy

Weyerbacher Brewing Co.

Easton, PA

Wit

Weyerbacher Brewing Co.

Easton, PA

Loose Seal

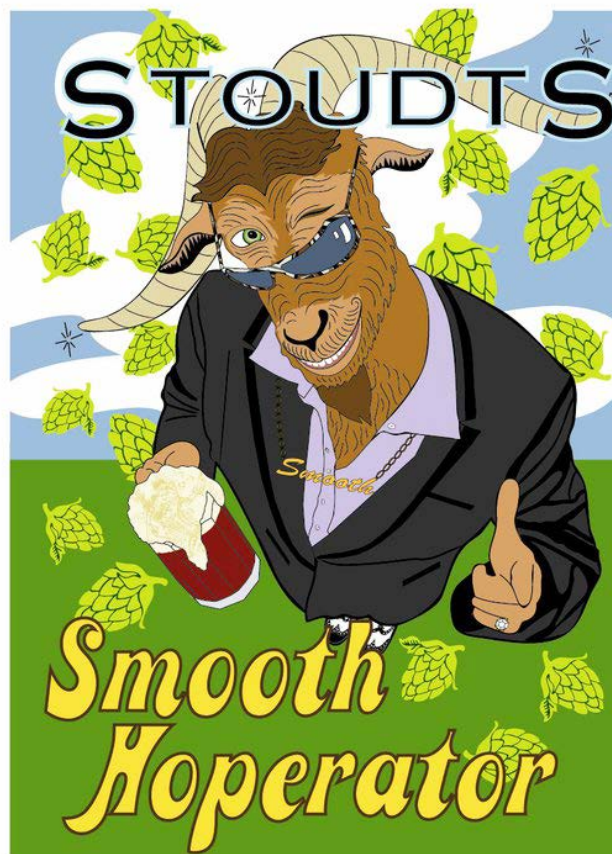
The Brew Gentlemen Beer Co.

Braddock, PA

Overgrowth

The Brew Gentlemen Beer Co.

Braddock, PA





United Kingdom

by Carolyn Smagalski

Wolf in Cask Clothing

On the silver screen, bravery manifests itself through larger-than-life adventure and a cast of thousands. But in real life, even a common British nurse can earn the title of hero. During World War I, Edith Cavell, a Red-cross nurse from Swardeston England, assisted in the escape of over 200 Allied servicemen from German-occupied Brussels to Holland. She faced a firing squad in 1915, just before her 50th birthday. Her execution stunned Europe.

In a show of unity, two national newspapers established the Cavell Nurses' Trust in 1917, which still functions today, serving nurses in times of personal hardship.

To honor her courageous spirit, Wolf Brewery of Norfolk created Edith Cavell Cask Ale, commemorating the centenary of her final breath. This real ale quenches the palate with hints of licorice and dark fruit, accented in a base of local Norfolk malt. Through the sale of 45,000+ pints, Wolf Brewery contributed over £2250 to the Cavell Nurses' Trust in 2016.



BrewDog Goes American

With the approach of their USA brewery opening in Columbus, Ohio later this year (August 2016), BrewDog founders James Watt and Martin Dickie have leaked rumors of a first-time roll-out of the Equity for Punks Crowdfunding Program in the United States. Crowdfunding offers a limited number of shares to small investors, and BrewDog is prime meat for those who believe in these cutting-edge “packleaders” with their raucous marketing style.

Nuts for the Red Squirrel

With an eye on expansion, Red Squirrel Brewery of North Hertfordshire established a Crowdcube opportunity for investors who dream of owning shares in a craft brewery. Since its launch in 2010, Red Squirrel has won awards from both SIBA and CAMRA for ales that showcase originality and tradition. A goal of £500,000 will triple current output and add another seven craft beer shops to their current London-based portfolio. In five days, Red Squirrel had already raised £160,000.



RED SQUIRREL BREWING CO

Ales made with  in Herts

European Report



Belgium

by Carl Kins

Brasserie de Silly installed a small brewery in a quite unusual place, i.e. a supermarket in Mons, run by Carrefour. They brew one special beer (6 % ABV), that only is available there, La Cham-bourlette.

Brussels steps in the footsteps of other large cities with new breweries. “No Science” chose their location on the Greenbizz site (behind the phenomenally beautiful building of Tour & Taxis). And then there is “En Stoemelings” and “Beerstorming”. Plus, the “Brussels Beer Project” who is really making a name for themselves. Recently they cooperated with the rock band “The Editors” and released “Salvation” (nothing to do with Russian River). And the famous British TV-chef Jamie Oliver recently collaborated with them within the framework of his food wastage fight. Indeed he has been using and promoting Babylone, BBP’s “recycling” beer brewed with old, unsold bread from a social bakery in their neighborhood. And Jamie Oliver is now also promoting a similar beer brewed in London by Hackney Brewery, called “Toast”.

....

For the fourth year in a row, a “Lady and Beer Day” was organized by Huyghe, this time on Saturday 16 January. Each time, a beer was brewed by the ladies, called Deliria. For this fourth edition, an international group of ladies, coming from among others Mexico, Spain, Netherlands and Belgium did brew a total of 500 hectoliter.

When it comes to ladies, AB InBev had another experience. They launched a campaign in order to counteract the gender stereotypes about beer and ladies.



But, according to the Belgian marketing regulator, they are achieving just the contrary by portraying beer drinking ladies as “cool, easy going, and always good company” and stating that they are the best partners because they will “ensure there is always beer at home and will always understand their partner goes for a beer with friends.”

An important Belgian brewer, Orval’s brew master Anne-Francoise Pypaert announced she will make a collaboration ale with New Belgium Brewing. It will be a ‘Spiced Belgian Strong Dark Ale’ at 9.5 % alcohol, with spruce tips and aged on wooden spirals. Her predecessor, the famous Jean-Marie Rock has done US collaborations (with Boulevard Brewing Co.), but this is AF’s first collaboration. Hopefully, not the last.

....

Duvel continues to put themselves in the limelight. They just launched this year’s version of Duvel Tripel Hop, which makes use of an experimental type of American hop, i.e. HBC291, resulting in aromas of black pepper, roses and lavender. Next to that they created a pack with the three latest Tripel Hop versions. And they celebrate the tenth anniversary of one of the first Belgian IPA’s, Houblon Chouffe Dobbelen IPA Tripel.

....

Just across the Dutch border, the Trappist monks of Koningshoeven/La Trappe – came up with a world first by issuing a glossy magazine. It provides a unique look behind the scenes of the monastery walls, an inside view in the contemplative monastic life not to forget the history and the brewery and its beers.





Czech Republic

by Max Bahnson

The Ministry of Agriculture has announced changes in the beer legislation, more specifically, in the official nomenclature. Speciál (for beers with > 13° Plato) will now be called Silné pivo (strong beer). Porter as a category for dark beers of 18° Plato or higher is to be scrapped in response to the new trends among Czech brewers, which was also the reason to revise the flagship category of Czech beer, Ležák—Lager (for beers between 11 and 12° Plato). In recent years, ales and other top-fermented beers have grown in popularity to the point that larger brewers have been exploring them, and many people in the industry have complained that the name of the category makes little sense when applied to those beers—a 4.5% Stout must be labelled (top-fermented) Dark Lager. When the new nomenclature comes into force later this year, it will include two categories for the above mentioned Plato range: Ležák, for bottom fermented beers, and Plné Pivo (Full Beer) for the rest.

The official count of microbreweries has passed 300, and it keeps growing without slowing its pace, with Minipivovar having become part of the mainstream language. Microbreweries are getting more attention outside beer circles and this year's edition of Solima, the country's largest food trade-fair, included a wing dedicated solely to them.



PHOTO CREDIT: ØYVIND HOLMSTAD.

European Report



Germany

by Jim Dykstra

Hopped Up

The United States overtook Germany to lead the world in hop production last year, according to a report from the International Hop Growers Convention, which took place in Nuremberg, Germany.

Historically, Germany has secured the top spot, but drought coupled with some of the lowest rates of domestic consumption in decades drastically decreased production to 62.2 million pounds, or 33 percent of the world total, compared to the U.S. production of 80.2 million pounds, or 42 percent of the world total.

The continuing U.S. IPA trend has also provided a significant boost to America's total, the vast majority of which comes from Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

Overall, total world hop production topped out at 190.4 million pounds in 2015, down from 208.1 million in 2014. The highest total reached in the past 10 years came in 2008, at 245 million pounds of dankness.



Building a B.O.M.



Photos courtesy B.O.M. Brewery

By: Jim Dykstra

In the tiny city of Bree, in the upper right-hand corner of Belgium, Bert van Hecke is meticulously crafting B.O.M., or Belgian Original Maltbakery packages with a glint in his eye.

Before you dial Interpol, these aren't your standard incendiary devices. These packages are chock-full of personally-roasted malt, along with meticulously-blended hops and sugars designed as ready-to-brew kits for professional brewers. Only the creator knows exactly what's inside.

Bert van Hecke is the founder of B.O.M. Brewery, which is not a brewery in the traditional sense, but a

gypsy brewing and malt roasting company.

His origins were humble, learning brewing basics from a friend of the family who would distill gin, a practice van Hecke described as "totally illegal." As his interests turned to beer, he went from homebrewing in the kitchen and "making everything sticky" to brewing for some of the most highly touted brewers in the world, beginning at Orval and Rodenbach before being named cellarmaster of Brouwerij Boon, brewmaster of Saint Bernardus and even spending two years as head brewer of a brewery outside of Shanghai. And somehow, he also found time to work at New Belgium, which gave him an appreciation for aromatic American hops.



Bert van Hecke is the founder of B.O.M. Brewery, which is not a brewery in the traditional sense, but a gypsy brewing and malt roasting company.

“I always say, ‘I have no style,’” says van Hecke. “Sometimes a painter just wants to paint, and that is how I think of beer. I draw from Belgium, the States, China, but I don’t brew by style.” In some ways, he is more a sculptor, starting with “roasting, toasting and tasting” until he has perfected his recipe.

Van Hecke seems to find great joy in transcending the typical. He speaks excitedly of the malting process, which he does himself on a modified coffee roaster. In order to afford the roaster, which was the price of a “small brewery,” he needed a loan.

“I went to the bank and said ‘I want to buy a roaster

to start a malt bakery,’” van Hecke said. “They asked for references. I had no references for a malt bakery, because there were no malt bakeries.”

As one of the few, or perhaps the only, maltster/brewers in the world, van Hecke’s beers benefit from the freshness of their ingredients.

“There’s nothing better than freshly roasted malts,” he said. “If [certain Belgian brewers] were still roasting their own malt, their beers would taste better.”

Van Hecke contracts with two separate breweries, and they have no idea exactly what’s inside his recipes. They



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are simply presented with B.O.M. packages containing his pre-blended malts, hops and sugars, and simple instructions to follow in order to create his beers.

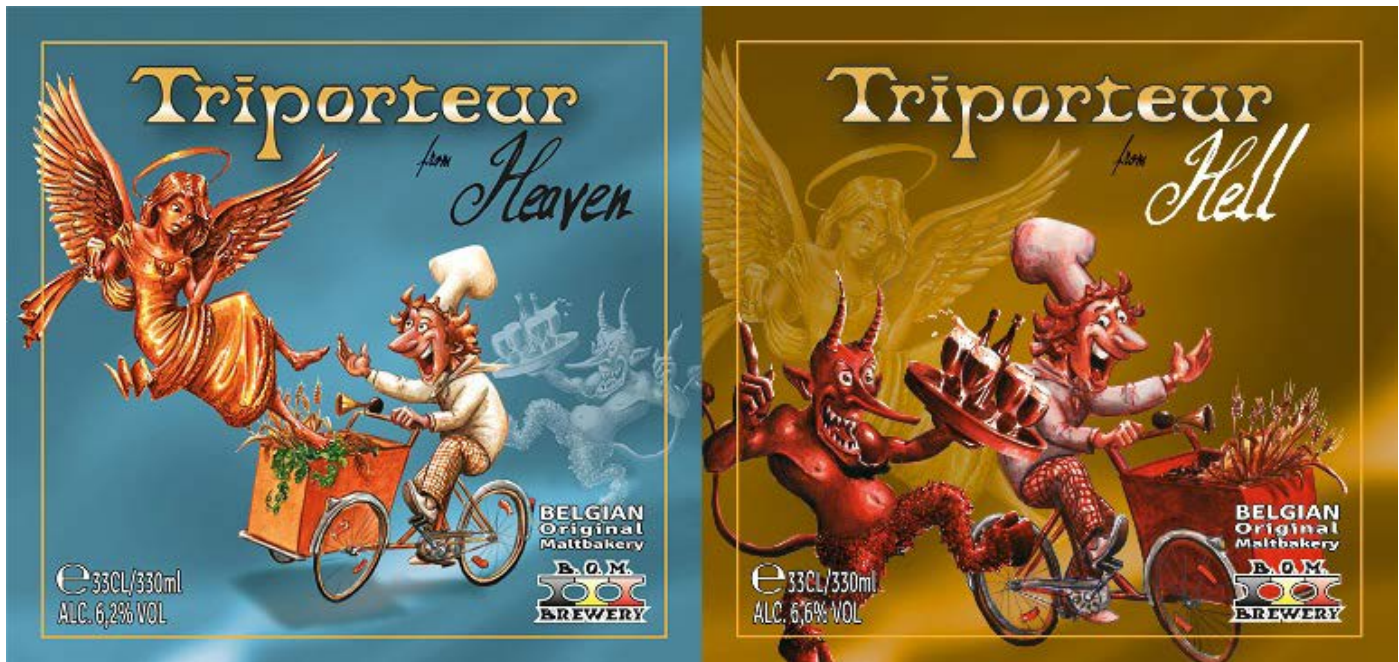
In van Hecke’s words, there are “too many” different B.O.M. beers available, but in the U.S. there are four, currently, from his Triporteur series, a reference to the tripartite blends of sours, aged and fresh beers. Triporteur also translates literally to “delivery tricycle,” as seen on the beers’ eye-catching label artwork, which was partly inspired as a reaction to the standard austere Trappist beer label style.

The first is Heaven, a thoroughly hopped and dry hopped ale, loosely categorized as a Blonde. B.O.M.’s first brew, this alluringly cloudy ale beckons with

a fruity aroma and smooth, snappy flavor from traditional English hops and B.O.M. wheat malt, amongst others.

Next, of course, is Hell, ringing in at a devilishly exact 6.66%. Hell ages well, with a flavor reminiscent of fresh-brewed coffee and just-baked bread. The name comes from the malts used, which van Hecke describes as “roasty, toasty and burned!”

Then there’s Full Moon 12, a self-described parody of another classic Belgian beer that may or may not have “12” in its title (the monks threatened legal action if the word “parody” was used on the label). Clocking in at a perfectly cellar-able 10.2%, Full Moon 12 is brewed with a secret blend of freshly-roasted B.O.M. malts



Heaven beckons with a fruity aroma and smooth, snappy flavor from traditional English hops, and Hell rings in at a devilishly exact 6.66% ABV with a flavor reminiscent of fresh-brewed coffee and just-baked bread.

and aged on home-toasted, Belgian-grown oak that he sourced himself.

And for now, Kinky Berry; a truly complex fruit beer, made with real cherry, blueberry, B.O.M. roasted blueberry, blackberry, elderberry, apple, pear and banana. Juniper berries, orange and citrus peels add additional complexity on top of a six-malt blend and dry hopping, pouring a lustrous ruby red.

As for what's in the pipeline, van Hecke is working on a recipe for a beer with notes of "Belgian oak and fruitiness, with medium toast in the malt," with a "philosophy of chardonnay."

Like his recipes, Bert van Hecke's philosophy is a mix of the best parts of the world's beer culture blended with refreshing levity. His Belgian roots taught him to keep things "simple and consistent," and his time in China taught him the importance of flavor and aromatics.

And of course, he always keeps things fresh.



Kinky Berry is a truly complex fruit beer.

Featured European Beer



B.O.M. Brewery



Full Moon 12

A self-described parody of another classic Belgian beer that may or may not have “12” in its title (the monks threatened legal action if the word “parody” was used on the label). Clocking in at a perfectly cellar-able 10.2%, Full Moon 12 is brewed with a secret blend of freshly-roasted B.O.M. malts and aged on home-toasted, Belgian-grown oak chopped by the brewer himself.

Kinky Berry

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Triporteur from Hell

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