

The *Beer* Connoisseur®

BeerConnoisseur.com

TOP Rated Beers of 2015



The Beer Connoisseur®

Winter 2016, Issue 22

New Year, New Brews. But first, we take a look at the Top 100 Beers of 2015, along with over a hundred more from our Beer Review. Brewers weigh in on their high-scoring beers, and we test the waters of the Mallorcan beer scene before docking in Charleston for a divine tour of the old city's bustling beer scene.

Sherry Dryja brings you recipes to wow and woo with pairings to boot, and Jonathan Ingram delves into pairing whiskey while researching the holy origins of chocolate malt. You'll hear from venerated brewing luminaries behind some of the top U.S. breweries and see what they're doing to stay above water in an ocean of competition. We've got more content than you could wave a Crooked Stave at, but you've got all year to read. Sit back with your favorite six-pack and enjoy!

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From the Editors



We're here to kick off 2016 with the best of old, new, and splendid golden brews.

In our inaugural New Years issue, we have the Top 100 Beers of 2015 as rated by our ever-growing team of BJCP-ranked judges, along with a veritable rogue's gallery of brew news, travel stories, profiles and mouth-watering recipes designed to share your love of beer with a special someone, no matter who it is. The only judgments we cast are upon the lovingly crafted liquids you'll see gracing the pages.

We chart the path of Heavy Seas' founder Hugh Sisson for our Innovators Series, and hear from New Holland's "Beervangelist" Fred Bueltmann, a champion of all things craft.

Jonathan Ingram weighs in on the divine origins of chocolate malt in between musings on how to pair beer with its brother in spirit, whiskey, and we travel to the tropical paradise of Mallorca before brushing off the Spanish moss for a beer tour of Charleston.

As usual, our beer review features over 100 delightful creations from around the country with winter warm-

ers, Double IPAs and deep, dark stouts leading the way coupled with Brewer Q & As for any beer that scored 91 or above. There's plenty more, but we'll leave it up to you to seek it out. After all, you've got all year.

So light a fire, get comfy in your favorite sipping chair, and enjoy some winter reading in the 22nd issue of *The Beer Connoisseur*!

Cheers!

Jim & Chris

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Contributors

Martyn Cornell

Beer consultant, beer educator, author, journalist and blogger; Martin is Britain's leading authority on the history of beer and beer styles. His published books include *Strange Tales of Ale* (Amberley Publications, 2015) and *Amber Gold and Black* (History Press, 2010).



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.



Owen Ogletree

The founder of the popular Classic City Brew Fest held in Athens, Georgia each spring, Owen runs Brewtopia.info and writes for the bi-monthly *Southern Brew News*. Full-time in beer, Owen has also served as a beer judge at the Great American Beer Festival and the Great British Beer Festival.

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, an 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*.



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Industry News

A-B InBev Purchases Three More Craft Breweries

2015 was a big year for craft beer. While the statistics aren't in yet, the sheer number of acquisitions and expansions shows that the craft beer's growth hasn't diminished in the slightest. As always, macro vs. micro remains a major theme of any enlightened barroom, and A-B InBev was extremely busy in 2015.



More recently, the megabrewer added three highly regarded local breweries from around the world to its High End line of beers. Breckenridge Brewery in Denver, CO, Four Peaks Brewing Co. in Tempe, AZ and Camden Town Brewery in London will provide 189,000 barrels of high-quality craft beer to A-B InBev's High End stable.

Four Peaks Brewing was founded in 1996 and has grown into one of Arizona's largest breweries. With a devoted following and delectable beers like Sunbru, Hop Knot IPA and Kilt Lifter (a 5-time GABF-medaling Scottish-style ale), this is an important regional pickup for the company.

Even more revered is Breckenridge. When it opened in 1990, it was only the third craft brewery in Colorado – what a difference 25 years makes. Now that Colorado has 235 craft breweries (according to the BA), Breckenridge is one of the elder statesmen of Coloradan craft beer.

While American craft brewery acquisitions garner much of the media's attention, A-B InBev's acquisition of Camden Town Brewery in London is of equal importance. While not quite as steeped in tradition and history as Breckenridge and Four Peaks, Camden Town was founded in 2010

and has experienced a surge of growth as the craft beer movement has begun to take off in England.

The A-B InBev/SABMiller deal continues to be scrutinized by financial analysts, and in a bid to help with its passage, the company announced plans to sell SABMiller flagships Grolsch and Peroni, along with recently acquired Meantime Brewing Company. Both Grolsch and Peroni could each be worth upwards of \$1 billion, leaving other large macrobrewing corporations such as Heineken and Constellation out of the conversation due to regulatory concerns.

AleSmith and Mikkeller Collaborate in San Diego

San Diego's AleSmith Brewing Co. and world-renowned gypsy brewery Mikkeller announced plans to open up a brick-and-mortar establishment for Mikkel Borg Bjergsø's creations in AleSmith's hometown of San Diego. The brewery will be called Mikkeller Brewing San Diego.

AleSmith brewmaster Peter Zien (who possesses an ownership stake in the business) will remain on as a creative consultant and help "provide ongoing assistance on as-needed basis," according to a press release from AleSmith.

Since AleSmith has moved into a sprawling new 105,500-square-foot facility, the old 30-barrel brewhouse that AleSmith started out using has become Mikkeller headquarters.



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Zien and Bjergsø (along with the future staff of Mikkeller San Diego) have already brewed two collaborations in the new facilities, AleSmith-Mikkeller IPA and AleSmith-Mikkeller APA. Both beers are available at the brewery taprooms and other craft beer havens throughout California.

Plans are already in place to convert Mikkeller's new taproom to be more in line with the aesthetic of the brewery's global beer bars, and the updated sampling room is set to open in early 2016.

"People have always asked me when I'm going to open my own brewery, and my answer has always been 'never.' It's the easiest answer, but it's been on my mind for several years," Bjergsø said in the press release. "I like being a 'gypsy brewer,' but know that having a stake in a U.S. brewery will change our position here. Brewing in one of the best breweries in the world really makes sense. If they can brew beers like they do at AleSmith, it really can't go wrong."

Ballast Point Sets Sale for Constellation

In another landmark deal for the increasingly contentious world of craft beer, Ballast Point Brewing & Spirits has agreed to sell to Constellation Brands for a cool \$1 Billion. This marks the first entry into the craft market for the company which owns an array of brands including Corona, Modelo, and variety of wine companies.

Founded in 1996, the San Diego-based Ballast Point has become one of the fastest growing beer companies in the U.S., with projected sales of over 4 million cases in calendar 2015, an increase of over 100 percent from the previous calendar year. Its growth was largely fueled by flavorful amendments to its core line-up including Habanero and Grapefruit Sculpin, and an ever-growing line of spirits. 2016 promises to continue the trend with additions of Pineapple



Photo courtesy Ballast Point Brewing Co.

Sculpín IPA, Mango Even Keel Session IPA, Watermelon Dorado Double IPA and Ginger Big Eye IPA.

Ballast Point ranked number 31 on the Brewers Association's Top 50 Craft Breweries of 2015.

Papazian to Relax, Have Homebrew

After 37 years at the helm of the Brewers Association, Charlie Papazian will step down from day-to-day operations this month. Founder of both the BA and the Great American Beer Festival, Papazian will still attend "key Brewers Association and American Homebrewers Association events," according to the organization.

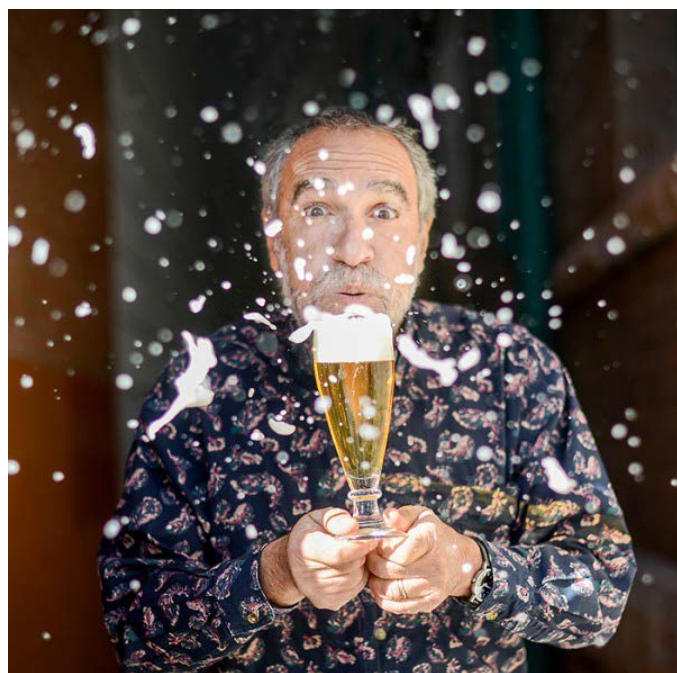


Photo courtesy Brewers Association

"My 37-year journey as founding president has provided me a lifetime of fulfillment," Papazian said. "Being part of an organization that serves to enhance the opportunities for professional and amateur craft brewers is especially rewarding. The hard work, dedication and long hours of past and current association staff and the community of brewers it has served has undoubtedly made the world a better place for every beer drinker."

CEO Bob Pease will take over presidential duties, giving Papazian ample time to sit back and enjoy a nice homebrew.

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Photos courtesy of Heavy Seas Beer

Heavy Seas founder Hugh Sisson rallies the troops.

Innovators Series: Hugh Sisson – Navigating the Heavy Seas

By: Owen Ogletree

Hugh Sisson, founder of Heavy Seas Beer, definitely makes the cut on any list of the most influential American craft beer pioneers. Hugh guided his fledgling brewery through the troubled waters of the late '90s when the first craft beer “bubble” burst. In his words, “In those days, we were playing the game not to lose, instead of playing the game to win.”

Throughout the years, Sisson has employed creativity, business smarts, adaptability and a deep adoration of magnificent beer to guide his brewery plan and remain successful, even in today’s wild and wacky craft beer market. For almost 35 years, Sisson has been instrumental in introducing craft beer to the Mid-Atlantic region,

influencing brewery legislation and setting the tone for today’s craft beer culture.

BIRTHING A BREWPUB

In 1980, fresh out of graduate school, Sisson got his start in the bar/restaurant business by running a little bar in Baltimore that his dad had bought and renovated five months earlier. He quickly figured out that he had to come up with something creative and different for the bar to stand out and grab the attention of potential customers. Sisson developed an interest in beer while visiting London as part of his undergraduate studies, so he decided to turn Sisson’s pub into a beer-focused bar.

Sisson recalls, “Most of the interesting selections we could

get back in the day were imported beers, and Sisson's featured 120 beers – mostly imports. We were actually Maryland's first draft Guinness account. So, fast-forward a couple of years, and my father and I wondered what would happen if we could make our own beer at the pub."

Thus began months of research for Hugh Sisson into the complicated world of brewery equipment, plumbing, ingredients, fermentation and serving techniques. "We didn't know what the hell we were doing," he recalls. "But by 1986 we started to realize that installing a brewery in the pub was doable, just not legal in the state of Maryland. With the help of a local legislator, we introduced a state brewpub bill in 1987, thinking full well that it would fail. When the bill actually passed, we had to get on the stick to beat the competition of other startups, and in August of 1989, we brewed our first beer and became Maryland's first brewpub."

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

Hugh stayed with Sisson's brewpub for five more years but left in 1994 to focus entirely on beer production. It took most of 1995 to raise substantial capital, purchase and install equipment, and hire a staff, but Clipper City Brewing Co. (now called Heavy Seas) brewed its first batch of beer on December 8, 1995.

Sisson made the decision early on to focus on running the business, instead of making the beer. "I never did any of the brewing at Clipper City and Heavy Seas," he says. "I really missed the hot, sweaty brew sessions at the pub that rewarded me with a tank of fermenting beer at the end of the day, but I figured with Clipper City it was important for me to stick to spreadsheets, finances and sales."

With the impressive growth of craft beer in the early '90s going flat for several years starting around 1996, Sisson found the early days at Clipper City quite a challenge. The brewery struggled for distribution outside of their own backyard around Baltimore, and Sisson realized that most of the local beer scene lacked a level of sophistication in regard to beer styles. "I had to dummy down what I was doing with products as a way to survive," Sisson points out. "Clipper City's brands were classic styles and lighter-weight beers because the market just wasn't into big beers at the time. In 1997, we even started contract brewing for other breweries just to keep the doors open. It was all about survival."

Around 2002, American craft beer numbers began to show improvement, but Sisson noticed that a type of "Darwinian attrition" had taken place, with many breweries being lost during the lean times. "When the market bounced back, the quality of the beers at the surviving craft breweries was really good," he says. "I wanted to start making more



Sisson's passion for beer began with classic U.K. styles.

adventurous beers, but I didn't think these would be appropriate under the Clipper City name."

HEAVY SEAS ON THE HORIZON

Sisson premiered his Heavy Seas line in 2003 to showcase innovative, high-gravity, experimental brews, and by 2010 realized it was time to concentrate totally on Heavy Seas. Clipper City brands were eliminated, all contract brewing was phased out and Sisson says that business "finally became fun."

Under the Heavy Seas theme, total sales expanded 35 percent in 2010 and 55 percent the following year. In 2012, the brewery hit serious capacity constraints and struggled with demand throughout 2014. "We basically had to rebuild the facility from the bottom-up while staying in



Sisson and Heavy Seas brewmaster Christopher Leonard share a CrossBones Session IPA.

business – which is not something I would recommend,” notes Sisson. “With the expanded capacity, we should finish 2015 up around 20 percent. In the grand scheme, we’re a happy, nice little company, and we make really good, consistent beers.”

In regard to the early days of Clipper City, Sisson recalls a greater focus on traditional beer, with most American craft brewers basing their beers on classic European styles. “We were kind of doing our beer apprenticeship in this country,” he says. “But in the last few years, I think there’s been an insane explosion of experimentation and pushing the limits for the sake of pushing the limits. There are remarkably interesting, good beers being produced these days, but with all the trendy sour, gose, peanut butter and M&M beer popping up, I still try to execute variations on classic themes at Heavy Seas, and I think we do this well. When people ask me when I’m going to make sour beers, I tell them that I’ve spent years trying to make sure my beers don’t sour.”

Sisson seems a bit concerned with the current, exponential expansion of craft breweries when he relates, “It seems like there are two breweries opening every day, and not all of them are making great beer. I live in a business environment where if someone doesn’t ask for a second pint, I lose. We’ll never win a medal for Loose Cannon IPA, because it’s not bitter enough for BJCP specs, but our customers like the fact that it’s floral, hoppy, aromatic, drinkable, and makes you want another pint.”

A TASTE FOR THE CLASSICS

Sisson cut his beer-drinking teeth in England and readily admits his affinity for classic U.K. pale ales, bitters and malty IPAs. “These styles are where I live. I do like Belgian ales but am a little ‘Belgianed out’ these days. I also still have a warm spot in my heart for a classic, well-styled pilsner.”

Sisson indulges his pilsner fetish by planning a March, 2016 release of a new Heavy Seas Pounder Pilsner that

will include classic pilsner ingredients such as European malts, noble hops and a traditional lager yeast strain. He sees a perfect opportunity at present to make interesting lager beers that should stand out in today's sea of IPAs. In shooting for an ABV around 4.5 - 5 percent, Sisson foresees Pounder as a crisp, immensely appealing session beer that will make a perfect alternative to drinking four Loose Cannons in a sitting – something he calls “a really bad idea.”

Walking a line between making beers that he wants to drink versus producing beers that the market demands forms a constant challenge for Sisson. As a seasoned business owner, Sisson tends to focus on the demands of consumers. “Some new breweries seem to have lost sight of the fact that this is a business,” Sisson believes. “You own a commercial brewery not just for pure artistic expression, otherwise you just have an expensive hobby. You don't get to make the artistic beers unless you make a living off the main commercial brands. How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?”



Sisson saw his Heavy Seas Desert Island series as an enjoyable and creative outlet for his brewers, but sales and marketing expectations for these special beers were limited. He does emphasize the importance of including a creative, artistic spin on every beer that comes from Heavy Seas, and notes that making outstanding classic styles is a challenging process with less room for error.

INNOVATION & RELEVANCE

When discussing how to keep the Heavy Seas brands relevant in today's crazy craft beer environment, Sisson stresses the importance of consistent innovation. “We retire a few brands, and add new, interesting beers each year. We have to be willing to reinvent ourselves, yet always go to market with realistic strategies.”

Regarding the future, Sisson remarks, “Our focus is to dig in deeper in our current core market of about ten states these days. It can be hard to get placement in bars because of all the new breweries fighting for tap handles. When the market stabilizes soon and the dust settles, we'll seize the opportunity to dive into new markets.”

Sisson explains that having a slew of new breweries on the scene does help with influencing governmental craft beer policies. “I started the Brewers Association of Maryland years ago and am still heavily involved, but I attend meetings these days and only know about one-third of the brewers. All these new people are making the association stronger, and our industry is getting better at being politically savvy. We definitely have more clout.”

When asked to comment on a few recent Heavy Seas beers that made him proud, Sisson immediately mentions Cross-Bones Session IPA. “Even with 4.5 percent ABV, this hoppy beer came out complex and extremely drinkable. Also, I enjoyed our Blackbeard's Breakfast Barrel-aged Imperial Coffee Porter that was infused with dark Sumatran coffee and subtle bourbon barrel notes. With our spirit barrel-aged beers, we like to take a ‘less is more’ approach to achieve a nuance, but not turn the beer into a glass of bourbon. The coffee was delicate and smooth with a little oaky vanilla, and none of the flavors reached out and grabbed you by the nuts. I also love our Deep Six Porter – a classic U.K.-style at 6.5 percent ABV. It's smooth with light coffee and dark chocolate tones, and the Maris Otter malt provides a creamy, malt-focused texture that's backed by supportive hop bitterness.”

A PASSION FOR THE PROFESSION

Cask ale ranks as another passion for Sisson, who admits that selling cask-conditioned beer is more of a labor of love than a viable business opportunity. “We sell around 150 casks a month,” Sisson points out. “In terms of cost of



"In terms of cost of labor and some theft of our cask shells, we don't make any money from cask ale, but having this special beer in the market generates tremendous buzz. Cask ale is the finest expression of draft beer, in my opinion."

labor and some theft of our cask shells, we don't make any money from cask ale, but having this special beer in the market generates tremendous buzz. Cask ale is the finest expression of draft beer, in my opinion."

When asked if he still enjoys the beer business after surviving the roller coaster ride over so many years, Sisson replies, "Yeah, I still have fun, but it takes a huge amount of energy. For example, I'm out for the next five nights actively promoting our beer. It's really a younger person's game, and I'm in my early 60s, so at some point I need to start playing a more strategic roll and less of an active, ambassadorial role. I don't know if I can be like my buddy Jim Koch of Sam Adams – he's going to be out there kissing babies, shaking hands and selling his beer until they put him in the ground. Not a chance for me. I want to retire one day and volunteer my time helping young business developers not make the mistakes I made."

Sisson admits that doing public relations for Heavy Seas can be both rewarding and full of surprises. He recalls a holiday beer tasting at a large bar in DC with ten different beers being introduced by representatives from ten breweries. "We had a cask of Winter Storm," notes Sisson. "When it was my turn, I went up and described the beer to the crowd, but when I was served a pint, the beer had no resemblance to the beer I just described – other than having the correct color. I thought, 'Holy shit, how did we get the wrong product?' Jason Oliver with Devils Backbone came up next with a beer already in hand and told the MC that this was not his beer. Since mine was the only beer in cask form, I have no idea how the servers switched our two beers, but I had to get back up and tell the crowd that everything I just said goes with the next beer. There's never a dull moment in this business."

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Brewing With: Fred Bueltmann

New Holland's VP of Brand and Lifestyle discusses his artisanal philosophy with The Beer Connoisseur

By: Jim Dykstra

BC: *You seem to be the embodiment of "craft." How'd you get that way, and why are you so dedicated to it?*

Bueltmann: My creativity was encouraged while I was growing up, which was originally focused on developing a talent and career in music, but was present in all of my interests and hobbies. I feel like I've had a strong appetite for learning, which was also encouraged by the mentors in my life. This overall curiosity and creativity led me to learning to homebrew in the late '80s and teaching myself to cook. The more I learned, the more I could see evidence of process, good and bad; whether I made it or not.

This awareness had great impact on what I valued, and led to great excitement when I saw there were various opportunities to get in on it. I didn't always know it at the time, but I was slowly bringing my professional and personal values closer together.

BC: *Very few people grow up wanting to work in craft beer. What path did you take to end up where you are?*

Bueltmann: I went to music school and intended on going into film scoring. I ran out of money and was trying to finish school part-time, while playing gigs and tending bar. In a strange happenstance, my homebrewing partner Mike ended up being hired by Guinness as a regional ambassador to Pilsner Urquell, our favorite beer at the time. He recommended I talk to and interview with his distributor, which was an industry and world I was completely unfamiliar with. I felt like I was hearing about a make-believe world as I heard about both his job and the one I ended up interviewing for. I had dismissed "business" as a threat to my creative career in music, so I had no idea this blend of passion, creativity and business existed as an option. I talked my way into a sales job at the distributor, selling mostly specialty imports and the rest is history. My passions collided, and I found I was really good at helping interpret beers, and find how to



Photos courtesy of New Holland Brewing Co.



"In terms of cost of labor and some theft of our cask shells, we don't make any money from cask ale, but having this special beer in the market generates tremendous buzz. Cask ale is the finest expression of draft beer, in my opinion."

get people connected to them. After two years, I got a job managing the Midwest for Warsteiner, and in 1995 I was hired as the first sales manager at Kalamazoo Brewing (Bell's).

BC: *What drew you to New Holland?*

Bueltmann: In 2004, I decided it was time to leave Bell's, where I had been for the better part of 10 years as VP of Sales and Marketing. I knew Brett and Jason from the Michigan Brewers Guild, where I had served on the board with Brett for a number of years. As I looked around the industry and considered my next steps, the biggest draw to New Holland was our creative fit. It felt like I had what they needed and they had what I needed. There was a great culture of creativity and balance, which we've certainly built on since. There's an overall commitment to quality and measuring our accomplishments against our vision and values, versus against others' – that I greatly appreciate and enjoy driving forward.

BC: *Where do you want to take this company?*

Bueltmann: I want to see us continue to be a healthy, strong, creative company that makes people's lives better by the products and information we put forward. I want to keep helping people connect to the food and drink they buy and enjoy their experiences with them

as well. There's a lot of pressure to go faster and shout louder, which I believe can take away from the original purpose of the craft renaissance. If we continue to offer more quality choices to people, while upholding the quality and integrity of products like Dragon's Milk and Mad Hatter, amongst others, while making sure we take time to "Stop and Taste," – we're happy.

BC: *New Holland does a lot of experimentation with spirits, barrels and yeasts. What's the creative environment like?*

Bueltmann: It varies, but overall, we like the idea of being perpetual students and always being willing to ask questions and explore new answers. As any company grows, this can get challenging, as we have to balance it against being consistent and having really strong protocols over an ever-growing team. Our leadership is empowered to make a case for something new or challenge an existing idea.

Our company's vision is built around six core values: People, Teams & Teamwork, Artistry, Quality, Profitability and Ambition. I think it's our job to keep all of those in balance, so that your commitment to being creative is also a commitment to driving quality forward, while doing so profitably with people feeling valued and enjoying working together. It's harder than it sounds, but we believe in keeping those values as our guideposts, and I think it makes for both a productive and creative environment.

BC: *We hear you have a new brewpub in the works. What are you looking forward to most about it?*

Buelmann: We are opening “The Knickerbocker,” a New Holland brewpub and distillery in Grand Rapids in the fall of 2016. It’s our first “new” build out and it’s part of neighborhood revitalization, which is all very exciting. We’ll be showcasing a great deal of connection to food and drink. The Knickerbocker will capture the essence of eating and drinking well, by exploring the art of cooking, brewing, distilling and hosting. The building is inviting, including large community spaces, as well as smaller, cozy nooks. We will feature specialty beer and spirits brewed on-site, as well as the established beer and spirits brands New Holland is well known for, and a full-service restaurant featuring farm to table, nose to tail scratch cooking.

BC: *When does a “craft” company become just a “company”? Or, how big is too big?*

Buelmann: I think it all depends on the culture within the company. If you continue to connect to your mission and values and find ways to keep your growing number of team members connected with each other and a part of your vision, then size isn’t really a detriment. If size and pace convince the organization to sacrifice their original vision and values in the name of quick and easy growth – the phrase “it’s just business...” comes to mind, then they might start to look less recognizable to their origin, and start leaning towards the commodity brands they once

battled against. Overall, it’s not a number – it’s about process, culture and connection.

BC: *Do you think a beer company can positively affect larger social change?*

Buelmann: Hell yes.

BC: *What’s your favorite food/drink pairing?*

Buelmann: An impossible question, to be sure. I’ll go with Dragon’s Milk and Gail Ambrosius Chocolates’ Shitake-chocolate truffle.

BC: *Can you offer a few words to live by?*

Buelmann: I hope for all of us to take more time to Stop and Taste, to linger over flavors and conversation and to indulge in the unhurried meal.



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How To Sip Whiskey, Drink Beer

New Annals of Craft Collaboration

By Jonathan Ingram

The combination of drinking whiskey by the shot and chasing it with beer is known as a boilermaker, a process that generally is like throwing a haymaker to one's head. It's a method more familiar to the 1960s and B-movies than the current era, if only because whiskey and beer are so much better these days.

Yet, if you stop to consider that both whiskey and beer are made from malt, it can make sense to put them together again, precisely because the quality of each continues to improve with innovation. So I decided to give some thought

to pairing whiskey and beer in the same three ways that one would pair food and beer. In other words, choose beers whose flavors are either complementary to the whiskey, a contrast to the whiskey or that refresh the palate.

The results were quite surprising.

Given the ruminative qualities of whiskey, which have inspired many an artist and writer, one might hope this pairing revelation initially resulted from intuitive thinking, if not drinking. Alas, I must confess that it was while working on a story about Caskmates made by Jameson Irish Whiskey that the idea occurred.

Caskmates is aged in barrels that previously held an Irish stout and prior to that, these same barrels were used to age Jameson Original. The Caskmates whiskey is highlighted by notes of cocoa with a hint of hops – which came from using the same aging barrels used by Franciscan Well of Cork, Ireland to make its Jameson Stout.

In the company's media release about Caskmates, this mild-mannered suggestion was included: "With the subtle suggestion of hops in every sip, it also makes a perfect accompaniment to stout beer."

Initially, I went to a Guinness stout as a pairing – in part because the Franciscan Well Jameson Stout is not available yet in the U.S. Alas, the Guinness pairing made me long for something richer.

So the journey began. At one of my favorite beer emporiums I bought a four-pack of Old Rasputin by North Coast Brewing Company, a truly rich Russian Imperial Stout. I also picked up a bottle of Taddy Porter by Samuel Smith's as well as a six-pack of Boulevard Brewing Company's Unfiltered Wheat. Once at the counter, I confessed that my selections were all whiskey chasers. "Oh, you're going to have a merry holiday season," was the reply. The pairing idea already seemed to be gaining traction.

Once at home by the fireplace (where there was no fire due to this year's mild winter), my glass held two fingers of Caskmates and standing nearby was a pour of Old Rasputin, impenetrably black and topped by a creamy tan head. If straight whiskey invariably has a dry, hot finish, it quickly began to make real sense to follow it with the wetness and coolness of beer. And then start over. Soon the fire was roaring.

The Old Rasputin indeed offered a complementary richness to the cocoa and hop notes of the Caskmates and a soothing wet finish. It helped the palate find the subtle but noticeably present hoppiness in both. It was a warm, sensuous, flavorful and almost analgesic combination.

The next logical step was a sip of the whiskey followed by the Unfiltered Wheat in order to "cut" or cleanse the palate. I thought an American wheat style would be a bit more hoppy, less spicy and yeasty compared to European wheat beers, therefore a good selection as a palate restorer. What surprised me was how much the Caskmates and its distilled malt brought out the sweetness in the malt of the Boulevard. In one respect, this beer had never tasted so good, and the whiskey sustained its contrasting appeal of the cocoa and hop notes amidst the distilled malt. Still, it was not nearly as bracing or levitating as the complementary pairing of a Russian Imperial Stout.

The remaining method of food pairing calls for a beer that offers a contrast. I chose the Taddy Porter to pair with the whiskey because it tends to have a slightly more caramel and tangy flavor found in a classic English Porter, but is "stout" enough to hang with whiskey. Although a bit roasty, Taddy Porter is less hoppy and less chocolatey than many current stouts or American porters.

There was indeed a contrast – the Taddy blossomed in terms of its dark fruit notes and the whiskey retained its slightly dry notes of cocoa and hops plus a wee bit of the green apple, a flavor note in the Jameson Original used to make Caskmates.

The initial conclusion was that it only takes two fingers of whiskey straight up to handle three different pairings.

So it's not a volume thing like boilermakers. Certainly a feeling of bonhomie emerges, not surprisingly, with each beer and whiskey combo. But one combination stood out. The real upwardly bound sensation concerned the complementary matching with the mighty stout; the other two seemed to enhance the flavor of the beer without returning the favor to the whiskey.

After this heady introduction to sipping and drinking and maybe even a little thinking, it was logical to go for another tasting with a beer from my cellar, where I found a nicely aged year-old bottle of

Gonzo Imperial Porter from Flying Dog Brewery – an extra hoppy version of a Baltic Porter first created in honor of Hunter S. Thompson. Gonzo journalist Thompson was fond of beer and whiskey, among other inebriants, and probably came up with a few pairings of his own along the way. So this seemed to be a perfect candidate for an alliance with the Caskmates, although I couldn't decide if it should be considered a complementary or contrasting pairing.

The Gonzo Imperial is a thrilling beer, no doubt, starting with Ralph Steadman's extraordinary label in tribute to



Photo courtesy of Defiant Whiskey



Photo by Jonathan Ingram

Thompson; much like the various collaborations of these two journalists, the label tends to introduce hallucinogenic phobias. The beer is a meaty porter as opposed to tangy or chocolatey with an intentional burst of extra hops. These characteristics were emphasized by a year in the cellar before a brief stay in the freezer to bring it down to 55 degrees. Alas, the beer fell in between complementary or contrasting when drunk with the Caskmates – extra bitter and not enough cocoa or fruit.

So what about other whiskeys? I went to my liquor cabinet and brought out a bottle of Defiant, a single malt, which

figured to be good for another round of pairings.

Alas, a similar result with the Gonzo Imperial Porter.

While it might be fun to report gonzo journalism lives and that I dove right into more whiskey and beer despite the bats flying through my house that had jumped off Steadman’s label amidst other paranoid ramblings, I concluded the inaugural whiskey and beer evening in favor of a second day’s sampling and a fresh palate.

Defiant, distilled in North Carolina by Blue Ridge Distillery, comes out of the same mountains that have been dominated for several centuries by Scotch-Irish distillers otherwise known as bootleggers. By creating a different way to distill it, this whiskey is made in the same spirit moonshiners often displayed. Defiant is made, surprisingly, without barrels. The influence of American oak comes from spirals of the wood used during the aging process in modern stainless steel tanks. It has been judged to be one of the most bourbon-like single malts made in the U.S.

The Day 2 tasting began with a trip to a neighborhood store, which yielded a bottle of Innis & Gunn Original as well as Lagunitas IPA.

A stab at making a complementary choice for the Defiant, the Innis & Gunn Original was one of the primogenitors of the movement to match beer with bourbon barrels. When paired with Defiant, the intense, flavorful whiskey highlighted the beer’s sweet vanilla notes, but otherwise, the beer and whiskey didn’t quite connect.

About this time, there seemed to be a pattern developing. I realized what was happening with each of the whiskeys and all of the pairings. Pairing the two alcohol types emphasizes retronasal tasting due to the volatized nature of whiskey, whose aromas are easily exhaled from the throat after a sip. A lesser known fact of life, retronasal tasting is something I first came across in Jeff Alworth's recently released book *The Beer Bible*.

Alworth's research is exacting and impeccable. In the case of explaining retronasal taste, he combined standard research on the nature of taste, which includes the limitations of the tongue, as well as insights from brewers who are charged with tasting beer daily and maintaining consistency. What Alworth confirmed was that the tasting of any flavor occurs most noticeably when the aromas come through the nose via the opening at the back of the throat, hence the phrase retronasal.

These retronasal "scents are always detected in the presence of the tongue's taste," writes Alworth. "That fusion may be why we are so easily fooled to think 'flavor' is something our taste buds sense. Yet, in most cases, when we say 'taste,' we mean the overall flavor of something, and when we say 'flavor,' we largely mean retronasal smell."

I seemed to be discovering that if a whiskey such as Caskmates has a cocoa and hops flavor, drinking a stout with a similar profile emphasizes the taste not only due to the complementary flavors. As the alcohol and intense flavors of whiskey continue to evaporate off the surface of the tongue and throat, they are exhaled into the back of the nose following a sip of beer and help carry the flavor of the beer, too. In other words, you get a real rush of flavor.

This is probably something already discovered by those drinking stouts enhanced by bourbon barrel-aging – alongside a few sips of bourbon.



In some cases, the whiskey tends to just enhance the beer. This would explain why even an American wheat tastes so flavorful after a sip of Caskmates. To take another example, the highlight of vanilla, which is the American oak flavor intensely imparted by Defiant, is brought to life by the Innis & Gunn Original. In these cases it seemed that the beer was enhanced considerably more than the whiskey.

It's clearly more cerebral if the taste in the whiskey and the paired beer are similar in the manner of Caskmates and a rich Russian Imperial Stout, because one enhances the enjoyment of the other so noticeably.

The folks at Jameson, who are very interested in making the connection to the craft beer drinker, seem to have caught on to this, too. Starting with a small batch in 2016, Jameson intends to follow Caskmates with a whiskey influenced by an IPA that was made in Jameson barrels at KelSo Beer in Brooklyn.

KelSo owner Kelly Taylor, who began his brewing life in hop-heavy San Diego, made a floral IPA with highlights of spice and vanilla two years ago Lagunitas using six Jameson barrels. That beer was shared via kegs through the brewery's distribution network in New York City and the barrels were sent back to Jameson's distillery in Cork for experimentation with an IPA-influenced whiskey.

To me, the idea of making a whiskey influenced by an IPA through the wood of a barrel is interesting, because the lush, malty and bitter Lagunitas IPA, when paired with either of the whiskeys I experimented with, simply overwhelmed the connection. But what if you had a whiskey that accentuates the flavors of an IPA followed by a healthy swig of a lusty American IPA? That could be a one-two "barley-maker" punch worth trying.

As the winter wanes, meanwhile, consider enhancing the flavor of some of your favorite beers with a well-chosen pairing of some good sipping whiskey.



Top 100



of 2015

Top 100 Beers of 2015

With a new year upon us, there comes a time when we must ruminate on our past. For us, that means a discussion of the best beers we reviewed in 2015.

There were a lot of changes for us in 2015, especially when it comes to our beer review. We greatly expanded the amount of beers we review for every issue – increasing the number from around 20 to upwards of 100! We gained many new judges and now have over 20 BJCP-ranked beer experts on call from all over the world ready to grade some of the best brews around.

In 2015, twelve beers we reviewed attained the level of “world-class,” ranging from obscure Belgian styles to ubiquitous American IPAs. Congratulations to all the breweries that achieved this status; your efforts have helped craft beer grow into a joyous celebration of delightful flavors and artistic experimentation, where nothing is off-limits and rules are meant to be broken.

For each beer that attained a world-class ranking, we interviewed one of the brewers that made that beer happen to discuss some of the beer’s backstory. Also, the judges have revisited the world-class beers they evaluated, discussing various topics that revolve around the best beers they reviewed in 2015.

Without further ado, here are the Top 100 Beers of 2015.

World Class (100 to 96)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Oude Geuze Boon - Brouwerij Boon | 7. Unsessionable - Revolution Brewing |
| 2. Tropicália - Creature Comforts Brewing Co. | 8. Malefactor - Upland Brewing Co. |
| 3. Cali-Belgique - Stone Brewing Co. | 9. Mocha Porter - Rogue Ales & Spirits |
| 4. Todd The Axe Man - Surly Brewing Co. | 10. Hennepin - Brewery Ommegang |
| 5. Blast! - Brooklyn Brewery | 11. Founders Porter - Founders Brewing Co. |
| 6. Pinchy Jeek Barl - Anderson Valley Brewing Co. | 12. Barrel Aged Old Ruffian - Great Divide Brewing Co. |

Top 100 Beers of 2015

Exceptional (95 to 91)

13. Devil's Lettuce - Short's Brewing Co.
14. MoonJuice IPA - SanTan Brewing Co.
15. Lil' Devil - AleSmith Brewing Co.
16. Unchained #20 Sticke Alt - Summit Brewing Co.
17. DirtWolf - Victory Brewing Co.
18. Helios Farmhouse Ale - Victory Brewing Co.
19. Silva Stout - Green Flash Brewing Co.
20. The Greater Pumpkin - Heavy Seas Beer
21. Captain's Daughter - Grey Sail Brewing of Rhode Island
22. Funky Pumpkin - Boulevard Brewing Co.
23. Hop Hunter IPA - Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.
24. Hop Drop 'N Roll - NoDa Brewing Co.
25. Grand-Am - Bear Republic Brewing Co.
26. Mad Hatter - New Holland Brewing Co.
27. Full Sail ESB - Full Sail Brewing Co.
28. Polygamy Nitro Porter - Wasatch Brewery
29. Ethos IPA - Tallgrass Brewing Co.
30. Johnny's American IPA - Moab Brewery
31. Hinterland Grand Cru - Hinterland Brewing Co.
32. Racer X - Bear Republic Brewing Co.
33. The Rainmaker - Green Man Brewery
34. Incurigible - New Holland Brewing Co.
35. Hoptometrist - Roughtail Brewing Co.
36. Pernicious IPA - Wicked Weed Brewing
37. Grains of Truth - Brewery Ommegang
38. White Angel - Wicked Weed Brewing
39. Hop Highway IPA - Belching Beaver Brewing Co.
40. Grunion Pale Ale - Ballast Point Brewing Co.
41. Palo Santo Marron - Dogfish Head Craft Brewery
42. Upslope Imperial IPA - Upslope Brewing Co.
43. Devastator Double Bock - Wasatch Brewery
44. Samuel Adams Rebel Raw - Boston Beer Co.
45. INDY - Motorworks Brewing
46. The Brother Imperial IPA - Fremont Brewing
47. Hop Sun - Southern Tier Brewing Co.
48. Dorado Double IPA - Ballast Point Brewing Co.
49. Saranac Legacy IPA - Matt Brewing Co.
50. Fielder's Choice - Heavy Seas Beer
51. Freak of Nature - Wicked Weed Brewing
52. Little Sumpin' Extra - Lagunitas Brewing Co.
53. Lights Out Stout - Worthy Brewing Co.
54. Double Red IPA - AleSmith Brewing Co.
55. 8-Bit Pale Ale - Tallgrass Brewing Co.
56. Collaboration No. 5
- Boulevard Brewing Co. / Cigar City Brewing
57. Pivo - Firestone Walker Brewing Co.
58. Hop'lin IPA - Southbound Brewing Co.
59. Dale's Pale Ale - Oskar Blues Brewery
60. Double Platinum - Starr Hill Brewery

Top 100 Beers of 2015

61. Dragon's Milk - New Holland Brewing Co.
62. Tropic King - Funkwerks, Inc.
63. Overrated West Coast Style IPA - Surly Brewing Co.
64. Calm Before The Storm - Ballast Point Brewing Co.
65. Nordic Saison - Harpoon Brewery
66. Frost Line Rye - Summit Brewing Co.
67. Sauvage - NOLA Brewing Co.
68. Green Man ESB - Green Man Brewery
69. Samuel Adams Boston Lager - Boston Beer Co.
70. Citra Hero - Revolution Brewing
71. Chucktown Follicle Brown - Holy City Brewing
72. Double Duckpin - Union Craft Brewing
73. Duckpin Pale Ale - Union Craft Brewing
74. Blood Orange Gose - Anderson Valley Brewing Co.
75. Dantalion Dark Wild Ale - Upland Brewing Co.
76. Red Nose Winter Ale - Natty Greene's Brewing Co.
77. HopDevil - Victory Brewing Co.
78. AleSmith IPA - AleSmith Brewing Co.
79. Picture of Nectar - Southbound Brewing Co.
80. Vanilla Bean Buffalo Sweat - Tallgrass Brewing Co.
81. Squeaky Bike Nut Brown - Moab Brewery
82. Gemini - Southern Tier Brewing Co.
83. Carnevale Ale - Port Brewing Co. / The Lost Abbey
84. Florida Cracker - Cigar City Brewing
85. Angel City IPA - Angel City Brewery
86. Golden Road Hefeweizen - Golden Road Brewing
87. Anchor Steam Beer - Anchor Brewing Co.
88. Ruination 2.0 - Stone Brewing Co.
89. Zombie Dust - 3 Floyds Brewing Co.
90. Hoplanta - Red Brick Brewing Co.
91. Stone Pale Ale 2.0 - Stone Brewing Co.
92. Rosetta - Brewery Ommegang
93. Sex Panther - SanTan Brewing Co.
94. Full Suspension Pale Ale - Squatters Craft Beers
95. Best Brown Ale - Bell's Brewery
96. Melt Away Session IPA - Newburyport Brewing Co.
97. Treasure Chest - Green Flash Brewing Co.
98. Loving Cup - Southbound Brewing Co.
99. Unfiltered Wheat Beer - Boulevard Brewing Co.
100. 12th Round - Roughtail Brewing Co.

For each beer included on this list, you may read the Judge's Review, Brewer Q & A, Beer Details and Similar Beer Recommendations online at the page below.

The individual reviews can also be found in the Summer, Fall and Holiday 2015 editions.

www.BeerConnoisseur.com/articles/top-100-beers-of-2015

For the world-class beers, please enjoy the expanded Judge's Review and Brewer Q & A on the following pages.

Oude Geuze Boon - 98 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

I consider myself lucky to have heard about the Beer Judge Certification Program just as I began homebrewing and discovering good beer. It wasn't long before I sat for the exam and began spending way too many Saturday mornings judging beer competitions. Since then, I haven't looked back, which makes my personal history with beer

virtually inseparable from my experience with homebrewing as well as the BJCP.

That's probably the reason why – like a lot of folks, but maybe more than some – I have serious respect for stylistic accuracy. It's safe to say that I have plenty of room for improvement as a homebrewer, so when I'm not drinking my own, it needs to be good. Beer fads have their place, but I'd prefer a well-brewed example of any given defined style regardless of whether it's commercially created or homebrewed. Finding one in a particularly exacting style is icing on the cake.

Enter Oude Geuze Boon. I rated this beer a 98 out of 100 points in my review, meaning it's a world class representation of the Gueuze style and one of the best beers available commercially. All things considered, this is a nearly perfect beer. In a few words, this beer's most impressive qualities are its distinctiveness, balance and depth, resulting in something almost unrivaled in any other beer I have tasted in the last few years. The beer's tangible qualities earned Oude Geuze Boon its score of 98 points, but it's what those qualities represent that earns it the title of world-class.

Making gueuze requires an infrastructure that the overwhelming majority of homebrewers do not have. Consequently, in my experience, gueuze is one of the least entered styles in homebrew competitions, and the few that are entered often suffer from hard-to-avoid flaws. That's not knocking homebrewers; it is simply a difficult style to make even for commercial breweries. One reason is that the lambics that are blended to make gueuze may, by themselves, be unpalatable – either too dry, too sweet or too acetic and sharp. Although the blending process will mitigate any extreme characteristics, it is still an unpredictable

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by Jim Koebel

Oude Geuze Boon Brouwerij Boon



Oude Geuze Boon - 98 World Class

process relative to modern brewing. Uncorking a bottle of imported gueuze can be a game of Russian roulette of sorts; I know enough to do it over a sink in case an infection occurred during secondary fermentation or transport.

Still, they're worth trying because they can be amazing beers. In Frank Boon's Q & A with *The Beer Connoisseur*, he claimed that bottles of Oude Geuze Boon could be kept for twenty years. I'm not sure I could hang on to a bottle for that long without enjoying it, but I definitely believe him. The bottle I reviewed changed markedly while I drank it, presenting two different versions of itself. I have no idea what this beer would taste like in 20 years, but it certainly proved itself over the course of thirty minutes. Unlike the majority of other beers that would become undrinkable in that amount of time, this beer has the potential to become even better.

And that is no fluke. Oude Geuze Boon's potential is the product of over a century of tradition, retooling and, probably, quite a few failed attempts. As Mr. Boon said, this beer has been brewed since 1899, but it was only perfected in 1975. That persistence is something any homebrewer can respect, and something every beer judge appreciates.

We can be pretty sure Mr. Boon didn't spend the years leading up to 1975 tweaking his recipe so that Oude Geuze Boon would fit into the BJCP style guidelines (they didn't exist then). Instead, as he put it, he was aiming for perfection. And look where it got him; it's evident that the BJCP style guidelines for Gueuze were written around his beer. If that's not representative of a World Class Beer, I don't know what is.

Brewer's Thoughts

from Frank Boon

New Year's Eve is a time of celebration. With a new year sprawled out before us, it feels like a new start – this is the year where everything will fall into place. The holiday is also rife with booziness, especially champagne. But for discerning craft beer drinkers, that super-sweet fizzy beverage can feel like the lowest common denominator so, next year, why not pop open a world-class alternative: Brouwerij Boon's incredible Oude Geuze Boon, our highest-rated beer of 2015.

Our judge was blown away by the expert craftsmanship of this beer, saying that this Gueuze "typified both art and



craft." I spoke with the founder of Brouwerij Boon, Frank Boon, about one of his most widely acclaimed creations.

I asked Frank why he thought Oude Geuze Boon attained our highest score of 2015, and he gladly elaborated: "The use of wild yeasts, collected from the air of the Zenne River Valley in Belgium, make Oude Geuze Boon a beer that keeps for at least 20 years. To make Oude Geuze Boon we blend Lambics that are between 1-3 years old and re-ferment them in the bottle. Because of this blend, Oude Geuze Boon has the winy character of a fine white wine, the body of a good glass of beer and the phenolic and oaky qualities of a good glass of whiskey."

The most difficult aspect of brewing Oude Geuze Boon is the aging of Lambic in oak casks. If something goes wrong during the aging process, the beer gets too vinegary and has to be drained. According to Frank, "To obtain a gentle, wine-like sourness, our brewers only brew in the seven cold months in Belgium, avoiding the wild yeast that can overpower the sour-making bacteria.

Many of the fine flavors found in Oude Geuze Boon are from the quality, and perfect aging process of the Lambic that go into the beer. "Well-aged Lambic will have lost its 'young beer flaws,' such as goatcheese and horse-sweat, which are sometimes mentioned as typical aromas and flavors for Gueuze are due to the use of too much young Lambic."

Because Oude Geuze Boon blends young and old Lambic, it takes on the character of a good glass of champagne – the perfect accompaniment to a new year of drinking fine beer in 2016.

Tropicália - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

I will never forget my first beer partly because I don't remember it. Evidently my Dad and my Uncle Bill (his brother), future pub owners, thought the little guy needed to taste what he was so intensely curious about. As the story goes, I was given a sip, immediately turned red and spit out the Ballantine IPA, thus ensuring a lifelong

grail-like quest to re-experience my first taste of a class of beverages I later embraced in adulthood. My mother, who never met a story she wouldn't repeat, has exponentially added new details to the story every year – even though she wasn't there. I was only 2 in one telling and as old as 4 in another, but that is what you get when it is the story of something someone doesn't remember as recounted by someone who wasn't there. As far as family oral history goes, three times the sum total of my living relatives at the time were all in the room when it happened. Today I simply triangulate my age to have been 3, which thankfully agrees with almost 66 percent of those relatives polled.

Beer for me has always been a tapestry of the familiar stitched together by the thread of the unique. As the years go by it is really difficult to experience uniqueness as an isolated thing. I remember my first Cascade hop rush from a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, my first Boston Lager, the oxidized sherry notes in my first Thomas Hardy, my first proper pint of cask ale, my first Weizen, my first Trappist Ale as well as my first truly intentionally wild beer. Every time I personally experienced something unique (for me), I filed it away even if I wasn't initially taken by it. Much like the musician who gets drawn into others' compositions the moment the first notes are strung together, I am most often treated to familiarity because let's face it: I drink around. I enthusiastically seek unique yet don't consider familiarity a failure. Familiarity presented in a unique manner is always welcome. Amadeus Mozart essentially worked with the same 7 notes Dee Dee Ramone did, even though Dee Dee could only find 4 of them on a good day. Both created unique from the familiar.

My Familiarity Factor is particularly relevant for IPAs, Ballantine notwithstanding. You are setting yourself up for disappointment by limiting yourself to unique IPAs,

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by *Phil Farrell*

Tropicália

Creature Comforts Brewing Co.



Tropicália - 96 World Class

considering they are the lifeblood of craft beer. Creature Comforts Tropicália is one of those beers that is so good precisely because it is unapologetically a master of familiarity. Hops can be thought of in the same manner as spices – with some chefs working with a few favorites and others throwing in the entire rack. In this case whether they utilized one or a blend of several, the brewers at Creature Comforts emphasized the pleasant aspects of tropical hop characteristics. The aroma is an array of tropical mainstays such as mango, orange, grapefruit, and even a little Georgia Peach. There is a bit of pine resin and a generic spiciness that hits the mark perfectly. If it were a song it would be a 45-RPM single playing in the key of Hop Sharp. The malt drum set keeps the beat going with a simple one-two of toast and caramel. The palate is then cleansed by a firm bitterness that is dry and not so thin as to disappoint yet not so full as to end your evening. So delicious and drinkable, it is a Lennon-McCartney tune you can't get out of your head rather than the overproduced Phil Spector "wall of sound" version that diminishes the original genius by too many additions. Tropicália is that tight 3-minute song that is so good you play it 3 times in a row.

Brewer's Thoughts

from Adam Beauchamp

Georgia's craft beer scene is experiencing something of a resurgence. Despite extremely antiquated beer laws that hinder the growth and sales of many breweries, Georgia has a host of thriving and popular breweries that excel in making terrific brews.

One of the state's hottest new breweries is Creature Comforts Brewing Company in Athens, GA, the home of the University of Georgia. Though they only currently have two year-round offerings, they make them count. The first is Athena, a flawlessly executed Berliner Weisse, and the second is their flagship IPA Tropicália.

Featuring a juicy cocktail of mango, guava and grapefruit flavors from Citra, Centennial and Galaxy hops, Tropicália is one of the hottest IPAs on the market right now, and I spoke with Creature Comforts brewmaster and co-founder Adam Beauchamp about this delectable drink.

"Tropicália features a ton of hop flavor and aroma, without the intense bitter aftertaste that many highly hopped IPAs exhibit. We avoid adding large amounts of



colored malts to this brew in an effort to allow the bright hoppy flavors to shine," said Adam. "At Creature Comforts we have a major focus on quality and freshness, and Tropicália greatly benefits from this by typically being offered to customers within a few days of canning."

With any hugely popular craft beer that's created by a microbrewery, supply and demand is important. Adam discussed how the brewery is trying to keep up with the voracious appetite for Tropicália that craft beer lovers have.

According to Adam, "We're able to keep the Athens, GA area fairly well supplied, but Atlanta has been a challenge since the beginning. We're brewing as much beer as we can at the brewery and are planning expansions that will come online very soon. We are staying totally focused on quality during this growth period, and we will never sacrifice the integrity of our products for the sake of growth."

"People should know that we sold about 1,800 barrels during our first year and we plan to hit close to 9,000 barrels this year," Adam continued. "This upcoming year, with our new tanks, we should be able to do quite a bit more. We are growing extremely quickly, but from the customer's perspective, there are often only empty shelves where Tropicália should be. We are diligently working to fix that."

Hopefully Creature Comforts expands quickly and easily, and Tropicália gets the widespread recognition it deserves as one of our best beers of 2015.

Cali-Belgique - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

Every one of my favorite songs also remind me of a place. Stone's Cali-Belgique is an iPod shuffle of a walk down my personal Beer Memory Lane. By combining so many favorite beer flavors in such a unique progression, I am reminded of all the reasons I liked beer in the first place. If Tropicália is a hit single, Cali-Belgique is an

entire Rock Opera. This beer is not someone mixing four random alcohols and having it taste like iced tea. It is more like the wonderful contradiction of smelling the ocean while you are skiing down a glacier. Stone Head Brewer Mitch Steele's creation initially transports me to the Pacific Northwest and the thick resinous forests where there are no hop farms (or grapefruits for that matter), but work with me here for a moment. I smell the low, rain-heavy clouds engulfing the dormant volcanic mountain peaks, a hop harvest and the rugged Oregon coastline, but then, there is something more. How can my perfect Norman Rockwell hop vision of grapefruit and pine resin be clouded by a Belgian daydream of lemon zest and white pepper?

My Beer GPS is really confused by the straw, biscuit, and pear flavors in the middle of my taste that perfectly complement the spice and citrus. How did I get from Bend to Brussels in half a sip? Okay, just as I am getting comfortable finishing up on the other side of The Pond in my Belgian Cafe I am treated to Act 3, the Big Bitter. Not the palate-crushing grunge rock destruction of bitterness, but rather that perfectly timed bass drum of one that shatters the trance and says, "Hey I'm an IPA over here." But wait, there's more! While many IPAs would be satisfied with a bitter ending and quit while they are ahead, there is still one surprise left. Instead of rebooting the palate, the initial bitterness is a grand finale of the Tour de Belgium reprise. Earth, pepper spice, pear, and lemon zest deliciously linger in the finish. This is one beer that managed to make me think of an entire evening of beer enjoyment in one glass. More cowbell not required.

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by *Phil Farrell*

Cali-Belgique

Stone Brewing Co.



Cali-Belgique - 96 World Class



Brewer's Thoughts

from Mitch Steele

Stone Brewing Co. has never been a business that pays attention to the norm. Much of its branding, specifically the “Bastard” line of beers, focuses on how difficult it is for people to fathom how great their beers are because the palates of the masses aren’t refined enough.

Though this might not necessarily be true, it hasn’t hurt Stone’s sales, as they are the eighth-largest brewery in America according to the BA.

Cali-Belgique IPA, one of Stone’s highly acclaimed year-round beers, tells you exactly what to expect in the title: this is a perfect intermingling of American and Belgian beer flavors.

Despite its status as one of Stone’s beloved year-round brews, it didn’t start out that way. Stone Brewmaster Mitch Steele told me that its creation was a “serendipitous thing.”

“We had experimented with fermenting some of our year-round beers with a Belgian yeast, just to see what

would happen. This is the beer that worked the best! So much so that it’s now in the lineup of Stone year-round beers,” Mitch said.

The original creation of the beer occurred in 2008 and involved pitching wort from a batch of Stone IPA into Vertical Epic Ale 08.08.08. Mitch takes over the story: “After adding the yeast, the initial yeast propagator had leftover beer. So we tasted it, really liked it and decided to dry-hop it. We called it Stone Cali-Belgique IPA. Since then, we have brewed it using the exact same recipe as Stone IPA, except fermented with Belgian yeast and dry-hopped with Chinook.”

Mitch favors the beer’s overall flavor balance and fruit character, discussing the combination of citrus and banana from the hops and yeast, respectively. He also discussed that the Stone brewers have been “playing around with some unfiltered versions” of Cali-Belgique, furthering the Belgian character that is based on. While that beer would surely be a hit, for now, Mitch can only say, “We’ll see where it goes.”

Todd The Axe Man - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

When I started reflecting back on this collaboration beer between Surly Brewing Company and Denmark's Amager Brewery, I was lucky enough to still have a stray can in my fridge – what better time to crack that last can than right now? I admit, I'm a hop head, and I really enjoy bright, hoppy beers from the IPA family. For me, it's not so

much the bitterness of IPAs that draws me in, but rather the marriage of hop aromas and flavors. This is why I tend to gravitate towards the less bitter and more hop-forward IPAs. I've had the likes of Sculpin, Maine Beer Company's Lunch, Stone IPA, AleSmith IPA, Bell's Two-Hearted and many, many other top-rated IPAs that are extremely well-balanced, bright and truly delicious. One of my local favorites here in Wisconsin is the intensely citrusy Green 19 from Titledown brewery in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Recently, I have come to appreciate the beautifully bright tropical and melon notes of the newer hop varieties. Beers like Heady Topper are a nice blend of traditional American pine and citrus flavors and the mango and pineapple notes in the newer hop varieties. Todd the Axe Man fits that bill perfectly of being on that cutting edge of bright and flavorful hoppy IPAs without that out-of-bounds bitterness. That is a very difficult act to pull off. We all know hops are bitter, but they can also be incredibly flavorful and juicy as well. It's very impressive to not only be able to create a beer that's chock-full of big bright hop flavors and aroma, but also avoid hop astringency and bitterness.

I also think Todd the Axe Man is proof that less can be more. This beer consists of a single grain and two varieties of hops – that's it. There is no complicated five grain grist to get a nice malty backbone, there is no complex blend of six different hops; it's just Golden Promise for the base malt and Mosaic and Citra for the hops. That's it! Surly did a great job balancing the flavors well even with so few ingredients. The beer is far from boring or one-dimensional. In fact, it's proof that simplicity can achieve results that are deserving of becoming one of the best beers of 2015.

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by Jason Johnson

Todd The Axe Man Surly Brewing Co.



Todd The Axe Man - 96 World Class

As a homebrewer, I'm generally not fond of "cloning" beers. I feel that if I like a beer that much, I will just buy it. So while cloning beer recipes is great, often there are minute details that brewers focus on that still set the beer apart from a clone – be it water chemistry, specific fermentation temperatures or yeast selection. But in the end, as I finish this glass, it's still a mighty fine IPA, even if it is several weeks old. The big bright tropical notes are still delicious, and it has inspired me to brew some sort of variant of this beer with the ingredients listed on Surly's website. What better compliment can you give a brewer or brewery than telling them that their beer has inspired you to brew something similar? Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, right?

Brewer's Thoughts

from Todd Haug

After we released numerous stories about the brewery and its head brewer, Todd Haug, we finally reviewed some of Surly Brewing Company's popular IPAs in 2015. The one that received the most acclaim from our reviewer was this Todd the Axe Man, a collaboration between Denmark's Amager Brewery and Surly.

The name is based on Haug's rather impressive guitar playing, which rivals his brewing prowess. According to Todd, the intention for Axe Man was "to create a collaboration beer that employed raw materials that each brewery hadn't used before. Golden Promise malt is featured in a handful of my recipes here at Surly, and Mosaic hops are a favorite at Amager and also ones that I've never brewed with before."

The use of Mosaic hops turned out to be an inspired choice, as our reviewer noted the subtle interplay of malt and hops as a highlight of the beer. Todd outlined the hop profile explicitly: "We used Warrior for bittering and Mosaic and Citra for aroma." When I asked him to elaborate on quantity, he deflected: "We use a lot. It's a secret." With Axe Man scoring so highly in 2015, it's understandable that Todd didn't want to provide any more information on the hop profile, as he wants it to be a highly sought after beer in 2016 as well.

Speaking of 2016, Surly does plan to release Todd the Axe Man this year as well, though a release date hasn't been set. "[Axe Man] will be available in cans and on tap in our markets occasionally throughout 2016," Todd said.



As Axe Man has edged out Surly's year-round Furious IPA in Todd's list of favorite Surly beers, do yourself a favor and search far and wide for the 2016 release. You won't be disappointed.

Blast! - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

I've got a thing about IPAs – I almost never make them. I'll brew anything. I've won medals in literally every BJCP style category (and the 2015 guidelines will let me hit some new ones!) as a means of ensuring that I can confidently brew across the whole beer spectrum. But I don't really brew IPAs. Why not?

Well, because there's a whole world of competent IPAs out there. Why would I brew my own when I can pick up a case of just about any brewery's IPA? The dirty secret in the beer world (which maybe isn't so secret) is that the distance between an IPA at the 95th percentile of quality and the 5th percentile of quality isn't all that large. Maybe the very, very best of them are much better than the very, very worst, but honestly, most of the time they're all just somewhere between OK and pretty good.

Having said that... sometimes you get to enjoy one of those really great IPAs, like Blast!, and for me it really just makes me wonder why more breweries don't just... you know... STOP making theirs so that we can appreciate the really good ones. If there's an area that is screaming for some winnowing out in the beer world, it's in the realm of IPAs.

This one is awesome. It's a pretty beer that smells fruity and fresh but still lets you know it's beer (because, you know, grain). It tastes wonderful – extremely high bitterness, but not in a way that grates on the palate. It's a smooth bitterness, if that's not too much of an oxymoron. And it isn't all just the bitterness: some brewer went out of his/her way to make sure that you can taste all of the other elements of the beer as well.

That's the thing. IPAs are so popular because of two things: one, anyone can pick out their key feature (hop flavor/aroma/bitterness); and two, even mediocre brewers can make a decent one. But they can't make a great one because they're using hops to paper over a sloppy or mediocre beer.

Making a great IPA like Blast! is an exercise in balance. That's an odd sentence in a style that supports ridiculously high bitterness, but it's true. Great brewers can have a

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by *Josh Weikert*

Blast!

Brooklyn Brewery



Blast! - 96 World Class

dominant flavor, but still find ways to let the other elements contribute, and not just in a way that keeps that dominant flavor from being offensive. Yes, you can use alcohol sweetness or crystal malts to offset hop bittering – but isn't it better to also have them contribute in a meaningful way to the overall gustatory aesthetic? So get yourself a bottle and remind yourself why big, beautiful IPAs are such a great find. For those of us who are wading through the sea of mediocre IPAs to help you find the great ones, it's the best outcome we can hope for. Reward Brooklyn for their efforts, and your palate will thank you!

Brewer's Thoughts

from Garrett Oliver

Another one of the biggest breweries in America, Brooklyn Brewery has a vast and varied selection of year-round and limited-release beers, but according to our reviewer the best one we reviewed this year was Brooklyn's Blast! Double IPA.

I spoke to Garrett Oliver, founder of Brooklyn Brewery, to discuss one of his favorite brews. I first asked where the recipe of Blast! came from: "Blast! was actually the name of my first batch of homebrew in 1984, though that was a pale ale, not an IPA. We've produced a version of this beer for about 10 years now. I did the original recipe, but as new hops have become available, I've sat down with our team to make little adjustments here and there over the years. We love where Blast! is right now."

With so many Double IPAs available on the market today, I wanted to get Garrett's thoughts on why Blast! rose above the ranks in our 2015 ratings. "I think the structure and sense of balance set it apart. It's not only hoppy, but it also just tastes really good. There's a nice stone-fruit character in the center from the use of some great British hops alongside the American ones, which give the beer its 'pop.' The most important trait here is outright deliciousness."

Garrett finished up by saying Blast! is indeed one of his favorite beers, which is "vaguely problematic, as it's easy to forget that the beer is 8.4 percent ABV. He also said that while British hops tend to age better than American ones, there's no time like the present to enjoy a cold Blast!.

Obviously, our judge had a "blast" drinking this beer, and we think you will too.



Pinchy Jeek Barl - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

Ahhh... a revisit of Anderson Valley Brewing Company's Pinchy Jeek Barl Bourbon Barrel Pumpkin Ale... if only there was more of this liquid inspiration to be enjoyed while writing this article.

This was a beer that I had not tasted before, which in itself can be an amazing feat since I have recorded tasting notes for 23 years, amassing notes

on over 5,600 commercial beers. The list could be as high as 8,000 if I chose to count brewpub beers, and maybe even as high as 10,000 if I included homebrewed beers!

On first thought, Wild Turkey Bourbon would not have been my first choice as a bourbon source for a barrel-aged beer; Wild Turkey isn't renowned as one of the finest bourbons that Kentucky has to offer. My first recollection of Wild Turkey was on my 21st birthday, when an acquaintance bought me a shot of Wild Turkey. I wasn't an immediate fan, and at that time I was primarily a light lager drinker as the craft beer movement was still young (and I was certainly a bourbon neophyte) so my palate was still very early in development. Since then, I have grown to appreciate bourbon, especially when beer is aged with bourbon or in bourbon barrels. With this beer, the barrel character of toasted oak and vanilla comes through strongly without being too overly bourbon-driven; the bourbon provides a complementary flavor to the base beer and spices without becoming the dominant flavor of the beer.

Second, the beer was brewed "with pumpkin and [unnamed] spices." Personally, I dread pumpkin beer season - when seemingly every brewery releases its take on a pumpkin-pie-style beer. The season seems to start as early as August and runs until the last beers at the store gets sold. These beers typically feature nutmeg, cinnamon, and allspice and many brewers are not shy to push this spicing well to the forefront. The aggressive spices typically need a hefty malt base to temper the otherwise unbearable astringency that these spices provide. For this beer, however, the spices are more subtle and complement the caramel/chocolate malt and toasted oak/vanilla barrel character beautifully.

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by *Michael Heniff*

Pinchy Jeek Barl Anderson Valley Brewing Co.



Pinchy Jeek Barl - 96 World Class

Finally, a characteristic that I believe all great beers need to have is the element of balance. I'm not advocating that all beers need to have an equal level of malt and hops, but the best beers, regardless of style, should have complementing or contrasting characters that work together to add to the depth and complexity of the beer. For this beer, the aroma exuded toasted oak and vanilla barrel character with complementing caramel and chocolate malts and pumpkin spices. The pumpkin spices hint at pumpkin pie, but they never showcase any singular spice above others. The body was quite a bit more complex, conveying an almost even balance between the barrel character, malt and spices. The Wild Turkey Bourbon never comes to the forefront and remains complementary element, perhaps appropriately so (based on my earlier impression). The finish once again demonstrates complexity with the interplay of malt, barrel and spices with only a slightly spicy astringency. In summary: This is a complex, rich, dynamic and thoroughly enjoyable Pumpkin Beer.

Brewer's Thoughts

from Fal Allen

When autumn rolls around that means that pumpkin beers aren't far behind (in fact, they usually debut before the season even begins). Love them or loathe them, pumpkin beers are an inevitable part of the Halloween and Thanksgiving seasons.

Many pumpkin beers are construed as overly spiced, muddled messes, but Anderson Valley Brewing Company's Pinchy Jeek Barl is not only an exemplar of the Pumpkin Beer style, but also one of our finest beers of the year. I spoke with Fal Allen, Anderson Valley brewmaster, about Pinchy Jeek – his favorite pumpkin beer.

Pinchy Jeek employs nutmeg, cinnamon and clove as its spice profile, but one thing that sets it apart from other pumpkin beers (apart from its barrel-aged properties) is its lower spice profile. Allen elaborates: "We wanted the bourbon flavors to come through in the beer and create a beautiful dance of flavors with the spices – not to have the spices overpower the bourbon notes. I think Pinchy Jeek ended up as a well-balanced beer that you can certainly drink a few of if you want to."

Our judge was a bit surprised that Wild Turkey barrels were used exclusively for the aging process, as his experience with that bourbon was far from ideal. Allen



responds to the exclusive usage of Wild Turkey barrels: "Wild Turkey bourbon is a bit more assertive than some other brands, and it brings a bolder bourbon flavor to the beer. The barrel-aging process imparts notes of coconut, vanilla, and oak to complement the tang of the pumpkin pie spices and a hint of hops, all wrapped in a smooth, silky round finish."

Despite his claim that Wild Turkey is more assertive, the aging process was perfectly executed as the balance between booziness, beer qualities and pumpkin spices makes Pinchy Jeek Barl one of the best pumpkin beers you can get your hands on.

Unsessionable - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

When it comes to craft beer brewing in the US, IPA is America's favorite beer style. Almost every brewery has their version of this ubiquitous style. As the quest for ever stronger hop character and alcohol strength causes brewers to push the envelope, the Double IPA style was developed to provide a middle ground between an IPA and a

Barleywine. Of course, just like with regular IPAs, brewers of Imperial IPAs also put their own spin on the style.

Years ago, my brewing mentor ingrained in me that the best beers, no matter the style, should deliver a certain level of complexity. This complexity can be derived from using an interesting yeast strain, appropriate blends of hops and/or malt in the recipe or anything that makes a beer stand out from the rest of the pack. Of course, the brewer should also have a palate that can identify ingredient blends that work best for whatever style they wish to experiment in.

For Revolution Brewing's Unsessionable IPA, the brewers decided to focus on hop complexity, and they truly deliver! An immediate explosion of fresh, bright pine and citrusy, woody hop aromas welcomes you even before pouring this golden-colored brew into a glass.

As you first sip this slightly hazy brew with a lingering fine bubble head, your first impression is of layer after layer of hop complexity. The depth of the hop flavor is outstanding, with massive pine, citrus and some woody hop flavors combine elegantly with a touch of dankness. Hop bitterness (advertised as 100 IBUs on the can) is also impressively assertive, though there is enough of a mild, caramel base malt backbone to deliver a solid balance. A clean alcohol note is also very evident, delivering quite a bit of warming upon the swallow. The brew has a satisfying medium body and a moderately dry finish for the style, preparing you for the next delicious sip.

It is not an easy matter to craft a Double IPA that doesn't overwhelm the palate after a short time. Interestingly, the name of this brew is a bit of a misnomer. For a Double IPA, this one does have some sessionable qualities, though

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by *Joseph Formanek*

Unsessionable Revolution Brewing.



Unsessionable - 96 World Class

it's probably best not to force the issue because of its powerful alcohol strength! Revolution Unsessionable is a very impressive, extremely drinkable Double IPA that will delight those not afraid of the almighty hop. Cheers and enjoy!

Brewer's Thoughts

from Jim Cibak

One of two specialty IPA releases from Revolution Brewing we reviewed during 2015, this one scored the highest – with good reason. Head brewer Jim Cibak is quite proud of his brewery's limited-release IPAs, and, according to him, "Unsessionable has been a very well-received new addition to Revolution's beer lineup."

Hops are almost always the star when it comes to American and Double IPAs, but Cibak's favorite element of Unsessionable was its balance: "What I really like about Unsessionable is that it's a massive Imperial IPA with an extremely high ABV bursting with floral, citrus hops and a dry crisp finish, but it's also well-balanced."

His favorite element of the brew, however, is the "crisp, clean finish and the punch of bitterness that seems to clean the palate after every sip, setting you up for a night [or a session] of Unsessionables."

When asked what his favorite ingredient in Unsessionable is, Cibak was quick to respond. "The blend of American hop varieties we use in the brewhouse is my favorite ingredient in Unsessionable. It infuses these strong aromas and flavors of pine and fresh citrus zest." Coupled with the tropical fruit aspects from the addition of Galaxy hops, Unsessionable is a Double IPA bursting with delectable hop elements.



Malefactor - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

Sour beers are a fascinating lot. Unlike most foods, where sourness is an indicator that something has become spoiled, sour beers achieve the defining characteristics of the style through the souring process. There was a time not so long ago when the only sour styles available were from Belgium, with their long history of

brewing Lambics and Flanders Reds and Oud Bruins. These spontaneously brewed products typically develop wonderful levels of complexity from the microbiology involved in the inoculation and fermentation of these beers. It has historically been difficult to replicate those characteristics in beers brewed outside of Belgium due to the types of bacteria and yeasts in the Brussels environment and their interplay during fermentation. Being trained as a microbiologist, I personally have always found the synergy of ingredients in sour beers fascinating. Now that there is wider understanding of the fermentation process for sours, those beer styles can be brewed outside of Belgium by true artisans that are able to approach the complexity and quality of those traditional Belgian Lambics. Upland Brewing Company's Malefactor is certainly one of those. This brew, promoted as an "Epic Flanders Style Red Ale," delivers quite the impact to the senses in all aspects, delivering a memorable and, indeed, epic experience.

The aroma of this brew is very complex with intense cherry, lactic and acetic notes. There is a wine-like character that could be coming from the barrel-aging or perhaps from the microbiological complexity. The mouth salivates immediately upon the first whiff after popping the cork. Visually, this moderately carbonated, quite turbid, reddish brown-colored brew has a solid, rocky, cream-colored head. In overall appearance, except for the turbidity, it hits the mark quite well for a Flanders Red. The flavor comes through as a Flanders Red as well, but with impressively intense sour components of cherry and vinous aromatics married with a moderate level of tartness that complements the base beer character well. The middle and finish retains this complexity, along with a browner woody note that adds even more to the mix. This

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by Joseph Formanek

Malefactor

Upland Brewing Co.



Malefactor - 96 World Class

brew finishes up quite dry and spicy, with the moderate sourness cleansing the palate fully, preparing you for the next sip.

The most impressive aspect of Upland Malefactor is the intense overall fermentation complexity, which is delivered across the board from start to finish. While this might be a treat after being cellared, it is ready to experience and share with friends immediately. This brew will certainly delight any sour beer aficionado. Cheers and enjoy!

Brewer's Thoughts *from Caleb Staton*

Upland Brewing Company in Bloomington, Indiana has a line of experimental sour beers called the Sour Series. Numerous different styles are represented, but the one that scored the highest during 2015 was this "Epic Flanders-Style Red Ale."

I spoke with Caleb Staton, Upland's Director of Sour Operations, about Malefactor, and he provided an interesting picture of one of Upland's finest soured beers.

The beer's incredible complexity made it hard for me to define in terms of BJCP style guidelines, and Caleb understands the struggle: "The recipe was modeled to be a strong version of a Flanders-style Red Ale. The American spin on the classic style was to create a very strong version of it, and also to age it in previously beer-aged bourbon barrels to add a darker, charred wood character and a polite bourbon character."

When asked what his favorite ingredients in Malefactor is, Caleb gave me a clever answer. "I would say time and patience are the most ingredients. Malefactor really gets the most complexity from long aging periods in oak barrels. We age the beer for at least 8 months before the flavor profiles we are looking for start to appear. We feel giving the numerous microorganisms involved in the fermentation a healthy amount of time is the most important ingredient in developing a complex and well-layered sour ale of this strength."

Flaked maize and Belgian candi sugar create the relatively light body of this beer, and there are plans to



release more of it in the near future with the planned expansion of Upland's sour program in April 2016. "Of course, this means a healthy amount of Malefactor will not be ready until 2017 release, but we are looking forward to having the ability to deliver less scarcity for what we do in the future," Caleb said. Fans of Upland's sours will certainly be happy to hear that.

Mocha Porter - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

In the fall of 1994, I started taking courses at the Siebel Institute for Brewing Technology. As an aspiring craft brewer, they didn't have a program specifically geared towards microbreweries and so I was in classes with brewers from Coors, Miller, Anheuser-Busch, Modelo, Asahi, Brown Forman (maker of Jack Daniels) and Heineken.

We also had brewers from Old Dominion, Goose Island and a bunch of folks who would go on to work for breweries all over the country and world. Back then, the world of possibilities in beer were only limited by our imaginations... which, quite frankly, were very limited back then. Many of us cared more about the Reinheitsgebot and a clean flavor profile than anything else.

I had a friend from Louisiana that I fought forest fires with. While not a brewer, he loved his food and his beer, and always had a quip about either, whether he was extoling the virtues of Tobasco sauce ("It's got just the right tang without too much twang.") or talking about his least favorite style of beer, American Wheat Beer ("you keep your fruit out of my beer, and I won't put no hops in your gumbo").

To get to the point: there are lots of people out there who believe that beer should have nothing in it but yeast, hops, malt and water.

Someone squarely not part of that group is John Maier, head brewer of Rogue Ales & Spirits. While I've never met the guy, I'd like to think our paths have crossed somehow. He was on the staff at Alaskan Brewing Co. in Juneau during its early days. Despite his day job, he couldn't stop brewing after his shift. In fact, I remember looking at a homebrew recipe that helped him win "Homebrewer of the Year" from the American Homebrewers Association in the late 80s. The man has been obsessed with pushing the envelope for a long time.

Quite frankly, not all of the results are amazing. If anyone has ever had the Voodoo Doughnut Maple Bacon Ale you know what I'm talking about.

However, I discovered a real treat in 2000: Rogue's Chocolate

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by *S.J. Klein*

Mocha Porter Rogue Ales & Spirits



Mocha Porter - 96 World Class

Stout. It became a favorite – perfectly blending sweet and bitter without being overpowering with either. Young’s Double Chocolate Stout has long been the industry standard for chocolate in beer, but with less distance to travel and hands to go through, I found the Rogue stout to be more drinkable.

I had never considered their Mocha Porter as a distinctly different beer from Chocolate Stout. If given the choice between Mocha Porter and Chocolate Stout, I found myself reaching for the Chocolate Stout every time. It’s not that I didn’t enjoy the Mocha Porter, but rather that I’d never considered it after having had the Chocolate Stout first.

That all changed when my partner served the Mocha Porter to me. As an expert reviewer for *The Beer Connoisseur*, I never get to know what I’m drinking until after I’ve reviewed it. When drinking the Mocha Porter, I compared it favorably to the Chocolate Stout, finding it less sweet, more balanced and ultimately more drinkable. The nose is rich and interesting. The coffee and chocolate are well-considered elements of a nicely crafted beer. There’s no gimmick to it. The coffee provides a nice acidity and the chocolate gives a round, sweet back end. It’s a light-bodied porter, with a totally appropriate dry bite that leaves you wishing you had more.

You have to respect a brewery that pushes the edges of expectations in beer. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t and sometimes, as is the case for Rogue Mocha Porter, you hit one right out of the park.

Brewer’s Thoughts

from John Maier

Rogue Ales & Spirits has a roguish streak. Many of their beers have off-kilter names (Yellow Snow IPA, New Crustacean Barleywineish Imperial IPA Sorta) or crazy ingredients, like a yeast strain cultivated in founder and brewmaster John Maier’s beard. One thing is certain though: Rogue is one of Oregon’s most popular and longstanding craft breweries, with numerous accolades to its name.

Adding to that laundry list of awards and commendations is the brewery’s Mocha Porter rating of 96 in our 2015 fall issue. We spoke to the man with the beard, John Maier (founder of Rogue Ales), and got a few answers about the brewery’s beautiful coffee-themed porter.



Being an American Porter, the malt bill is the star of this beer. John had a funny story regarding it as well: “The ingredients for Mocha started as an accident. We received a pallet of chocolate malt that we were milling when we discovered that a couple of odd bags got mixed in and milled by mistake. I decided to go with it and brew with this new ‘blend.’ It was this mix that created Mocha Porter – the same recipe we’ve used for the last 20 years.”

Despite what its name might suggest, Mocha Porter does not contain any coffee – its rich, roasty flavor and aroma are both born of the complex blend of malts used during brewing. The name of the beer was changed from “New Porter to Mocha Porter to reflect its ruddy brown mocha color instead of a riff on the location of our brewery’s sleepy fishing town of Newport, Oregon.”

John is quite proud of Mocha Porter, and he’s certain that the beer is an exemplar of “the Rogue way: The path to Mocha Porter was formed by innovation and rebellion. We started out by making flavorful beers, even though we were told no one would drink them. We made Mocha Porter as a way to offer a wide range of beer styles despite the common belief at the time that no one wanted variety. We take the road less traveled when we make our beers – from starting a farm to aging beer in barrels that we make ourselves – this is the Rogue way.”

Enjoy Mocha Porter with a steak covered in blue cheese crumbles and finish it off with a figgy pudding (three things that John recommends to pair with Mocha Porter). We’ll bring the beer.

Oude Geuze Boon - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

I first got excited about craft beer when I started learning about its impressive variety. Beer is, in many ways, the story of making the same thing in lots of different places using different ingredients and methods based on what was laying around in your particular part of the world. For example, Czech Pils turns

into something else when you try to make it in Munich, and evolves into something else when you make it in Dublin, and although Pils and Oktoberfest and Dry Stout are very different beers, they share a common DNA.

Saison is one of those beers that really brings it home for me, though – as a regional specialty using “found” ingredients and with a seasonal character, it’s the epitome of an authentic style.

So how, then, can a brewery in New York make a Beer of the Year-worthy example of a style that originated in Northeastern France? Simple: by painting a picture of the place with the flavors that beer produces. Hennepin creates a mental image as clear as a postcard, and the flavors of grain, pepper, lemon, and a hint of earthy funk call to mind images of the countryside at harvest time. Now, is this actually what a Wallonian field smells like? No, probably not. But it smells like what one might imagine it smells like. It’s subtle and soft, and it avoids the temptation to overreach (a common feature in beers these days, I find). Let’s not forget, these beers were, authentically and originally, very light and low-gravity affairs. Strong flavors or alcohols would be wrong, and would be more like the abbey beers from that region. Hennepin evokes a sense of scale, place, and time that we can easily use to connect to that original style, and for that reason, it’s a wonderful beer to get your hands on.

For me, beer is like traveling. It both creates and provokes memories and experiences, which adds to our enjoyment of life and appreciation of variety. Every bottle is a chance to experience a different place and time, and no two bottles are ever the same. There’s a lot of fun, learning, and wisdom in that – not that everyone will see it that way,

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by *Josh Weikert*

Hennepin

Brewery Ommegang



Oude Geuze Boon - 96 World Class

of course. Some just want it to taste good! I want that too, of course, but I also appreciate that this is another example of how local conditions and context create something new and different but also consistent and ancient. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go pop the cap on another adventure!

Brewer's Thoughts

from Phil Leinhart

Saisons make for an effervescent and refreshing style. The sweetness and spiciness of the style serves as a fascinating and rewarding detour from the normal hop highways of modern American craft beer. This example from Brewery Ommegang epitomizes the elements that make for an intriguing and delicious brew.

Ommegang brewmaster Phil Leinhart discussed the brewery's creative employment of standard Belgian ingredients mixed with some more traditional American craft beer elements.

Being one of Ommegang's flagship beers, this "Belgian-inspired beer has unique spicing and the specialized Ommegang yeast strain, which create a well-blended, balanced, intriguing and endlessly drinkable beer."

When asked about the beer's fascinating flavor profile, Phil outlined a few specific ingredients that play a major role in the beer's taste. "The spiciness of Hennepin comes predominantly from our yeast strain and a unique blend of spices (surprise!). The beer's sweetness comes from residual non-fermentable sugar – we use corn as an adjunct; extract sources other than barley malt, such as wheat, oats, rye, corn are common in Saisons."

Despite making different-strength versions of its Saison, like Glimmerglass – Ommegang's spring seasonal brewed with pink peppercorns – Hennepin remains the brewery's classic rendition.



Founders Porter - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

This is the day of the IPA. All of the styles are packed with hops – double, session, red, white, black, brown, Belgian and, more recently, India Pale Lagers – and often have higher alcoholic levels, much to the detriment of the beer. Thankfully, Founders Brewing Co. has offered a reprieve from the barrage of hops in the modern craft

beer scene, and its name is Founder Porter.

Founders Porter falls into the category of American (Robust) Porter, and it exemplifies the word “robust” to the fullest extent. The rich, aromatic combination of roasted grains is first enjoyed in the bouquet, then again in the flavor as the dark roasted dryness from the kilned grains impart a black hue to the beer and marry nicely with the malty sweetness of the pale malts. Hops make their presence felt yet are not aggressively stated, which allows the malt to balance and define the beer. The finish has a pronounced bitterness without being overly harsh while the body is full and silky smooth.

The porter style originated out of 18th century England and is historically known as the grandfather of the stout. The first renditions brewed in London were made at higher gravities, resulting in a finished product at 6.5 to 7 percent ABV. Founders has followed these earlier examples of the style when it comes to alcohol strength yet added its own unique touch to the beer as well.

There are approximately 100 breweries in the U.S. today that make porters. In comparison, there were over 12,000 IPAs being produced by U.S. breweries in 2015! Not surprisingly, good porters are hard to find. These dark brown ales took a back seat to paler beers starting in the mid-1800s and going well into the 1900s in the form of pale ales and lagers. Oddly enough, it was homebrewers who started the revival of the style in the 1970s and 80s. I remember trying my first porter at a homebrewers meeting in 1987. Not being familiar with the style, I was surprised and favorably impressed by the pleasant, malty sweetness and full body without the sharpness imparted by unmalted barley, an ingredient generally associated

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by *James Link*

Founders Porter

Founders Brewing Co.



Founders Porter - 96 World Class

with dry stout. It was one of the first homebrewed beers that I had tried that didn't taste like kerosene and gave me hope for making my own beer. Those were the days when ingredients for making beer were, in many cases, only available via mail-order. Products used by commercial brewers were not readily available to homebrewers. Fortunately, due to the craft beer movement and fine breweries such as Founders, we can now enjoy all the world's classic beer styles brewed fresh – right here in the U.S.

Brewer's Thoughts

from Jeremy Kosmicki

Despite no longer being considered a craft brewer by the Brewers Association (due to a sale of 30 percent of the business to global macrobrewer San Miguel), Founders Brewing Company in Grand Rapids, MI has been home to some of the most sought-after and recognizable brews in the US.

While some of the brewery's harder-to-obtain beers – such as mythical whales KBS and CBS – grab all the headlines, the brewery's core lineup of beers contain plenty of pleasures in numerous styles. We reviewed a few of the brewery's offerings in 2015, and the beer that made the best impression on our judges was Founders Porter.

I spoke to Jeremy Kosmicki, Founders brewmaster, about the dark beer that requires no “dark penance.” According to Jeremy, “Founders had a porter in their portfolio when I joined, but it was one of the first recipes that Nate Walser and I changed when it was decided that Founders beer needed to be more ‘extreme.’ We wanted a Porter that was rich and full-bodied enough to satisfy all the dark beer lovers amongst us.”

The flavor profile is certainly dark, but the balance is flawlessly executed. Jeremy elaborated on this point: “I really appreciate the balance of this beer. It can handle the residual sweetness because there's adequate hop bitterness and flavor. A little bit of burnt flavor from the Black Malt and Roasted Barley helps to balance that sweetness too and keep it from getting too cloying. Also, the rich chocolate flavors are the main characteristics I'm looking to get across with this beer. That comes not from actual chocolate, but rather Chocolate Malt and lots of it. Chocolate Malt is barley that is roasted just to the point where it gives off those



delicious chocolate flavors, without coming across as too burnt.”

Despite many Porters tending to finish a bit thin and watery, according to Jeremy, Founders Porter is rich and thick. “There's a pretty high proportion of specialty grains contributing to that body – lots of roasted malts, toasted malts, and crystal malts,” Jeremy said.

Barrel Aged Old Ruffian - 96 World Class



Judge's Second Opinion

Some people tell me that my beer tastes run too much toward the simple, small, clean, and boring (hell, I'm the author of the Beer: Simple blog!): I'm a great lover of standard bitter, German pilsner and English mild styles. In spite of that, I recognize that there's a "degree of difficulty" argument to be made for certain styles

and beers. I don't think I'll ever exclaim, "WOW, that was an INCREDIBLE blonde ale," but I just might when faced with a barrel-aged barleywine like this one.

This is a beer that's like an ugly but high-performing car. It isn't much to look at with its low head and slight haze. Truth be told, it looks a bit like a fermenter sample of a beer that isn't quite ready for primetime yet. But the aroma quickly shows why this ended up with such a sterling rating. It's a pleasant trip down a country lane on a snowy evening – a touch of alcohol, a bit of dark fruit, and a rich toffee background note. What's not to love?

The flavor is set up by the aroma and is likewise very enjoyable; it manages to be lovely without overwhelming the senses – a rarity when it comes to barrel-aged beers generally and barrel-aged strong ales in particular. Maybe the best part is the way the flavor just goes on and on, changing and evolving as it does so. One of the real treats of craft beer is that it trains the palate so much more effectively than mass-produced light lagers, because those tend to be one-trick ponies (and it usually isn't a great trick). Beers like this one just keep going: first it's toffee, then treacle, then alcohol, then bitterness, then a touch of chocolate, then a dry finish with a lingering tannic structure from the barrel – it's a journey.

To bring about such a rich aroma and flavor in a big beer with such a challenging method (barrel aging can go badly wrong very easily, you know) is impressive enough – to do so in such a way that I still want to drink a full glass (and another) of it is remarkable. Because remember: this isn't really my scene. I'm happy as heck with a nice Kolsch, but I usually take a pass on the big beers.

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by Josh Weikert

Barrel Aged Old Ruffian Great Divide Brewing Co.



Barrel Aged Old Ruffian - 96 World Class

Sometimes, though, they just get it right. Your palate wakes up and your eyes snap open, and even after thousands of beers over a number of years you're reminded of how you felt when you first drank a beer that wasn't just corn, a little bitterness and a little alcohol.

So by all means, keep it simple (which is practically my mantra) – but make allowance for your own limitations as well, and keep trying those big, complex beers. Yes, a great many will be overwrought and annoying and over-the-top. But once in a while they'll also be not just big, but nuanced and impressive. We can all do with a little complexity sometimes – even those of us who love simplicity.

Brewer's Thoughts

from Ethan Osborne

Great Divide Brewing Company in Denver, CO have been telling their fans that “Great Minds Drink Alike” for 21 years. With their popular line of Yetis, which have the honor of being both extremely popular to the craft beer-drinking masses and widely acclaimed by judges and other tastemakers, Great Divide have carved out a niche in a heavily saturated craft beer market in one of America's best craft beer destinations.

The brewery's Old Ruffian Barleywine enjoys similar accolades, but our judge fell head over heels for the barrel-aged rendition of Great Divide's Old Ruffian, and Great Divide head brewer Ethan Osborne answered a few questions about the barrel-aged beauty.

Of course barrel-aging fundamentally changes a beer, but Ethan outlined exactly how: “The biggest difference between Barrel Aged Old Ruffian and the original is the hop profile. Any barrel-aged beer will lose most of its hoppy taste and floral/piney/fruity aroma because the aging process oxidizes the beer. We age this beer for at least 12 months, which adds huge oak and vanilla flavors as well as subtle bourbon notes. The nose produces pleasant caramel and bourbon aromas with a hint of booziness.”

Many barleywines can have a strong alcohol heat, but our judge was struck by how mellow and balanced Barrel Aged Old Ruffian was. Ethan expounds upon this: “The mellowness and balance of the barrel-aged version is definitely intentional, as the long aging process aids in



the richness and complexity of the beer. The hop profile is quite subdued compared to fresh Ruffian, and deep malty flavors and aromas have surfaced over time.”

While Ethan assures me that no other versions of Old Ruffian are in the works, he has always thought aging Ruffian in port barrels would make for an interesting and delightful beer.

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Style Studies - By Chris Guest



ALTBIER

Altbier sounds like a faintly condescending term, such as “alternative rock” or “alternative lifestyle,” with little to no real meaning regarding its subject. This is not the case for altbier, however.

Historically, “alt” means “old,” a reference to the fact that this is an ancient style whose nomenclature was only finalized in the modern sense in the 1800s, when it became threatened by the “new” style of making beer with bottom-fermenting lager yeast.

A more modern spin on the altbier name refers to the fact that this beer is brewed with a top-fermenting yeast,

which is commonly used for all ale styles – such as IPAs, pale ales and stouts as opposed to the typical bottom-fermenting yeast used to make lagers. Since altbiers employ top-fermenting yeast, they showcase all the hallmarks of smooth, easy-drinking, bottom-fermented lagers but are technically ales due to the strain of yeast they are brewed with. Hence the term “alternative beer” or altbier.

Further confounding the issue is the fact that altbier are fermented at cool ale temperatures (59 – 68° F) and then conditioned and lagered at colder bottom-fermentation temperatures (roughly 50° F).

Either way, altbier originated in the historical region of Westphalia and are a specialty of the German city of Düsseldorf (hence the spelling of beer as “bier”). It is still one of the most popular beer styles in that city.

Well-made altbier should be balanced, attenuated, clean and smooth and should exhibit a clean, sharp bitterness tempered by a strong, sweet malt character. Generally, they should drink like a classic lager, but with a higher level of hop bitterness. The color is similarly lager-like, with amber coloration laced with darker copper hues being the norm.

Another discerning characteristic of altbier is its full flavor profile, far different from the often dull lagers that replaced it in 19th century Düsseldorf, though they retain the light-bodied and sessionable elements of those beers as well.

The malt tends to be the more prominent element of an altbier’s ingredient list, with German base malt varieties in the forefront such as Pils, Munich and trace amounts of crystal, chocolate and black malts to adjust the color. Rich nutty and bready flavors emanate from the malt bill

and are balanced and accentuated by the use of Saaz or Spalt hops, which provide a spicy, herbal and perfume-like character – creating a fascinating blend of malty earthiness and fragrant hop-forward aromas and flavors.

The finest examples of altbier are found straight from the source in Düsseldorf, though a few American breweries are beginning to experiment with this ancient style, though often with higher alcohol strengths in the *sticke* or *doppelsticke* categories.

STATS

OG: 1.044 – 1.052

IBU: 25 – 50

SRM: 11 – 17

ABV: 4.3 – 5.5%

Commercial Examples: Bolten Alt, Diebels Alt, Fückschen Alt, Original Schlüssel Alt, Schlösser Alt, Schumacher Alt, Uerige Altbier, Union Craft Brewing Balt Altbier, Summit Unchained #20 Sticke Alt



Photo courtesy of Union Craft Brewing.

SPECIALTY WOOD-AGED BEER

No style gets craft beer connoisseurs in a frenzied tizzy more than a Specialty Wood-Aged Beer. Specifically, Barrel-aged Imperial Stouts are among the most sought after beers currently available on the market. People brave the elements and wait in line for hours for 3 Floyd's Dark Lord, Goose Island's Bourbon County line, Westbrook's Mexican Cake and various other lesser-known barrel-aged beauties.

Despite the popularity of barrel-aged imperial stouts, their style is still based upon what barrel they are aged in, be they Whiskey, Bourbon, Scotch, Rum or Tequila, and Specialty Wood-aged Beers have specific characteristics that set them apart from other beers that have spent time in wood.

Many craft brewers use wood chips, spirals or staves in order to impart a beer with barrel flavors, though these beers are not technically "specialty," but rather just "wood-aged beers." Even AB InBev got in on the action with last year's release of Oculito – a "premium" lager brewed with tequila barrel staves.

Preserving beers in wood is a practice that has existed since the birth of beer, and some styles (such as Flanders Red or Lambic) require keeping beers in barrels to create and cultivate cultures that aid in the continued fermentation of those beers. However, specialty wood-aged beers are aged in barrels solely to impart the flavors of whatever libation rested in the barrel before its use as a beer container. Many barrels' interiors are charred or toasted in advance to provide even more flavor to the beer housed inside.

Specialty Wood-Aged Beer is a bit of a catch-all phrase too. While one might immediately think of uber-popular (and extremely revered) barrel-aged stouts that craft beer fanatics may camp out several days in advance to obtain, any beer that has spent time in a barrel that was previously used for another alcohol qualifies as a specialty wood-aged beer.

Green Flash Brewing's Cellar 3 series is an exemplar of the style. While the series contains the standard bourbon barrel-aged Imperial Stout (Silva Stout), it also explores fascinating additions such as Oculus Sauvage, a Mixed-Style Beer (Belgian Tripel and Double IPA) that was aged in red wine barrels and finished with Brettanomyces, or Natura Morta Plum, a Saison brewed with plums and also aged in red wine barrels.

Aging beers in once-used barrels can completely transform a beer's flavor, color, aroma and (unexpectedly) alcohol content. Of course, the changes are dependent on what barrel is employed, but some common flavors and aromas found in specialty wood-aged beers include: vanilla, wood, butterscotch, toasted bread, coffee, cocoa and caramel.



Photo courtesy of Green Flash Brewing Co.

While these flavors and aromas should be noticeable, they should never overpower, but rather nestle themselves side-by-side with the base beer style's characteristics – leading to a delightfully robust and complex, yet balanced, finish.

The beers should contain a slightly more warming alcohol element, though they should never be too "hot," and are often darker than the base beer due to the beer leeching some of the original liquid leftover in the barrel.

STATS

OG: varies by style, typically above average

IBU: varies by style

SRM: varies by style, often darker than base style

ABV: varies by style, typically above average

Commercial Examples: Founders KBS, Goose Island Bourbon County Stout, Green Flash Oculus Sauvage, Firestone Walker Parabola, Toppling Goliath Kentucky Brunch Brand Stout, Perennial Barrel-Aged Abraxas, Russian River Supplication, Deschutes The Abyss

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The Dogfish Inn marks another notch in Sam Calagione's business belt.

MOVING BEYOND THE BEER

By: Jim Dykstra

It's hard work opening a brewery, and even harder work keeping it open. There are more breweries in the U.S. now than ever before. As of 2015, there were 4,144, slightly edging out the previous high of 4,131 set in 1873. With so many fish in the sea, brewers are having to get creative.

If you're a Sculpin, you can throw some habanero, grapefruit or pineapple in and make waves, but the ripple effect will be swift. Or, if you're a market-savvy taxidermist, you can brew high-gravity beer and toss it in a squirrel. A more long-term and arguably more practical method would be to expand your brand beyond the scope of beer.

Did you know Dogfish Head has a pickle brand? What about brats? Coffee? You can enjoy them while you stay at the Dogfish Inn in Lewes, Delaware. The 16-room motel is

strategically located between the company's production brewery and brewpub.

As competition continues to stiffen, more brewers are looking beyond beer to brand building.

As an eminent marketer behind this cottage industry, Sam Calagione has always been interested in building a brand rather than just a brewery. By establishing more points of market contact, he firms up the foundation of his business while reaching a wider audience. "Oh you liked the sausage? It was infused with our Midas Touch beer..."

San Diego's Modern Times Beer is one of the only breweries to roast its own coffee in-house. It makes for a wonderfully aromatic workplace, but more importantly, it lends authenticity to the entire enterprise, which is more important than ever for a craft brewer.

Photo courtesy of Dogfish Head Brewing Co.



It's also a logical step from one mind-altering beverage to another, especially when one is a classic hangover remedy.

Another beverage to beverage route is that of brewing to distilling. Ballast Point has created a full range of spirits and pre-mixed beverages, and New Holland's been at it for almost a decade. And surprise, Dogfish Head got in on the action late last year. These companies can utilize their established distribution chains to break into a new market with minimal legwork. There are hundreds of smaller brewery combos around the country as well, be it distilleries, wineries or meaderies. Though they may not have reached a point of distribution, the same concept applies.

Mirroring the homegrown aspect of craft brewing, many brewers have taken to growing their own ingredients for both food and drink.



Austin-based Jester King recently announced a 58-acre purchase of the land surrounding its brewery, with the intent to turn the parcel into a fully-functioning farm. Bell's, Rogue, Stone, and myriad others have working farms that lend credence to the term "renaissance" in relation to craft beer.

PakTechIt takes a lot of resources to put a six-pack on a shelf, and while having a wider selection of beers to choose from is a joy, actively mitigating environmental impact reflects some of the best aspects of the homegrown mentality. New Belgium is an industry leader, diverting 99 percent of its waste and working to reduce the amount of water it consumes through reuse along with brewing practices such as dry-hopping, removing the need to bathe hops.

Industry practices such as using cans over bottles, and the increasingly prominent PakTech six-pack carrier (the plastic apparatus that clips onto the tops of cans), allow for easier recycling and disposal. Even waste products can be a viable source of income for a brewery, which can sell its spent grain as cattle feed, compost or to be made into a host of products including bread and soap.

As quality beer becomes increasingly common, a brewery's identity and versatility becomes a larger factor. We can't wait to see who will open the first beer themepark. Our bets are on Brewdog.



Photo courtesy of Hanchegirl via Wikipedia

The PakTech six-pack carrier is gaining popularity as an alternative to traditional cardboard or plastic ring carriers.



Photo courtesy of Hunterdon Brewing Co.

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Connoisseur's Corner:

The Barley of the Gods



Photo courtesy of pieceloveandchocolate.com

By: Jonathan Ingram

If you've been drinking porters and stouts this winter, then give a nod to the Mayans and Aztecs. The royalty of these cultures were the first to embrace chocolate by drinking it, and chances are, some of your favorite porters and stouts were brewed with chocolate malt, providing a hint of one of the world's most famous drinkables and edibles.

When it came to liquid chocolate, the Mayans and Aztecs preferred consuming the foam, perhaps because it was easier to drink the slightly bitter substance this way in the absence of sugar. Although the Aztecs used some additives for flavoring, both cultures were known for repeatedly pouring or beating their chocolate drinks to create a foam head before sipping it right off the top.

So if that chocolatey Russian Imperial Stout you're drinking with its nice foam head makes you feel like a member of the upper crust, maybe there's something universal involved.

After the English Reformation, chocolate imported from the New World was drunk before coffee and tea started to dominate the hot drink scene in what became known as coffee houses. The English, like those across the water, were looking to chocolate for the effects of theobromine (food of the gods, directly translated) and caffeine, each a stimulant. On both sides of the Atlantic, the societies that endorsed the drinking of chocolate – or other caffeine-laced drinks – were flirting with the abandonment of what had made their societies strong. Their cultural ethic favored steady work and sobriety,

not sitting and sipping stimulants or ingesting an aphrodisiac, a reputed quality of theobromine.

These days, American and European cultures have learned to live with the “work hard, play hard” ethic. Should that porter or stout happen to also put you in the mood for love as Valentine’s Day approaches, forget about the feeling being sourced from any chocolate malt on three counts. First, theobromine has only been confirmed as a good accompaniment to caffeine. Second, chocolate malt is made from barley, which doesn’t have these ingredients or any other known stimulants – unless malted and brewed with hops! As importantly, there’s not much chocolate malt, which has a rather dry taste, in grist bills. Much of the flavor comes from other dark malts on the bill or roasted barley that is highlighted by the chocolate.

The story of chocolate malt doesn’t get much shrift in the mill that often provides the written grist on beer, its ingredients and history. Without stepping into the eternal debates surrounding porters and stouts, it’s well established that the malt roaster invented and patented by Daniel Wheeler in 1817 introduced black malt and was a key change in the darker beers favored by the British public and eventually around the world. Then a change in the laws regarding the taxation of malt in Britain in 1880 led to more widespread use of roasted barley. Malt

Eventually, it caught on that roasting malt – after the usual techniques of germination – could be done in a way similar to roasting the beans of the cacao with a result remarkably similar to chocolate. The malted barley and cocoa nibs (the fermented beans of the cacao tree) have similar flavor precursors like peptides, amino acids and sugars, according to Cassie Liscomb, a technical services associate at Briess Malt & Ingredients Company in Wisconsin. The same roasting equipment used to make chocolate malt, she pointed out, is often



Photo Courtesy of Briess Malt & Ingredients Co.



Photo Courtesy of Briess Malt & Ingredients Co.

As far as the art of malt shoveling is concerned, not much has changed in the past century.

used by companies that roast cocoa nibs prior to adding sugar and milk, among other ingredients, to create the familiar edible.

Some beers announce chocolate as a major flavor ingredient such as Young’s Double Chocolate Stout; Samuel Smith’s Chocolate Stout; or Choklat Stout, brewed by Southern Tier Brewing Co. In addition to chocolate malt, beers designated as chocolate generally have another source for flavoring such as cocoa nibs, cocoa or the chocolate we know in edible form. Invariably for all dark beers, the darker malts are a minority ingredient on the grist bill along with a majority of pale malt, which is more efficient for brewing.

Since Spaniards reported that pepper was one of the additives used by the Aztecs, it seems fitting that pepper-influenced dark beers have emerged with links to Mexico such as the Cocoa Mole Spiced Chocolate Porter from New Belgium Brewing Company; The Mayan from Britain’s Ilkley Brewery; or Chocolate Sombrero from Clown Shoes Brewing Company.

It took a while from the time Wheeler invented the roaster until chocolate malt first started showing up in

beers made in Britain. It seemed to be a progression starting with the black malt that first came out of his patented device that was used primarily for coloring. Next, roasted barley gradually became a common ingredient, and apparently, only afterward came the use of chocolate malt in relatively small quantities.



Photo Courtesy of Jason Alden

Ironically, the use of chocolate malt in brewing may have resulted from the popularity of chocolate in something other than liquid form. British companies J.S. Fry & Sons and Cadbury made edible chocolate all the rage across a range of consumers in the 1920s along

with Milton Hershey in America. This market change in consumer demand driven by producers happened about the same time chocolate malt began appearing in some grist bills in Britain.

If it's difficult to pin down precisely when chocolate malt was first produced, it's also hard to tell why. Due to the popularity of chocolate, perhaps there was a money-driven search for a method to replace production from cacao beans by starting with something home-grown – like barley. Brewers themselves might have wondered if there was a way to capitalize on the chocolate rage going on all round them and may have inquired about it at malting houses. The entire concept of specialty malts may have brought out more experimentation on many fronts due to better understanding of how to use the drum roaster invented by Wheeler.

After macro lager brewers began to dominate in America, a counter-reformation took place and chocolate in beer marched in the legion of this much larger movement. In 1972, Anchor Brewing Co. almost single-handedly saved the porter style in the U.S. and Britain, then the rest of the world by introducing its profoundly tasty Anchor Porter, which includes chocolate malt. It was the start of something compelling that led to other landmark dark beers brewed with chocolate malt once the craft movement was in full fermentation. The Bourbon County Stout from Goose Island Brewing Company, Obsidian Stout from Deschutes Brewery and the iconic Wake-n-Bake Coffee Oatmeal Stout from Terrapin Brewing Company are among many others emerging along this arc of progression toward darker beers.

In light of Valentine's Day, it's almost enough to make one dream of amber/brown waves of chocolate barley growing in the heartland – even if there is no such thing until the barley meets a maltster and a roaster.



Photo Courtesy of Briess Malt & Ingredients Co.

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SWEETS FOR THE SWEET

A Guide to Planning the Perfect Craft Beer Fête

Story and Photography By: Sherry Dryja



Valentine's Day is known for high-priced meals and equally high expectations, but let's face it, what this holiday really boils down to is sharing dessert and bubbly with your special someone. Why not forgo the pricey meal and head straight to dessert? Pair it up with delicious craft beer and you've got yourself the sweetest Valentine's Day beer tasting ever.

To make planning easy, check out our four-course dessert menu. It starts with Mini Neapolitan Bundt Cakes that are as delightful to look at as they

are to eat. Light and delicate, these cakes are topped with a bright pink fluffy icing that doesn't overwhelm the sublime flavors of the cake.

Of course, Valentine's Day wouldn't be the same without chocolate, and although our bundt cakes have a layer of chocolate, our Red Velvet S'mores Blossom Cookies take care of any remaining cravings. For starters, these cookies are a breeze to bake, thanks to the devil's food cake mix called for in the recipe.

They come out soft and chewy and are layered with a pillow of gooey, seared marshmallows and melty Hershey's Kisses.

Peanut brittle is the opposite of melty, but it is so tasty with the beers we have lined up. For all three of our offerings so far, stouts and porters are the way to go. The peanut brittle and the bundt cakes are perfect when paired with Samuel Smith's Organic Chocolate Stout. Pairing it with the peanut brittle is like adding



a chocolate peanut butter cup to the menu. It also has a light touch, which brings out the chocolate in the cake without overwhelming the other flavors and texture.

Bayhawk Ales brews a chocolate porter that paired well with the cookies and the cakes, but it was Pelican Brewing Company's Tsunami Stout that got our vote when pairing the cookies. It is jet black and strong, like a good cup of espresso. The beer tames the sweetness of the cookie and

exudes roasted notes that harmonize beautifully with the caramelization of the marshmallow.

Don't forget to save room for pie! Our Mixed Berry Love Note Pie appears to have been delivered by Cupid himself. Sealed with a heart, it is the sweetest way to send a message of love.

A dark coffee-style stout or porter could be paired with this treat, but we found quadrupels to be the real showstoppers. Ommegang Brewery's

Three Philosopher's Quad and Avery Brewing's The Reverend Belgium-Style Quad were our picks. They impart a mild sweetness with just a hint of stone fruit, which partners well with the buttery crust and juicy fruits in the pie.

Now that you've got a plan in place, complete with recipes and beer tasting ideas, all you need is your special someone to make Valentine's Day sweeter than sweet.

Individual Neapolitan Bundt Cakes

INGREDIENTS:

For cake:

Nonstick baking spray, such as Baker's Joy

2 3/4 cups cake flour, sifted

1 3/4 cups sugar

4 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2/3 cup butter, softened

1 1/4 cups room temperature milk, divided

2 teaspoons vanilla

5 fresh egg whites, room temperature

Red food coloring

2 tablespoons cocoa powder

2 tablespoons water

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

Frosting:

2 fresh egg whites

1 cup sugar

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

2/3 cup water

1/8 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Several drops of red food coloring



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Thoroughly spray the insides of each cavity in a mini bundt pan with nonstick baking spray.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, sift together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add the butter, half of the milk, and all of the vanilla. Mix on medium speed for about 2 minutes, occasionally stopping to scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl.

Mix in the remaining milk and the egg whites. Beat for 2 more minutes.

Divide the batter into 3 separate bowls, in 3 equal portions.

Leave one portion white.

To the second portion, blend in a few drops of red food coloring until the batter is dark pink.

To the third portion of the batter, blend in the cocoa, water, baking soda, and a few drops of red food coloring, until the chocolate is slightly pink.

Starting with the white batter, spoon about 2 tablespoons into the bottoms of each of the bundt cake cavities. Over that, gently and as evenly as possible, spoon about 2 tablespoons of pink batter. Don't mix the batters. The pink should just sit on top of the white.

Finally, spoon about 2 tablespoons of the chocolate batter on top of the pink.

The bundt cake cavities should be no more than 2/3 full to allow the cake room to expand without overflowing. There should also be about half of each color of batter left to make 6 more cakes.

Bake the cakes for 20 to 30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool for 5 to 10 minutes in the pan and then remove the cakes to a wire rack to cool completely before frosting.

When the mini bundt pan is cool again, repeat the process of adding the batters to the pan to create the next six cakes.

Make the frosting:

Once the cakes are cool, place the egg whites in the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat until the egg whites are thick and foamy, but before they hold a peak. Set aside to prepare the sugar.

Combine the sugar, cream of tartar, water, and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Once the sugar has dissolved, boil the syrup – do not stir – for 2 minutes, or until the syrup reaches 240°F on a candy

thermometer.

Once the sugar syrup is ready, start beating the egg whites again. Immediately, and carefully, pour the sugar syrup into the egg whites in a slow stream, beating constantly. The mixture will thicken.

When the syrup has been added, stir in the vanilla and red food coloring to tint the icing pink. Continue to beat until the frosting is thick and holds a peak.

Spoon the hot frosting on top of the cooled bundt cakes, swirling decoratively.

Makes 12 mini bundt cakes.



Mixed Berry Love Note Pie

INGREDIENTS:

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp salt

1 tsp sugar, heaping

1/2 pound cold unsalted butter (2 sticks)

3 ounces cold water (6 tablespoons)

1-2 cups blackberries, blueberries, or strawberries, or a mixture

The juice of half a lemon

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

Sparkling sugar

1 egg white

Directions:

In a food processor, combine the flour, salt, and sugar. Pulse briefly to mix. Dice the butter and scatter it over the top of the flour mixture. Pulse until the mixture forms coarse crumbs about the size of peas.

Drizzle the ice water in 2-tablespoon increments over the flour and butter mixture while pulsing the food processor, until the dough starts to come together. If the dough sticks to itself but not to your hand, it's ready. If not, add a little bit more water.

Lay a large piece of plastic wrap on a work surface. Transfer the mixture onto the plastic wrap. Bring the mix together into a ball. Cut the ball in half and form two separate discs. Wrap each disc in plastic and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, up to 24 hours. (Dough can be frozen up to a month.)

When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 425°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place one of the disks of dough on a lightly floured

surface. Roll it out to about 1/8th-inch thick, or 11-inches round. Using a pizza cutter or knife, create a square or rectangle by cutting off the rounded edges. Set the scraps aside for later.

In a bowl, lightly stir together the berries, lemon juice, sugar, and flour. Spoon the filling evenly onto the center of the dough, leaving a 2-inch border uncovered around the edge.

Fold each corner of the crust to the center of the berries to create the envelope. Dab some egg white on each corner to seal them in place. It doesn't have to be perfect and gaps in the seams are preferred to allow air to escape. Don't worry if a little juice from the berries seeps out while baking—it adds color.

Using a heart-shaped cookie cutter, create a heart with the piecrust scraps. Brush the back of the heart with egg white and secure it to the center of the envelope. Brush the pie, including the heart, with more egg white and, if desired, sprinkle with sparkling sugar.

Bake until the filling is bubbling and the pastry is golden brown, about 25 minutes.

Transfer the pie to a wire rack and let cool slightly before serving.

Makes 2 pies.



Peanut Brittle

INGREDIENTS:

Butter for greasing cookie sheet

1 cup light corn syrup

2 cups sugar

1/2 cup water

2 cups roasted peanuts

1 tablespoon butter

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:

Grease 1 cookie sheet with butter and set aside. Combine the corn syrup, sugar, and water in a heavy saucepan and stir over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Raise the heat to high and boil without stirring for about 10 minutes, or until a candy thermometer registers 260°F.

Reduce heat to medium-low and add the peanuts. Stir constantly for about 8 to 10 minutes, or until a candy thermometer registers 295°F. Keep stirring while adding the butter, baking soda, and vanilla. The mixture will foam up as you do this.

As soon as the butter, baking soda, and vanilla are mixed in, immediately pour the brittle onto the greased baking sheet and spread it as evenly and thinly as possible. It will immediately start to set up and harden. Let stand until it is cooled completely.



Red Velvet Smores Blossom Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

1 package Devil's Food Cake mix

2 eggs

3/4 cup butter, softened

Red food coloring

1 package large marshmallows

1 package Hershey's Kisses

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line a couple of cookie sheets with parchment paper.

Mix the cake mix, eggs, and butter together on low in the bowl of an electric or stand mixer. This can also be done by hand. As it starts to become a paste consistency, add enough red food coloring to tint the chocolate deep red and mix well.

Scoop out about a tablespoon of cookie dough and roll it between your hands to create a ball. Space each ball about 2 inches apart on the parchment lined cookie sheets. You should have 24 cookie balls.

Bake for 9 minutes. The cookies will spread, and when cracks form on the top, the cookies are ready.

Remove to a cooling rack to cool completely.

Unwrap 24 Hershey's Kisses and count out 24 marshmallows.

Move a rack in the oven to the top, closest to the broiler and turn on the broiler.

Return the cookies in a single layer to the cookie sheets. Top each cookie with a marshmallow. Place under the broiler for a few seconds, turning the cookie sheet to brown and melt the marshmallows evenly. If the tops are getting too dark before the marshmallows have melted on the bottom, remove the pan from the oven, flip the marshmallows over, and repeat under the broiler, until all the marshmallows are slightly browned and squishy.

Immediately press a Hershey's Kiss into the top of each melted marshmallow and serve.



Traveling Connoisseur: Mallorca

Story and Photos By: Martyn Cornell

One of the big benefits of the global craft beer boom is that it is now possible to go on holiday almost anywhere in the world and find good, locally brewed craft beer on sale. There are, for example, around 300 craft breweries in Spain now – and that includes the Mediterranean holiday haven of Mallorca, largest of the Balearic islands, 125 miles to the east of the Spanish mainland, which welcomes 10 million tourists a year.

Mallorca is currently home to seven craft breweries, all of which have started in the past three or four years. Few Mallorcan bars, alas, stock anything but big-name lagers and, in the built-up tourist belt around the coast, other macrobrews such as Guinness. But the small guys have made a surprisingly successful push into the island's supermarkets, so that even the beer shelves of stores serving big tourist centres such as Cala D'Or in the southeast will have bottles from four or five small Mallorcan breweries.

At the same time the better Mallorcan restaurants have recognised that if you are going to promote Mallorcan cuisine and Mallorcan produce, it makes sense to sell artisanal Mallorcan beers alongside Mallorcan wines for your patrons to drink, so that good craft beers can be found in the sort of high-class restaurant that would not necessarily stock such brews in other parts of the world.



Beer Lovers Brewery is scarcely recognizable from the outside. Formerly a barn, the structure has been in the family for 300 years.



The Sullerica Brewery incorporates tastes of the local terroir in its beers, like rosemary, lemon and even olive.

Life is a little different on Majorca from, say, Italy, where Italian craft brewers are making much-admired pilsner-style brews: no Mallorcan brewer makes a lager, simply because they could not compete with the Spanish giants, Estrella Damm and Mahou San Miguel, on price. But all seem to make a wheat beer (“blat” in Catalan), which is evidently seen as the entry-level craft beer for locals, and there are pale ales, IPAs, and speciality beers too.

The Sullerica brewery, in the small town of Sóller, in the west of the island, makes a very good wheat beer flavored with local lemon peel, and an equally fine amber ale, Original, which includes rosemary, lemon verbena and orange blossoms, or ‘flor de taronger’ in Catalan. Alas, the beer brewed with bitter olives the brewery was making in 2014 seems to have disappeared. Sóller is a lovely old town worth a visit in its own right (take the somewhat rickety train up from Palma), and if you go there, you’ll find Sullerica beers on sale in the excellent Café Scholl, a vegetarian restaurant in Carrer de la Victòria. You should also track down “Fet a Sóller” ice cream, which is also made from locally grown ingredients

Another establishment concentrating on local flavourings is the Cas Cerveser brewery in Galilea, about eight miles to the west of Palma, started by a German-Mallorcan



Life is a little different on Mallorca... No Mallorcan brewer makes a lager, but all seem to make a wheat beer.

brewer called Sebasti n Morey, which makes a first-class sour cherry beer, Cor de Cirera, aged for a year in French oak barrels that had previously contained red wine from the Bodegas Son Puig in nearby Puigpunyent.

Other Mallorcan brews worth finding are Rossa, an English bitter-style bottle-conditioned ale from the Pla brewery, named for Es Pla, the flat plain of central Mallorca in Algaida, about 15 miles east of Palma, and the wheat beer from the Talai tka brewery in Porreres, a small town in the middle of Mallorca. Watch out, however, for at least one fake: Moli Balear, or “Balearic mill,” a wheat beer that carries a drawing of a typical Mallorcan windmill on the label, is actually brewed in Belgium.

Several Mallorcan breweries have “open days” for visitors with tastings and food-and-beer pairings. One is Cas Cerveser; another is the Beer Lovers brewery in Alc ida, in the north of Majorca, which was founded in 2012 by Miquel Amor s Crawford and his brother Felipe, sons of a Mallorcan father and a mother who is half-Welsh and half-English. The brewery is down a narrow

street, in the heart of the attractive centre of old Alc ida, in a former barn built of the local honey-coloured limestone and attached to a house that has been owned by the family for 300 years. It is hard to find even with the help of Google Maps, and it was not until I was ten yards from the front door and smelt the unmistakable aromas of mashing malt that I knew I was close to my target. Originally, the barn, which still has troughs on one wall for animal food, “was where the horse and cart were kept – it was full of stuff, so we emptied it and added a bit – we couldn’t touch much, because all the old buildings are protected,” Miquel says. “We put in a new floor, but the floor had to be like the old house’s floor, the walls have to be built of the same old stone.”

The brewery name is in part a pun on their surname – “amor s” literally means “loving” in Catalan – and was chosen because it would be easy to understand and pronounce, by Mallorcans and tourists alike. They could have chosen a locally based geographical name, Miquel says, but they didn’t want one of those: “We wanted to escape from all those products that are being sold



Touristy areas of Mallorca rarely stock local brews - to find them, one must travel inland.

because they're Mallorcan rather than because they're good." The name "doesn't sound so strange to us," he says, though he admits that "there are people who like it a lot and people who don't like it, who say, 'why an English name when you're based in Mallorca?'"

Miquel is a semi-reluctant professional brewer: "I tell everybody, 'I prefer drinking beer to brewing it,'" he says. "We were homebrewers, but I was working in construction, and that was badly hit by the recession, while my brother was a translator, and Google Translate means that's not a good job to have nowadays. So we called some numbers, we visited a few breweries and we decided to get into the brewing business. Come back to me in two years and I'll tell you if we were right or wrong!"

The brewing equipment - combined mash tun and kettle alongside a combined lauter tun-whirlpool, plus, in the front room of the barn, three small conical fermentation vessels - comes from a firm in Catalonia that previously made kit for wineries. The boom in small breweries in Spain has been a blessing to them, after the country's wine bodegas stopped expanding in the recession. Brewing capacity is 750 litres at a time, with brewing currently taking place once a week during the summer months, less during the island's quiet season. There is actually a well inside the barn itself, but it smells musty, and Miquel says Mallorcan well water is not normally suitable for brewing.

Beer Lovers actually tanks 3,000 litres at a time from a well in a place called Can Sales, around seven miles to the west, at the end of the Sierra Tramontana, which runs up the island. Here the water has apparently spent less time travelling through Mallorca's limestone rocks, and needs no treatment to make darker beers with, and only a little tweaking for pale ones.

The brewery produces both bottled and keg beers, and its beer is on tap in a few bars in Palma. It makes five different beers: the original three, Blat, a Belgian-style wheat beer and the brewery's best-seller ("It wouldn't be a beer I would have done as a homebrewer, but this is a business, you've got to brew the beer people will buy, not the one you like," Miquel says); Broll, a Pale Ale ("sales are growing, and if in one or two years we sell more of the pale ale it will be mission accomplished!"), and Bram, an amber ale, "difficult to sell in Mallorca, people see dark beers, they're a bit taken aback," plus, now, a porter, made just twice a year with English malt from Crisp of East Anglia, a fine, deep ruby-brown drink with chocolate and coffee in the depths, and Llop, Catalan for "wolf," an IPA that Miquel confesses began as an accident after they over-hopped a batch of the amber ale. Miquel and his team decided to dry-hop the beer as well before releasing it, and it found enough of an audience for them to have brewed more batches since.

“For me it’s the best one we’ve got,” he says. Most of the malt, except for the porter, comes from Weyermann in Germany via the Spanish mainland: “there’s plenty of barley in Spain, but the maltsters are owned by the big companies, so you can’t buy it even if you wanted to,” Miquel says. All the bottles carry a full list of the malt and hop varieties found in the beer.

The first stage, Miquel says, was to make sure they were happy with the standard of the beers they were making. The next stage, which they are working on now, is “to be easy to find. People come here, they try the beers, they like it, and they ask, ‘where can we get hold of our beer,’ and that’s the difficult question. The most difficult part is distribution.”

As news about Beer Lovers spreads, Miquel is also finding holidaying brewers from Denmark, Germany and other countries – and beer writers like me – arrive on the brewery doorstep. The brewery is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays, when Miquel and his team showcase the suitability of their beers to be matched with food. They certainly match extremely well: right after my visit to the brewery I had a lunch of gambas (prawns) in a garlicky, buttery sauce with a bottle of Broll in a restaurant 100 or so yards away that was a marvellous combination.

Mallorca is still short of good craft beer bars, but one not to be missed if you’re in Palma is the island’s oldest, Lórien, a small, dark, hidden-away place, now 25 years old, and run by the friendly and knowledgeable Pep Joan: the beers on draft when I was there included examples from Italy, mainland Spain (from Pamplona, an excellent sour wheat beer, though definitely not the “hefeweizen” it claimed to be) and Ireland. It also sells excellent llonguets, the Mallorcan version of a sandwich. Two others in Palma are Guirigall, in Carrer d’En Brossa, close to Lórien, quieter and a locals’ favourite, and Atomic Garden in Carrer de Borguny, whose recent beers include brews from Mikkeller, To Øl, Rogue Ales and Edge Brewing from Barcelona. Outside Palma, La Birreria in Carrer del Temple, Pollença, flies the flag for craft beer in the far north of the island.ress a Hershey’s Kiss into the top of each melted marshmallow and serve.



The Mallorcan palate skews towards lighter styles, although amber ales and porters are catching on.

A Beer Pilgrimage to the Holy City

A tour of Charleston's burgeoning beer scene



Photos courtesy of Holy City Brewing Co.

By: Jim Dykstra

The city of Charleston was bound to become a craft beer haven. Equal parts college town and gentrified refuge, you get the impression that people come here to spend money – whether they have it or not. And what better way to deflate a bloated wallet than a tour of the city's ample watering holes?

Our tour starts with a daytime jaunt to Westbrook Brewing, located in Mt. Pleasant, SC, right outside of Charleston. In terms of distribution Westbrook is leading the local pack with a steadily increasing footprint driven by a solid year-round lineup and its yearly crop of Mexican Cake, a riot-

inducing Imperial Stout aged on cocoa nibs, vanilla beans, cinnamon sticks and fresh habanero peppers.

Tucked into an industrial enclave, Westbrook's facility is fairly unassuming. If it weren't for the Spanish moss, palms and lemongrass growing out front, which they use in their White Thai wheat beer, you'd have no idea you were a stone's throw away from a juicy Chocolate Raspberry Imperial Stout brewed to celebrate the brewery's 5th anniversary.

And if you weren't already holding their dry, nutty Udderly Milk Stout, you might not realize the even larger facility under construction next door is also theirs. Westbrook's



The iconic Chucktown Follicle Brown cans utilize both stimulating visual and verbal imagery to attract drinkers.

growth has been bolstered by contracts with some of the biggest gypsy brewers in the industry, Stillwater Artisanal Ales and the notorious Evil Twin.

All three brands produce high-quality beer, but while contract brewing is an effective business strategy, it has left Westbrook's taproom feeling a bit sterile in terms of culture. The walls are bare, and you get the sense that this is a business first and a brewery second. Regardless, their business is making good beer, and in the eyes of the fastidious brewer, sterility is next to godliness.

Godliness goes a long way in the Holy City, where law mandates no buildings rise above the array of venerable church steeples dotting the peninsula. Until recently, laws prohibited brewers from making beer above 6 percent ABV, along with serving a full pint. These arcane restrictions were lifted in 2007 and 2013 respectively, paving the way for a rush of breweries.

Before we hit the town, we stock up at Charleston's most

respected bottle shop, Charleston Beer Exchange. It's the size of a large closet, but a brief scan of the carefully curated collection could bolster any craft enthusiast's cellar.

I pick up a few local bottles, an Oro de Calabaza from Jolly Pumpkin and a Bell's Expedition Stout, and leave feeling lighter in both wallet and heart. After a quick recharge of coffee and food cart gyro, I'm ready to start my quest for divine libations.

Naturally, it begins at Holy City Brewing. The man behind the beer pulpit pours a Pluff Mud Porter, which took home gold at the 2012 GABF. The silky brown suds make a statement without overwhelming the palate. It is true to form in flavor, with mild chocolate and a hint of roast, yet still refreshing.

The taproom is refreshing as well. Clad in warm wood and light, a tasteful mix of distractions make for a cozy environment. I could stay awhile, but my guide is eager to carry on.



Holy City Brewing's taproom strikes a fine balance between rustic and modern; and cleanliness without "hospital chic."

Freehouse Brewery is right down the road. A 2013 addition to the city's brewing force, it's an all-organic facility located right on the Ashley River. The view is as delicious as the ALE Back Pale Ale, an English take on the style that puts balance before hop declarations.

Next up is the nearby COAST Brewing Co. Founded in 2007, it is one of Charleston's oldest breweries, and is also focused on local, organic ingredients. The taproom is in the same space as the brewery, which adds a certain homespun charm.

I am struck by the disparity in venue and product – the brewery is quaint, but the can artwork on their products is as sleek and professional as they come. In fact, a firm grasp on the marketing end of beer production is one of the defining features of Charleston's breweries. Almost without fail, these beers are made to stand out on a shelf. It mirrors the city center itself, where every passing window is calling out to the consumer within, and every consumer is seeking out the perfect product with which to define themselves. I define myself with a HopArt IPA and venture back into a blur of The North Face and flannel, navigating the cobblestones with as much care as I can muster.

A while later, I make my final stop for the night at the relatively ancient Palmetto Brewing Company. This place

boasts true history, having been around from the late 1800s until Prohibition, before its resurrection in 1993. Artifacts from the original building adorn the walls, but the beer is thoroughly modern, and after a nitro Espresso Porter, I am thoroughly satisfied.

Yet during my time here, I hardly scratched the surface. Charleston and its surrounding area is home to around a dozen quality breweries, and more are on the horizon. I didn't have the liver-space for visits to Revelry, Ghost Monkey, Tradesman, or Cooper River brewing companies, amongst others. But that's a mark of a good beer town. If you can't drink your way through all of the breweries in a day, it's worth a trip.

The city is old, but the beer culture is fresh. It's the best of both worlds.



Photo courtesy of Coast Brewing Co.

Festivals and Events, Winter 2016

Events to warm the winter days and nights!

January

Isthmus Beer & Cheese Fest

Madison, WI

January 16

Black Hills Beer Fest

Rapid City, SD

January 16

Cabin Fever Schlafly Winter Beer Festival

Maplewood, MO

January 16

Hibrewnation Festival of Beer

Gettysburg, PA

January 16

Cleveland Beerfest

Cleveland, OH

January 22 - 23

Winter Brew Fest

Denver, CO

January 22 - 23



Isthmus Beer & Cheese Fest (photo courtesy of isthmus.com)



Cleveland Beerfest (photo courtesy of clevescene.com)



Asheville Winter Warmer Beer Festival

Asheville Winter Warmer Beer Festival

Asheville, NC

January 23

6th Annual Jolly Skull Beer and Wine Fest

Greenville, NC

January 23

Hopocalypse Day

San Leandro, CA

January 23

Atlanta Winter Beer Fest

Atlanta, GA

January 30

Rhode Island Brew Fest

Pawtucket, RI

January 30

Big Bear Brew Fest

Pueblo, CO

November 21



Hopocalypse Day (photo courtesy of drinkdrakes.com)



Atlanta Winter Beer Fest (photo by capturelifethroughthelens.com)



Rhode Island Brew Fest (photo courtesy of Rhode Island Brew Fest)

February

The Beer Dabber Winter Carnival

Saint Paul, MN
February 6

Arizona Strong Beer Festival

Phoenix, AZ
February 13

Brewbies Fest

Oceanside, CA
February 13

Florida Craft Brew and Wingfest

Vero Beach, FL
February 20

Steins and Vines Beer and Wine Festival

Sioux City, IA
February 20

Tailspin Ale Fest

Louisville, KY
February 20

Winter Beer Festival

Grand Rapids, MI
February 26 - 27

Kansas City Brew Festival

Kansas City, MO
February 27



Arizona Strong Beer Festival
(photo courtesy of craftbeeraz.com)



Winter Beer Festival (photo courtesy of westsidebeer.com)



Kansas City Brew Festival

Beer Review

96 / 96
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.

96

by *Joseph Formanek*

Malefactor

Upland Brewing Co.

Aroma:
24 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Upland Malefactor is a monster of an American Sour! This brew, promoted as an "Epic Flanders Style Red Ale," delivers quite the impact to the senses in all aspects, delivering a memorable and epic experience indeed.

The aroma of this brew is very complex with intense cherry, lactic and acetic notes. There is a wine-like character that could be coming from the barrel-aging or perhaps from the microbiological complexity. The mouth salivates immediately upon the first whiff after popping the cork. Visually, this moderately carbonated quite turbid reddish-brown-colored brew has a solid, rocky cream-colored head. In overall appearance, except for the turbidity, it hits the mark quite well for a Flanders

Red. The flavor comes through as a Flanders Red as well, but with an intensely complex wild character that complements the base beer character very well. The flavor has a very impressive sour flavor complexity of cherry and vinous aromatics married with a moderate level of tartness. The middle and finish retains this complexity, along with a browner woody note that adds even more to the mix. The finish is quite dry and spicy, with the moderate sourness cleansing the palate quite well to prepare you for the next sip. The complexity is intense, but this is a fantastic representation of the Mixed Fermentation Sour Beer style. While this could certainly be cellared, it is ready to experience and share with friends immediately.



96

by *Joseph Formanek*

Unsessionable

Revolution Brewing

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Revolution's Unsessionable IPA makes its presence known even before opening the can. The bold graphics and claims of massive hop impact on the can almost taunt you into popping it open. Once you do, there is an immediate explosion of fresh and bright pine, citrus and woody hop aromas even before pouring it into the glass. There is no disappointment here!

This golden-colored, slightly hazy brew with a moderately fine head packs a huge bitter wallop (the can says 100 IBU – it's at least that high!) along with massive pine and citrus hop flavor with a touch of dankness behind this. A solid base malt backbone balances out the hop expression. A clean alcohol note is also very evident, giving

quite a bit of warmth upon swallowing. The brew has a satisfying medium body and moderately dry finish for the style, preparing you for the next delicious sip.

This is a very impressive, extremely drinkable Double IPA that will delight those not afraid of the joy of hops.



95

by *Randy Scorby*

MoonJuice IPA

SanTan Brewing Company

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

Overall Impression:
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer is a welcome diversion from the typical citrus bomb Northwest-style IPA. The prominent hop character is a fresh and bright tropical fruit cocktail coupled with candied peaches and suggestions of pineapple. A very light grainy, caramel maltiness emerges as it warms and vents. The appearance pulls the drinker in even more with its deep amber color, near-brilliant clarity and off-white head that lasts throughout the example. The hop flavor follows the aroma with a prominent peach character and adds a light grapefruit rind, resin and a hint of pineapple. The medium-high hop bitterness is smooth and lingers through a light residual sweetness into a dry finish. A very light

grainy malt character and alcohol warming adds the needed balance to round out the hop flavor and bitterness.



95

by *Sean Coughlin*

Devil's Lettuce

Short's Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

Overall Impression:
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

An inviting cornucopia of hops jumps out of the glass with profound complexity: freshly squeezed grapefruit juice, earthiness comprised of grassiness and onions, and a hint of cannabis. There is a background note of sweet biscuit malt but it plays second fiddle to the loaded hop profile. The beer is an attractive medium-blond color with good clarity. The small off-white head develops slowly but is tightly-knit, has a creamy texture, and is easily awakened with the swirl of the glass. The flavor follows the aroma with a balance that is decidedly hop-forward. The immense hop flavor brings forth the onion and cannabis from

the aroma, almost bordering on musty. The hop bitterness seems to overwhelm the palate some, but is balanced well enough by the hop flavor to keep the beer enjoyable. The fermentation is extremely clean – the lager yeast allows the hops to take center stage and steer the drinker towards a lupulin overload. This is a must-try beer for the discerning hop head!



95

by *Randy Scorby*

Lil' Devil

AleSmith Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

The aroma is an explosion of stone fruit and tropical fruit that is tempered by a bready, biscuity maltiness. A light orange citrus character emerges as it warms, along with a light spicy hop aroma and a suggestion of black pepper. The aroma displays a layered complexity that evolves throughout the glass. Then the flavor shifts slightly, with a light pear ester and subtle bready and nutty malt character complemented by hints of black pepper and spicy hop flavor. A moderate hop bitterness and light alcohol warming linger into a medium-dry finish. This complex and enjoyable Belgian Pale Ale will leave you wanting another pint.



95

by *Jason Johnson*

Unchained #20

Sticke Alt

Summit Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impresion:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Altbiers are generally fermented with ale yeast at cooler temperatures, giving you a cleaner fermentation than most ales require. The stronger version of the altbier style pours a clear, deep, nearly brown amber. The cream-colored, long-lasting head is well formed, with tight compact bubbles. The aroma is mostly deep, complex, toasty melanoidin malt with some reserved chocolate and a little toffee in the background. The hop presence is a decidedly spicy noble hop varietal. The aroma is clean, with just the faintest hint of alcohol.

The flavor matches closely with the aroma, with some nice, slightly sweet and rich malt flavors. A little nutty, a bit of toast, and some choco-

late is apparent. While it starts out sweet, the finish is a bit dry, with help from the moderate hop bitterness. The moderately spicy hop flavor comes through nicely, and the balance is perfect for the style: It's well-balanced with a minor bias towards the malt. The body is medium, with a higher than normal carbonation character. The alcohol presence is not hot or boozy in the least, but there is a slight alcohol warming sensation, especially as the beer itself warms up.

All in all, this was a great example of a higher-strength Altbier; if you're looking for a great altbier in the states, this is the beer you'll want to find.



95

by *Nelson Crowle*

DirtWolf

Victory Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**

19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Pouring a brilliantly clear gold with a nice poofy head of tiny ivory bubbles, the initial aroma is grassy with some pine notes, grapefruit, and a bit of bready character to hold up the substantial hops. The first sip brings piney and grassy hops up front, light stone fruit and gooseberry mid-palate and a hint of garlic in the fairly dry, moderately bitter yet balanced finish. This beer has a medium body, really nice balance, medium carbonation, and a substantial alcohol warmth that is clean and not hot. It's also crisp and very smooth – an excellent example of an East Coast-style Double IPA. Pour this in a snifter or tulip and sip it slowly – it will sneak up

on you! I combined the beer (after evaluating) with lightly salted yellow pear tomatoes – yummy! This would also go well with a vegetable and bread cheese fondue.



94

by *Susan Ruud*

Johnny's American IPA

Moab Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**

19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer has an enticing aroma of citrus hops and sweet pleasant malt behind with mild pear-like esters leading into pleasant flavors of citrus hopping and lightly toasted sweet malt. A gentle, soft bitterness lingers into the finish. The malt and hops are almost perfectly balanced for the style. Each sip jumps through endless hoops of sweet and bitter, making you excited to try the next sip. This is a top-shelf American IPA, and is highly recommended.



94

by *Randy Scorby*

Polygamy Nitro Porter

Wasatch Brewery

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer pours a gorgeous deep brown with burgundy highlights and a thick tan head that seems to last forever. The aroma is creamy milk chocolate with supporting roasted malt, herbal hops and a low level of mixed berries. The flavor builds on the aroma with a slightly higher intensity of milk chocolate and a medium hop bitterness that builds and lingers through a moderate residual sweetness, helping to create a pleasant dryness in the finish. The herbal hop flavor, berry character and a hint of coffee play a supporting role. The creamy mouthfeel adds a touch of fullness to the light body, but a touch more is needed to create a more pleasing mouthfeel. Still

though, this is a very nice porter with extra creaminess from the nitrogenation.



94

by *Garrick Van Buren*

Hinterland Grand Cru

Hinterland Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Hinterland Grand Cru is a very fun beer. It amplifies the caramel notes you'd expect in a Belgian Strong into something bigger, bolder and more complex. The low, dense, persistent, beige head is supported by a brilliantly clear copper body. The aroma offers a complex blend of caramel, honey, bread, toast, very light lemon, a sprinkling of powdered sugar, a hint of woody hops, and a low-to-medium alcohol note. The balance ever so slightly biases the rich, bready, toasty malt over both the prominent woody hops and the prominent grape Kool-Aid-esque fruitiness. It has a sweet finish, honey-like, approaching syrupy, with an alcohol warmth and spiciness reminiscent of cinnamon.



94

by *Michael Heniff*

Ethos IPA

Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Intense hops abound with prototypical American IPA "C hops" leading the way, evincing aromas of resins, citrus, and piney hop character. The moderate-strong hops are supported by a background of light bready malt before all balance gives way to an aggressive, lingering bitterness. This beer is everything you would expect in a west coast IPA yet from a state that is as further away from either coast than many states. This is a very well-done American IPA. Enjoy!



94

by *Richard Wong*

Racer X

Bear Republic Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

Surprisingly for a Double IPA the hop aroma was fairly restrained. For this style of beer, I was expecting a very prominent and intense hop aroma, but instead, it was somewhat subdued. The beer had a lovely copper color with very good carbonation and a nice head of light, fluffy, creamy bubbles. Even with the surprisingly subtle hop aromas in the nose, the flavor was definitely just like a Double IPA. It had the dominant malt background in flavor (malty sweetness) and the alcohol strength to back it up. Hints of subtle pine from the hops balance nicely with the malt sweetness along with the fairly strong alcohol warmth. The

beer was also surprisingly very creamy and light in the tongue and mouth. This beer was "spot-on" in terms of style; it had the necessary malt, hops and alcohol to justify it being called a Double IPA. The beer was crisp, clean and finished with a nice alcohol warmth in the end.



93

by *Rick Franckhauser*

Collaboration No. 5

Boulevard Brewing Co. /
Cigar City Brewing

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

New world hops at their finest are on display in this brew. None of the dank, high-alpha varieties are on hand, but rather a tropical fruit punch medley of aromatics highlighting mango, pink grapefruit and tangerine, combine with apricot and a little pine resin. A slightly hazy golden color is topped with a frothy off-white head that eventually drops to a thin creamy cap. The flavor follows the aromatics but includes some residual malt sweetness and a firm, rounded bitterness. The bitterness takes center stage without being at all harsh, thanks to the malt sweetness and moderate carbonation. The finish is not as dry as most American IPAs and the beer is

bigger than the average APA, but the specific style is irrelevant as the beer is delicious.



93

by *Nelson Crowle*

Upslope Imperial IPA

Upslope Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This Double IPA pours a slightly hazy, deep gold with a moderate head of persistent, tiny, cream-colored bubbles – looks very inviting! The first sniff is a delicious combination of bread crusts, crackers, grapefruit and tangerine, with a background of honeydew melon with more pine tree notes as the beer warms slightly. The flavor is complex – the bread dough and bread crust profile provides just enough malt to hold up the big resinous and pine hop expression with lots of tangerine, some woody notes, and some apricot and gooseberry fruit esters. The base water is slightly mineral, which helps to present the hop bitterness cleanly and crisply. The balance is slightly to

the bitter side, but this is a huge hop bomb – with some dry-hopped notes. With fairly high carbonation and substantial alcohol warmth, this is a big beer. Enjoy this in a snifter and not too cold – let it warm up a bit to present all those luscious hops!



93

by *Randy Scorby*

Devastator Double Bock

Wasatch Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

Overall Impression:
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A rich and complex malt-driven beer with strong bread crusts, toast, nuttiness and a light caramel character. The malt-derived plum and dark cherry aromas provide a pleasant background support to the malt and light floral alcohol aroma. The flavor opens up with a prominent, rich, bready, toasty maltiness with a hint of chocolate, caramel and nuttiness, as well as a low level of supporting dark fruit character. The medium-light hop bitterness lingers through to a solid residual sweetness that develops mid-palate into a medium dry finish with a pleasing and appropriate smooth alcohol warming. The fermentation character is quite clean in this

complex, malty beer. To top it off, the burgundy color and near-brilliant clarity provide a beautiful appearance.



93

by *Michael Heniff*

8-Bit Pale Ale

Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

Overall Impression:
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer pours a crystal clear, golden color supporting a finely beaded, resilient, white head. The aroma is a menagerie of hop flavors: floral, orange, apricot, resin and tropical fruit. The medium body sports a light toasty and bready malt to support the more prominent citrusy, floral, and fruity hop flavor. This beer finishes with a moderate bitterness, lingering citrusy hops, and a crisp, clean character. The complex hop character and refreshing finish make this beer a very quaffable and hoppy Pale Ale.



93

by *Sean Coughlin*

Samuel Adams

Rebel Raw

Boston Beer Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
39 / 40

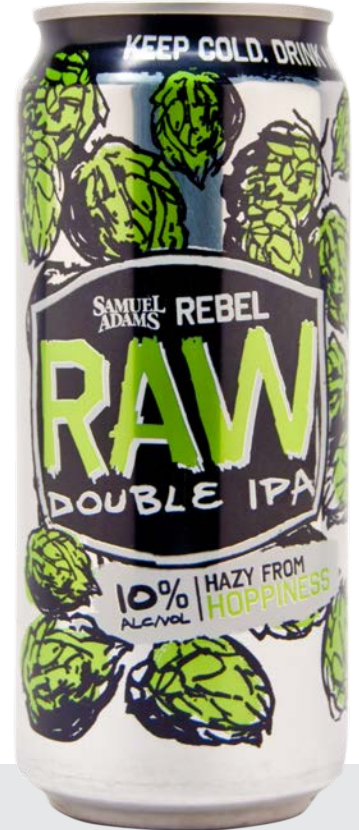
Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A pleasant, hop-heavy aroma emerges from the glass with bright tones of honeydew melon and cantaloupe. Although the aroma lacks hop complexity, it does a great job of whetting the appetite with a decidedly fresh hop oil-laden aroma. There is an underlying presence of sweet bready malt that does a good job of getting out of the way of the hop barrage. The beer also does a great job of creating anticipation with its hazy, burnished gold appearance and creamy, tightly packed, off-white head that persists exceptionally well. The bitterness is intense but is hidden behind layers of pine, stone fruit, melon, and a light soapiness from the hops. The alcohol comes across a bit boozy

and detracts from the overall experience. The finish is dry, which helps drinkability, but the intense bitterness and high alcohol hold it back. Overall, this is an intense Double IPA that will appeal to those in need of a lupulin overload.



93

by *Randy Scorby*

Double Red IPA

AleSmith Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A fairly complex Double IPA that pours a deep copper color with ruby highlights and a long-lasting tan head. The aroma greets the drinker with a prominent stone fruit hop aroma with hints of pineapple and a subtle bready and toasty maltiness with a light caramel character in the background. The flavor builds on the aroma with a moderate resin and stone fruit hop character followed by a light bready malt flavor with a just suggestion of caramel. The solid hop bitterness lingers through a light residual sweetness, yielding to an appropriately dry finish that allows the hop character to shine through.



92

by *Susan Ruud*

Squeaky Bike Nut Brown

Moab Brewery

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer features a pleasant, grainy aroma that jumps out at you, followed by hints of roastiness, chocolate and minor hints of hops. A pleasantly dry roasted malt flavor finishes out the flavor with just a touch of light hopping. With a lighter body than American brown beer styles, typical of English milds, this an easy-drinking beer with a clean, pleasant and refreshingly dry finish. This is a subtle, low-gravity Dark Mild that is well balanced between its malt and hop profile.



92

by *James Link*

Gemini

Southern Tier Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
8 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

A firm citrus fruit hop aroma comes through cleanly to greet the nose and is accompanied by piney notes and a hint of grainy malts. This is a clear amber ale with a medium white, finely beaded head that keeps on coming.

The hop-forward flavor is reminiscent of the aroma profile and definitely characteristic of the style. Although the hops are aggressive, they were not overly assertive and balanced nicely with the aforementioned grainy malt base. The body is medium to full with medium-low conditioning, producing a pleasant smoothness. The higher alcohol content was evident yet did not overwhelm.

A well-constructed recipe that allows the hop blend to showcase itself without completely distorting the integrity of the style.



92

by *Michael Heniff*

Vanilla Bean Buffalo Sweat

Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This canned beer pours pitch black and opaque with a small, splotchy brown head. Dark malt aromas dominate with chocolate, roasted, and toasted characters and a hint of complementing vanilla. The flavor mimics the aroma with a slightly sharp roasted and chocolate malt with a light complementing vanilla spice. The lactose and oats provide a very creamy, almost silky, texture. The light bitterness allows the malt and spice flavor to continue to shine through to the end with the silky smooth texture and lingering vanilla providing a finish similar to an old-fashioned cream soda. The vanilla adds an extra dimension to the core Buffalo Sweat

brand without dominating or becoming overly obtrusive.



92

by *Joseph Formanek*

Dantalion Dark Wild Ale

Upland Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Upland Dantalion Dark Wild Ale is a well-crafted American Sour that has the potential to improve with age.

The aroma of this brew is very complex with cherry, apple, sour fruit and spicy notes. There is a strong Lacto character along with some brown sherry aromas. Visually, this well-carbonated, quite turbid, brown to black-colored brew has a solid, rocky, tan head. In overall appearance, it looks very similar to a Flanders Brown. However, while the flavor has all of the expected sour flavor complexity, the malt character is surprisingly subtle, quite unlike a Flanders Brown. The middle and finish retains its complex sour character, but

the sourness never becomes overwhelming, keeping it quite approachable. The finish is quite dry and spicy, with the moderate sourness cleansing the palate quite well to prepare you for the next sip. While the overall package is not particularly complex, particularly in the malt character, this brew is still quite nice and is a good representation of the Mixed Fermentation Sour Beer style. This one has the potential to become much more interesting after cellaring.



92

by *Randy Scorby*

AleSmith IPA

AleSmith Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

The drinker is greeted with a strong tropical fruit cocktail hop aroma with pineapple slipping through as the dominant force along with a light resiny character. The hop aroma is fresh and bright. A light bready maltiness emerges in a supporting role along with a light alcohol character. The hop flavor is also complex, with prominent tropical fruit, resin and light grapefruit emerging as it warms. The hop character in the flavor is not quite as bright as in the aroma. A high level of hop bitterness lingers into the dry finish. As with the aroma, a light bready malt character and low alcohol warming help to balance the hop aroma and flavor. This is a very pleasurable IPA to enjoy at any time of year.



92

by *Joseph Formanek*

Picture of Nectar

Southbound Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
38 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

outhbound Brewing Co.'s Picture of Nectar could either be considered a big Fruit Beer with very assertive, dank hopping, or as a Double IPA with fruit. Either way, it's a Specialty beer, and it is also quite special. This golden-colored, slightly hazy ale with an assertive stand of head exhibits an assertive dank hop aroma with citrus and light floral notes in the background. The flavor has quite an interesting balance of moderate hop bitterness and dank hop flavor from start to finish along with an evident, fresh tangerine character that begins to come through in the middle over the base malt backbone. The finish re-

tains the flavor balance, with the tangerine notes slightly overcoming the hop character, as well as some warming at the swallow as expected from a 9.4% ABV brew. This is an interesting and delightful brew – in the beginning the DIPa is the hero, but in the finish the fruit character makes this delicious beverage quite memorable. Definitely recommended.



92

by *Jim Koebel*

Red Nose Winter Ale

Natty Greene's Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

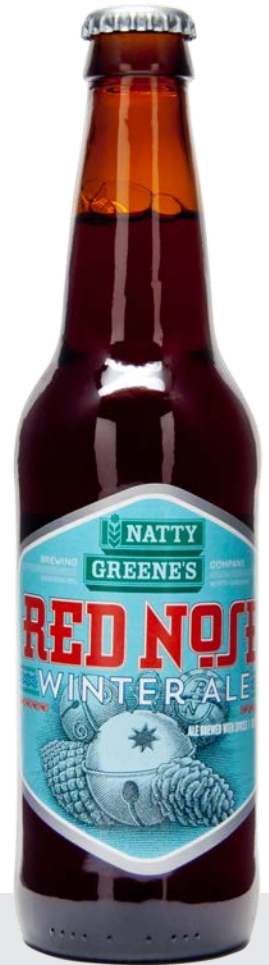
Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Subtle spicing is the theme of this Christmas Ale. Behind nutty, toffee, and chocolate aromas lies a pleasant dose of something herbal and spicy. A low phenol, slightly clove-like, comes out as it warms. This beer looks as it should: dark reddish-brown, clear and with a moderate, off-white head. It tastes primarily malty, with bread, toffee, and lightly sweet flavors. As expected, there's a gentle layer of spice, reminiscent of cardamom, which also adds bitterness. It's moderately carbonated and medium-bodied with low warmth. Overall, this example is a malty beer accented with spices; fans of the style will appreciate that.



92

by *Nelson Crowle*

HopDevil

Victory Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer pours a beautiful brilliantly clear orange-amber with a big, fluffy, cream-colored head of small bubbles that persists and leaves some Belgian lacing. The aroma of fresh baked bread and bread crusts is just a bit grainy, with grassy and resinous tangerine notes and hints of tropical fruit. The flavor echoes the fairly substantial (for an American IPA) malt backbone with crackers, honey, and a bit of a nutty character. The finish is quite dry, although there is an offsetting honey note – with bitterness lingering in the back of your throat. With just above a medium body and a crisp and clean expression that invites you to drink more, there's also a bit of alcohol warmth.

Very enjoyable and tasty, with the hops dominating the bittering, though a bit more subdued in the flavor and aroma. Enjoy this with a spicy Indian curry dish – or just by itself for a balanced and engaging IPA experience.



91

by *Michael McGuire*

Rosetta

Brewery Ommegang

Aroma:
21 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
19 / 20

Judge's Notes

This beer poured clear and light brown with a very thick white head that was present throughout tasting. The nose was both fruity and mildly sour, the latter from the cherry varietal rather than wild yeast or bacteria. The flavor profile also included strong cherry notes and a restrained, slightly puckering sourness. The finish included these flavors plus sweetness from the cherries that was not evident earlier. As such, this was a balanced, sour fruit beer rather than one that's extreme in any dimension. Combined with low alcohol (no warmth on palate), a medium-to-full body, and persistent carbonation, this beer is

highly drinkable to both fruit beer and sour beer veterans and those new to the style.



91

by *Randy Scorby*

Sex Panther

SanTan Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

The aroma greets you with a moderate level of bittersweet chocolate, light roast, and a light breadiness from the base malt followed by a light herbal hop aroma. As the beer warms, a suggestion of berries and caramel emerge. The moderate bittersweet chocolate grows slightly as it hits mid-palate and is joined by a medium hop bitterness that lingers into a fairly dry finish. The chocolate character is supported by a medley of bready malt characters, gentle herbal hops and a hint of dark roasted coffee. A light roast appears in the aftertaste to round out the experience. The chocolate character is present without

being overbearing. Most of the other flavor characteristics are subtle, but combine to provide a slight complexity to the balance. The mouthfeel is smooth and creamy with a very light alcohol warming.



91

by *Joseph Formanek*

Full Suspension Pale Ale

Squatters Craft Beers

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
5 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Full Suspension Pale Ale is a bit of a misnomer – not so much a traditional American Pale Ale, but more of what you could call an American Best Bitter due to the hop flavor impact in a quite small beer being similar to what you'd see in an English Bitter, but with a distinctly American spin on it.

This hazy, light-golden, unfiltered brew with a solid white head stand has a very evident fresh woody and citrus hop nose along with an apparent fruity ester note in the aroma. The flavor mirrors the aroma well, with low to moderate citrus and woody hop flavor along with an attractive estery note on top of the base malt backbone. The body is rather thin, as ex-

pected, but the mouthfeel is quite smooth and attractive. This is a very low alcohol brew (4.0% ABV), but the overall balance and flavor impact that this beer exhibits makes it a refreshingly quaffable and sessionable choice.



91

by *Rick Franckhauser*

Samuel Adams Rebel Grapefruit IPA

Boston Beer Co.

Aroma:
20 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
37 / 40

Mouthfeel:
10 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

Think “Grapefruit Radler on steroids” and you’ll have a good idea of what to expect from this beer. Bold, yet refreshing, the tangy, fresh grapefruit combines with American hops for a citrus explosion, but the malt sweetness keeps things just barely in check. The hop bitterness by itself may be a little low for an IPA, but fortunately, the tartness of the citrus aids the overall perception resulting in a decidedly hoppy, bitter beer. There are some residual sugars, but the finish is dry with a lingering citric tartness.



91

by *Graham L. Barron*

Pumpkinator

Saint Arnold Brewing Co.

Aroma:
22 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
36 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This ale pours a very dark brown (near-black) with a light tan head that dissipates quickly, which is not surprising given the alcohol content. Upon taking the first whiff, you are immediately hit with a spiciness that brings to mind the aromas of Thanksgiving and the holiday season. Hops are hidden, replaced by intense aromatic notes of cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, and a little bit of clove. A light floral, perfume-like hoppiness sits in the background with some slight caramel and coffee. The taste follows the nose and begins with an aggressive phenolic spiciness mixed with some caramel sweetness and a balanced bitterness. Although labeled as an Imperial Stout, this beer might

better be viewed as a strong, malty, heavily spiced brown ale since it lacks the roasty bitterness one would expect. Pumpkin flavors and aromas are hard to discern, but the gourd is evident in the creamy, full mouthfeel. Pumpkin beer fans should seek this one out for sharing at their holiday table.



91

by *Michael McGuire*

Oculus Sauvage

Green Flash Brewing Co.

Aroma:
23 / 24

Appearance:
6 / 6

Flavor:
35 / 40

Mouthfeel:
9 / 10

**Overall
Impression:**
18 / 20

Judge's Notes

This unabashedly complex beer was presented as a Specialty Wood-Aged Mixed-Style Beer: a Belgian Tripel and Double IPA aged with Brett in red wine barrels. A very ambitious order to fill, but this beer does so in spades. Beginning with an appearance that combines a well-retained rocky white head with an orange/amber color, it moves on to an aroma dominated by Brett sourness with underlying evidence of its red wine cooperage and plenty of grapefruity hop notes. The flavor, both initially and through to the finish, includes plenty of Brett sourness complemented by juicy, high-IBU citrusy hop flavor. If anything, the intense hop aroma and flavor

seem to soften the contributions of barrel-aging and higher alcohol strength normally associated with Belgian tripels and American double IPAs. The finish is predominantly sour with some hop bitterness to balance, and the alcohol strength is only moderate. The red wine barrel contributions are notable but not overpowering, enhancing this beer's drinkability and overall character.



91

by *Michael McGuire*

Green Bullet

Green Flash Brewing Co.

Aroma:

21 / 24

Flavor:

36 / 40

Overall

Impression:

19 / 20

Appearance:

6 / 6

Mouthfeel:

9 / 10

Judge's Notes

This was billed as a Triple IPA, a relatively uncommon style bridging the gap between a Double IPA and an American Barleywine. This particular example does so with distinction. The aroma is full of piney and citrusy hop notes on top of a full (and appropriately), high-gravity malt base. The thick off-white head sits atop an inviting copper brew with ruby highlights. With a flavor that combines and blends crystal malt sweetness with citrusy hops and a palate-pleasing high-gravity alcohol warmth, this beer is satisfyingly close to an American Barleywine, a high compliment indeed when pulled off as harmoniously as this beer is.



91

by *Graham L. Barron*

Best Brown Ale

Bell's Brewery

Aroma:

21 / 24

Flavor:

37 / 40

Overall

Impression:

18 / 20

Appearance:

6 / 6

Mouthfeel:

9 / 10

Judge's Notes

This ale pours from the can with a frothy and persistent off-white head that covers the hazy, dark brown nectar underneath. Chocolate malt jumps out in the nose, complemented by a toasty, nutty and slightly caramelly aroma. A light, woody hop character hides in the background along with a faint metallic note. The taste is predominantly sweet malt and toffee followed by a mild but noticeable earthy, woody hop flavor. Bitterness, while restrained, is sufficient enough to provide balance to the rich malt keeping the beer from being overly sweet. Despite a medium body, the finish is dry enough to leave you asking for another gulp. Bell's suggests this beer is "best enjoyed

with the changing of the seasons." This is not mere advertising speak, and in fact, perfectly describes this beer. This rich, flavorful brown ale is ideal for relaxing on a cool fall afternoon.



Beer Review

Very Good (90-86)

- 90** | Higher Math, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, *by Nelson Crowle*
- 90** | Bourbon Barrel Buffalo Sweat, Tallgrass Brewing Co. *by John C. Tull*
- 90** | Teddy Bear Kisses, Upland Brewing Co. *by Joseph Formanek*
- 90** | Warlock, Southern Tier Brewing Co. *by James Link*
- 90** | RIèzes, Newport Storm Brewery, *by Michael Bury*
- 90** | Bourbon Barrel Vanilla Bean Buffalo Sweat brewed with Cinnamon, Tallgrass Brewing Co. *by Michael Heniff*
- 90** | The Cask, RavenBeer, *by Phil Farrell*
- 90** | SanTan HefeWeizen, SanTan Brewing Co. *by Randy Scorby*
- 89** | Field 41 Pale Ale, Bale Breaker Brewing Co. *by S.J. Klein*
- 89** | 471 IPA Barrel Series Hüll Melon, Breckenridge Brewery, *by John C. Tull*
- 89** | Fade to Black, Left Hand Brewing Co. *by Richard Wong*
- 89** | Velvet Rooster, Tallgrass Brewing Co. *by Michael Heniff*
- 89** | Old Jubilation Ale, Avery Brewing Co. *by Michael McGuire*
- 89** | El Sully, 21st Amendment Brewery, *by Randy Scorby*
- 89** | 2X Stout, Southern Tier Brewing Co. *by James Link*
- 89** | Upslope Craft Lager, Upslope Brewing Co. *by Nelson Crowle*
- 89** | Big Brekkie Breakfast Stout, Lefty's Brewing Co. *by Jason Johnson*
- 89** | HopShock IPA, SanTan Brewing Co. *by Randy Scorby*
- 88** | Buffalo Sweat, Tallgrass Brewing Co. *by Michael Heniff*
- 88** | King Of The Yahd, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 88** | Natura Morta Plum, Green Flash Brewing Co. *by Tom Cannon*
- 88** | Luna Coffee Stout, Hinterland Beer, *by Garrick Van Buren*
- 88** | Punkin Ale, Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, *by Michael McGuire*
- 88** | Art Car IPA, Saint Arnold Brewing Co. *by Graham L. Barron*
- 88** | Shiner Wicked Ram IPA, Spoetzl Brewery, *by Michael Bury*

Beer Review

- 88** | **Graham Cracker Porter, Lefty's Brewing Co.** *by Jason Johnson*
- 88** | **Wicked Sticky IPA, Lefty's Brewing Co.** *by Jason Johnson*
- 88** | **Rocket Bike Lager, Moab Brewery,** *by Susan Ruud*
- 88** | **Over The Edge, The Unknown Brewing Co.** *by Jim Koebel*
- 88** | **Southern Pale Ale, Natty Greene's Brewing Co.** *by Jim Koebel*
- 88** | **Mr. Pineapple, SanTan Brewing Co.** *by Randy Scorby*
- 87** | **Valkyrie, Southern Star Brewing Co.** *by Tom Cannon*
- 87** | **Eight Point IPA, Devils Backbone Brewing Co.** *by Jim Koebel*
- 87** | **Lovely, Dark and Deep, Brewery Ommegang,** *by Michael McGuire*
- 87** | **Zombie Monkie, Tallgrass Brewing Co.** *by Michael Heniff*
- 87** | **16-Bit Double Pale Ale, Tallgrass Brewing Co.** *by Michael Heniff*
- 87** | **Lunatic Imperial Stout, Hinterland Beer,** *by Garrick Van Buren*
- 87** | **Black O' Lantern Pumpkin Stout, Wasatch Brewery,** *by Randy Scorby*
- 87** | **Blood Orange Saison, Upslope Brewing Co.** *by Nelson Crowle*
- 86** | **Soul Style, Green Flash Brewing Co.** *by Michael McGuire*
- 86** | **Southern Tier Porter, Southern Tier Brewing Co.** *by James Link*
- 86** | **The Gourd Standard, Flying Dog Brewery,** *by Mike Castagno*
- 86** | **Oskar Blues IPA, Oskar Blues Brewery,** *by Susan Ruud*
- 86** | **Heritage Coffee Brown, Alaskan Brewing Co.** *by Randy Scorby*
- 86** | **Bad Elmer's Porter, Upland Brewing Co.** *by Joseph Formanek*
- 86** | **Upland Harvest Ale, Upland Brewing Co.** *by Joseph Formanek*
- 86** | **Bombshell Blonde, Southern Star Brewing Co.** *by Tom Cannon*

Beer Review

Average (85-75)

- 85** | Myrcenary, Odell Brewing Co. *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*
- 85** | Annabel Lee White, RavenBeer, *by Phil Farrell*
- 85** | Topcutter IPA, Bale Breaker Brewing Co. *by S.J. Klein*
- 85** | Upslope Pumpkin Ale, Upslope Brewing Co. *by Nelson Crowle*
- 85** | Pinner, Oskar Blues Brewery, *by Susan Ruud*
- 84** | Raincloud, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 84** | Soft Parade, Short's Brewing Co. *by Sean Coughlin*
- 84** | Takeout Rye IPA, Squatters Craft Beers, *by Joseph Formanek*
- 84** | Infinite Wisdom Tripel, Upland Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 83** | Wooden Rooster, Tallgrass Brewing Co. *by John C. Tull*
- 83** | Hop Rising Double IPA, Squatters Craft Beers, *by Joseph Formanek*
- 82** | Vehopciraptor, The Unknown Brewing Co. *by Jim Koebel*
- 82** | Space Rock, Short's Brewing Co. *by Sean Coughlin*
- 81** | Sweet Potato Casserole, Funky Buddha Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 80** | Barstool, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 80** | Hop Seeker, Deep Ellum Brewing Co. *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*
- 80** | Black Cauldron Imperial Stout, Grand Teton Brewing Co. *by S.J. Klein*
- 80** | Peanut Butter Raincloud, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 79** | The Raven Special Lager, RavenBeer, *by Phil Farrell*
- 79** | Backyahd, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*
- 79** | Orchid, Upland Brewing Co. *by Mike Castagno*
- 77** | Easy Peasy IPA, Deep Ellum Brewing Co. *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*
- 77** | Loose Leaf, Odell Brewing Co. *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*
- 75** | Howling Wolf Weisse Bier, Grand Teton Brewing Co. *by S.J. Klein*
- 75** | La Ferme Urbaine, Foolproof Brewing Co. *by Josh Weikert*

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.

96 Rating – Upland Brewing Co. – Malefactor

Responses from Upland’s Director of Sour Operations Caleb Staton.

BC: Who came up with this beer’s recipe?

Caleb: I did. Malefactor is a take on the Flanders Red style.

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

Caleb: Malefactor has this great cherry ester profile, which melds well with the mild char character from long aging periods in neutral bourbon barrels. It is also the strongest beer we make company-wide, typically clocking in above 12 percent ABV.

BC: Where does this beer’s name come from?

Caleb: Malefactor means someone who commits a crime, or a general ne'er-do-well. Malefactor's (the beer's) name reflects long fermentation periods with souring microorganisms, a nearly criminal activity for both accountants and brewers alike. It also refers to a little break from traditional Flanders Red-style brewing, with the aging in bourbon barrels and higher alcohol content.

BC: Is this your “desert island beer?”

Caleb: I would definitely drink this beer on a desert island, and it would certainly keep for a little while if I was in it for the long haul, Castaway-style. If I had to choose, though, I’d rather drink a cold Session IPA out of a coconut.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Caleb: Cherry notes and warming dark barrel char meld wonderfully.

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

Caleb: Dantalion and Malefactor are two of the three base beers we brew currently in our Sour Ale Program. A blend of the two beers with Michigan Montmorency cherries is scheduled for release in early 2016. We call that beer Cauldron, reflecting the fun of blending sour beers together with unique ingredients to develop completely new beers and flavor profiles.



photo courtesy of Upland Brewing Co.

Caleb Staton, Upland Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – SanTan Brewing Co. – MoonJuice IPA

Responses from SanTan founder and brewmaster Anthony Canecchia.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Anthony: Gabe Wilson, SanTan Head Brewer.

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

Anthony: The extremely rare Galaxy hop varietal from Victoria, Australia.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Anthony: From the aforementioned Galaxy Hop. MoonJuice is a "Galactic IPA."

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Anthony: I would drink it on an island or a mountaintop!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Anthony: An out-of-this-world IPA that transcends all Earthly pleasures!

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

Anthony: SanTan was one of the first U.S. Craft breweries to use the rare Galaxy Hop, and for years we could only make it available on draft. The farms it is grown on have been increasing acreage for the past two years so we finally can finally purchase enough to begin packaging in cans as well as draft.



Anthony Canecchia, SanTan Brewing Co.

photo courtesy of San Tan Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Short’s Brewing Co. – Devil’s Lettuce

Responses from Short’s head brewer Tony Hansen.

BC: *Who came up with this beer’s recipe?*

Tony: I did.

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

Tony: I really love the way the fresh hop flavor and aroma shines through the clean lager malt and yeast profile.

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Tony: I love it very much, but no.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Tony: India Pale Lager with intensely fresh hop aromatics and flavor.

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

Tony: When I think about this beer, I always remember the experience of picking the hops up from the hop farm on the brew day. The hops were still warm from being picked just minutes before, and I put them in the backseat of my car. As I drove away from the farm, I remember smiling after realizing just how intense the aroma of the hops were in the confined space of my car. My car smelled great for days afterwards.



photo courtesy of Short's Brewing Co.

Tony Hansen, Short's Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – AleSmith Brewing Co. – Lil’ Devil

Responses from AleSmith brewmaster Peter Zien.

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

Peter: The complexity achieved from the combination of malt, hops, spices and fermentation characteristics. The aroma and flavor are tantalizing with hints of citrus fruit, coriander and subdued tartness.

BC: *Where does this beer’s name come from?*

Peter: We brew a higher-alcohol version of this beer known as AleSmith Horny Devil, a Belgian Golden Strong Ale. Lil’ Devil seemed like a natural choice for this lower-alcohol version.

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Peter: I always have trouble with this question as I would need more than a single style on my desert island! I could certainly enjoy my days with only this beer though.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Peter: A crisp, complex Belgian ale with hints of citrus fruit.

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

Peter: This beer was initially designed to propagate yeast for AleSmith Horny Devil. We would take 50 gallons of wort from a light-colored ale and ferment it with the Belgian yeast strain. We would then discard the fermented wort and harvest the yeast for brewing Horny Devil. After a while, we decided to accomplish two tasks in one: propagate yeast and design a world-class beer rather than discard the fermented wort. In 2002, we did just that, and Lil’ Devil was born.



Peter Zien, AleSmith Brewing Co.

photo courtesy of AleSmith Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

95 Rating – Summit Brewing Co. – Sticke Alt

Responses from Summit brewer Mike Lundell.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Mike: I came up with this beer's recipe.

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

Mike: I think the finish is my favorite. The aroma and flavor are great, but the clean, crisp finish really makes me smile!

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Mike: Dusseldorf, Germany! It's a 'seasonal' Altbier, released in secret (Sticke) as a special offering to the public.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Mike: I'm not sure if it's my first choice, but I sure wouldn't be upset if it was the only thing I could drink!

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Mike: Malty and bready with a dry, earthy finish. Yummy!

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

Mike: Summit produced an Altbier as a fall seasonal up until about 2001 or so, and I really enjoyed it. Knowing I was up for an Unchained Series release, I decided to make an Altbier, but not our old recipe. Sticke Alts are beer the brewer customizes, usually maltier and hoppier than the standard Alt beer, and that really appealed to me.



photo courtesy of Summit Brewing Co.

Mike Lundell, Summit Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Moab Brewery – Johnny’s American IPA

Responses from Moab head brewer Jeff Van Horn.

BC: *Who came up with this beer’s recipe?*

Jeff: I did.

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

Jeff: The great mixture of hops throughout.

BC: *Where does this beer’s name come from?*

Jeff: Johnny Borkoski is our owner.

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Jeff: No, that would be our Dead Horse Amber ale, which is named after Dead Horse Point in Moab, Utah.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Jeff: Strong hop characteristics with a distinctive, aggressive hop finish.



photo courtesy of Moab Brewery

Jeff Van Horn, Moab Brewery

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Wasatch Brewery – Polygamy Nitro Porter

Responses from Wasatch brewmaster Jon Lee.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jon: We've had Polygamy Porter in our lineup for quite a number of years, and I can't really give credit to one particular person for its creation. However, for the push to get a nitrogenated version, I've got to give credit to Wasatch founder Greg Schirf. The original Polygamy Porter was released in the winter of 2001 and quickly became a hit. We'd always thought that it would be great with the creamy head of a Nitro beer so we invested quite a lot of effort into the release of this 6.0 percent ABV nitrogenated version of the Polygamy Porter.

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

Jon: This is really a "full package" type of beer. I love the creamy mouthfeel of the nitro beer and the malt flavors that are present due to the low carbonation. There is also a nice fruity hop character that plays well in the background from the Willamette hops we use for aromatics.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Jon: This was a tongue-in-cheek name that was thrown out at a weekly planning meeting back in 2001 with obvious ties to some of the early history of Utah. It's a funny name that resonated so we stuck with it and made it our own!

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Jon: Yes, absolutely!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Jon: Super creamy nitro, scrumptious roasted malt, subtle fruity hops. Delicious!

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

Jon: While nitro beers have been a staple on draft for a number of years now, getting them into a package is quite a bit different. We're one of the very few breweries nationally that has been able to do this successfully and we are quite proud of what we have accomplished. Figuring out how to do it was one of the most difficult projects that many of us had worked on in quite some time.



photo courtesy of Wasatch Brewery

Jon Lee, Wasatch Brewery

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Hinterland Brewery – Grand Cru

Responses from Hinterland brewer Scott Kissman.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Scott: Myself and Joe Karls developed this recipe 4 years ago when I joined Hinterland.

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

Scott: My favorite aspect of this beer is the complex finish of spice, mild sweetness, Belgian yeast character and heat from the high alcohol coupled with its balanced, bitter finish.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Scott: Grand Cru is usually used for wine and means the most superior grade. We use it to showcase one of our biggest and boldest beers.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Scott: For sure! It has all of the flavor, character and body to keep me happy for the rest of my days. The beer will age well, pairs well with seafood and is high enough in alcohol that it would sterilize all wounds while giving you a great sense of euphoria.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Scott: I can do it one: "BOO-YAH!"

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

Scott: When I started brewing 15 years ago at the now defunct Michigan Brewing Company, I had the pleasure of brewing Celis Belgian beers under the guidance of Pierre Celis. At MBC we brewed the Celis White, Raspberry and Grand Cru. In brewing the Grand Cru, I found my love of yeast and its ability to create many flavors and aromas. At that point I knew if ever given the chance I would develop my own Grand Cru. Four years ago Joe Karls and Bill Tressler gave me that opportunity to showcase Hinterland's craftsmanship. Our ability was validated by Hinterland Grand Cru being awarded The Isthmus Best Beer of Wisconsin Award in 2014.



Scott Kissman, Hinterland Brewery

photo courtesy of Hinterland Brewery

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Tallgrass Brewing Co. – Ethos IPA

Responses from Tallgrass founder and CEO Jeff Gill.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Jeff: Myself and our Brewmaster at the time, Andrew Hood.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Jeff: When we developed this beer we had one goal in mind: to make the best IPA that we could. Striving to do our very best is what we do on a daily basis, and it has developed into the ethos of our entire company. This beer is that ethos in IPA form.

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Jeff: I love this beer, and yes, it is my desert island beer.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Jeff: Delightful, bright aromatics meet well-rounded malt bliss with light bitterness.

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

Jeff: Our ethos of an intense pursuit of improvement, which is so central to our character, was the inspiration for this brand.



photo courtesy of Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Jeff Gill, Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

94 Rating – Bear Republic Brewing Co. – Racer X

Responses from Bear Republic brewmaster Richard Norgrove.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Richard: I did.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Richard: Racer 5 doubled is Racer 10, or Racer X (in Roman numerals).

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Richard: No, that would be Red Rocket, our American Amber Ale.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Richard: Old-school, epically balanced, disciplined, and full of C hops.

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

Richard: Racer X is the bigger, badder brother to Racer 5 and has been the inspiration for many additional Racer brews from the Bear Republic family of beers.



photo courtesy of Bear Republic Brewing Co.

Richard Norgrove, Bear Republic Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Boulevard Brewing Co. & Cigar City Brewing – Collaboration No. 5

Responses from Boulevard brewer Jeremy Danner.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Jeremy: Boulevard Brewmaster Steven Pauwels and the Boulevard brewing and quality team worked with Cigar City Brewmaster Wayne Wambles and his crew to create the recipe for Collaboration No. 5 – Tropical Pale Ale.

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

Jeremy: We've brewed a few beers that incorporated fruit, but none have necessarily been hop forward. It was fascinating to explore the way grapefruit and passionfruit interacted with hoppy flavors and aromas. We wanted to showcase the fruit, while keeping the hops very much at the fore. It was also interesting to see how the bitterness played with the fruit character. The beer needed to be just bitter enough to balance the malt sweetness and fruit character without seeming overbitter in contrast to the passionfruit.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Jeremy: We had a group email exchange where we went back and forth on how to identify the "style." At Boulevard, we don't necessarily brew to style. We think about the flavor of the final beer when crafting the recipe and wait until we've tasted the finished beer to determine how we'd like to communicate our intentions to beer drinkers. We ultimately went with Tropical Pale Ale because while we felt the beer had a high enough ABV to fall into the IPA category, but the bitterness was closer to a pale ale.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Jeremy: You know, it's up there. My desert island beer is (and always will be) Saison-Brett because of how complex yet drinkable it is, but I drank quite a bit of Tropical Pale Ale when it was around. The way the fruit flavor and aroma interacted with the hops made it super interesting for me. I feel like a desert island beer needs to be very drinkable and refreshing, but interesting.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Jeremy: Crisp, refreshing interplay of tropical fruit and bright, citrusy hops.

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

Jeremy: During a new market rollout in Florida, Cigar City Brewing was kind enough to open their tasting room to us to host a Boulevard tap takeover to celebrate our entrance into the state. Not only did they put our beers on tap in their brewery, but they went above and beyond by showing Game 7 of the World Series on their tasting room televisions which had never displayed anything but their beer list and a live video feed of their brewhouse and fermentation cellars. We were so taken by the hospitality and kindness displayed and the amazing quality of their beers, that we just knew we wanted to brew our next collaboration beer with them. Over plates of BBQ, a few rounds of beers and a couple of conference calls, it was decided that Boulevard Brewing Company and Cigar City Brewing would team up to brew Collaboration No. 5.



photo courtesy of Boulevard Brewing Co.

Jeremy Danner, Boulevard Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Upslope Brewing Co. – Imperial IPA

Responses from Upslope head brewer Sam Scruby.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Sam: This beer was based on a homebrew recipe from our previous head brewer, Alex Violette. I don't know the entire lore surrounding the creation of the recipe, but we brewed numerous batches for the tap room – trying out different late kettle hop additions – before finally having the “eureka” moment.

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

Sam: I love that our Imperial IPA is aggressive but still well-balanced. It has great initial bitterness but finishes with a touch of sweetness to accentuate the juicier hop notes.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Sam: Well, we use our brewery name and the beer style for this beer's name. It isn't always sexy, but we don't ever deal with «cease and desist» letters so we can focus on brewing more delicious beer!

BC: Is this your “desert island beer?”

Sam: Well, I would definitely be having too much fun on my desert island with this 10 percent ABV beauty. I love this beer on certain occasions, but with such a high ABV, it definitely isn't my first go-to. Maybe a nightcap after a Broncos win?

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Sam: The dankest, most juiced-up hop liquor ever created.

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

Sam: I was brewing a pilot batch of our Double IPA with our former head brewer Alex, and we decided to have a game of H.O.R.S.E while brewing the beer. We were using the kettle as the basket and hop pellets for the ball, and we continuously hopped the wort with our increasingly complex trick shots. Cleanup was less than ideal after the brew was done, but we joked that we had added at least 1 IBU to the beer, and people would truly appreciate the increased hop complexity. I guess it worked out, right?



Sam Scruby, Upslope Brewing Co.

photo courtesy of Upslope Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Wasatch Brewery – Devastator

Responses from Wasatch brewmaster Jon Lee. BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jon: I (Chris Brown) write all the recipes here at HCB, although the whole production crew helps to come up with ideas.

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

Jon: The rich malt flavor, the sweetness of the alcohol, and that clean lager fermentation!

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Jon: It's an homage to the European "-ator" beers, but to make it our own (and to scare you a little) we called it "Devastator." Also, did you note the image of the scary ram splitting through the two local institutions? It's some minor social commentary: we're trying to put a split between church and state where, at times, one does not seem to exist.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Jon: Yes indeed!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Jon: Delicious malty lager beer! Eight percent ABV will get you!

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

Jon: I have the image for Devastator on the side of my race car. In 2010 when we won the "GABF Mid-Sized Brewery of the Year," I was trackside at the NASA National Championships and was so stoked on that win that it took all the adrenaline out of me for my upcoming race (GABF Awards were less than an hour from race start). I let the announcer know that we had just won in that category, and every lap he made mention of us. Needless to say, that night we had quite a few in celebration! That's a great memory I've got of this beer fitting into a well-earned celebration.



photo courtesy of Wasatch Brewery

Jon Lee, Wasatch Brewery

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Tallgrass Brewing Co. – 8-Bit Pale Ale

Responses from Tallgrass founder and CEO Jeff Gill.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jeff: Myself and our Brewmaster at the time, Andrew Hood.

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

Jeff: My favorite aspect of 8-Bit is the “rough-around-the-edges” quality of the hop character. The «hop rocketing» process via whole cone hops that we use for this beer creates that distinctive character, which matches the beautifully simple yet fun charm of those old-school video games we loved growing up.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Jeff: We love old-school video games and designed a beer to match what we love about them. The name came up with itself.

BC: Is this your “desert island beer?”

Jeff: I love this beer, and yes, it is my desert island beer.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Jeff: Unique hoppiness in a balanced approach to a classic style.

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

Jeff: My love of Tecmo Super Bowl on the original NES system both dropped my college GPA by 4 tenths of a point and led to the invention of our most popular beer!



photo courtesy of Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Jeff Gill, Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – Boston Beer Co. – Samuel Adams Rebel Raw

Responses from Boston Beer brewer Seth Adams.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Seth: Our brewers work together to develop recipes for our beers. For Rebel Raw, we brainstormed a flavor profile we wanted to create and worked together to develop the perfect recipe. It took a lot of test batches in our nano brewery and we played around with a lot of different dry-hopped beers before we determined the final recipe. One of the best parts of developing a recipe is the sensory process. We taste test a variety of our test batches and have a roundtable discussion after we've smelled, tasted and reviewed the test batches on our own. Talking through the recipe process and choosing what we want to ultimately share with drinkers is exciting.

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

Seth: Honestly, I love most everything about this beer. I love the big, piney resinous aroma and the hops that smack you in the face. It's a delicious 10 percent ABV Double IPA, but despite the strength there's no alcohol sting. Drinking Rebel Raw fresh from the brewery is the best experience a drinker can have. For this beer, we looked to give drinkers the freshest IPA possible that packed a giant hop aroma and an aggressive hop-forward flavor.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Seth: The recipe for Rebel Raw is a little "raw," meaning we were constantly experimenting with hops – what varieties to use, how much to use, when to add them to the kettle, what to use for dry-hopping. So, the Rebel Raw in cans right now, is a recipe based on evolving recipe experimentation.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Seth: Good question. I would love this beer on special occasions, but at 10 percent ABV and 100 IBUs, I'm not sure how long I would last! I think I'd have to go with Boston Lager, which balances hop bitterness and malt sweetness and, I think, is the perfect beer for any situation.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Seth: Freakin' good Double IPA with aggressive hop character.

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

Seth: Brewing Rebel Raw was a lot of fun. This is a beer that came out of our nano brewery in Boston, and I can't even begin to count how many recipes we developed until we determined this was the one we wanted to share with drinkers. When we had leftover test batch beers for Rebel Raw, we would get together at the end of the day to share it and talk about all things beer.



photo courtesy of Boston Beer Co.

Seth Adams, Boston Beer Co.

Brewer Q & A

93 Rating – AleSmith Brewing Co. – Double Red IPA

Responses from AleSmith brewmaster Peter Zien.

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

Peter: The big hop character and pleasant amber-colored malt backdrop. It's easy to drink, even at an elevated alcohol content of 8.5 percent ABV.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Peter: We decided to go with a clear style descriptor to let the consumer know exactly what they're in for. The marketplace is full of catchy, sometimes funny names (we have a few ourselves), but we chose to get right to the point with this one.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Peter: Now this beer actually could be. It has plenty of hops to keep it interesting and plenty of malty sweetness as well. It's the best of both worlds in my opinion!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Peter: A delicious combination of amber malts and spicy hops.

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

Peter: This beer was originally named Winter YuleSmith and appeared annually right before Christmas. It was all decked out in red and green and (inadvertently) screamed, "Drink me before Christmas!" But that was never intended to be the case with this beer, which is optimal for enjoying well into the spring, so we rebranded it in hopes people wouldn't feel pressured and would know exactly the style of beer they were about to encounter.



Peter Zien, AleSmith Brewing Co.

photo courtesy of AleSmith Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Moab Brewery – Squeaky Bike Nut Brown

Responses from Moab head brewer Jeff Van Horn.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Jeff: I did.

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

Jeff: Its flavor, aroma and body.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Jeff: An assistant brewer who loved our Nut Brown used to ride a squeaky bike to work (and at work) some days. Hence, Squeaky Bike Nut Brown.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Jeff: Rich, nutty flavor with an earthy, fruity hop finish.

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

Jeff: This beer speaks for itself – winning a 2014 Silver World Beer Cup® Session Beer award!



photo courtesy of Moab Brewery

Jeff Van Horn, Moab Brewery

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Southern Tier Brewing Co. – Gemini

Responses from Southern Tier founder Phin DeMink.

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

Phin: Gemini finishes dry, but it still has a strong bitterness and hop aroma.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Phin: This beer was originally a blended ale. We would mix Hoppe (an Imperial Pale Ale, now retired) with UnEarthly Imperial IPA. It also so happened that my wife had recently given birth to twin boys, so the name was a perfect fit. Gemini was blended for several years, and then retired, although it was a beer I was reluctant to cancel. A few years passed and I really wanted to drink that beer again, I missed it, but the blending process was cumbersome, so some tweaks were made to brew it as a single beer. Basically the recipes were more or less combined, which is why we decided to keep the name.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Phin: It's a close second to our LIVE Citra Hopped Session Pale Ale.

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

Phin: Dry, but with a strong bitterness and hop aroma.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Tallgrass Brewing Co. – Vanilla Bean Buffalo Sweat

Responses from Tallgrass founder and CEO Jeff Gill.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Jeff: Myself and our second-ever employee combined with a team effort in the development of VBBS, our first-ever cask beer experiment.

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

Jeff: How well the vanilla aroma and flavor meld with the coffee and chocolate sweetness of the base Buffalo Sweat, our Oatmeal Cream Stout.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Jeff: Our use of select Ugandan vanilla beans is central to the distinctive character of this beer, so it was very appropriate to use both vanilla and bean in the name. Buffalo Sweat, well, that is a story for another time.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Jeff: Not quite. I love my hops.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Jeff: Sweet chocolate and coffee seamlessly highlighting pure vanilla goodness.

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

Jeff: This beer is a result of our very first cask ale experiment. In late 2011 we threw two Ugandan beans into of a couple of firkins and left them next to my desk. Two weeks later I came in one morning and the brewery smelled amazing, but Buffalo Sweat was all over the floor and the only clue as to what had happened was the open bung hole on one firkin and a perfect circle cut into a ceiling tile directly above it. The cask had overpressured and blown the bung clean through the ceiling! We carefully placed the other cask in the cooler to bring down the pressure, and when we served it at a bar a week later it was the amazing combination of vanilla and stout-y goodness that is Vanilla Bean Buffalo Sweat.



photo courtesy of Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Jeff Gill, Tallgrass Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Upland Brewing Co. – Dantalion Dark Wild Ale

Responses from Upland's Director of Sour Operations Caleb Staton.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Caleb: I did. Dantalion is based on the Oud Bruin style.

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

Frank: The wonderful spice character of licorice and ginger predominantly, which melds well with the sourness of the beer alongside hints of roasted and chocolate malts.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Caleb: Dantalion is named after a demon. We thought this plays well with the artwork from our friend Norton Wisdom, which is depicted on the label.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Caleb: I would definitely drink this beer on a desert island, and it would certainly keep for a little while if I was in it for the long haul, Castaway-style. If I had to choose, though, I'd rather drink a cold Session IPA out of a coconut.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Caleb: Balanced spices, polite lactic sourness and roasted malts.



photo courtesy of Upland Brewing Co.

Caleb Staton, Upland Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – AleSmith Brewing Co. – AleSmith IPA

Responses from AleSmith brewmaster Peter Zien.

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

Peter: The balance between malt and hops. We believe in creating a big malt base to support the load of hops that make our IPA memorable.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Peter: IPA stands for India Pale Ale, in reference to the Brits' habit of sending hoppy beers to their soldiers in India back in the day. The extra hops ensured the beer's drinkability after long sea voyages.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Peter: For many it would be, and I would be quite happy to drink this beer for the rest of my days!

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Peter: A firm malt character supports a whole lotta hop goodness.

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

Peter: This is one of the beer styles that I brewed frequently as a homebrewer. In fact, the base of this beer in both the malt and hop bills was fashioned from my award-winning homebrewed IPA from the mid-1990s. Over the years, we've made some slight alterations to include new malt and hop varieties, but the core remains very similar to my original recipe.



Peter Zien, AleSmith Brewing Co.

photo courtesy of AleSmith Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Southbound Brewing Co. – Picture of Nectar

Responses from Southbound brewmaster Smith Mathews.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Smith: I did. I was inspired to make this beer after reading about a local chef incorporating these fresh ingredients into a dish while out to dinner. I thought to myself, "This would make a great IPA."

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

Smith: I really love the relationship the nectarines and elderflower bring to the hop profile. Both in flavor and aroma, they all combine to form intricate levels of complexity. It's a beer you can continuously discover new flavors in from the first sip to the last.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Smith: Picture of Nectar is an homage to one of our favorite band's (Phish) songs. Great band, great beer!

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Smith: This beer is pretty big to be drinking a lot of. I guess if you're stranded on a desert island and need to hydrate, you might as well do it with an incredible IPA! I'm not sure how productive you'd be during or afterwards however...

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Smith: Complex stone fruit and floral flavor with a big aroma.

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

Smith: Several of us made the mistake – after a long day of bottling – of drinking two bombers of this beer after we'd finished. It is so easy to drink and we kept exploring the flavors it had to offer. The deeper we got into the bottles, the more flavors we were finding. Little did we realize, the alcohol had crept up on us and we all needed a ride home! Needless to say, the labels didn't get put on until a few days after. Explore carefully!



photo courtesy of Southbound Brewing Co.

Smith Mathews, Southbound Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

92 Rating – Natty Greene’s Brewing Co. – Red Nose Winter Ale

Responses from Natty Greene’s head brewer Scott Christofel.

BC: *Who came up with this beer’s recipe?*

Scott: I did in 2004.

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

Scott: The malty, spiced balance of flavor. Some holiday beers can be cloying and lack balanced spicing.

BC: *Where does this beer’s name come from?*

Scott: 6.8 percent ABV delivers a nice warm feeling or a “Red Nose” for the holidays.

BC: *Is this your “desert island beer?”*

Scott: It’s perfect for the cold weather of winter, but my desert island beer would be our Hitchpost Gueuze.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Scott: Rich, malty flavor with ginger, orange peel and cinnamon notes.



photo courtesy of Natty Greene's Brewing Co.

Scott Christofel, Natty Greene's Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Brewery Ommegang – Rosetta

Responses from Ommegang brewmaster Phil Leinhart.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Phil: Rosetta is a blend of two beers that have existed for a long time. The resulting beer is more about the blend and the process than the recipes. I, along with two other Ommegang brewers, determined the blend.

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

Phil: The balance between sweetness and tartness.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Phil: It is a tribute to Rosa Mercx, a former brewmaster at Liefmans and the first female brewmaster in Belgium.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Phil: One of them!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Phil: Slightly fruity, tart and sweet. A perfectly balanced, drinkable sour.

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

Phil: The inspiration for Rosetta was Ommegang Zuur. For Zuur I traveled to Belgium and spent a day at Liefmans creating and tasting different blends to come up with the final one. For Rosetta, Liefmans sent us a keg of Oud Bruin and we experimented with Kriek Brut here in Cooperstown to create Rosetta.



photo courtesy of Brewery Ommegang

Phil Leinhart, Brewery Ommegang

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – SanTan Brewing Co. – Sex Panther

Responses from SanTan founder and brewmaster Anthony Canecchia.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Anthony: I did.

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

Anthony: The rich, dark unsweetened chocolate flavor. It really complements the nuances of a porter.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Anthony: It was suggested by one of my business partners while sitting at the bar. We had been struggling with finding a name for this beer and were never happy with anything that came up until he suggested Sex Panther. After that suggestion, nothing else fit.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Anthony: It certainly could be. There's a lot of cocoa powder in each brew, and the cacao bean is considered a superfood, after all!

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Anthony: Clean dark chocolate flavor from chocolate malt and Ecuadorian cocoa.

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

Anthony: This beer is hell on our equipment. There's so much cocoa powder that some of it combines with the yeast in the fermenter and wreaks havoc on the filter towards the end of the filtration. This year we purchased a centrifuge and were so overconfident with it that we started to run the first batch through with the tank only having gotten cold the day before, and this beer even bested our centrifuge! We decided to call it a day after unsuccessfully processing a couple hundred gallons. From that point on, we knew this beer just needs to sit a while before it's ready to get to market. It's the only beer that truly tells us when it's ready, not the other way around.



photo courtesy of SanTan Brewing Co.

Anthony Canecchia, SanTan Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Squatters Craft Beers – Full Suspension Pale Ale

Responses from Holy City brewmaster Chris Brown.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Jon: Original credit here goes back to our former Squatters brewer Jennifer Talley. She was playing with a pale ale special at the pub with this new hop that had just come on the market (Columbus). This is back in about 1996-97. We all loved it so much that it turned into a core beer for us. The rest, as they say, is history.

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

Jon: My favorite aspect is, and always will be, the hop aroma and flavor. However, the malt base we've got here is awesome as well because it really makes those hops shine.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Jon: In the mid to late 90s Full Suspension mountain bikes were introduced. This beer's name comes from our love of mountain biking here in Utah.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Jon: Yes.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Jon: Perfect pine and citrus flavors; sessionable before sessionable was cool!

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

Jon: This beer is truly one of the original classic Pale Ales of the modern craft beer scene. There are countless numbers of people that tell us that Full Suspension is what got them into hoppy beers. While the landscape of craft beer availability has changed dramatically over the years, we're proud of the fact that Full Suspension remains the go-to six-pack for many people.



Jon Lee, Wasatch Brewery

photo courtesy of Wasatch Brewery

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Boston Beer Co. – Samuel Adams Rebel Grapefruit IPA

Responses from Boston Beer brewer Seth Adams.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Seth: Our brewers work together to develop recipes for our beers. Together we worked on a recipe that not only showcased a wide range of hop intensities and characteristics, but also one that packed a big punch of citrus. We use real grapefruit, which helps to amplify one of our favorite West Coast hops, Mosaic.

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

Seth: Rebel Grapefruit IPA's big grapefruit flavor and aroma is my favorite aspect because it comes from both using real grapefruit juice and peel but also hops that showcase similar flavors. We add grapefruit peel to the kettle to impart a tart, sharp character and then we add grapefruit juice right before the beer is filtered to create a big grapefruit juiciness.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Seth: Rebel Grapefruit is part of our family of Rebel IPAs. The name Rebel Grapefruit IPA lets you know exactly what to expect: a rebellious grapefruit IPA!

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Seth: I would love to bring this beer with me on a desert island, and would probably drink it every day right around brunch. Why pair pancakes with OJ when you can pair them with Rebel Grapefruit IPA?

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Seth: Juicy, with a big citrus punch and tropical fruit notes.

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

Seth: Rebel Grapefruit features Mosaic hops, which are relatively new to the brewing scene. Just a few years ago when I started brewing at Sam Adams, they were released as HBC369 because they didn't even have a name yet. Since then, we've explored tweaking our Latitude 48 IPA recipe by brewing with Mosaic hops and now, for Rebel Grapefruit, we've used them during the kettle and dry-hopping process. Mosaic's mandarin orange, pineapple and grapefruit flavors complement the actual grapefruit we add to this recipe.



photo courtesy of Boston Beer Co.

Seth Adams, Boston Beer Co.

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Saint Arnold Brewing Co. – Pumpkinator

Responses from Saint Arnold brewer Aaron Inkrott.

BC: *Who came up with this beer's recipe?*

Aaron: The creator of Pumpkinator is Nick Walther, who now brews at Harpoon Brewery in Boston.

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

Aaron: The aroma and its ability to pair with decadent deserts. The aroma reminds me of Thanksgiving and great pumpkin pie. It's also great with roasted hazelnuts, and it ages very well. I'm particularly a fan of it with at least a year of age on it. The spices become a little more subdued and more balanced.

BC: *Where does this beer's name come from?*

Aaron: I'm not entirely sure to be honest. Traditionally, "ator" implies a doppelbock. I've always thought of The Terminator when I hear Pumpkinator. The ultimate machine... meets the ultimate pumpkin stout.

BC: *Is this your "desert island beer?"*

Aaron: Personally, no. But I know many people who see it as that.

BC: *Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?*

Aaron: Baker's chocolate, pumpkin, spice, sticky toffee, thick body, creamy mouthfeel

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

Aaron: Here's one only the brewers can identify with: It's not the most enjoyable beer to make here. Sure, the mash smells amazing with the roasted and chocolate malts, and enjoying the final product after 3 months of conditioning in the fermenter is a heavenly occasion. What isn't enjoyable, however, is adding close to 500 pounds of actual pumpkin and roughly 70 pounds of spices to each batch. But it's released once a year, so we're not constantly brewing it and that's what keeps it special. Also, enjoying several vintages in a vertical tasting is always fun.



photo courtesy of Saint Arnold Brewing Co.

Aaron Inkrott, Saint Arnold Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Green Flash Brewing Co. – Oculus Sauvage

Responses from Green Flash barrelmaster Pat Korn.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Pat: The recipe for Le Freak, which is the base for Oculus Sauvage, was developed by our previous Brewmaster Chuck Silva many years ago. Local publican Louis Mello – owner of Liars Club – and Chuck were having beers at Liars Club when Louis challenged Chuck to make a Belgian beer that had California IPA components. There weren't any other breweries in U.S. at that time who'd attempted a beer like this. After some trial and error, Le Freak became a Green Flash staple. From there, we experimented with barrel aging it in red wine barrels from a local winery. We've been making it ever since.

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

Pat: This is the first real barrel-aged beer where we've had multiple vintages to blend to a taste we like. Oculus Sauvage is a mixture of three different vintages. At the time of blending they were 9, 12, and 19-month old beers. The base beer, Le Freak, is a very hoppy beer with crazy Belgian undertones. After inoculating it with our house Brett, more flavors are imparted into the beer. Once it goes into the red wine barrel, the funky Brett character and tannins from the wood add to the complexity of the beer. You'll notice these distinct flavors when you taste it. Oculus Sauvage has a pronounced hop bitterness that pairs great with the vinous qualities from the barrel, and the esters of the Belgian yeast pair great with the barnyard funk, lemon and verbena elements from our house Brett. The nose is predominately tannins and hops – which is an amazing combination.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Pat: The Cellar 3 tagline, "Where Craft Evolves into Artistry," pays homage to the art of craft beer creation and our desire to elevate our beers to the next level – in this case through barrel aging. The beer names at Cellar 3 are inspired by art history, the Renaissance, and blending the meanings of palate and palette. Beers with the name Sauvage in their title elude to the wild nature of the house Brett yeast used to produce our Belgian-inspired, funky beers.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

Pat: At 10.1 percent ABV, I wouldn't want to drink this one on a hot desert island. My desert island beer is Anchor Liberty Ale.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Pat: Belgian-style Imperial India Pale Ale Aged in Red Wine Barrels.

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

Pat: I didn't like this beer at all when I first took over the barrel program. It felt unbalanced and overly woody; there was no finesse. Through the years, we've been able to mold the beer into what you taste today – through blending, experimenting with different barrels, and better sanitation techniques. Now I love this beer. I love it so much, in fact, that in 2016 we'll be releasing a version with Blackcurrant. I just tasted some out of a 5-month old barrel and it's really coming around nicely. We're very excited for the end product!

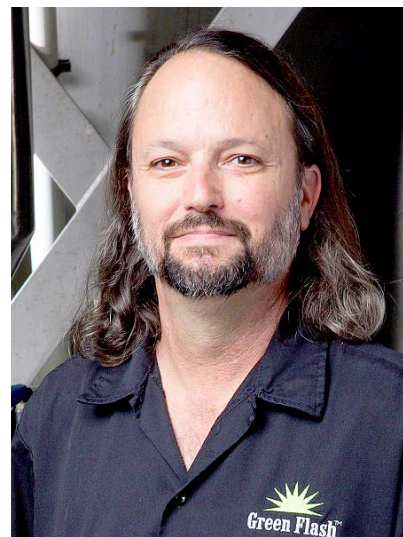


photo courtesy of Green Flash Brewing Co.

Pat Korn, Green Flash Brewing Co.

Brewer Q & A

91 Rating – Green Flash Brewing Co. – Green Bullet

Responses from Green Flash brewmaster Erik Jensen.

BC: Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Erik: The recipe for Green Bullet was developed by former Brewmaster Chuck Silva to showcase New Zealand hop varietals. No better way to do it than in a massive Triple IPA.

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

Erik: The sweet, resinous, and tropical hop aromas from the use of Green Bullet and Pacific Gem hops.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

Erik: The name comes from the use of Green Bullet hops.

BC: Is this your "desert island beer?"

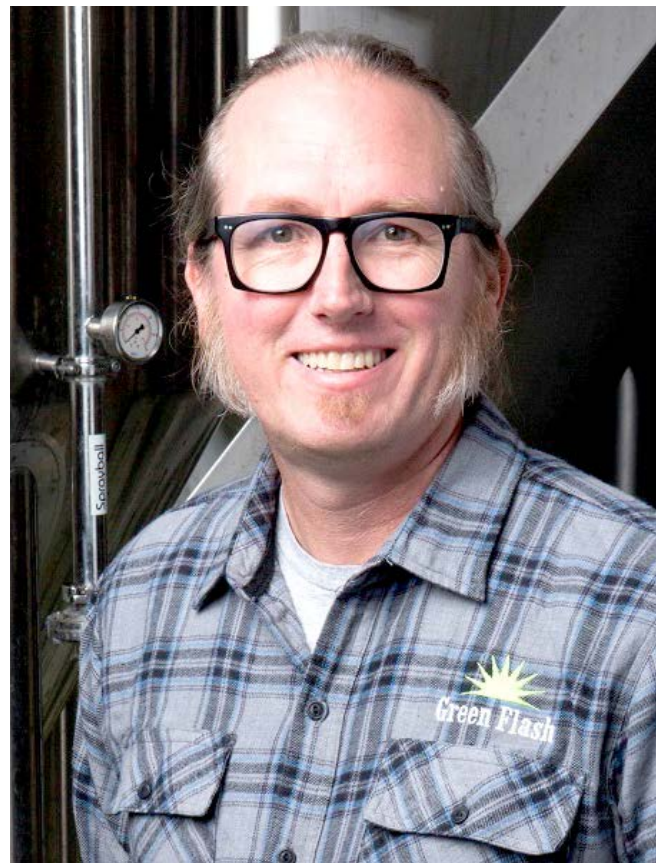
Erik: This beer weighs in at 10.1 percent ABV, which means it's probably not what I'd bring on my Cancun vacation. This one is better at the beginning of a quiet evening in front of the fireplace.

BC: Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Erik: Explosive hop aroma; hope you're not doing anything tomorrow!

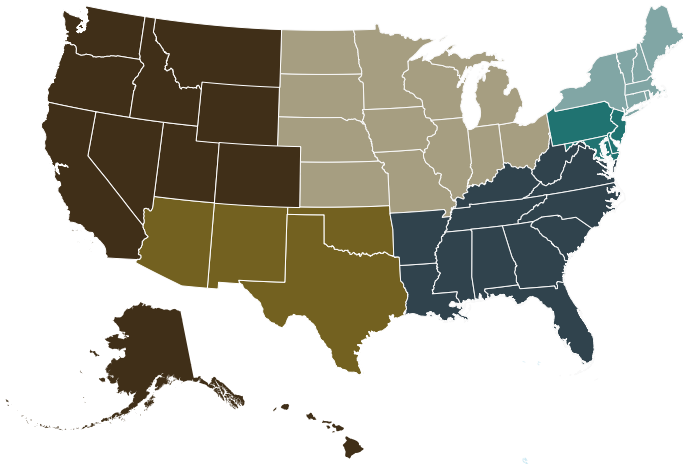
BC: Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

Erik: Green Bullet was developed as our Green Flash 9th Anniversary beer. It was unveiled at the San Diego Brewers Guild Fest at Liberty Station. It was my (and many people's) introduction to New Zealand hops.



Erik Jensen, Green Flash Brewing Co.

Seasonals & Hot New Releases



WEST

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

Alaskan Winter Ale
Alaskan Brewing Co.
Juneau, AK

Fireside Chat
21st Amendment Brewery
San Leandro, CA

The Commodore
Ballast Point Brewing Co.
San Diego, CA

Ol' Dirty
Belching Beaver Brewery
San Diego, CA



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Velvet Merlin

Firestone Walker Brewing Co.
Paso Robles, CA

Deviant Dale's

Oskar Blues Brewery
Longmont, CO

Otra Vez

Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.
Chico, CA

Accumulation

New Belgium Brewing Co.
Fort Collins, CO

Euphoria Pale Ale

Ska Brewing Co.
Durango, CO

Trout Hop Black IPA

Grand Teton Brewing
Victor, ID

The Cadillac Black IPA

The Great Northern Brewing Co.
Whitefish, MT

Mayan Maybe Not

Great Basin Brewing Co.
Sparks, NV



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Wreck The Halls

Full Sail Brewing Co.

Hood River, OR

Sleigh'r

Ninkasi Brewing Co.

Eugene, OR

Griswald's Holiday Ale

Red Rock Brewery

Salt Lake City, UT

Bifrost Winter Ale

Elysian Brewing

Seattle, WA

77 Fremont Select

Fremont Brewing

Seattle, WA

Dark Star Imperial Oatmeal Stout

Fremont Brewing

Seattle, WA

Octopus Ink Black IPA

The Pike Brewing Co.

Seattle, WA

Auld Acquaintance

The Pike Brewing Co.

Seattle, WA



SOUTHWEST

(AZ, NM, OK, TX)

Peanut Brittle Ale

Arizona Wilderness Brewing Co.

Gilbert, AZ

Scout Porter

Dragoon Brewing Co.

Tucson, AZ

The Rice Pudding Porter

Huss Brewing Co.

Tempe, AZ

Christmas City Ale

Prescott Brewing

Prescott, AZ

The Mad Czar

SanTan Brewing Co.

Chandler, AZ

Iron Lung Smoked Porter

Boxing Bear Brewing Co.

Albuquerque, NM

Trou Noir

La Cumbre Brewing Co.

Albuquerque, NM



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Anniversary Double Red

Red Door Brewing
Albuquerque, NM

Vanilla Noir

Prairie Artisan Ales
Tulsa, OK

Heavy Machinery Black IPA

Austin Beerworks
Austin, TX

Stocking Stuffer

Grapevine Craft Brewery
Grapevine, TX

Mother in Lager

Karbach Brewing Co.
Houston, TX

Raspberry Temptress

Lakewood Brewing Co.
Garland, TX

Till & Toil

Lakewood Brewing Co.
Garland, TX

DFW

Lakewood Brewing Co. and Rahr & Sons
Brewing Co.
Garland, TX



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Liberator Doppelbock

Live Oak Brewing Co.

Austin, TX

River Horse

Martin House Brewing

Fort Worth, TX

Winter Warmer

Rahr & Sons Brewing Co.

Fort Worth, TX

Phoenixx

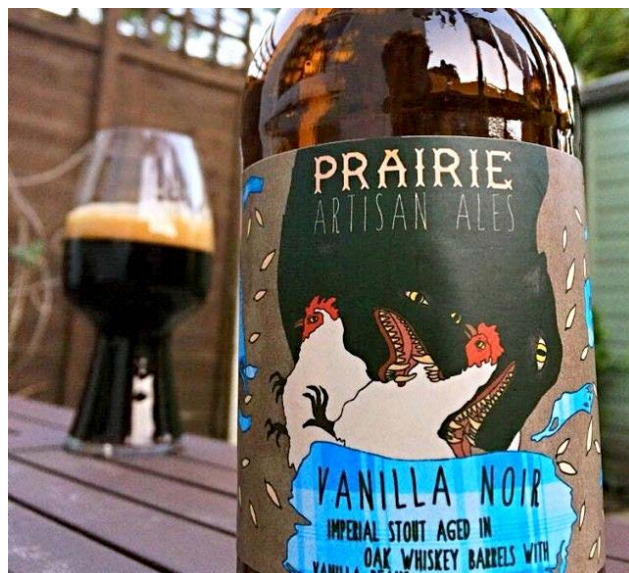
Real Ale Brewing Co.

Blanco, TX

Saint Arnold Winter Stout

Saint Arnold Brewing Co.

Houston, TX



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

MIDWEST

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

120 Shilling Scotch Ale

Destihl Brewery
Bloomington, IL

A Little Crazy

Revolution Brewing
Chicago, IL

Alpha Klaus

3 Floyds Brewing Co.
Munster, IN

Easy Chair Amber Ale

Upland Brewing Co.
Bloomington, IN

Indecision Dark IPA

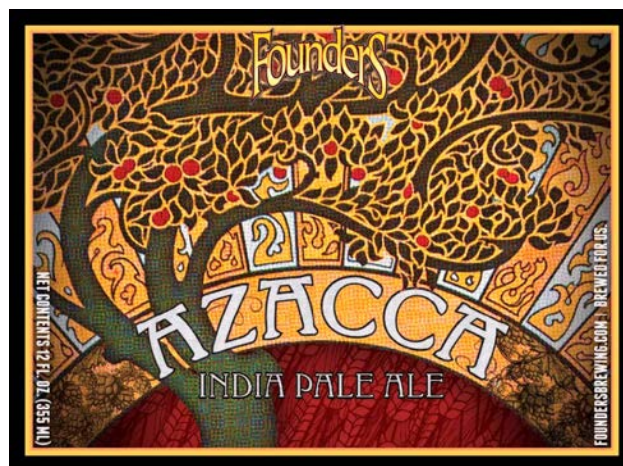
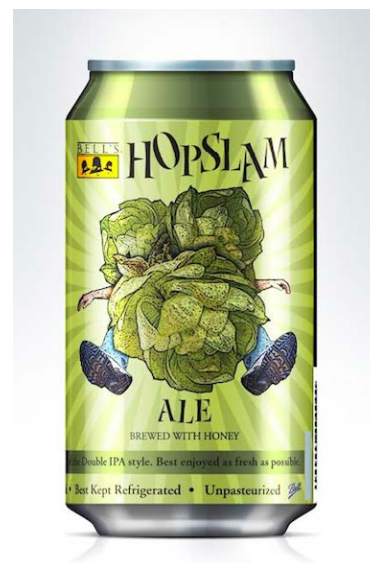
Peace Tree Brewing Co.
Knoxville, IA

Hopslam Ale

Bell's Brewery
Kalamazoo, MI

Azacca IPA

Founders Brewing Co.
Grand Rapids, MI



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Winter Bock Lager

Frankenmuth Brewery
Frankenmuth, MI

Good Humans

Short's Brewing Co.
Bellaire, MI

Winterloper

Bauhaus Brew Labs
Minneapolis, MN

Worthy Adversary

Fulton Brewery
Minneapolis, MN

Stir Crazy Winter Ale

Indeed Brewing Co.
Minneapolis, MN

Old Blaggard

Summit Brewing Co.
Minneapolis, MN

Snow & Tell

Boulevard Brewing Co.
Kansas City, MO

Winter Grind

Mother's Brewing Co.
Springfield, MO



Winter Mischief

Lager Heads Brewing Co.
Medina, OH

Irish Setter Red

Thirsty Dog Brewing Co.
Akron, OH

Maibock

Capital Brewery
Middleton, WI

Holiday Spice

Lakefront Brewery
Milwaukee, WI

Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

SOUTH

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

Winter Stash Ale

Cahaba Brewing Co.

Birmingham, AL

Darkhammer Belgian Quadruple

Yellowhammer Brewing

Huntsville, AL

Brae Scotch

Core Brewing Co.

Springdale, AR

Black Hops Cascadian Dark Ale

Stone's Throw Brewing

Little Rock, AR

Super Secret Stout

Bold City Brewery

Jacksonville, FL

Big Sound

Cigar City Brewing

Tampa, FL

Sweater Weather

Due South Brewing Co.

Boynton Beach, FL



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Koko Buni

Creature Comforts Brewing Co.

Athens, GA

Second Helping

Sweetwater Brewing Co.

Atlanta, GA

Ebenezer Spiced Ale

Bluegrass Brewing Co.

Louisville, KY

Mardi Gras Bock

Abita Brewing Co.

New Orleans, LA

Frostnipper

Aviator Brewing Co.

Fuquay Varina, NC

War Hawk

Big Boss Brewing Co.

Raleigh, NC

Red Baron

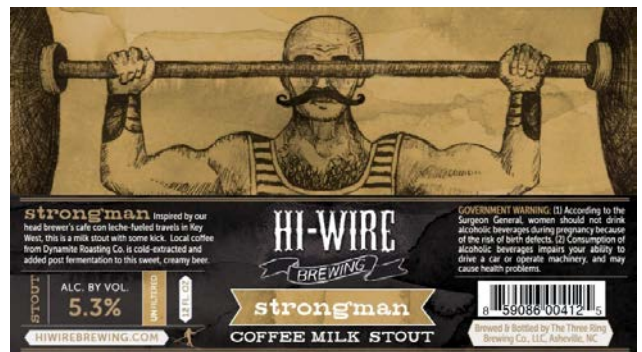
Check Sixth Brewing Co.

Southport, NC

Strongman Coffee Milk Stout

Hi-Wire Brewing

Asheville, NC



Black Watch

Highland Brewing Co.

Asheville, NC

Milk and Cookies

Wicked Weed Brewing

Asheville, NC

Old Naps

Conquest Brewing Co.

Columbia, SC

Reviver Red IPA

Starr Hill Brewery

Crozet, VA

Dolly Suds Cranberry Wheat

Mountain State Brewing Co.

Morgantown, WV

Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

NEW ENGLAND

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

Igor's Dream Russian Imperial Stout

Two Roads Brewing Co.
Stratford, CT

Window Seat

Baxter Brewing Co.
Lewiston, ME

Storyteller Doppelbock

Oak Pond Brewing Co.
Skowhegan, ME

Saison Noel

Oxbow Brewery
Newcastle, ME

Sea Dog Winter Ale

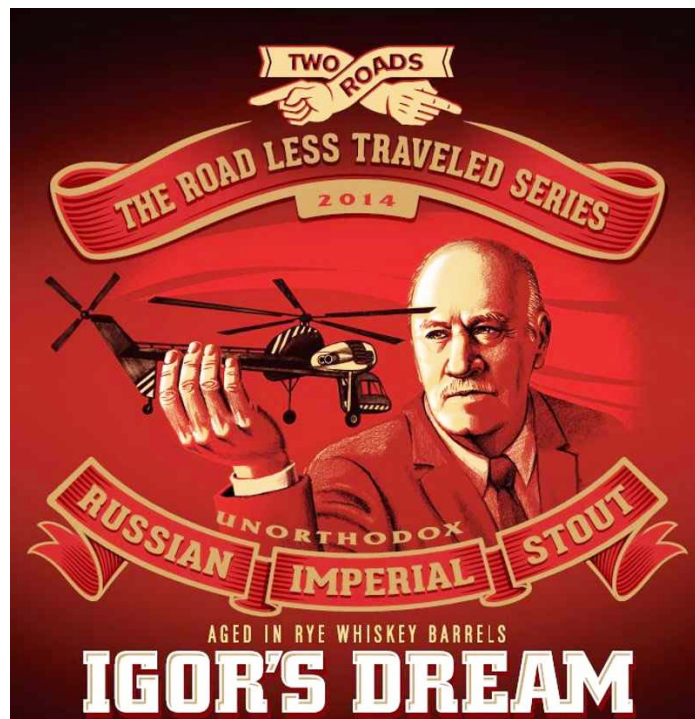
Sea Dog Brewing Co.
Bangor, ME

Slick Nick

Sebago Brewing Co.
Gorham, ME

Smashed Blueberry

Shipyard Brewing Co.
Portland, ME



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Farmstand Raspberry Barleywine Style Ale

Berkshire Brewing Co.
South Deerfield, MA

Old Fezziwig Ale

Boston Beer Co.
Boston, MA

Samuel Adams Rebel Grapefruit IPA

Boston Beer Co.
Boston, MA

Old Man Winter

Cape Cod Beer
Hyannis, MA

UFO Gingerland

Harpoon Brewery
Boston, MA

Calyptra

Jack's Abby Brewing
Framingham, MA

El Lechedor

Night Shift Brewing
Everett, MA

East Coast Common

Smuttynose Brewing Co.
Hampton, NH



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Big Mamie Indestructible American Pale Ale

Narragansett Brewery

Providence, RI

Winter Ale

Newport Storm Brewery

Newport, RI

Christmas Cake

Drop-In Brewing

Middlebury, VT

Winter Mingle

Magic Hat Brewing Co.

Burlington, VT



MID-ATLANTIC

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

Higher Math

Dogfish Head Craft Brewed Ales

Rehoboth Beach, DE

Lost Weekend

Bluejacket Brewery

Washington, DC

Penn Quarter Porter

DC Brau Brewing

Washington, DC

Devil's Milk

DuClaw Brewing Co.

Baltimore, MD

Snow Pants Oatmeal Stout

Union Craft Brewing

Baltimore, MD

Winter Storm

Heavy Seas Beer

Baltimore, MD

K-9 Winter Ale

Flying Dog Brewery

Frederick, MD

Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

Secret Spot Winter Ale
 Evolution Craft Brewing Co.
 Salisbury, MD

Oatmeal Milk Stout
 River Horse Brewing Co.
 Ewing Township, NJ

Exit 1 Bayshore Oyster Stout
 Flying Fish Brewing Co.
 Somerdale, NJ

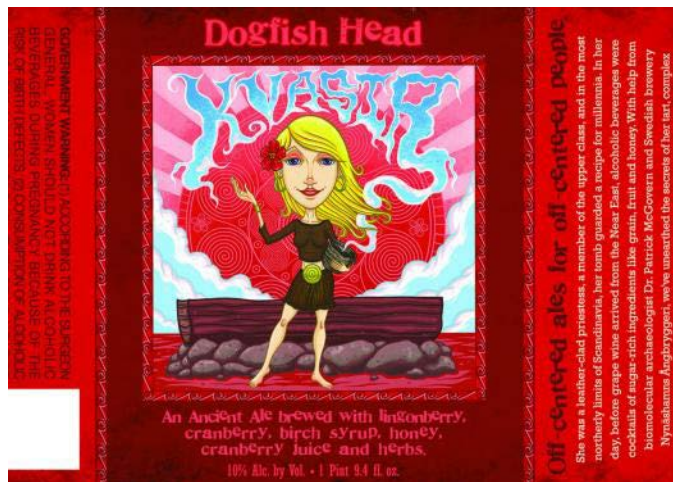
Defender
 Brooklyn Brewery
 Brooklyn, NY

Insulated Lager
 Brooklyn Brewery
 Brooklyn, NY

Sensi 2015
 Sixpoint Brewery
 Brooklyn, NY

The Plunge
 Coney Island Brewing Co.
 Brooklyn, NY

Lovely, Dark and Deep
 Brewery Ommegang
 Cooperstown, NY



Winter Seasonals & Hot New Releases

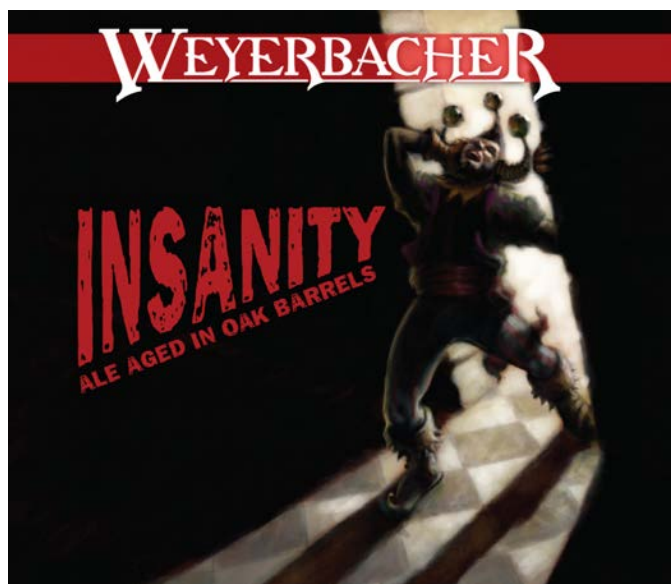
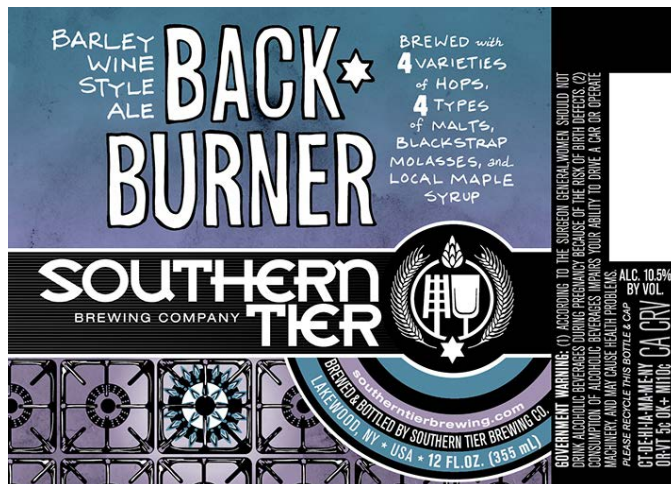
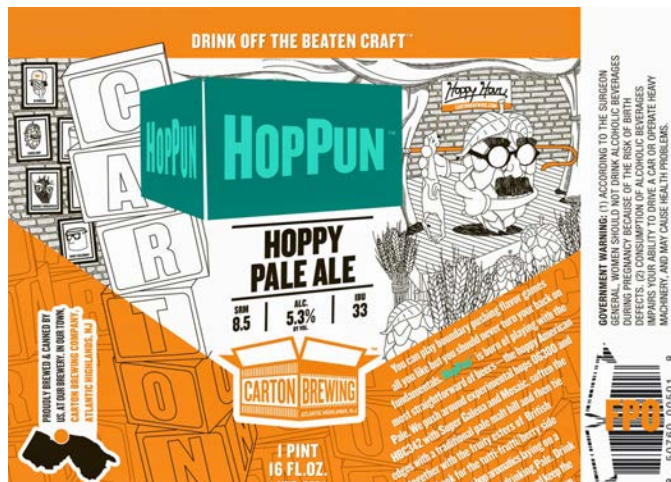
Wendigo Winter Ale
 Three Heads Brewing
 Honeoye Falls, NY

Old Man Winter
 Southern Tier Brewing Co.
 Lakewood, NY

Double IPA #1
 Weyerbacher Brewing Co.
 Easton, PA

Blizzard of Hops Winter IPA
 Tröegs Brewing Co.
 Hershey, PA

Vine to Victory
 Victory Brewing Co.
 Philadelphia, PA



European Report



United Kingdom

by Carolyn Smagalski

Glenn Payne (1954-2015)

Discerning beer consultant and former commercial beer buyer Glenn Payne of Carmarthenshire, Wales, passed away due to “unexplained circumstances” on Llanelli Beach in southwest Wales on December 6, 2015. He was 61. As a former senior buyer for Safeway and founding investor of Meantime Brewery, Mr. Payne became known as a maven of beer on four continents. He further developed his expansive knowledge of craft beer as proprietor of Beer2Love and was an internationally respected beer judge for the World Beer Cup and GABF, International Beer Competition, SIBA finals, Quality Food and Drink Awards, and more.



Photo Courtesy of Carolyn Smagalski

Chinese New Year Monkey Business

It seems China’s demand of India Pale Ale has gone viral since photos of Prime Minister David Cameron and President Xi Jinping shared a pint of Greene King IPA over the airwaves. Just in time for 2016, the Year of the Red Fire Monkey, Rooney Arand, Chief Executive of Greene King’s Export Team, plans to fulfill China’s order for 50,000 cases of IPA for the February 8th celebration.



Photo Courtesy of Greene King Brewing Co.

Music to their Ears

Can Celtic music make yeast happy? Drygate Brewing Company of Glasgow thinks it’s possible. In collaboration with Celtic Connections, Drygate crafted Festival Brew, a Farmhouse Saison hopped-up with Aramis and Striselspalt hops from France. Celtic piper John Mulhearn and acoustic guitarist Findlay Napier drenched the air with live music on brew day, followed by a continuous infusion of sound delivered through speakers inside fermentation tanks during two weeks of maturation. Festival Brew will be available during the Celtic Connections Programme celebrated at venues throughout Europe from January 14-31, 2016.

European Report



Belgium

by Carl Kins

The gueuze brewers and blenders are quite active these days, showcased by the following examples:

For their 40 year anniversary, Boon launched “Oude Geuze Boon Black Label”, consisting of a selection of lambic of 1, 2 and 3 years old, 99% of which was brewed in the new brewhouse. The lambic was taken from foeders with the highest degree of fermentation (almost 100%), resulting in a very dry and rounded taste. It has 7% ABV.



After SpontanBasil, Lindemans now launched Blossom-gueuze, a limited edition gueuze to which elderflower was added.

Anthony Martin, owner of a.o. Timmermans, opened a brewery in Bruges this November, focusing solely on “Bourgogne des Flandres”. Bruges is at the origin of this “versnijbier”, i.e. a blend of top fermented brown ale with Timmermans lambic to create a perfect sweet-sour beer at 5% ABV.

Anthony Martin already opened a small brewery a few months ago in Waterloo, a town made famous by Napoleon. And they will not rest on their laurels. They are looking to open a brewpub in Antwerp, expected in 2017. All this is the work of Willem Van Herreweghen, ex-head brewer of Palm, and the original founder of gueuze blender De Cam.

News from Chimay:

Head brewer Paul Arnott, well known in US and Canada, passed away. But the brewery continues to keep strong. They have started a project to age the Chimay Blue in wooden barrels (French and American oak) for about 6 months. They are the first Belgian Trappist brewery to do

this, but it has to be said that La Trappe (Netherlands) has been doing that for a few years with their Quadrupel.

Chimay will repeat the exercise yearly, using different types of wood each time. Furthermore, Chimay Blue is now also available on draft in about 200 specialty pubs in Belgium, an initiative that will be repeated yearly for the end of year festive season.

Brewery and distillery Het Anker in Mechelen has launched “Gouden Carolus Indulgence”, the first of a limited series of beers brewed every year with varying content. It is whisky infused, whereby the 2015 “Gouden Carolus Cuvée van de Keizer” was enriched by an infusion of Gouden Carolus Single Malt whisky from a selection of Anker bespoke wooden casks.

Haacht had a unique idea to promote their pils “Primus”. When you download the Primus Record Collector App and you scan a bottle label, a record becomes available from talented artists that are not yet well known. Watch the video on YouTube (https://youtu.be/sZEDmVnXS_g).



Two major beer competitions announced their results in November. The Brussels Beer Challenge, which took place in Antwerp this year, gave the medal of “Overall best Belgian beer in the competition” to Dupont for their “Saison Biologique”. Gold was awarded to De Brabandere for their “Bavik Pils”, Boon for “Kriek Mariage Parfait”, AB-InBev for “Hoegaarden Grand Cru”, Duvel for “Maredsous Blond”, Rodenbach for “Grand Cru”, Antwerpse Brouwcompagnie for “Seef”, Timmermans for “Oude Geuze”, and Hugel for “Zeven Zonden Invidia”.

In Germany, the European Beer Star awarded 8 medals to Belgian beers. The only gold went to Oud Beersel for their “Oude Kriek”. Noteworthy is that Saint-Feuillien received silver for their “Saison”, with Van Steenberge taking the same medal for “Piraat”.

European Report



Czech Republic

by Max Bahnson

In 1997, Pivovar Svijany received its death sentence by its then owners Bass & Co. It was saved by its Brew Mater, who bought it. At the time, it was brewing less than 30,000 hl/year. Today, it's brewing close to 600,000, making it one of the biggest breweries in the Czech Rep. Now, they have announced plans to open a production facility in Tbilisi, Georgia with a capacity for several hundred thousand hectolitres a year, according to company representatives. This will make Pivovar Svijany the first privately owned Czech brewing company to expand production beyond the country's borders.

Speaking of expansions. Since opening in 2011, Pivovar Antoš has been considered one of the best microbreweries, and brewpubs, in the Czech Republic, and one of the few able to produce classic Czech lagers and ales with equal proficiency. The success of their beers, not only at the brewpub, but also in the increasingly more competitive distribution market, has encouraged the owners to build a new brewery from scratch; one that will increase Antoš's capacity by at least 600%. The brewpub will continue brewing, while the new facilities will be devoted to distribution and contract brewing.





Germany

by Jim Dykstra

New Year, New Beer

Escondido-based Stone Brewing, the first American craft brewer to build an operate a brewery in Europe, began selling beer on December 7. The brewery, housed in Berlin, is contributing to a rising tide in German beer drinking where the Reinheitsgebot takes a backseat to experimentation.

“We’ve always looked across the pond as, ‘That’s where the real beer comes from,’ said Stone founder Greg Koch. “And now people are looking to the United States and the craft brewing culture we’ve developed here, and saying, ‘Wow. That beer over there in the U.S. ... that’s pretty awesome. We want some of that, too.’”

This perceived change in preference is supported by a K&I Brand Research study, which shows the Bavarian purity law to be “increasingly irrelevant” to young consumers. In the study, 60 percent of the over-60 demographic identified the Reinheitsgebot as “very important,” compared to only 25 percent for participants under 30 years of age.

Come Together

In the true collaborative spirit of brewing, a Jewish micro-brewery joined forces with German craft brewer CREW Republic to make beer. Herzl Beer, inspired by an exhibit from the Jewish Museum of Munich entitled “Beer is the Wine of This Land,” will work in tandem with CREW to make a beer to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reinheitsgebot, passed into law in 1516.

“We are currently working on the recipe in communication with the guys in CREW Republic and in February, my partner and me will arrive in Munich and start the brewing process,” said Herzl co-founder Maor Helfman. “The beer will be ready for consumption by April, in time for the Reinheitsgebot anniversary exhibition at the museum.”



Featured European Beer



OMER

Bockor Brouwerij

Bellegem, Belgium

www.bockor.be

Pale golden, Omer has a firm malt character with pleasant hop bitterness and warm, bready aroma. Tasted from a signature glass, it pleases the eye, nose and palate.

Cuvée Des Jacobins Rouge

Bockor Brouwerij

Bellegem, Belgium

www.bockor.be

This is a complex, beautiful sour beer. It has a robust character but is sophisticated with a full body and overtones of vanilla, dried cherry, stone fruit and cocoa.



Cuvée Des Jacobins Rouge

Bockor Brouwerij

Featured European Beer



Saison

Brasserie St. Feuillien

Le Roeulx, Belgium

www.st-feuillien.com

A golden blonde ale, this saison is a top-fermented classique. Thanks to secondary fermentation in the bottle, it has an unmistakable flavor full of nuance and a slight tang.

Grand Cru

Brasserie St. Feuillien

Le Roeulx, Belgium.

www.st-feuillien.com

Pale in color, Grand Cru has brilliant clarity. The nose is a cascade of hoppy aromas and rich fruitiness. A second fermentation leads to lingering hoppiness followed by an intense, pleasant bitterness.



Grand Cru

Brasserie
St. Feuillien

