

Belle-Fleur

Another beer from Ronald at De Dochter van de Korenaar brewery, in the Belgian enclave of Baarle-Hertog; a Belgian island in a sea of Dutch territory. This is his Belgian (India) Pale Ale - Belle-Fleur.

It pours a slightly cloudy orange colour, with a foaming white head. These beers are fresh and alive! The smell is an inviting combination of pale malt, citrus, grapefruit and pine needles.

There is just a little sweetness before the hops arrive, and they do so in a well-balanced way. Grapefruit and lemony citrus, grassy pine notes and a peppery spice tingle make for a delicious character. A lively natural carbonation sharpens the flavours on the palette. The earthy hops leave a long and pleasant bitter finish, inviting you back for more.

About the Style: Belgian IPA's are, by their nature, softer and more subtle than the IPA's we have become used to from Australian or US brewers. Some people might align this beer more closely to an American Pale Ale. The style is a relatively new one for Belgian brewers, driven by the US market.

Style: Belgian India Pale Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij De Dochter van de Korenaar

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.0%



De Molen White Witch

While De Molen is more renowned for their big dark imperial stouts, porters and barrel-aged beers, they do turn their hand to some of the lighter styles as well.

The White Witch is De Molen's take on a Belgian saison; with a twist. This saison is dry-hopped with both Cascade and Amarillo hops.

The beer pours a hazy straw colour, with a foamy white head. The nose is a mix of light saison funky yeast, and tropical fruit hops.

Early flavour is of sweet tropical fruits, and crisp malts. There is an earthy minerality in the body, which comes through and lingers. A real hop zing persists, giving prickly spices and fruit sweetness.

In the aftertaste, the minerality disappears before the long hop bitterness, with a very dry finish. An interesting take on a beer style which is quickly becoming very broad indeed.

Style: Saison

Country: The Netherlands

Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.5%



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Straffe Hendrik Wild 2015

Straffe Hendrik literally translates as ‘Strong Hendrik’ (Henry in Dutch). The beer name was first developed in 1981, and is in recognition of the family heritage. For five generations, the sons were named Henry.

With the strong family tie, it may come as a surprise that the label was sold to another brewery in the late 1980’s. It wasn’t until 2008 that the label was reacquired, and brought back to its true home.

A 9% Tripel and an 11% Quadrupel are brewed under this label. In 2014, in keeping with the international trend of brewing innovation, Brettanomyces (wild) yeast was added to the normal Straffe Hendrik Tripel.

The tripel is a delicious brew in its own right, but once a year, it is refermented with the wild Brett. yeast. It is then cellared for an additional three months maturation. As the hop bitterness subsides, the wild yeast will develop fruity and flowery notes, an intriguing farmhouse aroma and even a vinuous hint.

Released 24 April, this beer has now had a little time to evolve.



Style: Tripel (with Brett.)
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Huisbrouwerij De Halve Maan
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.0%

Vicaris Tripel

The Vicaris Tripel is an uncomplicated beer – using just two different hops and one type of malt. And maybe with good reason; it was the first beer produced commercially by this small family brewery in the East Flanders town of Dendermonde.

Of course the story has humble beginnings, with founder Vincent Dilewyns starting out as a home brewer, with no intention of selling commercially. A larger batch was produced under license for inclusion in an exhibition on the history of brewing in Grembergen.

The excess was sold to locals, and some of the beer found its way into a degustation for the Zythos beer association. Dilewyns was invited to show his beer at the next Zythos festival in 2006, and the Tripel won the consumers choice award. Time to brew commercially!

It seems a malt-forward beer, with less of the fruit aroma normally associated with tripels. There is an early sweetness, but the beer really dries out quickly mid palette. The spicing adds a pleasant prickly finish to the lingering bitterness.

Style: Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Dilewyns
Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5%



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La Caracole Nostradamus

Our first visit to Brasserie La Caracole was about 8 years ago. After a few wrong turns we found a rustic 18th Century dairy shed housing an equally rustic little brewery in the village of Falmignoul.

We were greeted by two young girls who must have been 12 or 13 years old. They were our hosts, as they presented the four beers that were brewed there, as well as the stories associated with each beer.

It was a very memorable brewery visit, not least because the beers. From the witbier to the quadruple, all were of such great quality. Our favourite was the Nostradamus.

It pours a lovely dark brown, and gives off a wonderfully enticing aroma of dark roasty malts, dried red stone fruits and spicing.

This follows through in the taste. Candy sugar sweetness, raisins, prunes, figs and a little tart cherry. Hints of chocolate, nutmeg, brown sugar and a slight earthy hop bitterness. It is quite a complex beer, and finishes reasonably dry for all the sweet, fruity attributes.



Style: Quadrupel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie La Caracole
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.0%

Abbaye Des Rocs Tripel Imperiale

We love beers that aren't to any true style. It somehow makes them more intriguing, allowing open exploration of the beer itself rather than judging against a pre-conceived style guideline.

This beer is something of a misfit. The beer has attributes in common with a dark abbey ale (often called a Prior), or even a quadruple. Or there is the good old catch-all of Strong Dark Ale. It is technically classed as a dark tripel - an uncommon style, with the most notable example probably being Gulden Draak.

Whatever box you choose to put it into, it is a quality beer. It has a heavy malt body with the sweetness of toffee and caramel, raisins and figs. There is also a moderate amount of earthy hop bitterness and a slight citrus note to break up the sweetness.



Style: Dark Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie de l'Abbaye des Rocs
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0%

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