

Saison Voisin

This is a beer with an interesting history; as so many of these beers are.

The story starts with Brasserie Voisin which began operations in 1876. In 1884 they first produced a regional specialty saison, which they produced for more than 100 years.

Sadly Brasserie Voisin ceased operations in 1989.

In 2001, Brasserie des Geants began producing Saison Voisin using the same recipe as that of Brasserie Voisin. It is made under the watchful eye of retired brewer Leon Voisin, who is happy to vouch for this new version as being an accurate representation of the beer previously made by his family.

It is very much a traditional saison, which means it is probably not so saison-like nowadays. The beer is an amber colour, dry with a lingering bitterness. Take a step back and enjoy the workers ale, typical of southern Belgium and northern France a century ago.



Style: Saison

Country: Belgium

Brewer: La Brasserie des Geants

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.0%

Hapkin

Hapkin is another beer with a dynamic history.

The story begins with Brouwerij Louwaeghe; a family brewery with a history dating back to 1877 and spanning five generations, until the brewery was purchased by the Alken-Maes group in 2002.

Of the many beers in Brewery Louwaeghe's portfolio, only two survived – Hapkin and Thouroutenaere. The brewery was closed after the purchase, and the old site is now residential accommodation.

Alken-Maes itself is a merger of two brewing companies – Maes and Alken – which made it the second largest brewing company in Belgium. It was sold to Scottish & Newcastle (UK), which in turn was acquired by Heineken in 2008. So lots of behind-the-scenes changes, but the beer is still alive and kicking.

It is a strong blond ale in the style of a Duvel. It is a clear golden orange with a thick foamy head. Lots of Saaz hops and crisp light malts make for a lightly fruity, dry and somewhat spicy blonde ale.



Style: Belgian Strong Blonde Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Alken-Maes

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5%

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De Molen Winterhop

The De Molen beers are generally just a bit different somehow, and the Winterhop is no exception. Technically we'd have to label this beer as an India Pale Lager.

It is a deep amber coloured beer, with the use of a little caramel and chocolate malt. And of course lots of hops – Magnum for bittering, late-hopped with Cascade and then dry-hopped with Simcoe and Citra. Then a bottom fermenting yeast which is why this is a lager rather than an ale.

There is a strong tropical fruit aroma, with a fruity and pine resin flavour. But there is also a malt backbone supporting all those hops. A touch of sweetness and dry roast malt add another layer to the taste.

The beer finishes quite dry, with a lingering bitterness.

Style: India Pale Lager
Country: The Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.8%



Viven (Smoked) Porter

Brouwerij van Viven began operations in 1999, producing two quintessentially Belgian beers – a blond and a brown ale. The original owner sold the brewery to current owner in 2003.

In 2009, the range was expanded to include more non-traditional Belgian styles, one of which was the American Porter.

The beer is full of roasted malt and light smokiness, mixed with a little chocolate, nuttiness and burned brown sugar. Lying in wait is also a good dose of hop bitterness, with the beer finishing very dry.

We have two different labels on the bottles. The standard label is as per the picture showing 'Viven Porter', while the beer is marketed in America as 'Viven Smoked Porter'.

The Viven beers are produced at de Proefbrouwerij in Lochristi, near Ghent. The 'Proof Brewery' is the birthplace of some of our favourite beers from Troubadour, Slaapmutske and even Mikeller.

Style: American Porter
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij van Viven
Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.0%



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St Feuillien Cuvée de Noël 2014

Brasserie St Feuillien was originally known as Brasserie Friart, named after the family who started the brewery in 1873, and continued family operations through four generations.

In 2000, the brewery was renamed Brasserie St Feuillien. The name is a reference to the 7th Century Irish Monk Foylan or Foillan; and this evolved into Feuillien. His followers erected a chapel at the site of his murder, which later became the Abbaye St Feuillien.

So the St Feuillien beers are abbey ales, using the link to the religious name, without having any true religious association.

Enough history, and onto the beer. It is a Christmas beer of course, full of Christmas pudding aromas and flavours. Dark roasted malt, rich dark raisins, plums, hints of citrus and winter spices. There is enough bitterness to offset some of the sweetness, with a rich and decadent aftertaste.



Style: Kerstebier
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie St Feuillien
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.0%

Struise Tsjeeses 2015

We look forward to our Christmas beers every year, though we never get to receive them before Christmas. Luckily these beers keep really well, and probably present even better the following year.

One of our favourite Christmas beers each year is Struise's Tsjeeses. There was much disappointment last year when there was no Tsjeeses 2014 available, due to a brewing 'issue'.

The silver lining is that the 2015 incarnation was available in September this year, so we can present it on time this year!

Tsjeeses is a 10% strong blonde spiced ale, lagered for 8 months on different stone fruits. They present early, with hints of apricot, peach and plum, and a little citrus tartness. The body is rich and thick, and hides the ABV so well. It's a beer you could enjoy any time of year.

Merry Christmas!!

Style: Kerstebier (Christmas Beer)
Country: Belgium
Brewer: De Struise Brouwers
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0%



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