

Lupulus Hopera

We always love getting beer from a new little family brewery, and this months pack leads off with the first beer we've had from Brasserie Les 3 Fourquets.

The brewery is in the village of Bovigny, nestled deep in the Belgian Ardennes, down toward the border with Luxembourg.

The brewery unofficially started in 2004, providing the local village pub with locally produced beer (as is the case all over Belgium). It wasn't until 2007 that the brewery formalised its arrangements and began packaging its beers for wider sale.

The name 'Lupulus', and the label imagery of the wolf, is recognition of the wolf packs that used to roam the Ardennes. The latin name for hops – Humulus Lupulus – literally translates as 'small humble wolf'.

The beer is a slightly hoppier than normal Belgian Pale Ale. And easy drinking beer with a nice balance of malt sweetness and hop bitterness.



Style: Belgian Pale Ale
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie Les 3 Fourquets
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.0%

Caracole Saxo

Brasserie Caracole is microbrewery housed in an old converted dairy shed, in the town of Falmignoul, near Dinant in the Namur province.

We have a real soft-spot for Caracole, and their delicious beers. We thought it was the 'find' of one of our earliest trips to Belgium, searching for little breweries we'd been told about, but their beer we'd never had.

Caracole has a nice selection of beers, ranging from a witbier through to a strong dark ale. The Saxo is the easy-drinking, Belgian staple blonde ale.

A strong yeast profile has strong banana and grassy, hay-like aroma. It is a mix of pilsner malt and wheat, which gives a light, lively mouthfeel.

The brewery is an interesting place to visit, and could be the definition of an artisanal microbrewery. The labeling and bottling is still done manually, and the water for brewing is heated by a wood-fired.

The beer is named after the local hero Adolphe Sax – inventor of the saxophone!

Style: Belgian Blonde
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie Caracole
Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.7%



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De Molen Amarillo

Although more noted for their big dark stouts, De Molen often turn their hand to making lighter coloured beers. And they are always experimenting with IPA's.

While these beers are not part of their core range, they are presented quite frequently. There seems to be two distinct styles of double IPA's – they are either heavy and sweet, or lighter and drier.

The Amarillo is one of the sweeter style DIPA's. It is very much a malt forward beer, heavily dry-hopped with Amarillo. Quite a thick caramel malt body with over-ripe tropical fruit aroma and resinous, piney flavour.

Moving away from the American-style names, and back to the more traditional theme, this beer has now been renamed Storm & Bliksem.

Style: Double IPA
Country: The Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.3%



Bush Blond 10.5



The Bush beers from Brasserie Dubuisson are always something of a treat. The family brewery was established in 1769, and is still run by the Dubuisson family.

Located in the town of Pipaix in Wallonia, it is down near the French border. The big brasserie, and great selection of beers always makes for a rewarding drive. But be warned – stay nearby if you intend on sampling their full range.

For those familiar with Belgian beers, you'll know one common trait with the Bush beers is they are all quite high in alcohol. After all, they once had Belgium's highest ABV beer in the Bush Scaldis.

The blonde is a big 10.5% ABV. Traditional malts and saaz hops combine with the characteristic Dubuisson yeast to create a boozy, spicy but well-balanced tripel. A nice strong malt body with a spicy hop bitterness. The beer is actually quite dry for all the high alcohol and fairly heavy body.

The beer was introduced in 1998, to mark the 65th Anniversary of the Bush Amber (Scaldis) beer. Any excuse to introduce a new beer to market!

Style: Belgian Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie Dubuisson
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.5%

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N'Ice Chouffe

The winter seasonal offering from the charming little Brasserie A'Chouffe. Even after the brewery was bought by Duvel-Moortgat in 2006, there remains an artisanal charm about these beers, still produced at the small original brewery at the foot of the Ardennes.

First brewed in 1993, and available only during the period October to February, this is one of the Christmas beers that people look forward to each year.

It has a dark brown body, and has all the aromas of Christmas. Dark fruits, burned sugar, gentle spices and even a hint of licorice.

Lots of sweet crystal malts, with a little dark roasted malt, candi sugar, thyme and curacao combine for a robust roasted malt body. Burned sugar and caramel plus orange citrus hints, gentle spicy yeast notes – this beer is the ultimate winter warmer.

Do as the brewers suggest, and let this beer warm to get the full extent of the flavour and aroma captured in this little bottle of Belgian Christmas cheer.



Style: Kerstebier (Christmas Beer)

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brasserie A'Chouffe (for Duvel-Moortgat)

Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0%

White Pony The Oracle

This is another beer from the White Pony brewery – a young Italian gypsy brewer who brews many of his beers in some of Belgium's microbreweries.

He has a passion for high gravity beers, many in the Belgian style. This beer is described as a Belgian-style Barley Wine. A beer that crosses the divide between a traditional English-style barley wine and a Belgian quadrupel.

The beer has a dark brown body, with aromas of boozy raisins and toffee. This carries through into the flavour. An initial sweet caramel malt hit with roasty hints and dried red stone fruits. There is a spicy characteristic to the Trappist yeast, and a stronger hop bitterness than is normal for either a barley wine or quadrupel.

For a big beer, it is amazingly dry, and finishes with the little spicy prickle.

It tends more toward being a barley wine, as it doesn't quite have the depth of body that a Belgian quad does. Either way, it is an enjoyable and interesting beer.

Style: Barleywine

Country: Italy (brewed in Belgium)

Brewer: White Pony MicroBirrificio

Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.7%



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