

Chimay Doree

Many craft beer enthusiasts cut their teeth on a bottle of Chimay, one of the few 'proper' international beers that were fairly readily available when there wasn't a lot. So most are familiar with the Chimay trio of Red, White and Blue.

Doree is the fourth of the Chimay beers, though it isn't exactly a new beer. It is the 'patersbier' (translates as Father's beer), meaning it is the table beer of the monks. So while it has been brewed for some time, it was only made available to guests of the abbey; and the monks themselves of course.

In 2013 this beer was made available on tap in the café opposite the Trappist Monastery, and proved to be very popular. It was then made available in keg and bottle to some export markets, and later more generally though it is less widely available than the other three beers.

To ensure the monks can function, the beer is much lower in alcohol than the other three styles. It is said to be brewed with similar ingredients to the Chimay Red, though with paler malts.

A golden colour with hints of orange peel, coriander, pale malt and Belgian yeast. Like a cross between a Belgian witbier and a very soft tripel. The Monks suggest this as a perfect spring time beer. Perfect!

Style: Patersbier

Country: Belgium

Brewer: L'Abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont

Alcohol Content (ABV): 4.8%



De Molen Saint & Sinner

Everyone loves a good tribute beer, and that's exactly what the Saint & Sinner is – a celebration of 50 years of Maris Otter.

Maris Otter is a type of barley malt, developed in the UK at the Plant Breeding Institute (it is a real thing!). Introduced in 1966, the Maris Otter malt had its heyday in the 1970's and early 1980's.

As you'd expect then, 100% Maris Otter is used, and the malt is dominant in this beer. In typical De Molen style, they describe the beer as 'IPA-ish', but it is really an English-style IPA. Which of course makes sense, given Maris Otter was an English malt.

It is reasonably highly carbonated, which makes for a lively pour that releases strong notes of melon and light citrus. There is a fruit and caramel sweetness from the malt, a light hoppy bitterness and dry finish.

Style: IPA-ish

Country: Netherlands

Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.1%

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Viven Bruin

The Viven Brewery was officially launched in 1999 by Willy De Lobel, a homebrewer who turned his recipes into reality. Renting time on the brewing equipment of the renowned De Proef Brouwerij, he brewed a Blond (the 'Chapel of Viven') and a Bruin (the 'Monastery of Viven').

In 2003, the brewery was sold to Tony Traen, son of the local drinks distributor. Tony tweaked the recipes of the old beers and in 2010 introduced a few new creations, with the beer still being brewed at De Proef Brouwerij.

The really exciting news came at the start of 2015, when Tony established his own small brewery in the beautiful little village of Damme. Just a quick 10 minute bicycle ride along a scenic canal, small farms and even a windmill - if you ever find yourself in Bruges, a small diversion to Damme is well worth the effort.

The beer is a tasty Belgian dubbel style, pouring a ruby-brown colour with a sweetish aroma. The flavour is prunes, figs and raisins, with burned sugar and a slight hint of chocolate and even licorice. But not as sweet as the aroma suggest, with the beer quite dry and a hint of acidity.

Style: Dubbel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Van Viven
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.1%



Alvinne Gaspar

If there is one thing we know about Alvinne, it is to expect the unexpected. And Gaspar is something different.

It is a little hard to categorise this beer into a particular style. We'll nominally call it a strong blond ale, but throughout the beer I get hints of a saison, a tripel and a Belgian IPA.

Gaspar is one of Belgium's most bitter beers at 115 IBU. It sounds a bit of a beast, but there is enough else going on in the beer to soften this bitterness out. The Morpheus house yeast is in there, and is brewed with pilsner, pale and chocolate malts plus wheat.

It's a light, slightly hazy colour, with a fairly subdued aroma. There is a little malt sweetness right at the start, and an interesting hit of the Morpheus yeast. The bitterness come on hard, but is softened by a little fruity/grassy hop hit, as well as interesting hints of spices like coriander and pepper.

Of course there is a lingering bitterness, but also enough interesting components to quickly invite another taste.

Style: Belgian Strong Blonde
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Alvinne
Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.9%



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Troubadour Westkust

Troubadour Westkust is a Black Imperial IPA. It is a Belgian take on a US-led style, though with a twist, as it uses 100% Belgian hops.

The US importer was a massive fan of the Magma, and asked the brewers to make a dark version of the imperial IPA. This is something that happens quite often, and given that the US is the major market for many of Belgium's breweries, such requests are nearly always granted.

The surprise to the importer was the use of three Belgian west coast hops, rather than the US west coast hopping that was expected. It really works with this beer though, providing much earthy hop notes.

It has a soft aroma of roasted malt, faint dark fruits and subtle hints of coffee and caramel. The flavours are more pronounced and carry through from the aroma.

A little sweetness first with rich roasted malt and coffee in the background. They combine perfectly to give a rich and complex beer, with a crisp and defined mouthfeel. The hops finally win through in the end, to finish with a pleasant lasting bitterness.



Style: Black Imperial IPA

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij de Musketiers

Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.2%

Dochter van de Korenaar Sans Pardon

We really appreciate that many of our brewers are creative – never content with just brewing their range, there always seems to be a new beer in the portfolio or a new seasonal of special beer.

The Sans Pardon is one of the newer creations from Ronald at De Dochter van de Korenaar (The Daughter of the 'Ear of Corn'). It is a very fine imperial stout, with the added benefit that it is available year round. There is no bad time for a great imperial stout.

An interesting feature of this beer is that it contains Rooibos. This ingredient is sometimes called 'Red Bush Tea', and is known for having many health benefits such as being high in antioxidants and caffeine-free.

Lots of rich dark chocolate with just hints of dark fruits and coffee. The body is a little sharper than a traditional 'thick' imperial stout body, but this seems to balance the mouthfeel making the beer a little lighter and drier. I honestly don't know if this is the effect of the Rooibos, but if I can advocate the health benefits to my Nutritional Therapist wife, then this beer is a winner!



Style: Imperial Stout

Country: Belgium

Brewer: De Dochter van de Korenaar

Alcohol Content (ABV): 11%

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