

Partizan Saison – Rhubarb & Ginger

Typical of his craft brewing brethren, Partizan brewer Andy is a creative. Though in some of his beers I really think his former life as a chef has a big influence – like in this saison featuring rhubarb and ginger.

Saisons as a beer style lend themselves well to the addition of some interesting fruits, vegetables and other botanicals. (Reference Dany Prignon's Fantome beers for some crazy examples). But rhubarb and ginger are not so common, though do provide an interesting balance to the beer.

The saison yeast is present, though it takes a back seat to the ginger which is dominant in both the aroma and flavour. A good dose of acidity from the rhubarb presents as tart, and balances the bite of the ginger. The background farmhouse funk and slight spiciness adds a prickle and extra level of interest.

To say that this beer is refreshing would be an understatement. A lovely crisp light body, with good carbonation and a very dry finish keeps you wanting another sip.

It is a really clever little beer, packing a load of character and flavour into a relatively low ABV body.



Style: Saison

Country: England

Brewer: Partizan Brewing

Alcohol Content (ABV): 3.7% (0.96 Std Drinks)



De Graal Triverius

De Graal is a great example of a Belgian Huisbrouwerij (House Brewery). An oversized shed at the rear of a residential property, situated in the middle of a small village in the Flemish Ardennes made this an interesting search the first time we visited. But it was well worth the effort!

The De Graal Triverius is designated as a blonde wheat beer, so another example of a beer traversing two distinct styles.

It is an impressive yellow golden colour, and much clearer than a normal wheat beer, but is capped by the characteristic fluffy white head. The aroma exhibits a mix of coriander, citrus, grassy hops and bready yeast.

The taste is clean with pleasant spiciness. The citrus flavours are somewhat subdued, along with soft biscuit malts. The lack of sweetness leads to a crisp dry finish, with more than a hint of hop bitterness.

Style: Double Witbier

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij De Graal

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.8% (1.77 Std Drinks)

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Poperinge's Hommelbier

The Van Eecke Brewery in Watou is located near to the French-Belgian border in West Flanders, very near to both St Bernardus Brewery and the Westvleteren St Sixtus Trappist Monastery.

'Hommel' in the local dialect means 'Hop', and this beer is a tribute to the area once famous as a major producer of hops. Of course it features, amongst others, two hops grown locally in Poperinge – Brewers Gold and Hallertau.

This beer was arguably Belgium's first IPA, and has become the official beer of the tri-annual Poperinge Beer and Hop Festival.

Hommelbier is a golden bronze ale. The nose has typical Belgian yeast characters, combined with summer fruits and hints of spice.

The taste follows the aroma, initially sweet then citrus and floral hop flavours giving way to spice and peppery prickles. Orange peel, honey and cumin are common descriptors of the flavour, though none of these are actually added. The finish is dry without being overly bitter.



Style: Belgian IPA

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Abbaye De Leffe (AB-InBev)

Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.5% (1.48 Std Drinks)



Kees Strawberry Fields

This is another interesting and clever creation from Kees. He calls it his chocolate strawberry milk stout.

The beer is an oatmeal chocolate stout at its base, but with kilos upon kilos of fresh whole strawberries added.

In the aroma, the strawberries are very strong at first though they seem to subside as the beer warms and the stout characters take over.

A rich sweet chocolate flavour greets the tongue, with the developing roasted malt bitterness building toward the back palate. The strawberry is more subdued in the flavour, though certainly present in the background.

There is heaps of flavour packed into the 6% body, and the flavours seem to compliment each other rather than being disjointed or artificial. Kind of like the early evening build-up to tackling Kees' Caramel Fudge Stout!

Style: Milk Stout

Country: The Netherlands

Brewer: Brouwerij Kees

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.0% (1.56 Std Drinks)

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Caldera IPA

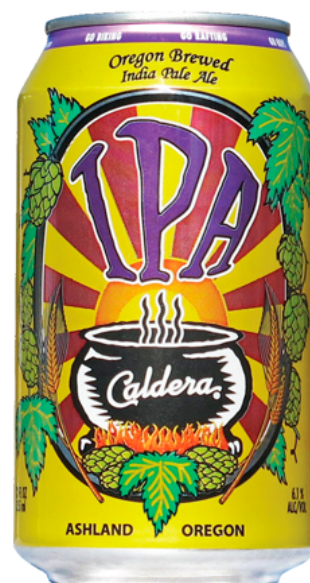
We've undoubtedly been a little slow to the party, but finally we have our first canned beer in our packs. Of course it is an American IPA.

Caldera Brewing Company is based in Oregon, which is something of a home state to US craft brewing. As of 31 Dec 2016, Portland had 70 breweries, rising to 105 if you include the metro areas of the city. Caldera's Ashland brewery is about 4.5 hours drive to the south.

They commenced brewing operations in 1997, and their success required a move to much bigger premises in 2010. They were the first west coast brewer to can their own beers. And their current facility cans over 1200 cans per minute!

Their IPA is one of the flagship beers produced year round. Naturally it includes a good mix of fruity aromatic American hops with Citra, Simcoe, Centennial and Amarillo. Despite this lupuline smorgasbord, the beer is nicely balanced with a solid malt backbone tempering the bitterness.

Never mind the influx of XPA's popping up now – I could happily session these all afternoon!



Style: IPA
Country: USA
Brewer: Caldera Brewing Company
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.1% (1.59 Std Drinks)

Alvinne Cuvee D'Erpigny Sauternes

We had the Pays D'Erpigny in our February 17 pack, and this is the base for this beer that is aged in French Sauternes barrels for 8 months.

Alvinne last created Cuvee D'Erpigny in 2012, when they made Cuvee D'Erpigny Monbazillac. After this use, they were not able to find any suitable barrels for the barrel-aging process. In 2016, three 300 litre sauternes barrels were sourced and it was time to reintroduce Cuvee D'Erpigny.

In case you haven't had sauternes, it is a sweet white desert style wine made from Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle grapes that have been affected by the Botrytis disease known as 'Noble Rot'.

The barrel aging adds a little extra sweetness to the big malty body, as well as a slight vinegar acidity with the sweet dessert wine character in the background. And the beer has picked up a touch of extra alcohol.

It's a big bold sipper, so let it warm and notice the evolution of the beer as it progresses. Don't be driving anywhere after this one though!

Style: Barley Wine
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Alvinne
Alcohol Content (ABV): 12.2% (3.18 Std Drinks)



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