

Inglorious Brew Stars Cum Laude

Another beer from the twin brothers – Benny and Erwin – who quickly went from first time homebrewers in September 2012, to only their fifth ever batch of home brew wni 'Best Hobby Beer of the Low Countries' in June 2014.

Part of the prize was the opportunity to brew a commercial batch of 500L at Brouwerij Anders. Following this successful venture, they officially started their own brewery in October 2014.

In March 2015, they produced their second beer – Cum Laude, which was made to be the house beer of the University of Antwerp. As alumnas of the university, they had a strong association, and it came as no surprise they allowed the university a say in the name of the beer. In a poll of university staff 'Cum Laude' won with 38% of the votes.

It is curiously classified as both a Belgian Blond or a Belgian IPA on different beer websites. I'm happy with calling it a hoppy blonde ale.

There is a slightly spicy, floral aroma with an inviting sweetness early giving way to a reasonable firm and very balanced bitterness.



Style: Belgian Blonde
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Inglorious Brew Stars
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.3% (1.64 Std Drinks)



Emelisse Vanille Ice Cream Stout

Fans of Emelisse will have noticed a rebranding taking place throughout the last year, and this was the result of the brewery being sold. The new owners of the labels and recipes of Emelisse are the Slot Oostende brewery, located not too far from Kees Brouwerij in Middelburg.

While the full transition took a while, all brewing and operations for Emelisse were moved to the Slot Oostende brewery in 2017. Former brewer Kees has his own fantastic brewery, and assistant John is now brewing with De Molen.

First introduced in late 2016, this is one of the newest creations for Emelisse. It is a sweet stout, with barley and wheat plus milk sugars, this is a very flavoursome beer for its modest 5.5% ABV.

Rich dark chocolate and vanilla on the nose follow through in the taste. Early rich and sweet dark chocolate and roasty malts, the vanilla is more subdued. The beer becomes drier and roastier with hints of coffee. Then finishes with a little sweetness again.

It doesn't really have the creamiest of bodies that the name 'Ice Cream Stout' might invoke, but it is smooth and tasty.

Style: Sweet Stout
Country: The Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij Emelisse (Slot Oostende)
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.5% (1.43 Std Drinks)

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De Molen Geuren and Kleuren

This is another of De Molen's special, one-off festival beers from their Boreft Festival late last year. As usual, the brewers have taken license to experiment, and the result is an interesting – if slightly unexpected – beer.

For fans of tea IPA's (think Yeastie Boys' Gunnamatta, or even De Molen's Dag & Dauw), please don't think this is an IPA with a hint of tea. This beer is much more about the tea and smoked malts, than it is about highlighting hops.

Bergamot extract and smoked malts take centre stage, with an aroma of wood smoke, leather, smoked ham, lightly toasted tea leaves, sweet malts and a slight grassy, herbal character. The beer is sweet at first, with caramel malt and a light bitterness. The smoked malt and tea combine to accentuate the smokiness, with any hop character really overpowered by the smoke and tea.

This beer may be a little divisive – as smoked beers can be. For smoky fans though, as well as those partial to an earl grey tea, this beer is a tasty little experiment. The name translates as 'Scents & Colours'!



Style: Smoked Earl Grey IPA

Country: The Netherlands

Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen

Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.9% (2.06 Std Drinks)

Gouden Carolus Ambrio



Some breweries (and their beers) seem to fly under the radar, somehow being spectacularly solid without coming to any great prominence. Het Anker would have to be one such brewery.

One of the buildings dates back to the early 1400's, which then was a hospital attended by an order of nuns. In recognition of their contribution to the city, in 1471 they were granted permission to brew beer without taxes. And there has pretty much been a brewery onsite since then. Now controlled by the 5th generation of the Van Breedham family, the beers produced at Het Anker are all pretty awesome.

The Ambrio was the first beer produced by the old brewery to a recipe dating back to 1421. Het Anker recently recreated this beer, and they say they are the only brewery making this type of beer which was the typical brew for the Mechelen region. (Although the current version is slightly heavier than the original which was at 6.5% ABV).

It has the light body of a blond, with the deep flavours of a darker beer. A semi-sweet malt body of caramel and toffee, beautifully balanced with a nice hop bitterness, raisins, dried berries, woodiness, gentle spicing and long aftertaste.

Style: Amber

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Het Anker

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.0% (2.08 Std Drinks)

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Cornet Oaked

The history of the brewery in which this beer was brewed is as interesting as the beer is tasty. In 2014 the Palm Corporation (which is majority owned by Bavaria NV, the Netherlands second-largest brewery company; after Heineken of course!), restored the 300-year old brewery in the town of Steenhuffel.

They installed a 1000-litre microbrewery, with the sole intention of using it to 'experiment with herbs, spices, hops, fruit and wood'. The brewery was named De Hoorn, in tribute to the 500-year old inn that once stood on the site.

I wasn't sure whether I wanted to put this beer in the 'Strong Blonde Ale' or 'Belgian Tripel' basket; it probably sits somewhere in between. Either way, it is an interesting beer to experiment with.

The beer is not aged in oak barrels, rather oak chips from an old barrel were added during brewing. As a result, the oak character added is minimal to be fair. But if you look, I'm sure there are added notes of vanilla and a little spice.

The base is a good beer, with a lovely malt body, lots of Belgian yeast character, strawberries, a gentle spicing and of course a bit of vanilla!



Style: Strong Blonde Ale (Oaked)

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Palm Corporation (Brouwerij De Hoorn)

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5% (2.50 Std Drinks)

Kasteelbier Barista Chocolate Quad

This beer is deliciously described by the current CEO of the brewery Xavier van Honebrouck as being 'the successful marriage between beer, coffee and chocolate.' Quite a reference for one of the brewery's newest labels.

But it isn't truly a new creation, as the beer was previously marketed as Kasteel Winter, the Christmas seasonal beer. It was unique among the Belgian Christmas beers in that it lacked any herbs or spices. Instead this beer relies on Belgian chocolate and coffee.

So keen to capitalise on a year-round marketability of this beer, we have the updated label with that same delicious beer inside.

As you'd expect, the beer is really rich and full-bodied. Sweet malts, creamy chocolate, dark stone fruits, hints of red wine, molasses and vanilla, with a pleasant layer of coffee present throughout.

There is just hop and/or yeast character to provide a bitterness and little spice to the beer, and this stops it short of being cloying. The aftertaste is long, rich and warming; though it hides the 11% ABV really well.

Style: Quadrupel

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij van Honebrouck

Alcohol Content (ABV): 11.0% (2.86 Std Drinks)



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