

La Debauche Volga

One of the most striking features of the La Debauche beers is the label art. Each label is the work of a local artist and is carefully chosen to portray the character of the beer.

The Volga label is the work of local tattoo artist Orange TP, and embodies the delicate and inviting nature of this beer.

Pouring a light golden amber, the aroma is of lemon and grapefruit with a good malt base. When cold the citrus follow through in the flavour, with a crisp malt body providing some delicate sweetness.

As the beer warms the bitterness takes a firmer hold. The finish is really dry with a lingering hop bitterness, accentuated by the good level of carbonation.

A really refreshing and thirst quenching offering from our (so far) one and only French brewery.

Style: American Pale Ale
Country: France
Brewer: Brasserie La Debauche
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.0% (1.30 Std Drinks)



De Molen Sjonnie & Peet

When you are the owner of one of the world's best breweries, what beer do you decide to supply at your wedding? Well if you are John Brus from De Molen, you leave the decision in the hands of your brewing team!

So we may not have received an invite to the celebration, but we can feel slightly part of the proceedings by getting to try John & Petra's (Sjonnie & Peet's) wedding beer.

It's a reasonably sessionable IPA, loaded with US hops. Columbus for bittering, Citra is the late hop addition, and then dry-hopping is done with Citra, Simcoe and Mosaic. And its not a NEIPA!

There is a good level of tropical fruit sweetness from all those fruity hops, as well as a dose of caramel in the malt body. There is also pine and orange citrus with a soft carbonation that adds to a nicely balanced IPA.

This is a return to the more old-school style of IPA from De Molen, that they more commonly produced a few years back.

Style: IPA
Country: The Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.0% (1.56 Std Drinks)



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Kees Pineapple/Coriander Smoothy

Here's another interesting creation from our mate Kees Bubberman, which surely harks back to his days as a chef. A beer which includes pineapple, coriander and szechuan peppers.

This style is loosely known as a milkshake IPA, and uses lactose to achieve a smooth(y!) creamy mouthfeel.

The pineapple is most dominant, both in the aroma and the taste. After a few sips, you get the hint of the peppers in the background. It might be just psychological in that you know it's there, but I reckon there's a little more zing in the hop bitterness. Though I really don't get much in the way of coriander.

Despite the creamy feel on the tongue, the beer finishes really quite dry and prickly.

Ingredients more akin to an Asian curry perhaps but I think this beer really works.

Style: IPA
Country: The Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij Kees
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.5% (1.43 Std Drinks)



Caracole Ambree

I have a real soft spot for the beers of Brasserie Caracole. It was one of our earliest brewery visits, tracking down virtually unknown breweries with the aid of only paper maps and an address with directions provided by another brewer.

And a fantastic recommendation it was; a memory which brings a smile to my face as I write the notes for this beer.

It is one of the last breweries in Europe to heat their kettles with an open fire. The brewery really is a working historical display of how things used to be done, housed in the atmospheric stone and wood dairy shed that is home to the brewery.

Caracole was the first beer produced by the brewery and remains the most produced beer from the portfolio. It really is just called Caracole, with the 'Ambree' added to help distinguish it from the other beers

We will nominally label it an amber ale, largely thanks to its colour. There is a lovely fruity malt body, caramel, brown sugar, raisins with a moderate hop bitterness and a strong Belgian yeast character. It finishes slightly sweet, but with a prickly lingering bitterness.

Style: Amber Ale
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie Caracole
Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.9% (2.06 Std Drinks)



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Gouden Carolus Classic

Sometimes breweries put names to their beers that somewhat overstate the 'street-cred' of the beer. Well that isn't the case with this beer.

The Het Anker brewery is in the town of Mechelen, sort of between Antwerp and Brussels. The closer you get to the region, the more this beer becomes a staple in the cafes and bars. Across the country, it is not unusual to see a Gouden Carolus beer on a beer menu, and chances are if there is only one it will be this beer.

It has a slightly sweet, dark malt body with flavours of caramel, brown sugar, raisins, plums, licorice, some herbal notes and a spicy yeast. All these flavours somehow meld so that no one characteristic is overly dominant. It really has a lovely balance.

There is very little sign of the alcohol, save a little warmth to the dry, spicy and slightly bitter aftertaste.

This beer has been brewed to the same recipe since it was first released back in 1962. And for that reason alone, it deserves the name 'Classic'.

Style: Belgian Strong Dark Ale
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Het Anker
Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5% (2.21 Std Drinks)



De Molen Hemel & Aarde Bowmore BA

The 'Heaven & Earth' is one of De Molen's most iconic beers. It is packed full of malt, including the most heavily peated malt in the world, sourced from the Bruichladdich distillery. And if that wasn't enough, the beer was then aged for 10 months in Bowmore Scotch Whisky barrels.

If you are a fan of roasty and peaty malts, and/or peaty whisky then you will be in heaven with this beer. The aroma is strongly of those peated malts. Peat, ash and smoke all jump out of the glass, and follow through in the flavour.

In behind this is a lovely thick malt body full of dark chocolate, molasses and a hint of licorice and coffee. But then the smoke and peat fight back to finish rich and smooth, with a definite boozy edge.

Experiment tasting this beer at different temperatures, it really does change the characteristics. When colder, the whisky character in particular is more subdued. But as it warms the beer opens up to deliver the full flavour impact.

As De Molen warn: 'this beer isn't for the fainthearted!'

Style: Imperial Stout
Country: Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen
Alcohol Content (ABV): 11.0% (2.86 Std Drinks)



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