

Troubadour Magma Tropical

Troubadour was the first brewery we ever imported, and the Magma was one of our favourite beers. It is fair to say it had something of a cult following in our local area in those early days.

It remains the brewery's highest profile beer, and each year they produce a variant of Magma. Over the years they have altered the hops, the malt even the yeast (the 2015 Triple Spiked Brett was my personal favourite).

For 2019 they dialled back the level of ingredients to make a more sessionable beer of 6.5%, and added two extra hops to the dry-hopping regime. Nelson Sauvín and El Dorado hops add the tropical twist.

The aroma is fruity, though maybe not as tropical as I was expecting given the name. Also a Belgian yeast character on the nose.

The flavour is again maybe not as invitingly fruity as imagined. The malt body is crisp, with good carbonation lifting the mouthfeel. It is light with a sustained bitterness. There is some tropical fruit flavour but it is quite subdued with the beer finishing dry and bitter.



Style: Belgian IPA
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij De Musketieres
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.5% (1.69 Std Drinks)

't Hofbrouwerijke Hofblues



It seems funny to write about a 'new brewery' when it has been around for some 12 years or more. And that is the case for 't Hofbrouwerijke, as we welcome their beers to our beer packs for the first time.

The story of a home brewer whose first attempt at homebrewing was far from successful. So much so that he took a 15-year hiatus from brewing before finding the inspiration to try again. After honing his skills at a nearby brewing guild, Jef set up his own small brewery much closer by – right next door to his home! Hence the name 't Hofbrouwerijke which can translate as 'garden brewery'.

Hofblues is a Belgian stout, weighing in at a moderate 5.5% ABV. It pours a very dark brown to black colour, and my bottle was a little lively needing a rest in between pours to get it all in the glass.

Aroma is of chocolate and a little coffee, which kind of reverses in the flavour. Initially a little sweet, the taste is much more that of very dark chocolate, roasted malts and coffee. Medium bodied with a dry, somewhat bitter finish with a hint of dark fruits lingering in the background.

It is quite an easy beer to drink, the roasted bitterness softening with each sip to become something that you could easily enjoy a few of.

Style: Stout
Country: Belgium
Brewer: 't Hofbrouwerijke
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.5% (1.43 Std Drinks)

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Kees Milkshake IPA

Usually when we bring across Boreft beers they are from De Molen. But this is one that Kees presented at last years festival.

It isn't the first time he's marketed a 'Milkshake IPA', so we need to differentiate this one as being made with mango and vanilla (as opposed the previous creation using cranberries)

Its hazy, and slightly thick from the use of lactose. There is mango aplenty, both in the aroma and in the flavour. And not the artificial essence – this is from real fresh mangos! There is also vanilla, but it is pretty subtle.

At the core of the beer, this is an IPA so there is a definite hop bitterness playing off against the fruity sweetness so that despite the lactose there is still a good prickly character to the mouthfeel that lingers in the aftertaste.

I'm not really a fan of lactose IPA's, with the thick mouthfeel seeming at odds to what I want from the IPA; even if they are not made to be that sweet. But this is an enjoyable beer. If you are a fan of the lactose UPA then I reckon you might really love this.



Style: IPA
Country: Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij Kees
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.8% (2.36 Std Drinks)

Duchese De Bourgogne Cherry Chocolate



Duchesse is one of my favourite beers from Belgium, so it was with great delight that I saw last year Verhaeghe had produced two new variants of this great Flanders beer.

This is the Duchesse Choco Cherry variant. To the normal Duchesse, 20kg of fresh Belgian cherries are added to the maturation barrels, along with some chocolate essence.

As always, the Duchesse starts with quite a sharp sourness, but that quickly fades with the softer, fruitier malt character pushing through as the beer opens up. The cherries add a nice fruity character as well as providing a different sour note to the usual balsamic vinegar character. The chocolate is subtle, almost more like cocoa powder than having any sweetness, but it does provide an extra layer of interest, and is balanced quite nicely.

I'm not even going to give the obligatory 'sour warning', I mean its almost like a dessert beer. For those still pulling the squint – time to harden up!

Style: Flanders Red
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Verhaeghe
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.8% (1.77 Std Drinks)

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De Molen Hel & Verdoemenis Hazelnoot

What do you do if your flagship and best selling imperial stout is rated as almost perfect on the beer ratings websites. If you are De Molen then you pimp that bad boy!

This is the 'Hell & Damnation' with the addition of hazelnut syrup for that decadent, dessert touch.

The aroma is an inviting combination of chocolate, coffee, roasted malts and a good dose of hazelnut. The flavour is rich and smooth. Lots of roasted malts, dark chocolate, cocoa, espresso, hazelnuts of course, vanilla, an herbaceous, earthy note and a little ashy-woody hint that gives a certain dryness to the finish.

It's a nice twist on the classic base beer. Not overly sweet in the end, but enough to put it in the dessert beer category. And more than enough to make this beer a guilty pleasure.

Style: Imperial Stout
Country: Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Molen
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0% (2.60 Std Drinks)



De Moersleutel Bumps Ahead

Fans of the barley wine rejoice, for it is with this can of malty goodness that we conclude this month's beer pack.

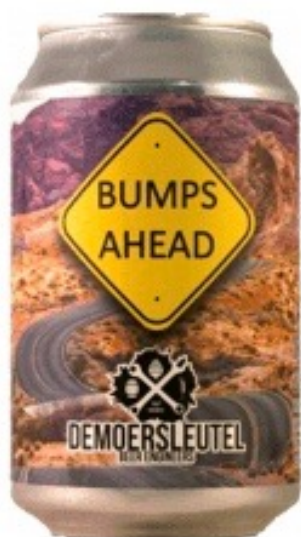
Today's barley wines generally fall into one of two categories. A traditional barley wine has its origins in 18th England, and is really all about the malt. Then we have the American barley wine, which is a more recent incarnation and hints at the extra use of hops; looking for much more hop character and bitterness than in a traditional barley wine.

With this beer, we have an American style, as the beer was dry hopped to add that extra bite and a little floral character to the aroma.

It pours a pretty thick, dark amber with a small head that settles quickly. On the nose there is the sweet malt character of caramel, toffee, burnt sugar and dried fruits. There is also a little citrus hint from the dry hopping.

This all follows through in the flavour. Sweet caramel malts, a little dried stone fruit, with a citrus hop bitterness cutting through the sweetness and drying out on the finish. For a big beer it drinks really smoothly, very much belying its name.

Style: Barley Wine
Country: Netherlands
Brewer: Brouwerij De Moersleutel
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0% (2.60 Std Drinks)



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