

Lupulus Pils

We've gone from one extreme to the other with the Lupulus beers, having had the Hibernatus winter beer back in the March pack, we now present the pilsner.

A pilsner is a type of pale lager which was introduced to the beer world by German brewer Josef Groll in the town of Pilsen (Plzeň) in the Czech Republic. The ubiquitous Pilsner Urquell was the world's first pale lager, and it is still being produced today.

Pilsners are a simple beer in terms of ingredients, but a true test of the brewers skill given there really is nowhere to hide any faults.

I found this a tasty and enjoyable beer. Unfiltered and not pasteurised, it pours a slightly cloudy straw colour.

Characterised by a clean, crisp mouthfeel the grainy malt base shares the stage with the herbal, earthy hop bitterness.

The key to a good pilsner is the balance of these attributes, and I think this beer does a good job of that task.

Style: Pilsner
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie Lupulus
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.0% (1.30 Std Drinks)



Siphon Cendre

This is an interesting beer from the small brewery in Damme, just outside of Bruges along one of the canals that lead into the city.

The brewery's catchphrase is 'old world meets new world', and that is perfectly captured in this beer. Described as a black India saison, it is one of their seasonal brews made annually for the autumn. So I had to keep it for the autumn season in Oz!

It is a pretty uncommon style for a beer, and if you stop and think about what to expect it takes a minute to imagine what might be in the bottle.

It pours a dark brown, just short of black body, with a really rocky foam. Strong aromas of roasted malts, coffee, chocolate and licorice follow through into the taste just as strongly.

Hopped with Citra hops, there is a faint hint of those tropical characteristics, but it really is beneath the malts. Fermented with a saison yeast, I don't get a lot of saison funk, but the really dry finish attests to that.

Dark malts really are dominant, and I found myself looking hard for the other sides of this beer. Apparently smoked eel pairs really well – I didn't find out! I did enjoy it as an interesting point of difference from a small brewery pushing boundaries and challenging the norms of Belgian brewing.

Style: Saison
Country: Belgium
brewer: Siphon Brewing
Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.5% (1.69 Std Drinks)



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den Bangelijke Tripel

't Pakhuis is a small brew pub in the old part of Antwerp's city centre, that I've had the pleasure of visiting a couple of times. It was here, quite a few years ago, that I was introduced to the 't Pakhuis beers, which were previously only available at the venue but have since been made available for wider distribution.

Now when I had this beer from the tap, I had remembered it more as a hoppy Strong Blond Ale, but as you can see from the labels the brewery has called this a tripel.

This is the premier beer of the brewery, and the name comes from a comment by a beer expert invited to the opening of the brewery. He noted 'Da's een bangelijke goei pint', which translates from Antwerp dialect to 'this is an amazing pint!'. The beer name stuck.

It starts with a malt sweetness, with hints of summer fruits and something floral. Mid-palate the hops kick in as I remembered, growing toward the finish. The aftertaste is of earthy spices and that lingering tingly hop bitterness.



Style: Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij 't Pakhuis
Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.3% (2.16 Std Drinks)

Bersalis Tripel

Oud Beersel was traditionally one of Belgium's old lambic brewery, having commenced back in 1882. It was passed through several generations of the family until 2002 when financial issues led to the brewery ceasing operations.

In 2005, two beer-loving Belgian's decided to kick things off again. Now starting a lambic brewery requires patience – and cash – while you wait the 3 or more years for the lambic to age. So it was that two non-lambic beers were produced to generate some cashflow.

Of course this Bersalis Tripel is one of those beers. Less obvious is that this beer is actually made at Brouwerij Huyghe (famous for the Delirium beers).

The aroma is typically Belgian, with those yeast characters of banana and clove, with a hint of herbal spice.

The flavour is as expected for a Belgian Tripel – a slightly sweet malt body, a little bready with white stone fruits, candi sugar or even honey, cloves again and in behind are those spicy yeast characters which, along with the hops, do their job of balancing out the sweetness to make this beer really drinkable.

Style: Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Oud Beersel
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.5% (2.47 Std Drinks)



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La Debauche Cognac Barrel

This was quite a tricky beer to describe if I'm honest. Normally taking the lead from the brewery, I was tempted to class this beer as an amber ale. But it is way too big and bold for that.

As you see I've put it in the barley wine box. But it isn't really the rich and heavy malt bomb you'd expect from a barley wine. Maybe we'll call it an American style barley wine, slightly heavier on the hops than European style.

The beer is indeed amber in colour, and I guess it is reasonably rich. Mouthfuls of caramel malt, brown sugar, molasses, dried dark fruits like raisins and currants, all balanced by a good dose of French hops.

The influence of the cognac barrel is there as well. Notes of vanilla and oak come through, and the hint of the sweet cognac are also there. It is quite a boozy beer too, with more than a hint of heat from the 9.5% ABV.

It is definitely a beer to sip on. Take it easy and allow it to warm and this beer will change over time. I definitely enjoyed this more as I went along, with it presenting more flavours as it opened up.



Style: Barley Wine

Country: France

Brewer: Brasserie La Debauche

Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.5% (2.47 Std Drinks)

Gulden Draak Brewmaster BA 2020 Edition

We always look forward to special editions of classic beers, and this from Van Steenberge certainly fits that billing.

We've had the 2017 edition in way back in March 2019, so some of you will be familiar with this beer. But for those that haven't yet had the pleasure, settle in for a treat.

First released in 2013, this beer was developed by head brewer Jef Versele as a tribute to his grandfather and former Van Steenberge brewmaster Jozef Ven Steenberge, and the brewery's 230 year history.

Taking inspiration from visits to many US breweries, it was decided to age batches of the classic Gulden Draak in various whiskey barrels. The result is this delicious limited edition beer.

Caramel malts, dark dried fruits, toffee, mild spices and just a touch of vanilla and the whiskey barrel all present in the aroma. They follow through in beautiful balance in the flavour, with a little more spice coming through and the barrel character being skilfully restrained but adding an underlying layer of character to the beer.

Style: Dark Tripel (Barrel-Aged)

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Van Steenberge

Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.5% (2.73 Std. Drinks)



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