

St Bernardus Tokyo

St Bernardus Tokyo was a beer originally brewed to celebrate the opening of the first St Bernardus-themed bar in Tokyo back in 2012. It was a one-off creation, which was revived in 2020 (albeit a change in recipe.) I've kept it to celebrate the Olympics in Tokyo this month!

Tokyo is an unfiltered and unpasteurised Belgian white ale made using a good amount of wheat malt and finished with St Bernardus house yeast.

It pours quite a cloudy golden colour, with an aroma of citrus, probably more lemon than anything else. The wheat malt gives a bready note and there is an herbal note as well.

The beer is light, and quite well carbonated. The body seems quite light really, crisp and a little fruity. There is the faintest spicy acidity which gives the impression of a little sourness in the finish. It is probably the reason this beer is said to fill the space between a traditional Belgian witbier and a saison.

Style: Witbier

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij St Bernardus

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



Val-Dieu Cuvee 800

In 2016 the Abbey of Val-Dieu celebrated 800 years of history. To mark the milestone, the brewery created this special Belgian Pale Ale called Cuvee 800 (of course).

Val-Dieu are the only true 'abbey beers' with the beers still brewed on the site. Most abbey beers are a commercial arrangement for a brewery to brew beer under licence using the abbey name.

Back to the beer, and it is no surprise that it is a really good beer. I was more than pleasantly surprised when this arrived and I first tasted it.

A really yeasty aroma offers up banana and clove, with a bready malt note. The beer is really vibrant, well carbonated, kind of bouncing the bubbles of flavour over your taste buds. And tasty it is.

Light grainy malts mix with fruit flavours of banana, pear and lemon citrus. There is also a grassy, slightly herbal note from the hops which lift the mouthfeel of this beer as well. As it warms a little the flavours soften to present a beautifully balanced beer. One that I very much enjoyed, and a fitting tribute to the colourful history of this abbey.

Style: Belgian Pale Ale

Country: Belgium

brewer: Brasserie de l'Abbaye du Val-Dieu

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.5% (1.43 Std Drinks)



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Hof ten Dormaal Kriek Zure Van Tildonk

Brouwerij Hof ten Dormaal is the quintessential farmhouse brewery, located north east of Brussels. On the farm they grow their own grains and hops that are used in the brewery.

In the last few years, they seem to have a sharper focus on the sour and wild yeast beers. One of their most renowned beers is Zure Van Tildonk (literally 'sour of Tildonk'), their version of a spontaneously fermented blond sour. They started by filling 20 buckets with some of the wort and placing that around the farmhouse. Tasting each sample, they selected the best one to culture the yeast which they now use for this beer.

The Kriek sees a batch of Zure Van Tildonk further matured for a period of 6 months with 35kg of sour cherries from nearby farm, per 100 litres of beer.

First off, the colour is a lovely purple with a fluffy head the dissipates rapidly to settle quite still, albeit there are big bubbles of carbonation in the mouthfeel. The aroma is of tart cherries and Brettanomyces yeast, with wood, leather and a fruity aspect.

If anything, the tart and sourness is more pronounced in the taste than the smell. Fruity sweetness from those cherries, lots of oak notes with leather and an earthiness. The sourness really lasts well into the aftertaste.



Style: Kriek

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Hof ten Dormaal

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.5% (1.69 Std Drinks)

De Glazen Toren Odineke

Brouwerij De Glazen Toren is found in the small village of Aalst, located between Ghent and Brussels. The brewery was started by three friends from nearby villages who had either retired or semi-retired from their professions.

Heading up the team is renowned brewer, teacher, author and general good beer fellow Jef Van Den Steen. I met Jef many years ago and have always remembered his take on beer's place in the world.

I asked him why all his beers were only available in 750ml bottles. The answer was: "beer is made to be enjoyed in good company, to be shared with friends, not to be drunk sitting on one's own." I would very much agree.

Well it seems the brewery has bowed to public pressure and their two best beers are now available in smaller formats. Good news for the beer club!

Our first offering is this traditional Belgian Tripel. Of course it is a great beer, soft, fruity, slightly spicy and with a lingering bitterness in the finish. In fact it is the official beer of the town of Aalst.

Style: Tripel

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij De Glazen Toren

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5% (2.21 Std Drinks)



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Corsendonk Christmas 2020

Here we have another member contribution, this time from Terry Wilson!

1398. A fair time ago, the Priory of Corsendonk, comprised an all-important brewery and malt house. History tells us this thanks to Lucas Vosterman, who produced a plate detailing the priory clearly depicting the granary, malt house, water-well and brewery.

Unfortunately, an emperor from Austria, Jozef II, ordered the closure of both the monastery and brewery in 1784. Boo Hoo Austrian important person.

However, in 1906, Antonius Keersmaekers within his brewery produced a famous Pater beer. From 1982, the Corsendonk brew became a well-known name, and currently now a worldwide famous brand. The bottles designed simply from recall of the Middle Ages.

The Corsendonk Christmas Ale - this months Christmas in July - promises a deep red brown ale, made from roasted special malts, the finest hops and seasoned with a hint of coriander. It gives the best that a Christmas beer can give, with a round balanced taste and a dry and refined aftertaste.

The pour delivers as promised, with a beige slowly subsiding head. On the nose, it provides a heavily malted, slightly spiced bread like aroma. The initial sip and the malts shine through, followed by candied citrus, almost apricot. This remains, floating on the tongue, some spices come through, subtle, but present and then finishing dry, lingering, but longing for more. It's a delicious beer, and worthy of Christmas, even if in July.



Style: Kerstbier (Christmas Beer)

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Corsendonk

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.5% (2.21 Std Drinks)

Het Nest Dead Man's Hand

I am a fan of the Het Nest beers, and I'd been looking forward to tasting this beer for a few years but failed to source any. Finally we get to make that right.

As you might recall, Brouwerij Het Nest hails from the Belgian town of Turnhout which is also home to several different companies that produce playing cards and export them around the world. Every beer label is designed to a playing card theme.

A 'Dead Man's Hand' is a pair of black aces and eights. It is said this was the hand held by Wild West Lawman (and gambler) 'Wild Bill' Hickok when he was shot in the back of the head by another poker player, so is considered an unlucky hand by poker players today.

Much luckier to be holding this Russian Imperial Stout. It is a big, dark intimidating beer full of roasted malt, chocolate, coffee and dark fruits in the aroma. They all follow through in the flavour. Chocolate and dark dried stone fruits like figs and raisins provide the sweetness, with the roasted malts and coffee cutting through. There is a little smokiness to the beer, and a hint of licorice or star anise.

It finishes reasonably dry, with a good level of bitterness accentuated by an herbal spiciness in the finish. Personally, I would have enjoyed a little fuller and softer mouthfeel, with a little less sharpness to the finish. But that's just my preference, it's a good beer just as it is.

Style: Russian Imperial Stout

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Het Nest

Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.0% (2.60 Std. Drinks)



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