

Witkap Pater Special

We all know Belgium is famed for their high strength beers but traditional Belgian breweries are showing an increasing tendency to have a lower ABV offering in their range.

The 'Speciale Belge' style is said to have been introduced after the First World War, to offer drinkers an alternative to the Czech and German pilsners that were quickly taking over the beer market. They are the Belgian 'session beers' with flavour, the most commonly known examples would have been beers such as Dekoninck or Palm.

But more and more breweries are (re)introducing similar beers to the market, either in the style of a Speciale Belge or small Belgian Pale Ale.

This Witkap Pater Special Amber is just such a beer, and probably fits somewhere in between the two styles. It is darker in colour than a pale ale, so probably tends more to the Speciale Belge.

The malt body feels light in the mouth, despite the darker colour. The grainy malt offers just a hint of sweetness at the start. Belgian yeast flavours and aromas dominate, with the dry and light mouthfeel giving in to a pleasant earthy bitterness as the beer finishes.



Style: Belgian Pale Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Slagmuylder

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

Uiltje The Great Hoo-dini

Another month, and Uiltje hoppy beer to try. Three malts, one hop and some more fantastic Uiltje label art. What else do you need? Are white IPA's still a thing?

The white IPA is basically the merging of two beer styles – the Belgian Witbier and an IPA. A collaboration between two US brewers – Larry Sidor from Deschutes Brewing and Steven Pauwels from Boulevard brewing – is said to have been the birth of the white IPA. They decided to play to their respective strengths (IPA's for Deschutes and wheat ales for Boulevard), decided on a recipe then both went away and brewed their version of the beer. And they were hits!

From the witbier side, there is a good dose of unmalted wheat in the mix along with pilsner malt and carapils. Mosaic is the only hop used for both bittering and aroma & flavour. There is a little fruit sweetness up front, with the unmalted wheat creating a thinner body that is light and crisp, with less sweetness than other malts.

That gentle fruit sweetness carries through and is offset by a building gentle bitterness and dry finish for a beautifully refreshing little beer.

Style: White IPA

Country: Netherlands

Brewer: Brouwerij het Uiltje

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.0% (1.30 Std Drinks)



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Hapkin BIPA

Belgian IPA's really only became recognised as a style at the start of this millennium. Not exactly a common style, even within Belgium, there have been a few hits and lots of misses that I've tried. My favourite has always been Chouffe Houblon.

American style BIPA's seem to be an IPA with the normal ale yeast swapped out for a commercial Belgian yeast. The better ones seem to have started life as a traditional Belgian strong blond ale (or even a tripel) which have then been hopped up more than normal.

This beer falls into that latter category. Hapkin is a long-established strong blond ale, hoppier than your average Belgian Strong Blond thanks to the use of four different hops at four different times. And then for this BIPA the brewers have added three more US hops – Sabro, Amarillo and Centennial.

The result is lively, light-bodied Belgian blond ale with dominant yeast characters in the aroma. Orange citrus, peach and banana come through in the taste, a gentle but sustained hop bitterness dries the beer out and leaves a lingering peppery tingle.



Style: Belgian IPA

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Alken-Maes (Heineken)

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.7% (1.74 Std Drinks)

Adriaen Brouwer Bio Tripel

I don't know about you guys, but I'm finding a renewed fondness for these Adriaen Brouwer beers. We've had a few over the last 12 months, and I've been really enjoying all of them.

But that should come as no surprise, given Brouwerij Roman is Belgium's oldest continuously operating brewery. They started in 1545, so they should have things worked out by now I guess!

This tripel is a fairly traditional beer in style, maybe slightly darker in colour than many tripels and it is a little zestier than your average tripel as well.

All of the ingredients in this beer are certified organic, and include the use of Belgian candi sugar, coriander and curacao, as well as all-Belgian hops.

Early fruit sweetness with orange sweetness and green apples, with a solid malt base. The coriander is almost mandatory for a Belgian tripel, but that curacao does add an interest touch, lightening the mouthfeel for the little citric zing you get.

It finishes full, with a grassy, slightly spicy bitterness lingering well into the finish. Another tasty beer from the Brouwerij Roman team.

Style: Tripel

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Roman

Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.0% (2.34 Std Drinks)



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L'Ermitage Noire Du Midi

With this beer we welcome another Belgian brewery to our monthly beer packs. Nanobrasserie de L'Ermitage is a small brewery and taproom located in the Anderlecht area, in south-western Brussels. Really not that far from Cantillon.

I've now had a few beers from this brasserie, and all are well made and quite atypical in style for a Belgian brewery. And this beer is very un-Belgian-like, being an English style porter hopped up with Columbus and Chinook hops from the USA.

It pours quite dark and has a really rocky foam, with bubbles of all different sizes. It really seems quite lively for a dark beer!

Roasted malts dominate the aroma, with chocolate, coffee and even a hint of woodiness (or maybe tobacco). The flavour is a little softer with chocolate and vanilla softening out the roasted malt astringency. Coffee kicks in midway through, with some hints of dark stone fruits as well.

It finishes pretty dry, slightly hoppy without being too bitter. It probably isn't as hoppy as I might expect and stops well short of being in the black IPA realm. There is a rustic nature to the finish, with earthy notes, leather, wood and a little tobacco lingering in the finish.

Style: Porter
Country: Belgium
Brewer: L'Ermitage Nanobrasserie
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.8% (1.51 Std Drinks)



Hof ten Dormaal Winter Goud

Hof ten Dormaal is our Belgian farmhouse brewery, where most of the ingredients used in their beers are sourced from their own farm. It is the quintessential rustic, Belgian countryside brewery.

And in typical Hof ten Dormaal fashion this beer isn't your average imperial stout.

It pours pitch black, glugging out of the bottle to form a thin white head that settles quickly. There is the aroma of chocolate, coffee, licorice, gingerbread and some spicing.

The body is thick and creamy, thanks to the oats. Lots of chocolate and a nice hit of coffee, with enough hop bitterness to balance out that big dark body. There is also roasted chicory root in this beer, which is something of a signature inclusion for Hof ten Dormaal it seems. I'm guessing this adds to the earthy, slightly spicy character that you get.

Overall it's a very nice beer, balanced well and lots of interesting flavour. A good one to let warm up if it has been in the fridge. Then sit back by the fireplace and enjoy this bottle of winter gold.

Style: Imperial Stout
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Hof ten Dormaal
Alcohol Content (ABV): 10.5% (2.73 Std Drinks)

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