

Maltgarden Bang For The Buck

Another new beer from Maltgarden, here we have a witbier dry hopped with Mosaic hops and with orange peel added.

As it pours, it looks like a pretty clear witbier with a small white head that disappears quite quickly. It gives off an aroma of clove, bubble gum and a little citrus. As the beer warms a little though the citrus aroma comes out more distinctly.

The flavour is pretty standard witbier, with a light malty backbone, banana, clove and a little spice. To start there really isn't much hint of those Mosaic hops, but as the beer warms a lot more of the citrus flavours come out.

Moderate carbonation gives the beer a little prickle, with some grassy, herbal hop bite leading into a fairly quick finish.

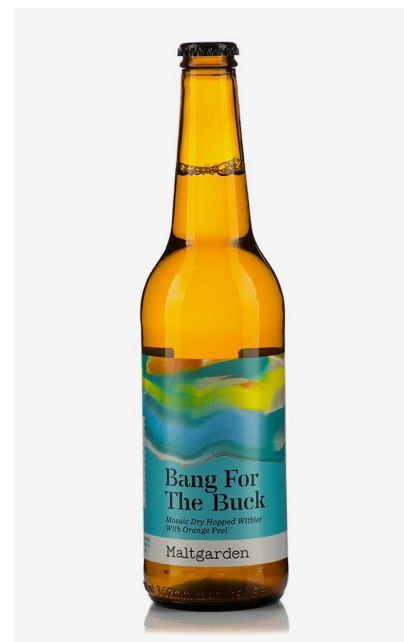
A perfectly acceptable take on the Belgian witbier, though I would have liked to have tasted a little more from the Mosaic hops.

Style: Witbier

Country: Poland

Brewer: Browar Pinta

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.0% (1.97 Std Drinks)



Ter Dolen Blond



Kasteelbrouwerij De Dool would have to be one of the most picturesque breweries I've ever had the pleasure of visiting. Located in the town of Houthalen-Helchteren, about a 45 minute drive east of Antwerp, the brewery and café are housed in a 16th Century castle that sits on the bank of a small river. The woodland area around attracts many walkers, and sitting on the castle terrace enjoying a Ter Dolen beer induces a sense of peace.

The castle has a longer history dating back to 1282, but over the years and through a succession of conflict, the original building has been destroyed, rebuilt as what we can visit today. In recent times, the castle had fallen into disrepair until it was purchased by Mieke Desplenter in 1993, to be renovated as the brewery.

And it isn't just the scenery that's so good, the beers of Ter Dolen are very good as well. None more so than this Belgian blond.

Pouring a hazy golden colour, the aroma is an inviting mix of malt, fruit and typical Belgian yeast. Sweet at first with hints of bready malt, peach, banana and some citrus, a spicy yeast together with hop bitterness adds a grassy, herbal touch.

Good carbonation adds to the spicy finish, with a lingering bitterness that dries that sweetness out and invites the next sip.

Style: Belgian Blond

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij De Dool

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.1% (1.59 Std Drinks)

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Pinta Modern Drinking

Our second beer from new brewers Pinta is the Modern Drinking West Coast IPA. (Don't worry, they do a lot more than just hoppy beers!)

It's funny how the West Coast (USA) IPA style is now referred to as an 'old school' IPA. That is, beers brewed in this style were the original, and the style that really gave rise to the craft beer movement.

The West Coast IPA was really an assault on the senses at the time. Big on bitterness with those dank pine and citrus hop flavours, the best ones had a great malty body to carry all that bitterness.

The guys at Pinta have brewed a beer to the style of the old (US) IPA's and have selected a classic US hop in Mosaic to feature. It is a hop variety that is used very effectively in single hop beers, and it allows the chance to really get to know the flavour of that hop in these situations.

The aroma isn't huge, but it does have a very fruity and piney aroma. The malt base is very complimentary in the sense it isn't too caramel and sweet, allowing the hop character to come through in the taste as well. And I found the bitterness to be a bit like using chilli – it kind of built up over a few sips to get to a level that was very enjoyable. Not quite up to the hop assault of some West Coast IPA's but a very enjoyable beer.

Style: IPA

Country: Poland

Brewer: Browar Pinta

Alcohol Content (ABV): 6.5% (2.56 Std Drinks)



Tongerlo Prior Tripel

The Norbertine Abbey of Tongerlo has a history dating back to 1133, and records show that brewing at the abbey commenced not long after. As is the story for so many of Europe's abbeys and monasteries, over the centuries various conflicts led to destruction and subsequent rebuilding but over that time records show that beer was brewed at the site.

However the German occupation of WWI saw the copper kettles scrapped for munitions, and at that point the brewing history of Tongerlo was at an end. In 1989, Brouwerij Haacht started brewing with the Tongerlo label again. Therefore we have ourselves another of Belgium's many and varied Abbey Ales.

The name 'Prior' refers to the order of the monks, where the top monk is known as the 'Superior' or Prior. So this moniker is given to the strongest (and best?) of the Tongerlo beers.

It pours a clear golden colour, with an aroma of Belgian yeast, some yellow fruits and a floral hop note. There is a medium sweetness up front with peach, melon and some citrus. The hops join in mid-palate offering a floral and spicy character that flows through into the lingering bitter finish.

Style: Tripel

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Haacht

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



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De La Senne Coucou Puissant

Here's a new beer from De La Senne, and I was excited to try this beer when I saw it was available at the start of this year.

As we've said before, De La Senne are really known for their lower ABV (at least for Belgium) beers that are really sessionable, together with their generous use of hops. This beer kind of breaks that trend, I think it is the highest ABV beer I've ever had from these guys, but the hopping regime still remains, including dry hopping with German hops.

It pours a dark orange colour with the slightest haze to the body. Aroma is of fruit and some spice. There is an early sweetness from the malt, and the fruit notes of banana, peach and a good dose of citrus. There is also a spiciness from the Belgian yeast, with hints of black pepper and a grassy, floral note. It finishes reasonably dry, with a building level of hop bitterness.

Drinking it you forget that it is a big beer, as there really isn't much hint of that ABV. The name of this beer translates as 'Mighty Cuckoo', which maybe an inference that you'll go a bit this way if you have too many!



Style: Dry Hopped Strong Ale
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brasserie De La Senne
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.5% (2.47 Std Drinks)

Troubadour Winter

Seasonal beers are a well-established part of the European beer scene, and it is the winter seasonal beers that are longed for more than any other. The cooler weather (at least in NSW) calls for some dark winter beers, so let's do just that.

The Troubadour Winter is now part of the Musketieres core seasonal range and is available through the northern hemisphere autumn and winter. Of course, we have the opposite seasons, so we sit on these beers for a while waiting to bring them out.

The beer pours a dark reddish brown colour, slightly hazy with an aroma of dark malt and lots of spices. Those dark specialty malts give the beer a nice caramel malt backbone, with a little dried dark fruit sweetness that is offered early on.

Then the spices kick in, and while there is no mistaking them in this beer, they are by no means overpowering or confronting. They are actually well balanced against the fruit and malt sweetness, with licorice at the forefront, backed up by flavours like clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander and banana. There is a good bitterness to the finish, and just a pleasant warmth from the alcohol, hiding the ABV really well.

Make sure you taste this beer a little warmer than your average beer, pull it out of the fridge at least 10-15 minutes before you want to drink it and give it time to open up to experience the best this Belgian winterbier has to offer.

Style: Winterbier
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij de Musketieres
Alcohol Content (ABV): 9.99% (2.60 Std Drinks)



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