

Maltgarden Bavarian Culture

Oktoberfest originated in 1810 when King Ludwig basically organised a massive party for the city of Munich to celebrate his marriage. It is held annually and gets bigger every year, and while many attendees may have no knowledge of the origins of the festival one thing that all look forward to are the Oktoberfest beers.

These 'festbiers' are made by one of the big six Munich breweries, to be served on the grounds of the Oktoberfest. Only these six beers can be called traditional festbiers – all others must be noted as 'fest-style' beers, as is this one.

The fest beers are normally brewed in spring (hence the style name "Marzen" meaning March) and allowed to lager through the summer months. It is this extended lagering process which is said to give the beers a rich, smooth malty body.

Slightly darker in colour to a standard lager, these amber lagers are also a little sweeter from the malt with a hoppy bitter finish.

Our beer is slightly lighter in colour than a Marzen, but definitely darker than a standard lager. The early malt sweetness is there with a bready malt backbone with the earthy and slightly herbal hop bitterness joining mid-palate. It finishes with a nice little spicy prickle and a dry and moderately bitter aftertaste. And all too quickly – you can see why they serve this style of beer in steins!



Style: Lager

Country: Poland

Brewer: Browar Maltgarden

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.5% (2.17 Std Drinks)

Tongerlo Lux Blond

Brouwerij Haacht has been around since 1898, which isn't unusual for some of the heritage Belgian breweries. They make a range of beers that are reasonably easy to find without being staples of the Belgian beer environment.

Their beers are quite traditional in style, just like this Belgian blond. I honestly don't think this beer stands out among the range of blond beers, but I've enjoyed it every time I have had the opportunity to drink it.

What is unique about this beer is the number and nature of awards it has one. The most notable being voted World's Best Beer at the 2014 World Beer Awards. (It was also voted World's Best Pale Ale at the same time). And it was the first time a Belgian beer was awarded World's Best Beer.

A lovely light copper colour (Lux is Latin for 'light'), with an aroma of Belgian yeast and grassy hops. The light malt base offers a little fruit sweetness, with a good level of bitterness with those grassy, earthy hops aiding a dry, prickly finish.

It is a simple beer with great balance that means it is very drinkable. I like the beer a lot, but not sure about that heavy badge of honour. What do you reckon?



Style: Belgian Pale Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Haacht

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

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Pinta Zytorillo

Rye beers are said to have originated in medieval Bavaria and were known as roggenbiers ('roggen' being the German word for rye). The beers would have somewhere between 30-60% rye malt, giving the beer a crisp and slightly spicy malt body. When the Reinheitsgebot German Purity Law was adopted in 1516, the list of permitted ingredients was only water, barley and hops (they hadn't factored in yeast at that time). So rye beers were not allowed in Bavaria and as such, the style virtually disappeared.

This Pinta beer isn't exactly a roggenbier, thanks to the roasted malts and generous use of Amarillo hops. It is more a Black IPA or a Cascadian Dark Ale, but it uses a good dose of rye.

It pours thick and dark, and you'd be mistaken for thinking you were pouring an imperial stout just on appearances. The foam starts out quite dark before settling to a much brighter white. Lots of roasted malt in the aroma along with the citrus hit from the Amarillo hops.

The flavour is a rich mix of roasted malt with a dark chocolate, balanced by a firm bitterness and the citrus and resinous notes from the hops. It is smooth and rich, drinking like a bigger beer than it is.

Style: Black IPA/Cascadian Dark Ale
Country: Poland
Brewer: Browar Pinta
Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.2% (2.05 Std Drinks)



Rochefort Tripel Extra

Belgium's National Day is celebrated on the 21st of July, so we try to ensure the month of July has a very Belgian feel to our beer packs. And what is more quintessentially Belgian than a tripel from a Belgian Trappist Monastery?

My only issue was the stock levels in our cool room, and it left me a choice of two beers. I've decided on the Rochefort Tripel Extra to represent Belgium.

The Rochefort Tripel Extra was released in 2020, and it was the first new beer that Rochefort had released for 65 years. It was nearly a century since Rochefort had brewed a blond beer, so it was quite a big deal.

We included the beer in our packs soon after its release, so some of you will have had this beer before. But I'm sure any that have will be happy to sample it again.

It presents as a lovely yellow-gold liquid, with a fluffy pure white foam. The aroma is strongly of citrus and spice with that typical Belgian yeast.

A smooth mouthfeel is a little surprising, with a definite citrus flavour, and a spicy tingle that persists laid over the biscuity malt body. There is more fruitiness in the aftertaste – mango? – and that pleasant lingering peppery yeast note.

Style: Tripel
Country: Belgium
Brewer: Brouwerij Haacht
Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.1% (2.11 Std Drinks)



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Weihenstephaner Korbinian

For those that aren't familiar with the beers of German brewing royalty Weihenstephaner, the first thing to know is they are the world's oldest brewery having a history dating back to 1040!

The brewery is within the Weihenstephaner Monastery, founded in 725 AD by the Benedictine monk Saint Corbinian upon the Weihenstephan Hill overlooking Munich in Bavaria.

This beer is a tribute to the original founding Monk, Saint Corbinian. And we can only assume he'd be pretty happy with this doppelbock.

A bock is a strong lager, so our doppelbock (double bock) is an extra strong lager. It pours a reddish-brown colour with an aroma of bready malt and dried dark fruits.

Sweet toffee malt is the first flavour, with raisins, plums and a hint of chocolate for a really rich and satisfying mouthfeel. While all the descriptors are sweet, the beer retains a balance with a light bitterness and a little nuttiness creeping into the finish.

Style: Doppelbock

Country: Germany

Brewer: Bayerische Staatsbrauerei Weihenstephan

Alcohol Content (ABV): 7.4% (2.92 Std Drinks)



Winterbinkske

It's the middle of winter, and Christmas in July is becoming more of a 'thing', so it seemed appropriate to include a Belgian Christmas beer in this month's pack.

Brouwerij Kerkom's Winterbinkske used to be known as Winterkoninkske (Winter King), but back in September 2022 the brewery was taken over by Brouwerij De Ranke. They moved production of all the Kerkom beers to the De Ranke facility and the winter seasonal beer had a slight rebrand and recipe change with the addition of juniper to this version.

It was a friendly takeover, as the brewing facilities at Kerkom were no longer up to the required standard. Since 2009 Kerkom had been brewing their beers at several different breweries, and the friendship between the two breweries led to the union. The intention is to upgrade facilities and continue brewing at the Kerkom site, at least for the beer that is consumed on the site that is a favourite for riding groups through the Limburg countryside.

Our dark winter beer has a rich aroma of dark malt and a hint of spice. That dark malt is front and centre of the flavour as well. Dark chocolate, roasted malt, black bread, a hint of molasses. There isn't a lot of sweetness given the dark, high ABV body. Rather there is a pleasant roasted malt astringency, coupled with a firm bitterness and a little spicy sharpness to the dry finish.

Style: Kerstbier

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Kerkom (Brouwerij De Ranke)

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.3% (2.16 Std Drinks)



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