

Warsteiner

If you've spent any time in Germany, or indeed Western Europe, chances are you seen and most likely tasted a Warsteiner beer. They are relatively easy to come across, which might make you think that this beer is made by a big multi-national.

In fact, the Warsteiner brewery is one of Germany's largest and oldest family-owned breweries dating back to 1753. They are currently managed by the 9th generation of the Cramer family.

And this is their flagship beer, known as one of Germany's best premium pilseners. In 2009 the beer was awarded 'Best nationally distributed beer from a family-run brewery'. In a land awash with outstanding lagers and pilseners, that it quite a win!

The beer pours a beautiful clear golden colour with a perfect white foam. A really clean aroma of floral, grassy hops backed by biscuity malt hints at the flavour to come.

There is a really light early sweetness from the malt that carries quickly into a pleasant hop bitterness that seems to take over all of your tastebuds. But it isn't an aggressive bitterness, just a grassy, prickly bitterness that sharpens the senses. It finishes the way it started, with a lingering hop bitterness that somehow softens on the tongue so that there is a smoothness to the aftertaste.

As is the case for all of these types of German lagers, they are perfectly suited for drinking all afternoon, the shame is you only have one can in your packs.

Style: German Pilsener

Country: Germany

Brewer: Warsteiner Brauerei

Alcohol Content (ABV): 4.8% (1.89 Std Drinks)



Guinness

I hadn't planned to include this beer in the packs as I thought it was a bit common, and loads of you guys would have had this before. But having had a couple of pallets of it hanging around the beer shed while fulfilling wholesale orders, I was surprised how many people either hadn't had the 'real' Guinness before, or else have only had it many years ago while enjoying their European travels.

And everyone who took a can was amazed by the difference to the Guinness we are normally offered here that is brewed in Australia under licence by Lion (Kirin), mostly at the Tooheys Brewery in Lidcombe NSW. But this is the REAL DEAL, brewed at St James' Gate in Dublin!

At the risk of being obvious, the funny noise from the can is the 'widget', a small, hollow, pressurised capsule. Tap-poured Guinness gets its creaminess from the 70% nitrogen/30% CO2 mix, and this widget replicates that in the can version.

Get yourself a pint glass and upend the can straight into the glass. Leave it there til the can is empty, and then watch the magic happen as the beer slowly settles. Do this and you'll have your beautiful black beer with white foam.

It is smooth and creamy, and that's what you notice first. Soft on the palate, it is only halfway through that you get the roasted malt character, a light bitterness and a hint of smoky coffee in the aftertaste. All without any carbonation prickles!

Style: Irish Dry Stout

Country: Ireland

Brewer: Guinness & Co

Alcohol Content (ABV): 4.2% (1.46 Std Drinks)



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Liefmans Kriek Brut

Liefmans is famed among Belgian breweries although it really isn't that common to find their beers about the place. It was the first Belgian brewery to have a female brewmaster (a former ballet dancer) in 1946. It was also the first brewery to wrap their beers in tissue wrap, which still isn't that common but was definitely copied.

The brewery officially started in 1780, although there are records of the brewery dating back to 1679. It was called Leifmans Brewery, and operated by the Leifman's family for nearly two centuries before it was sold in 1974. It then had a turbulent period where it was bought and sold multiple times before bankruptcy in 2007. Thankfully the Duvel-Moortgat family purchased the brewery name in 2008 and have revived brewing in Oudenaarde and the Leifmans beers.

Our beer is a mixed fermentation beer, and something of a mega blend. The beer is a blend of between 15 to 20 different vintages of Oud Bruin and Goudenband which is then matured for 18 months on around 13 kilos of fresh black Morello cherries per 100 litres of beer.

The result is a reddish-brown coloured beer with a delightful aroma of tart cherries, lactic acidity, woody notes and a hint of marzipan.

The flavour is at once sweet and tart, though not really that sour. The cherries are front and centre, supported by a good malty backbone with those hints of nuts and marzipan. There is a wonderful balance to this beer, that is not as sweet as some of the more commercial cherry beers, drying out as it finishes with those woody notes.



Style: Flanders Red Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Liefmans

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

De La Senne Brett Saison

The head brewer of De La Senne, Yvan De Baets, is known as one of the world's most knowledgeable people on the history of farmhouse ales. So it should come as no surprise that the bloke can knock out a decent saison.

This beer was made to replicate the rustic saisons of Belgium in the 1920's, characterised by the use of alternate grains like the spelt used for this beer, and the natural airborne yeast in the form of the Brussels *Brettanomyces* yeast strain that is added for secondary fermentation in the bottle.

Pouring a cloudy light yellow, the aroma is fruity and funky. A grainy malt body offers a lean, crisp backbone with lots of fruit flavours in the form of pineapple, apricot and some berries. And the barnyard funk sits over the top of all of this, offering that really rustic, interesting and wild yeast character.

Thanks to the *Brettanomyces* eating up all the sugars that normal yeasts just can't, the beer finishes really dry, with a prickly and slightly citrus aftertaste.

Always interesting to get an insight into the nature of beers of the past, and I for one am really glad that we get to enjoy beers like this now.

Style: Farmhouse Ale

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brasserie De La Senne

Alcohol Content (ABV): 5.3% (1.38 Std Drinks)



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Funky Fluid Gelato XTREME: Neon Black

I tried for over two years to get the Funky Fluid beers, and this Gelato XTREME range was the biggest reason why I chased this brewery. They are known as one of Europe's best breweries in this smoothie sour style. We've included a couple of the lower-level smoothie sours in past packs, but thanks to pushing the Guinness into this month's packs, I could financially squeeze one of these Funky Fluid XTREME beers in to share with you all.

The important thing to know about these beers is that all the flavours and colours are naturally achieved by the fruits included. And the XTREME range has around 40% fruit in each beer.

There is lactose included, so there is a sweetness but the over-riding flavours of these beers are tartness from the various fruits.

This particular beer includes blueberry, blackberry, blackcurrant and raspberry. The malt body is a combination of barley, wheat, oat flakes and wheat flakes. The result is a super-thick, fruity, slightly tart treat that really should be called a name other than 'beer'.

If you are sharing this beer, be sure to give it your best 'Coopers roll' or even upend the can a few times to make sure the contents mix through well. Then sit back and enjoy a really interesting, very different beer.

Style: Smoothie Sour

Country: Poland

Brewer: Browar Funky Fluid

Alcohol Content (ABV): 8.0% (3.16 Std Drinks)



Gulden Draak Imperial Stout

Van Steenberge is a family brewery that has been brewing since 1874, and currently under the stewardship of a 7th-generation family member. In late 2018 the Gulden Draak Imperial Stout was brewed as a limited edition to a great level of expectation. Given this beer is now part of the Gulden Draak core range, it is safe to say those expectations were met or even exceeded.

The beer pours quite dark, but not really the pitch black you expect from an imperial stout. There is a strong aroma of Belgian yeast with lots of caramel malt, some dark stone fruits, brown sugar and the faintest hint of coffee.

To taste, the beer has an initial sweetness of caramel malt, brown sugar, toffee and dark stone fruits. It then presents more roasted malt and dark chocolate flavours, but not quite the really dark roasted malt bite you might expect from an Imperial Stout. It is smooth and drier on the finishes than it is early on, with a really pleasant, slightly prickly aftertaste the lingers long.

A very Belgian beer that I think is more a quadrupel than an imperial stout, but given they've already got a Gulden Draak Quadrupel, I'll setting on it being a crossover of styles.. If we abandon the attempt to box each beer into a style, it's just a really delicious beer that is way too easy to drink for that ABV.

Style: Imperial Stout

Country: Belgium

Brewer: Brouwerij Van Steenberge

Alcohol Content (ABV): 12.0 (3.12 Std Drinks)



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