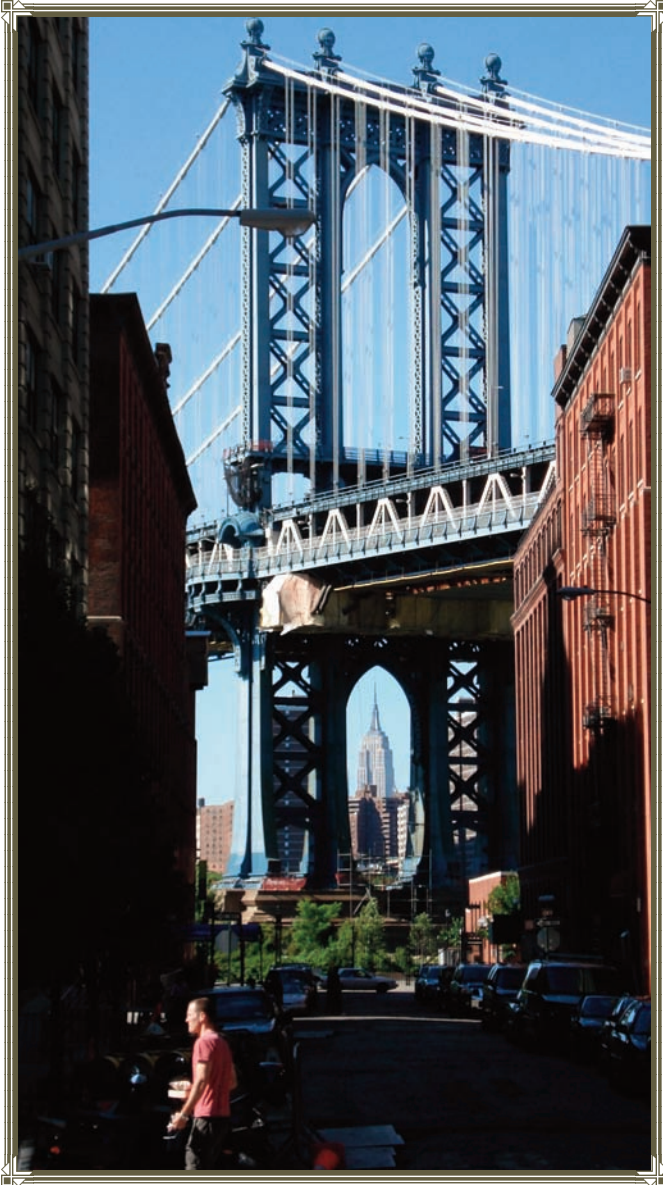


Malted Barley Appreciation Society

August 2007 • Volume 14 • Number 8



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Cheers! Here's your newsletter...

— Alan Rice —

Next Meeting:

Wed. August 8, 7:30 p.m., Mugs Ale House.

Our guest will be Eric McKay
of Union Beer Distributors.

Quebecan Quaffs

BY ALAN RICE



In July there were big storms outside, so we packed into a hot and humid Mugs. We welcomed back **Rick Suarez**, regional sales manager for Unibroue. Rick celebrates his 10th anniversary with Unibroue next month, and he has visited us many times over the years. He has opened 32 states and has hired 6 salesmen for the brewery.

UNIBROUÉ

André Dion founded Unibroue in 1990 with the acquisition of the Massawippi Brewery, in Lennoxville. In 1993, they opened a new brewery in Chambly, 18 miles east of Montreal. They are known for their Belgian-style beers, and Liefmans of Oudenaarde provided early support. Some say that Liefmans' parent, Riva Brewery, still has some influence.

Brewmaster Paul Arnott was hired in 2000 after a 10-year stint with Chimay Trappist Brewery. He is a Scot and a graduate of the International Centre for Brewing and Distilling, at Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh.

The inaugural Canadian Brewery Awards were held in Toronto in 2003. Thirty-seven breweries submitted over 130 beers for judging. Unibroue received the most medals with 6, including gold for Trois Pistoles (the highest rated

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beer of the contest), Blanche de Chambly, and L'Éphémère Apple. Unibroue was named Brewer of the Year.

In 2004 Sleeman Breweries of Guelph, Ontario purchased Unibroue for C\$31 million. Sleeman traced their roots back to 1834, but in fact, existed as that entity only since 1988. There was concern among beer aficionados when Sleeman took over. Sleeman's name brands are brewed with adjuncts for the mass market, for example, their Cream Ale.

But even worse, they had a bad reputation for purchasing regional breweries and liquidating all but the most popular brands. They bought Okanagan Spring Brewery (Vernon, BC) in 1996, Upper Canada Brewing (Toronto, ON) in 1998, La Brasserie Seigneuriale (Boucherville, QC) in 1998, Maritime Brewing (Dartmouth, NS) 2000, Shaftebury (Vancouver, BC) in 2004.

The disappearance of the Seigneuriale Belgian-style line was most lamented, especially the Seigneuriale Reserve. Many feared a similar fate for Unibroue, but Sleeman did not mess with success. The US no longer gets redundant beer like Eau Benite and poor sellers like Raftman, but the takeover was transparent to most consumers.

Canada's beer laws are in certain ways more restrictive than in the US. Each provincial liquor board has control over the import, distribution, and sale of all alcoholic beverages. So, inter-provincial beer sales are regulated to a greater extent than our interstate beer sales.

It is often times easier to export to the US than to a neighboring province. Owning breweries in several provinces solves many



sales and distribution problems. Purchasing Shaftebury and Unibroue were redundant in this regard, but these added market share.

Sleeman is a large contract brewer. Stroh's gave them early backing, and they produce the Stroh portfolio of



Rick Suarez and brewmaster Paul Arnott at Monk's Cafe in 2005. Photo by Mark C. Haynie. Mark's photos from his tour of Unibroue can be found at his blog. [Click HERE](#) to view.

brands north of the border, including Old Milwaukee, Pabst, and Rainier. They also market and distribute Guinness, Grolsch, Newcastle, Urquell, and Samuel Adams.

Sleeman grew, in part through acquisition, to Canada's third largest brewery with 7% market share. Neither micro nor macro, they were the size of a regional brewery compared to (InBev) Labatt and Molson Coors,



which each control about 41% of the market.

In August 2006, Sapporo Breweries purchased Sleeman for US\$300 million plus the assumption of \$108 million in debt. They are the third largest Japanese brewer (valued at \$4.3 billion), after Asahi and Kirin. Sleeman contract brewed Sapporo for the North American market, and this assures their growth internationally despite a stagnant domestic market.

Sapporo protected their North American interests by preventing a takeover by rivals. (Grolsch was also a bidder for similar reasons as Sapporo.) Some nationalists are bothered by the fact that about 90% of beer production is controlled by foreign interests, but there were no domestic bidders. Family owned Moosehead is now Canada's largest independent brewery, followed by Lakeport and Big Rock.

From the Sleeman employees' point of view, Sapporo's purchase was preferable to being taken over by Labatt or Molson (who were also seriously interested), since many of their 700 jobs would have been cut. Possibly all four Sleeman breweries, including the flagship brewery in Guelph, would have closed. Production would likely

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have consolidated to a larger, existing plant.

Sapporo's acquisition was also fortunate for fans of Unibroue's beer, as the Chambly brewery and recipes are so far unchanged. In fact, it is in Sapporo's interest to expand the Sleeman brands.

Let's Drink

All of Unibroue's exports are bottle conditioned, or "On Lees" as they prefer to say. The first was Blanche de Chambly, their white ale from 1992. Rick didn't bring this, or any of the core beers. Instead, we started with Chambly Noire, a 6.2% abv "black" beer first brewed in August, 2005. Of course, it's not a schwarzbier, but a Belgian-style dark ale. The beige head is long lasting, it has a creamy mouth feel, and is slightly bitter from the malt. It's an easy drinker and worth a try.

Sleeman proved their good intentions by resurrecting the flagship of Seigneuriale brand in January 2005. Perhaps the others will return as well? It is a 7.5% strong pale ale, apricot-colored, mildly hoppy, with a spicy finish. Michael Jackson described the originals: "Seigneuriale (7.5abv) has a flame colour, an orange-skin dryness, well-rounded, and a hoppy, bitter finish.

It was dry-hopped. A yet hoppier, and smoother, version, said to have been matured longer, is called Seigneuriale Reserve. Both are loosely along the lines of the great Belgian beer Duvel. A slightly stronger (8.0abv), fruitier, peachy-tasting, spiced (pepper?) brew is called Triple."

They bottle only 5,000 cases of the anniversary beers. Most are destined for the US. Each year is a different recipe, but the "15" was inspired by the amazing "10". However it was not nearly as good as the original. It's a 10% golden ale brewed with Westmalle yeast.

A few cases of the "15" and "16" did stay in Canada, and I can see why they kept the latter. It is a 10% amber ale also brewed with Westmalle yeast, but with the addition of cardomon. The off-white

head lingers over a reddish beer, tasting of sweet fruit and spice. It's delicious now, and I'll be hiding away one or two for aging.

Quelque Chose was their first annual, launched in 1996. It is an 8% fruit beer brewed with dark malt and with cherries from Liefmans. The copious amount of cherries are soaked for months in slightly bitter ale before being blended into the beer. It is a versatile beer that you can drink mulled to 160 degrees F., at room temperature, or over ice. It can be mixed with orange juice for a beer Sangria, or if you prefer a stronger drink, add some Grand Marnier.

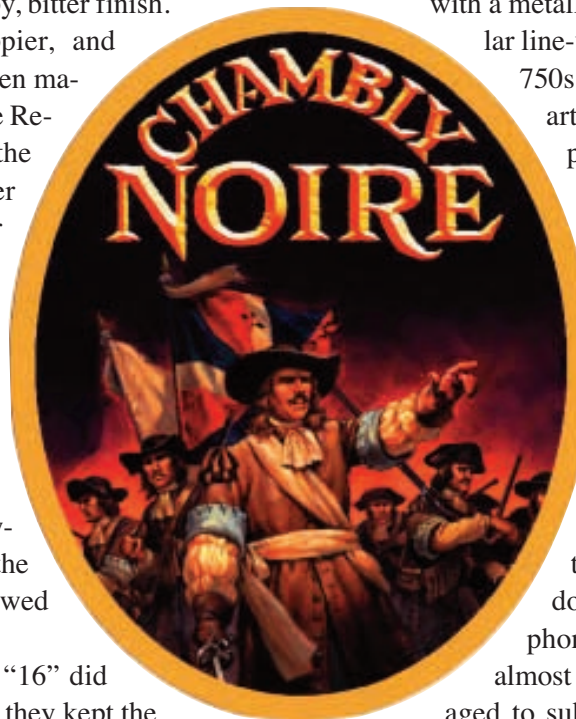
La Terrible first appeared in 2002, and this 10.5%, Belgian-style strong dark ale ages very nicely. Terrible is Rick's favorite beer, and he showed it off by breaking out a few from 2004. The head on this very dark beer dissipates quickly, unveiling aromas of stone fruit, spice and yeast. It tastes as you'd expect from the aroma, but the aging leaves you with a lingering flavors of Madeira. This was the highlight of the evening. The label suggests it may age

for 10 years, but why wait that long?

The annual beers such as Terrible and the anniversary beers are corked and caged in distinctive 750 ml bottles with a metallic, silk-screened label. The regular

line-up of year round beers are sold in 750s and also in 12oz. with distinctive artwork on the labels. They are packaged in 750ml and 33cl for French and, yes, even Belgian supermarkets.

Way back in 1991, André Dion imagined that each beer would have a Quebec theme, many dating back to colonial days. Some of these are anti-English, since they battled with the French in the area. He needed an artist to illustrate the tales. The story goes that he randomly picked a designer from the phone book. The man was busy and almost turned down the job. But he managed to submit samples, and today a Pakistani named Asaf who is a graduate from Brooklyn Tech is Unibroue's senior employee!



ALE AND ANTIQUITIES

BY B.R. ROLYA

In April, Bob and I signed up to judge at the 1st round of the American Homebrewers Association National Competition in Philadelphia. We arrived a day early to visit the King Tut exhibit at the Franklin Institute and to drink some beer.

Before heading to the museum we stopped for a light lunch at the Nodding Head Brewery where we tried their Boho Pils, a clear, beautifully golden Czech-style lager with a floral hop aroma. It was refreshing and full of flavor with some maltiness and lots of crisp hoppiness. There was almost a tartly fruity element but it wasn't estery.

Grog was an English Brown of the northern style with a faint roasty chocolate note, a fairly dark cola color, and an initial tart sour note that faded to a delicate chocolate-caramel flavor. It had a bitterness up front

which didn't linger and a nice, mild faint chocolate aftertaste.

We had to try Monkey Knife Fight just based on the name. Billed as a blonde lager with lemongrass and ginger, it was straw yellow in color

with a ginger ale nose. It tasted a bit grassy initially and felt like it would have ginger heat and bite but turned out to be fairly soft and nicely balanced. It had a clean finish with a mild ginger ale aftertaste.



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BPA, or Bill Payer Ale, was copper colored and had a floral hoppy aroma with some caramel notes. There was a big malt character in the flavor with lots of toasty notes and hops throughout which contributed to a dry finish.

After walking to the museum and seeing the exhibit we found ourselves quite thirsty and decided to walk over to Bridgid's where we enjoyed a Victory Throwback Lager, Barley Creek Antler Brown, Sly Fox Route 113 IPA, and a Yards Jefferson Strong Golden Ale and some snacks. The Victory was clear pale gold, very clean and crisp, with a hint of corn, malt in the middle and a hop finish. The Barley Creek was very caramel malt oriented with very little bitterness. The Sly Fox had a citrus hop

ing to the Yards website, it is brewed with honey).

Since we had to get up early to judge beer we didn't want to have a late, beery evening so we went the appropriately austere route with dinner at Monk's. While waiting for our table we refreshed ourselves with Monk's Flemish Sour Ale which was acetic and sour (and "great!" according to our not-so-detailed notes). It was not mouth-puckeringly sour, however, but refreshing with some malt sweetness for balance. We also enjoyed a glass of Cantillon Lou Pepe Framboise 2004 which inspired us to write "yum! Summer sour beer."

We were too busy eating our mussels and fries to write much about our dinner beers but we had a Regenboog Mustard beer which was good but a little oxidized and an Urthel Vlamse Bock (9%) which was very nice.

The next day, after we finished judging at the Independence Brew Pub (happily, only a short walk from our hotel), we had some extra time before we had to catch our train home. On the recommendation of Nancy from Home Sweet Homebrew we went to Tria which is a bar/restaurant serving wine, beer, and small plates and cheeses selected to complement the beverages. At this point, our hands must have been cramped up from writing out



aroma and the hop character carried over to the flavor, which was very hoppy and bitter with little apparent malt; the finish was harsh and astringent. The Yards Jefferson Strong Golden Ale (served by Bridgid's "down draft" gravity feed from the ceiling) is brewed in collaboration with the City Tavern restaurant and is based on one of Thomas Jefferson's recipes. Our glass arrived with a huge frothy head and a very estery, fruity nose. Medium copper in color, it was still with little carbonation and a smooth, full body. There was quite a bitter bite in the finish and some residual sweetness in the aftertaste (accord-

ing to the Yards website, it is brewed with honey). We did enjoy our beer selections (broken up into "invigorating", "friendly", "profound", and "extreme" categories on the menu) and the cheese and bruschetta that we choose to go with them.

We still had a little time to kill before the train and wanted to go to another place but we didn't have much energy and didn't want to stray too far from the train station so we stumbled back to Monk's and relaxed with some more Flemish Sour Ale which was a nice finish to trip.

Calendar

**Hot town, summer, in the city,
So few events, isn't it a pity**

Wed. Aug. 8, 4pm, Sixpoint at Blind Tiger. Diesel, Apollo (draught and gravity keg), Black-market Porter (cask), Otis Stout (nitro), Bengali Tiger, Blind Bengali Tiger (cask), Righteous Rye, Brownstone, and Bolshoi.

Sat. Aug. 11, North Fork Craft Beer Fest, Martha Clara Vineyards, Riverhead, L.I.

Tue. Aug 14, 6:30pm, Coney Island Beer Dinner, Rock Center Cafe, \$48 inclusive. 4-course "Coney Island-style" dinner paired with Grimbergen Blond, Newcastle Brown, Black Dog Ale, and Blue Moon Summer Ale.

Sat. Aug 25, 16th Annual Stoudt's Microfest, Adamstown, PA.

Fri. Sept. 7-Sun Sept. 9, Connecticut River Brewers Fest, Holyoke, MA.

Fri Sept. 14, 5-10pm 2nd Annual NY Brewfest, South Street Seaport, \$45. All NY State breweries and brewpubs are invited.

For up-to-the-minute **event info**, go to:

<http://hbd.org/mbas/calendar.html>

For the latest **draft lists** go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/new.html>

For beer **event venues**: <http://hbd.org/mbas/beer.html>

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