

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

January 2004 Newsletter

From the Editor's Desk

It's a new year and a new January 2004 Newsletter!

Please keep the news, articles, and
events submissions coming.

Proost!

Warren Becker, Editor

January Meeting

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2004

Our Guest Speaker will be

Rick Suarez

of Unibroue (Quebec, Canada)

www.unibroue.com/english.cfm



MUGS ALE HOUSE



125 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11211



December Meeting

By Eric Freiberg

The December meeting began with the all-important MBAS Presidential election. As per the usual process, we waited around to see who would be first to require a 'health break' and quickly got down to business of nominations when Jen Gibson (aka Jen Traska) was the first to answer nature's call. Just kidding of course, Jen was present the whole time, and graciously accepted the unanimous decision and promptly confirmed the existing cabinet, including Warren Becker as interim (yeah, sure) Editor, yours truly as Treasurer (cha-ching!), and former interim president Ludwig the Dachshund as Minister of Homebrew Security. We also raised a glass to past president Andy Ager, who did a fine job in 2003 and relocated to Dartmouth, NH over the summer.

Attention was then turned to perennial (we hope and pray) December guest speaker Dan Shelton, of Shelton Bros. importers. Dan was accompanied by his wife Tessa whom he married this year. Dan then led us through a series of beers arranged by country.

Starting off in the UK, we sampled two selections from Adnams Old Bay Brewery. First was Suffolk Strong Bitter, renamed Suffolk Special Bitter here due to restrictions regarding names that imply alcoholic potency. Ironically it was probably the most lightweight beer of the evening at 4.6% ABV. It had a biscuit-y, nice malt character with a dry finish. Then Broadside Original Ale (6% ABV), slightly buttery with an assertive hop bitterness lingering on the palate.

Then it was on to Strongarm (go figure!) Ruby Red ale from Camerons Brewery in Hartlepool, England. Not very subtle, heavy malt flavor and aroma. Might be available at your nearby Costco, no less.

Next was Bad Elf Winter Ale, from Ridgeway Brewing, Oxfordshire, England. This was the other end of the scale - the brewer's comments on the label says it all: 'Tis a heavy hand what adds the hops to this festive golden ale...'. Not your typical winter ale, but

guaranteed to please any hophead, and a cool label too.

Then we moved on to Inveralmond Brewery from Perth, Scotland from which we tasted a nice, well balanced Scottish Ale. This brewery also produces Ossian's Ale, which was voted the Champion Beer of Scotland in 2002.

On to Germany, well represented tonight by Mahr's Christmas Bockbier (about 6% ABV), nice malt character with hops evident too. Excellent.

Next stop was France, also with one selection, La Choulette Biere de Noel / Special French Winter Ale.. This is a Bière de Garde, translated as 'beer for keeping', probably the most noteworthy beer style associated with France, most often produced in the far north close to Belgium - not surprisingly. This style receives its fruity, perfum-y, champagne-like character from the yeast but also has a full malt flavor and aroma, and is typically cork finished. This was a particularly strong example. La Choulette is a small 'farmhouse' brewery producing only about 4,000 hectoliters per year.

Moving on to Belgium, we started with 'Bink' from Brewery Kerkom, in Sint-Truiden (Flanders). Kerkom is also a small, farmhouse brewery, producing a Saison-like Blonde, and a smoother Brown, which was made with pear syrup and honey, both of which ferment cleanly, leaving not too much residual sweetness.

Next was Satan beer from Brewery de Block from Piezegem, predictably lacking much in the way of subtlety or finesse. The Gold had an alcohol nose, rough hop bite, not much finish, and a big, sudsy mouth feel with banana/spice notes. The Red had a nicer finish but the flavor was sweet without much complexity. Nonetheless, Dan felt that this beer had some potential for commercial success, and we agreed, given the eye-catching packaging and other assertive attributes.

As if to make a point of Good triumphing over Evil, we moved on to Achel, the newest of the Trappist breweries and for many, the high point of the evening. We sampled the Blonde first, strong but ever so drinkable, some alcohol in the nose, with just a lot going on in both the aroma and flavor. Like the Blonde, the Bruin (Brown) weighed in at 8%, was darker in color (duh), and had more of a caramel like flavor.

From the tiny but recently expanded Duysters brewery in Diest, Flanders came Loterbol, a standout even by Belgian standards. Once again, we sampled the dry-hopped Blonde, and the bittersweet-chocolaty Brown.

La Gourmande spelt beer from Fantôme was next, most of us never tasted beer made with this grain before, and it was certainly unique. It had a root beer like quality, as if it was spiced with saffras or anise. We then moved on to the seasonal beers from Fantôme. Dan informed us that they had a rough year, and did not produce a spring or autumn beer. They still make some of the finest, most memorable beers on the planet. We started with the tart summer beer (ètè), and also had the Winter (Hiver) and finally the potent Fantôme de Noël, which had some coffee notes in the aroma, roastiness in the flavor, with some bittering hops evident.

Next and perhaps last was La Moneuse Speciale Noel from Blaugies.

Shortly afterwards, our friend Chris surprised everyone by bringing out a cask of Christmas Ale. A nice spicy nose but not overdone in the flavor.

At this point I left, fearing for a rough workday tomorrow, and thanking my lucky stars I had Lucy acting as my designated driver. I owe ya one, dear.



Please check the Beer Alert page for great beer sightings in and around NYC: <http://hbd.org/mbas/beer.html>

Beer Related Events:

- **January 14:** Malted Barley Appreciation Society Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at *Mugs Ale House*, 125 Bedford Avenue (North 10th St., three blocks north of the Bedford Ave. L-train station). This week's guest is **Rick Suarez of Unibroue**, with an excellent selection of Unibroue Beers.
- **January 22:** Highpoint Tasting, *David Copperfield's*, 1394 York Avenue, at the NE corner of 74th and York. Telephone: (212) 734-6152. Highpoint Brewing's Brewmaster, **Greg Zaccardi** will be hosting an informal tasting of his **Ramstein Wheat Beers**. On hand will be a first-time-ever cask of Ramstein Winter Wheat, as well as 1999 and 2000 vintages for fun comparing. Also available will be limited quantities of his Ramstein Wheat Esibock, arriving in growlers. No cover charge, this event starts 8:00 PM. The usual munchies will be on hand. Support your local brewer!
- **February 11:** Malted Barley Appreciation Society Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at *Mugs Ale House*, 125 Bedford Avenue (North 10th St., three blocks north of the Bedford Ave. L-train station). This week's guest is the award-winning brewer (rescheduled from November) **Phil Markowski, Southampton Publick House**, with an excellent selection of beers for the dead of winter!
- **March 10:** Malted Barley Appreciation Society Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at *Mugs Ale House*, 125 Bedford Avenue (North 10th St., three blocks north of the Bedford Ave. L-train station). This week's guest is award-winning brewer (and former President of the Malted Barley Appreciation Society), **George De Piro, of the C.H. Evans Albany Pump Station**, who will bring an excellent selection of beer unavailable in the area!

From Sam Calagione @ Dogfish Head Craft Brewery, located in Milton, Delaware: "We're pretty psyched, this was the first year in the last five that a brewery had triple digit revenue growth. Our Aprihop comes out in four packs March 1st and our distributors have been putting in big orders for it. For the last eight years this has been our most popular draft only seasonal. It's basically a fruit beer for hop heads - 55 IBUs with a ton of citrusy west coast hop character and subtle fruit notes." Check out: www.dogfish.com

