

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

January 2006 • Volume 13 • Number 1

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Here's the January 2006 newsletter...

Cheers!

— Alan Rice —

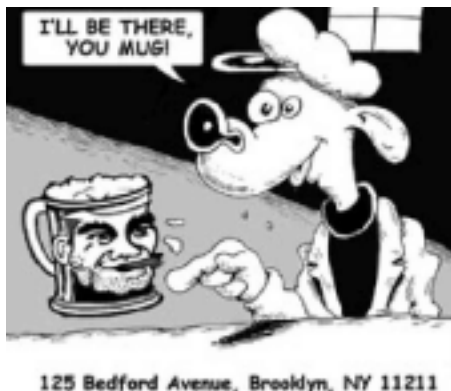
January Meeting

Wednesday January 11, 2006

Our guest speaker is Steve Hindy
of Brooklyn Brewery

MUGS ALE HOUSE

www.mugsalehouse.com



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Shelton Brothers

December Meeting

DAN SHELTON, OF THE SHELTON BROTHERS was once again our December speaker. He spoke and poured over a dozen beers from their holiday lineup. Ridgeway's Christmas beers and its labels were the main feature. Unfortunately, no notes were taken and memories are hazy. Following are a few of the standout ales that we tasted. Product descriptions and bottle images were bootlegged off the Internet. <http://www.sheltonbrothers.com/> — Ed.



Dan Shelton

De Ranke Père Noël:

This is a Christmas beer that defies the universal custom of a stronger, spicier beer for the holiday season. At 7%, this Belgian brew is relatively lighter in alcohol than De Ranke's Guldenberg, and does not pack the hop punch of their XX. It combines some of the best elements of those other two beers – with a fine balance of malt and hops, complex character, a refreshing dryness, and a gorgeous cellar aroma – but is distinguished by its festive copper color.



Ridgeway's Santa's Butt:

At 6%, it's a souped-up version of the classic Entire Butt Porter. This special English porter is made for winter -- rich and warming, the way they like it in the North Pole. It was inspired by this famous line from a well-loved children's story book:

"And Santa sat on his great butt, drinking a hearty brew."

In case you find that amusing, we hasten to point out that in England 'butt' refers to a certain barrel used in brewing -- a very large barrel, in fact, holding 108 imperial gallons. Back in the day it was quite a normal thing for a brewery to put its beer up in a large butt for storage.





Joel Shelton spreading cheer

Ridgeway's Seriously Bad Elf

Peter Scholey's very English interpretation of a Belgian Tripel, brewed to warming 9% alcohol, especially for his rapidly-growing American following. Seriously, you don't want to miss this beer.

BREAKING NEWS—Seriously Bad Elf was banned in Connecticut! That little red speck you see in the background of the label? Why, that's none other than Kris Kringle, Santa Claus, who, according to the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, cannot appear on a beer label.



Fantome de Noel:

A very dark Belgian saison for the holidays, at a whopping 10% alc. by volume. Reportedly spiced with honey, caramel, coriander, black pepper, and other secret ingredients. “Beautifully warming with an amazing, almost overwhelming, depth of character. This is a rich, dark-flavored beer with lots of deep-roasted chocolate malt, but still fairly dry, with a hint of sourness at the core. It is very spicy, with some winter spruce flavor in the bargain. The wild yeast sourness also adds to its welcoming character.



La Choulette de Noël

A very dark French Bier de Garde at a whopping 10% alc. by volume. Reportedly spiced with honey, caramel, coriander, black pepper, and other secret ingredients. The alcohol content probably goes a long way toward explaining that very warm and satisfied feeling one finds on the very first sip. This is a rich, dark-flavored beer with lots of deep-roasted chocolate malt, but still fairly dry, with a hint of sourness at the core. It is very spicy, with some winter spruce flavor in the bargain. The wild yeast sourness also adds to its welcoming character.



Tessa Shelton, Dan's wife, spreading more cheer.

New Jersey - The Porter State

BY KEITH OLSEN

Winter has settled in here in the Northeast, and a beer that warms the insides is just what one might hope for this time of year. Barleywines with their high alcohol content can be quite warming, and the roasted aromas of a Stout bring to mind coffee, fireplaces and other sources of winter warmth. But neither style typically works well as a session beer (i.e. the kind of beer you can drink all evening long, and never tire of). This is why I find the mysterious Porter the perfect brew this time of year.

Porters originated as the first truly “engineered” beer. In English pubs in the early 1700's, you could not simply pour a porter from a single tap. Porters started as a blend of beers much like a “Black & Tan” that is common today. They were initially called “three threads” (threads meaning thirds) or “entires” (having the entire range of beers in a single pint), where one third would be an old soured ale, another third a new brown ale, and the last a weak



<http://www.njbeer.org/>

or mild ale. The resulting beer would be a bit sour, a bit sweet, a bit roasted and bitter, and a bit mellow and smooth. While the combination of complex flavors made patrons happy, you could imagine pouring such blends all day would drive a barkeep a bit mad.

In 1722, the entrepreneurial brewer Ralph Harwood of London came up with the ingenious idea of creating a single beer that could mimic this popular blend, calling the resulting brew “Harwood’s Entire”. His beer then influenced many other brewers both in England and beyond. Ireland’s Guinness Brewery initially brewed porters, eventually brewing a strong, robust or “stout” version of their porter that became known more simply as Stout, the father of all such stouts brewed today. Across the pond in America, our founding fathers were extremely enamored of porter, being the favorite drink of George Washington who encouraged its brewing in the colonies so he would no longer rely on England for his supply of beer. Thomas Jefferson took matters into his own hands and brewed and sold his own porter.

Porters fell out of favor with the advent of the relatively “pale” ales coming to market in the mid 1800’s, and became even scarcer with the widespread popularity of clear golden lagers in the early 1900’s. Dark beers were being relegated to the dark ages, and it took a revolution to bring them back. The revolution occurred in the 1970’s and 80’s when microbreweries began to sprout in America. Brewers yearned for something different, and searched far and wide for recipes long lost and forgotten. Along with IPA’s, bitters and barley-wines, porters were a source of newfound inspiration. And as breweries seek to make their unique identities in a sea of mass-market lagers, the porters they brew are as unique as they are.

With a complexity of flavor inherent to the porter style, each rendition can bring something quite different to the table. To illustrate the variety possible within this single style of porter, three very different porters from the state of New Jersey (that sometimes foreign land just across the Hudson from New York City) are described below:

Produced in Cherry Hill, NJ, Flying Fish Porter is a bottle-conditioned rendition of the porter style. Of the three examples here, this one is the least rich, but in that respect, may be the most suitable as a session beer. It pours a deep medium brown with a very foamy off-white head. The flavors are well balanced, an initial caramel sweetness, with some plum and fig flavors in the middle, followed by a roasted, slightly burnt finish. I suggest letting this one sit for a little while after pouring, both to settle the



this could simply be described as a “dessert porter”. There are some roasted notes and a mild lingering bitterness to balance the sweetness, but overall this is very smooth on the palate. While the specialty of the house is pizza, I highly recommend drinking this one on its own rather than trying what could be a disastrous pairing.



carbonation that is a bit too high, and to allow the more subtle flavors come through as it warms. On rare occasions, this one is available on cask.

While most chain restaurants are the same wherever you go, there is only one Pizzeria Uno in the country with its own brewery on premises, and it happens to be in Metuchen, NJ. They offer six house beers on tap, which includes one rotating seasonal variety. Among the five year-round selections is Gust ‘n Gale Porter, a rich chocolatey brew, sweet and creamy, this could simply be described as a “dessert porter”. There are some roasted notes and a mild lingering bitterness to balance the sweetness, but overall this is very smooth on the palate. While the specialty of the house is pizza, I highly recommend drinking this one on its own rather than trying what could be a disastrous pairing. Unfortunately, this one isn’t available in bottles, but bring along your growler when you visit so you can enjoy more at home.

Heavyweight Brewing of Ocean Township, NJ doesn’t make just a porter (or just a stout, brown or pale ale for that matter). They create unique hybrids, recreate rarely found styles, and invent some beers that are totally new. In the case of their Perkuno’s Hammer, this brew is a Baltic Porter, a strong, dark and rich brew that was historically developed to survive the long sea voyage from British breweries to their Baltic customers. While such strength isn’t required to survive the trip across the Hudson River (even with heavy traffic in the tunnel), the revival of this style is greatly appreciated.

This porter starts smooth, with initial slight malty sweetness, then the full flavors of bittersweet chocolate and dark roasted coffee come through, all followed by a peppery finish. The mouthfeel is smooth as well: slick, thick and rich. The tiny bubbles of carbonation were a refreshing contrast to the thickness and richness of the brew. Other flavors come forward as you drink more raisins and caramel are just two of many that come forward out of this complex brew.

Altogether, a hearty and enjoyable beer that has no harsh bitterness, no burnt finish, and none of the alcohol taste that one might expect considering the alcohol content. Still, at 8% ABV (alcohol by volume) this may not be the ideal porter for drinking all night long.

While these are just three examples, there are literally hundreds of porters to choose from around the world, with dozens available in the New York area. There are smoked porters, mocha porters, vanilla porters and chocolate porters, organic porters and more. Whatever your taste, there’s probably a porter out there just for you.





DIARY OF A SAD IMBIBER

A log of the last few days of the Blind Tiger

BY ALEX HALL

SUNDAY 18TH DECEMBER. The first day of what I intended to be a daily pilgrimage to the Tiger. A merry afternoon was enjoyed, helped by bartender Louise celebrating her birthday. Cheers Louise!

Monday 19th December. A 'D' train whisked me over the Manhattan Bridge to West 4th Street, near the Hudson Street location of the Blind Tiger. There, I enjoyed cask-conditioned Chelsea Imperial Stout, plus a glass of delicious Lagunitas Gnarlywine. The blackboard outside ominously read "8 days left".

Tuesday 20th December. The first day of the city-wide mass transit strike. So, a 4 mile walk from Park Slope was my only option other than an expensive cab—which wouldn't have been any faster judging by the severely traffic-choked streets. City Transit buses were unexpectedly seen on the road, but these were for City employees only and were mostly being driven by cops in uniform. Anyway, 79 minutes after leaving home, I was greeted by bartender Kate, who pulled me some more of the rich and tasty Chelsea Impy Stout followed by a quick Avery Reverend before having to rush off for a Homebrewers' Guild meeting. Fortunately I got a lift home after the worst of the traffic had cleared (thanks Dave).

Wednesday 21st December. Again the 4 mile walk was done, this time in a spritely 70 minutes. Plenty of regulars were in evidence when I arrived. Unusually, both cask beer engines were running at the same time, the Impy Stout having been joined by another Chelsea stablemate—Hoppy Holidays. This full-flavored amber brew was more than enough reward for the walk in the frigid air over the bridge. I missed the free cheeses though, damn. I noticed the blackboard was showing "6 days left". A brisk walk home was then done, pondering whether I should look at the depressing day count again (and also wondering if I was going to complete the 4 miles without needing the loo desperately).

Thursday 22nd December. The last time I'd have to walk. It was Kate's last shift behind the bar, and the bar was just filling up after the working day when I got there. Looking over the street, there was a queue of people stretching from the entrance to the PATH station right round the block to opposite the Tiger. I thought to myself that I'm glad they're not lining up to pack themselves in the Tiger's small space. I enjoyed the cask Hoppy Holidays, plus a trio of delicious Avery brews: 'Salvation', '12', and 'Kaiser'. A brewing celebrity was visiting at the same time as me, none other than Tom Baker of Heavyweight Brewery. David and Alan had just removed all the breweriana from the walls for safekeeping, and were turning their attention to taking boxes of tap handles and other items out of the cellar in readiness for vacating the premises a few days later. The resulting forlorn space devoid of adornments seemed quite surreal.

Friday 23rd December. Someone had thoughtfully left out a marker pen. It was being used to adorn the walls with (most-



ly) appropriate farewells. My imbibing choice of the day was cask Chelsea Hoppy Holidays.

Saturday 24th December. I inadvertently spoiled Alan's day by informing him of the impending demise of Happy Deli—directly opposite Collins Bar where he also works. Shit happens. My wife Felice joined me, and we hung out with Warren 'Beer Sensei' Monteiro. Co-founder Brian Yaussi's picture was taken down (he sadly passed away in 2000). It was all going bit by bit. Cask Chelsea Imperial Stout helped to numb the pain.

Sunday 25th December. So this is Xmas. Alan opened at 5pm. Never mind religion, more Impy Stout please.

Monday 26th December. Fellow BeerAdvocate.com member Erica's birthday. A merry group assembled in the Tiger that afternoon to toast her attaining the grand old age of 'being-old-enough-to-drink-legally-plus-four'. The marker pen was put to good use, as was the contents of the cask of Brooklyn Brown Ale on handpump.

Tuesday 27th December. This is the end, beautiful friend. The last day of business. The terminus had been reached on a long and enjoyable journey. Os and Cindy were behind the bar at 518 Hudson Street for the final time. Craft beer was flowing like a waterfall, as were the tears welling in my eyes. Brooklyn Brown Ale (cask), Ramstein Winter Wheat, Flying Dog Gonzo Imperial Porter, Allagash Double, Weyerbacher Insanity, Southampton Espresso Stout, BusterBrau Jeze Louise, Dale's Pale Ale, Victory Hop Wallop, and Stone Old Guardian 2004 were my painkillers of choice. I arrived at 3.30pm, no seats available. Left at 4.30am, I'd just got a seat an hour previously.

Wednesday 28th December. The official end minus one, but there was still a wake to attend—the private 'thank you' party for regulars, open bar 6 to 12. Cask Brooklyn Brown, cask Heavyweight Old Salty, Lancaster Winter Ale, and Victory Hop Wallop consigned the Tiger's Hudson Street location to history for me. Pieces of wall tiling were being pulled down as souvenirs. This issue's Beerman and Firkin was taped to the wall, as was a picture of our friends at Dark Star Brewing in England toasting the reign of the mighty Tiger. The bar stools and some tables had already departed. All the beer signs and most of the bar lights were in darkness. We were all hoping that the potential Tiger cub may be of age around April, which owner Dave hinted at in his farewell speech. Adios amigo. Sob. 10-4, over and out.



BEER RELATED EVENTS

Wednesday 11th January 2005, 7.30pm: Malted Barley Appreciation Society of NYC. Monthly meeting, Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The guest speaker is Steve Hindy, President of Brooklyn Brewery. Steve will be signing his new book, "Beer School". Further details: <http://hbd.org/mbas>.

Thursday 12th January 2005: Vintage Stone Night at Mugs. Several aged Stone Brewery beers will be on tap, including a rare keg of 7th Anniversary Ale. Start time not specified. Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Monday 16th January 2006, 7pm: Beer and Cheese Pairing Event #2. d.b.a., 41 1st Avenue, Manhattan. Featuring a number of Belgian and French beers paired up with tasty cheeses, the second in a series of these events. Hosted by Patrick Jones and Melanie Stecura of Triumph Brewery. \$35 for eight pairings. Details: <http://www.drinkgoodstuff.com> or phone 1-917-757-4309 (RSVP please). (Event to be repeated 6th February.)

Wednesday 8th February 2006, 7.30pm: Malted Barley Appreciation Society of NYC. Monthly meeting, Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The guest speaker will be announced on the website shortly. Further details: <http://hbd.org/mbas>.

Friday 24th - Sunday 26th February 2006: 8th Tri-Annual 'Cask Head' Real Ale Festival. The Brazen Head, 228 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn. Free entry, prices lower than normal! Up to 18 rare and delicious cask-conditioned ales will flow through the weekend. Full details: 1-718-488-0430 or see <http://www.brazenheadbrooklyn.com> nearer the time.

Saturday 4th - Sunday 5th March 2006: Split Thy Brooklyn Skull. Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The annual barleywine and imperial stout bash.

EVERY TUESDAY, 7pm: Bierkraft, 191 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope, Brooklyn (at Union Street). Weekly beer tasting and cheese pairing, sometimes featuring a guest speaker from the trade. Details: 1-718-230-7600; <http://www.bierkraft.com>.

EVENTS OUTSIDE NEW YORK CITY

Friday 13th January 2006, Noon: Friday the Firkinteenth. The Grey Lodge, 6235 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. Up to 20 casks. Details: 1-215-624-2969 or <http://greylodge.com>.

Saturday 28th January 2006, 4pm: 2nd Annual Long Island Real Ale Festival. Blue Point Brewery, 161 River Avenue, Patchogue, NY. Details: 1-631-475-6944.

Sunday 29th January 2006, 1pm: 6th Annual Connecticut Real Ale Festival. BruRm at Bar, 254 Crown Street, New Haven, CT. About 50 cask-conditioned ales, including British imports. \$25, advance tickets only. Full details: 1-203-729-5445.

Saturday 11th February 2006, 1pm & 6pm: 3rd Annual Extreme Beer Fest. The Cyclorama, Boston Center for the Arts, 539 Tremont Street, Boston, MA. Over 100 extreme beers - "the ultimate palate smackdown". Details: <http://beeradvocate.com>.

Please see <http://beeradvocate.com/events/calendar.php> for other events worldwide.



Every Tuesday, 7 p.m.

191 Fifth Avenue, Park Slope, Brooklyn (at Union Street)

Weekly beer tasting and cheese pairing, sometimes featuring a guest speaker from the trade. Details: 718-230-7600

<http://www.bierkraft.com>

Alex Hall's

THE GOTHAM IMBIBER

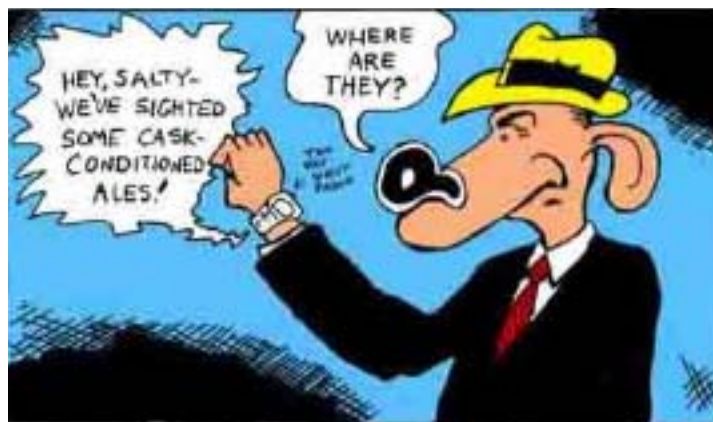
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BEER CALENDAR

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