

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

July 2007 • Volume 14 • Number 7

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Cheers! Here's your newsletter...

— Alan Rice —

Next Meeting:

Wed. July 11, 7:30 p.m., Mugs Ale House.

Our guest will be Rick Suarez of Unibroue.



Cooperstown Comes to Brooklyn

BY ALAN RICE

Mary Izetelny and Warren Becker contributed to this article.



The May meeting was held in the midst of scattered thunderstorms, so the meeting was held indoors. (Many flights were cancelled, too.) Our guest was Andrew Reed, Regional Sales Manager for Duvel USA in NYC. Their portfolio includes Maredsous and Rodenbach. Andrew became a big fan of Brewery Ommegang while attending SUNY-Oneonta. He started as an intern at the brewery and worked his way up.

Andrew poured the flagship and eponymous Ommegang Abbey-style Dubbel. The other original beer was Hennepin Saison, brewed with pilsner malt and orange peel at 7.7%. While both are popular with wine drinkers, Hennepin has become a cliché among beer drinkers for “pairs well with food.”

Rare Vos was named for a Brussels (Schepdaal) bar, famous as a starting point for bicycle and pigeon races. It's a 6.5% Brabant-style, from the low country, that was added in the second year of operation. Dry hopped casks are occasionally spotted around town.

BREWERY
OMMEGANG
BELGIAN STYLE ALES • COOPERSTOWN, NY

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Ommegang's Origins

Wendy Littlefield and Don Feinberg tasted many Belgian beers while he was a grad student in Brussels. In 1982 after three years there and much traveling, they returned to form beer importer Vanberg & DeWulf in NYC. Over the years, V&D built a portfolio of beers from family run breweries in Belgium and Northern France, including Duvel, Dupont, Scaldis, Witkap, and Boon.

In October 1997 their love of Belgian beers led them to open Brewery Ommegang on a former 136-acre hop farm in Cooperstown, NY. Proximity to the Baseball Hall of Fame and its visitors was also an important factor in choosing the site. Their contacts as distributors allowed them to quickly push into key markets around the country.

Brewery Duvel Moortgat's long-time association with Wendy and Don then grew closer as they were an original investor in BO. Brewery interests from Scaldis and Affligem were also involved. The Moortgat family took DM public in 1999. In February 2003 the couple's 20-year relationship with DM culminated in the sale of Brewery Ommegang and the eastern U.S. distribution rights for Duvel.

Cave Aging

A small amount of bottle conditioned Hennepin was stored in the cellar of Cooperstown's Farmer's Museum from the spring of 1999 until their harvest festival in September. The results were so good that they looked to repeat the experiment on a larger scale. BO has always been good at marketing: from the labeling, to their glassware, and even the brewery itself. So it was ideal to place the beer in nearby Howe Caverns, the second most popular natural tourist attraction in NY after Niagara Falls.

The beer is lowered 150 feet into the limestone cave where it rests in the dark with a constant humidity and temperature in the low 50s. Sure, you can buy some dusty bottles or stash some in your closet and get the same product. But then you wouldn't get a beer aged with no fluctuation in storage conditions and minimum drying of the cork. You also won't get a neat little hangtag or the cool warping of the label.

At first all of the beer sold out at the Caverns. The 9-month old Hennepin proved to be so popular that Ommegang was brought down to keep it company. This 8.5% dark brown ale matures for a full year. It is brewed with Czech Saaz hops for flavor and Styrian Golding for aroma. It is flavored with licorice root, star anise, cumin, coriander, and orange peel. Andrew Reed poured us two Ommegang vintages. The 2004 had nice malty caramel flavors, hints of nutmeg with slight sourness, and a tart finish lingering into sweetness. The 2005 had distinctive menthol, medicinal flavors due to the anise. It's semi-sweet throughout, medium body with alcohol strength apparent.

Pour us more

The first new beer in three years was the Three Philosophers. It was the winning submission to the "Create a Great Beer" contest BO sponsored on Real-Beer.org. Noel Blake, an award winning homebrewer from Portland, OR and advisor to Widmer Bros., conceived this Belgian-style Quad with a touch of real Belgian Kriek. The name came from an unpublished work by William Blake (no relation). The silhouettes on the label are not Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; but brewmaster Randy Thiel, brew manager Kevin Davis, and Duvel Moortgat director Michael Moortgat, whose image was used without his knowledge!

In 2001, only about 500 cases of Three Philosophers

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were brewed as a one-off. It proved to be popular and year round production began in 2003 with Lindemans Kriek as the added cherry lambic. Since last October, Boon Kriek is blended in to give the ale its “something special.” Perhaps not coincidentally, Boon is a V&D import. And during last month’s Lambic and Brett week at Spuyten Duyvil, Don Feinberg tapped two different 3-year-old barrels of Boon Lambic. They were un-carbonated and unsweetened, and had a vinegar-like sourness, as you would expect.

The fifth beer added to the regular line-up was Witte, which debuted in the summer of 2004. It’s a 5.1% Belgian-style wheat beer with a hint of citrus. It is an easy drinking challenger to Hoegaarden, available for under \$5 for 750ml.

BO is located near the headwaters of the Susquehanna River. Two wells located on the property supply soft water, which contributes to the brand’s character. Originally, all brewing was in open fermenters, but now it’s only about 15%. From these yeast is cropped, or harvested for future batches. There is only one house strain from Catholic University in Leuven Belgium, and it lasts about 4 years. The beer ferments warm, at 77F., for 5 days. It ages for 2 weeks at 28F. in large conical tanks. Fresh yeast and wort are added at bottling. The bottles condition for 9 days in the warm room which is also at 77F.

Maxed out

As BO beers, popularity grew, demand outstripped supply. In 2005, Randy Thiel was brewing at capacity. So he called his counterpart at Duvel, Hedwig Nevin for help. Recipes and yeast were discussed, until an American-style Abbey-style beer was brewed for the first time in Belgium. BO’s yeast comes from the same place as Duvel Moortgat. They use similar malts. And even the same Saaz and Styrien Goldins are used in Duvel. Look on the label and you will see that Ommegang 750s were brewed at DM from September 2005 through June 2007. Compare one to a 12oz. bottle and decide for yourself if there are any differences.

The addition of a grain silo, a steam boiler, and especially a conditioning tank brought production home and

ended this arrangement. And a long-planned, large-scale expansion of the brewery will begin soon. Large, as in growing from less than 10,000 barrels to 50,000 bbl/year. In the meantime, they are distributed in 37 states, and capacity is enough to allow for a new marketing experiment. Two 12oz. bottles of each of the five regular beers are selling in sampler boxes at BJ’s stores in NY.

In January, Phillip Leinhart was brought in from Anheuser-Busch as Director of Production. He was also at Manhattan Brewery, Commonwealth and Harpoon breweries in Boston, and The Lion in Wilkes-Barre, PA. He is responsible for daily operations of brewing and packaging.

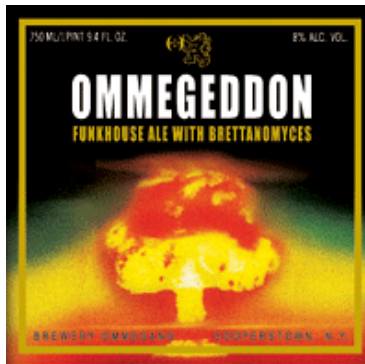
Randy Thiel graduated from the University of Wisconsin and studied brewing at UC-Davis and the Siebel Institute. In 2004, his brewing excellence was recognized by the Knighthood of the Brewers’ Mashstaff, a centuries old organization in Brussels representing the dignity and traditions of the brewer’s trade. He is the only American brewer ever inducted by the guild.

Randy is now managing the brewery expansion and continues to oversee quality control. He is also developing new beers, including Ommegedon. This was originally brewed only for festivals, such as Belgium Comes to Cooperstown on the third weekend in July. It is no coincidence that the brewery’s largest festival is held then. “Ommegang” is a festival celebrated at the same time in Brussels, commemorating the ascension of

Charles V in 1549. “Ommegang” is also now a generic term for pageants celebrated elsewhere in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Northern France.

Ommegedon is an 8% farmhouse ale brewed with 100% Brettomyces. Hopefully, the glowing mushroom cloud on the label will warn off those who don’t like sour beers. The first batch was dry-hopped with Saaz. Subsequent batches will use different hops at this stage.

On June 30 Ommegedon was released in 750s at the brewery. Attendees at the opening night of the Festival are guaranteed a bottle. Some bottles will be available at specialty stores. I’ve heard that it is reasonably priced at approximately \$7-8. Union Beer will also distribute kegs to the usual bars in the area.



Brewer Randy Thiel with his favorite beer.

Photo by George de Piro



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Chelsea continued...



Frank Gehry's new IAC building is at the West Side Highway and 18th St., directly across from Chelsea Brewing Co.

Calendar

BEER EVENTS

Tue. July 10, Grand Opening, **The Diamond**, 43 Franklin Street (Banker and Calyer), Greenpoint, Brooklyn, 718-383-5030. Dave Pollack, former bartender at Spuyten Duyvil and salesman for B. United knows a thing or two about beer bars. Drop by on Tuesday or the next time you're in the neighborhood.

Wed. July 11, B. United at **Blind Tiger**. Einbecker Pilsner J.W. Lee's Harvest Ale (aged in a Lagavulin Wood Pin), Hitachino Nest Sweet Stout, Hitachino Nest White, Harviestoun's Old Engine Oil, La Rulle Triple, La Rulle Summer, La Chouffe, Houblon Chouffe, Reissdorf Kolsch, Ichtegem's Grand Cru (Flemish Red), Dupont Cider, Schlenkerla Helle's, and more.

Fri. July 13, Noon, Friday the Firkenteenth, **Grey Lodge**, Philadelphia. Our largest ever with 22 real ales, 7 pouring at a time. The next Firkenteenth will be in June, 2008.

Fri. July 13, 7pm, Extreme Beer Fest, **Lazy Boy Saloon**, White Plains.

YOU'RE INVITED TO A PICNIC

The New York City Homebrewer's Guild has invited the MBAS to join them at the **NYCHG annual picnic**. **Saturday, July 14**, after Noon, Croton Point Park, Croton Point Ave., Croton-on-Hudson, NY Ride availability TBD, drivers needed. Also accessible by Metro North RR, Hudson line, Croton-Harmon stop. The 11:57 arrives at 12:48. About a mile walk SW or RSVP for pick-up. Bring beer or a side dish, and \$10 for food and charcoal. This is open to all NYCHG and MBAS members and their friends, family, and pets! Bring sports equipment and swimwear. RSVP: seanywonton@gmail.com <http://www.westchester.gov/parks/ParksLocations02/Croton-PointPark.htm>

Sun. July 15, South Shore Real Beer Fest, **T.J. Finley's**, Bay Shore, L.I. 20+ breweries, live music, BBQ. Roundtrip bus leaves from their sister bar, George Keeley's at 10:30am.

Mon. July 16, Southampton at Light Horse Tavern, Jersey City.

Mon. July 16, 23 and 30, 7pm, Sixpoint Table Tennis Tournament at **Fat Cat**, 75 Christopher St. \$20, includes 2 Six-point beers and entrance to this best 2 out of 3, double elimination tournament. Click above for info and to RSVP.

Wed. July 18, XMAS in July, **Blind Tiger**. List TBD.

Sat. July 21, Belgium Comes to Cooperstown, **Ommegang Brewery**. Sold Out.

Sat. July 21 – Sun July 22, Vermont Brewers Fest, Burlington.

Sun. July 22, Oskar Blues at **Hop Devil Grill**. Barrel-aged Ten Fiddy, Barrel-aged Gordon, Money Shot, Old Chub, Dale's.

COLLINS BAR IS CLOSING

Sunday July 22 is your last chance to say goodbye to the **Collins Bar** when they'll be pouring their final pints. The landlord sold the building and it is slated for demolition (so developers can erect yet another characterless high-rise). Collins thanks all of you who have supported them over the years.

Wed. July 25, Dogfish Head at **Blind Tiger**. Immort, Raison D'Extra, Pangaea, Johnny Rawton Pils, Chateau Jiahu, Festina Peche, Midas Touch, 90 Minute on the Randall, 120 Minute, 90 Minute, 60 Minute, Indian Brown, Raison D'Etre, Shelter.

Thu. July 26, Dogfish Head at **Barcade**. Black and Blue, Red and White, Paolo Santo Marron, Fort, Chateau Jiahu, Burton Baton, Festina Peche, 120 Minute, 90 Minute, 60 Minute.

Sat. July 28, State College, (PA) Brew Expo.

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

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>

LOCAL BEER EVENT VENUES

Andy's Corner Bar, 257 Queen Anne Road, Bogota, NJ 07603, (201) 342-9887, <http://www.andyscornerbar.com/>.

Barcade, 388 Union Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. (718) 302-6464. <http://www.barcadebrooklyn.com/> .

The Blind Tiger, 281 Bleecker Street, Manhattan, 10014, (212) 462-4682. <http://blindtigeralehouse.com> .

Brazen Head, 228 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn 11201. (718) 488-0430. <http://www.brazenheadbrooklyn.com/> .

Collins Bar, 735 8th Avenue, Manhattan 10036. (212) 541-4206. <http://collinsbar.com/> .

David Copperfield's, 1394 York Avenue, Manhattan 10021. (212) 734-6152. <http://www.davidcopperfields.com/> .

dba, 141 First Avenue, (212) 475-5097, Manhattan, 10003. <http://drinkgoodstuff.com/>.

Downtown Bar & Grill, 160 Court Street, Brooklyn 11201. (718) 625-2835.

Essex Ale House, 179 Essex Street, Manhattan 10002. (212) 505-6027.

The Gate, 321 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, 11215, <http://thegatebrooklyn.com/>.

Hop Devil Grill, 129 St. Marks Place, Manhattan 10009. (212) 533-4467. <http://www.hopdevil.com/> .

Jimmy's, 43 East 7th Street, Manhattan 10003, (212) 982-3006. <http://www.jimmysno43.com/>

Mugs Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. (718) 384-8494. <http://www.mugsalehouse.com/> .

Spuyten Duyvil, 359 Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn 11211. (718) 963-4140. <http://www.spuytenduyvilnyc.com/> .

Liberty Heights Tap Room, 36 Van Dyke Street, Brooklyn 11231. (718) 246-1793. <http://www.libertyheightstaproom.com/> .

Standings, 43 East 7th Street, Manhattan 10003. (212) 420-0671. <http://www.standingsbar.com/> .

Stanton Publick, 17 Stanton Street, Manhattan 10002, (212) 677-5555, <http://www.villedgepub.com/>.

Zum Schneider, 107 Avenue C (at 7th St.), Manhattan 10009. Tel. 212 598 1098. <http://www.zumschneider.com/>.

For up-to-the-minute calendar info, go to:

<http://hbd.org/mbas/index.html> . For draft lists go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/beer.html>

