

Tasting #3: Saison & Biere de Garde

May 30th & 31st, 2008



Saison Style Sheet

Overall Impression: A refreshing, medium to strong fruity/spicy ale with a distinctive yellow-orange color, highly carbonated, well hopped, and dry with a quenching acidity.

Tasting Experience

Aroma: Fruity esters dominate, often oranges or lemons. Low to mod spicy or floral hop aroma. Mod spice aroma, from actual spice and/or yeast-derived phenols. Phenolics likely to be peppery rather than clove-like. Low to mod sourness or acidity may be present, should not overwhelm nose. Spice, hop and sour aromatics typically increase with strength of beer. Alcohols are soft, spicy and low in intensity, and should not be hot or solventy. The malt character is light. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Often pale orange, but may be golden or amber. No correlation between strength & color. Long-lasting, dense, rocky white to ivory head leaving "Belgian lace" on the glass. Clarity poor to good though haze is not unexpected in this type of unfiltered farmhouse beer. Effervescent.

Flavor: Fruity flavors, frequently citrus, dominate. Low peppery phenols and/or spice additions prominent, but lower than in many other Belgian beers. Low to mod spicy or earthy hop flavor. Mod to high hop bitterness, should not overwhelm fruity esters, spices, and malt. Malt is light, a background to other flavors. Potentially low to mod sourness, should not overwhelm other flavors. No hot alcohol or solvent character. High carbonation, mod sulfate water, and high attenuation give a very dry finish with a long, bitter, sometimes spicy aftertaste. Perceived bitterness often higher than IBU level suggests. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Light to med body. Med alcohol, w/ low to med warming. Very high effervescent carbonation. Prickly acidity balancing dryness. Refreshing, not puckering tartness.

How to Taste

Food Pairing:

Cuisine: Curried, Thai
Meat: Poultry, Fish, Shellfish
General: Salad, Apéritif
Cheese: Earthy, e.g. Camembert; Nutty, e.g. Asiago; Pungent, e.g. Gorgonzola

Glassware:

Pint



History

A seasonal summer style produced in Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium. Originally brewed at the end of the cool season to last through the warmer months before refrigeration was common. It had to be sturdy enough to last for months but not too strong to be quenching and refreshing in the summer. It is now brewed year-round in tiny, artisanal breweries whose buildings reflect their origins as farmhouses.

Making the Beer

Ingredients:

Malt: Pilsner, plus Vienna, Munich, wheat
Hops: Noble, Styrian, or EK Goldings
Adjunct: Sugar and honey to the body
Herbs and spices: variety for complexity
Other: Hard water, Lactobacillus

Statistics:

OG: 1.048 – 1.065
FG: 1.002 – 1.012
IBUs: 20 – 35
SRM: 5 – 14
ABV: 5 – 7%

Biere de Garde Style Sheet

Overall Impression: A fairly strong, malt-accentuated, lagered, artisanal farmhouse beer.

Tasting Experience

Aroma: Prominent malty sweetness, with light to mod toasty character. Some caramelization is acceptable. Low to mod esters. Little to no hop aroma, though may be a bit spicy or herbal. Often have a musty, woody, cellar-like character. Paler versions will still be malty but will lack richer, deeper aromatics and may have a bit more hops. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Three main variations exist (blond, amber and brown), so color can range from golden blonde to reddish bronze to chestnut brown. Clarity is good to poor, although haze is not unexpected in this type of often unfiltered beer. Well-formed head, generally white to off-white (varies by beer color), supported by high carbonation.

Flavor: Medium to high malt flavor often with a toasty, toffee-like or caramel sweetness. Malt flavors and complexity tend to increase as beer color darkens. Low to moderate esters and alcohol flavors. Medium-low hop bitterness provides some support, but the balance is always tilted toward the malt. The malt flavor lasts into the finish but the finish is medium-dry to dry, never cloying. Alcohol can provide some additional dryness in the finish. Low to no hop flavor, although paler versions can have slightly higher levels of herbal or spicy hop flavor (which can also come from the yeast). Smooth, well-lagered character. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-light (lean) body, often with a smooth, silky character. Moderate to high carbonation. Moderate alcohol, but should be very smooth and never hot.

How to Taste

Food Pairing:

Cuisine: Indian, Middle Eastern
Meat: Fish, Shellfish
General: Salad, Apéritif
Cheese: Nutty, e.g. Asiago, Colby;
Tangy, e.g. Feta, Edam

Glassware:

Tulip



History

Name literally means “beer which has been kept or lagered.” A traditional artisanal farmhouse ale from Northern France brewed in early spring and kept in cold cellars for consumption in warmer weather. It is now brewed year-round. Related to the Belgian Saison style, the main difference is that the Bière de Garde is rounder, richer, sweeter, malt-focused, often has a “cellar” character, and lacks the Saison spicing and tartness.

Making the Beer

Ingredients:

Malt: Vary by beer color, but usually pale, Vienna, Munich, and crystal-type
Hops: Floral, herbal or spicy continentals
Adjunct: Sugar to add flavor, dry finish
Other: Soft water

Statistics:

OG: 1.060 – 1.080
FG: 1.008 – 1.016
IBUs: 18 - 28
SRM: 6 - 19
ABV: 6 – 8.5%

Styles of beer

Lager Uses "bottom fermenting" yeast strains, ferments at lower temperatures, 45-55F
 Produces fewer esters, giving lagers a "crisper" flavor

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|------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1 Light lager | 2 Pilsner | 3 Amber lager | 4 Dark lager | 5 Bock |
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Hybrid Mixes the materials and/or techniques of lagers and ales

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|-------------------|-------------------|
| 6 Light hybrid | 7 Amber hybrid |
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Ale Uses "top fermenting" yeast strain, ferments at higher temperatures, 60-75F
 Produces high amounts of esters that give ales "fruity" or "flowery" flavors

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8 English pale ale | 9 Scottish & Irish ales | 10 American ale | 11 English brown ale | 12 Porter |
| 13 Stout | 14 India pale ale | 15 German wheat & rye | 16 Belgian & French ale | 17 Sour ale |
| 18 Belgian strong ale | 19 Strong ale | 20 Fruit beer | 21 Spice or herb beer | 22 Smoke or wood-aged |

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Belgian & French Ale

A
Witbier

B
Belgian pale ale

C
Saison

D
Biere de garde

E
Belgian specialty ale