

The RARE BEER CLUB

BROUWERIJ DE RANKE DOTTIGNIES, WALLONIA, BELGIUM

GULDENBERG

We could feature only Belgium beers and keep this club going for years, never needing to repeat a single beer. There are just so many world-class beers produced in this national brew haven. One such example comes to us from the Brouwerij de Ranke out of West Flanders. We've selected a really solid example of Belgian brewing, but the version from de Ranke is unlike most other examples for a number of reasons. First off, the production quantity is quite limited; you'd be hard pressed to find it elsewhere in the U.S. Secondly, it is more heavily hopped than most examples of the style, so it suits



many of the craft microbrew fans in the U.S. who have come to appreciate a heavy dose of our precious little friend, the hop. Thirdly, in the context of Belgian beer history, this beer was only recently created, yet is sweeping through Belgium with massive popularity—impressing the least impressionable of beer-loving palates, including those reluctant to appreciate native styles augmented by high hop levels.

Brouwerij De Ranke was founded in 1994 by two good friends, Nino Bacelle and

Guido Devos. Their story is a classic in Belgium, where the very best craft brewing usually begins as a passionately pursued hobby, not an occupation (a similar tale is told again and again in the US as well). For Nino and Guido, brewing was literally a weekend obsession. For a few hours on Friday and Saturday each week, the historic turn-of-the-century Deca Brewery in West Flanders was turned over to the De Ranke brewers, who made small batches of what many consider the best specialty beers

(Continued on reverse page)

SPECIFICATIONS

Style	Hoppy Tripel
Alcohol By Volume	11.5%
Serving Temperature	45-50° F
Suggested Glassware	Tulip, Teku, Snifter, or Pinot Glass

of Belgium. Their beers are robust and flavorful and known for their atypically (in Belgium) massive hoppiness, which comes from the best Hallertau and Brewer's Gold varieties.

In 2005, after 11 years of brewing at the Deca Brewery, they built their own. Not bad for a weekend hobby—building a brewery represents no small feat (or fee!). Their story of dedication and quality is told in each delicious bottle of their beers. It is, indeed, a good read.

For more information about the brewery, learn to speak Dutch and check out their website at <http://deranke.com/be>

GULDENBERG

It's hard to classify this outstanding beer. Is it an example of the Belgian Strong Pale Ale? Generically speaking, yes. Though it doesn't really fit neatly into that category, and the label actually states that it's a Tripel, the heavy-handed addition of hops takes it to Belgian IPA territory. Set the styles aside for a moment and just enjoy!

Expect this unfiltered beer to pour a hazy butterscotch, honey-gold color, topped with a massive, thick, meringue-like head. The aroma smacks of honeyish malts and some tropical fruit tones as well as a lemony zest and ample hops. Overall, the nose is bigly fruited and flowery, with flourishes of mandarin oranges and a twinge of pear skin. Complexity looms as even more notes emerge in the bouquet: honey, herbal, grassy hop tones, and a minor note of spicy phenolics and cloves. The beer goes down with a yeasty and hoppy spiciness coming to the forefront. The hops not only add a spicy bite, they also have a rather drying, bitter character. Look for prominent orange flavors, with cloves, slight hints of cinnamon, and some woody notes. This is a yeast and fruit bomb! Expect the beer to finish with a lengthy arc of flowery bitterness. So complex. So rewarding. Somehow, the hoppiness does not lead to imbalance—it's all tied together very well. Floral, fruity, yeasty, hoppy... this beer has a little something for everyone, and a whole lotta something for fans of innovative Belgian beer. World

class. This beer is massively complex, and it changes as it warms; so a food pairing is a bit overkill, but pairing with whole boiled lobster served with drawn butter and lemon is a tasty combo. The rich meat and butter are cut by the sharpness and gentle acidity of this beer, and the lemon is a nice complement to the beer's herbal hoppiness. Guldenberg will also hold up to a spicy Mongolian beef dish, and is especially nice with a fine, sharp blue or a pungent gorgonzola (you could even take it as far as limburger). If you'd like to learn about fine gourmet cheeses firsthand, consider picking up a membership to our Gourmet Cheese of the Month Club. Details may be found at www.monthlyclubs.com.

The RARE BEER CLUB



ANCHORAGE BREWING COMPANY ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

NELSON SAUVIN

We first featured the esteemed Anchorage Brewing Company shortly after they'd opened, digging into their Galaxy White IPA right around the time that they were taking the #1 slot on RateBeer's 2012 Top New Brewers In The World list. They haven't exactly disappointed in the time since, with assertive release after assertive release hitting shelves in limited spots. Nelson Sauvín's one of their masterpieces.

We'll dig in below after swinging by the brewery.

Gabe Fletcher has been a serious force in craft brewing in Alaska for well over a decade. As the head brewer for the Midnight Sun Brewery in Anchorage, he was a major contributor to their tremendous growth over the years, as well as for producing such beers as their award-winning Arctic Devil Barley Wine and their legendary M Belgian-Style Barley Wine. Despite many successes at Midnight Sun, in the summer of 2010 Gabe decided to strike out on his own to pursue his passion for brewing unique beers, aging them in wood, and experimenting with *Brettanomyces*

yeast and other "critters" to produce flavors unexpected and exceptional.

Rather than go the traditional route and buy his own brewhouse, Gabe hit upon the unique idea of renting time on the system of the Sleeping Lady Brewery in Anchorage, as well as the space in their basement. Doing this allowed Gabe to invest his capital where he really wanted to put it: wood. Visiting

the Anchorage Brewing Company is a bit like being invited into the Bat Cave. There are racks and racks of barrels—chardonnay, cabernet, pinot noir, hundreds in all. And those massive French oak foudres: wooden vats holding over 600

gallons each.

Using each different barrel as a master craftsman uses his tools, Gabe produces beers that are typically packaged into 750mL bottles for distribution via Shelton Brothers. And they're pretty amazing stuff—with Gabe taking on a ton of adventurous terrain in recent years. The first four releases were each triple fermented:

a primary fermentation in stainless steel, a long secondary fermentation in French oak wine barrels dosed with *Brettanomyces*... before being bottle conditioned. Released first was Whiteout Wit, brewed with Sorachi Ace hops, spiced with lemon peel, coriander and black peppercorn, and then aged in French oak Chardonnay barrels. Next was Bitter Monk double IPA: 9% ABV, with a massive 100 IBUs from Apollo and Citra hops along with Citra dry-hopping during aging with *Brettanomyces* in French oak Chardonnay barrels. (A mouthful.) Then came the Love Buzz Saison, 8% ABV and 40 IBUs, brewed with Amarillo and Simcoe hops and spiced with fresh Alaskan rosehips, fresh orange peel and black peppercorns. (Also: aged in French oak Pinot Noir barrels with

(Continued on reverse page)



SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Saison w/ <i>Brettanomyces</i> and 100% Nelson Sauvín hops, fermented in oak foudres
Alcohol By Volume
6.5%
Serving Temperature
45–52° F
Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Chalice, Teku, or Chardonnay Glass

Brett.) Finally there was The Tide and Its Takers tripel, brewed with Sorachi Ace and Styrian Golding hops and aged in French oak Chardonnay barrels with Brett. Every one delicious. With the lasting creativity and depth in brewing, Gabe Fletcher and Anchorage Brewing Company have been, for us, one of the most exciting developments on the U. S. brewing scene in recent years. It's a treat to dig into their mouthwatering Nelson Sauvín with our RBC members this month.

NELSON SAUVIN

Anchorage's Nelson Sauvín, like most of Anchorage's releases, sees only a limited amount of distribution, with only about 200 cases sold throughout the U.S. in 2018. We'll be taking the majority of the 2019 release for our Rare Beer Club members, without around 50 to 75 cases to be sold outside of the club. This is a particularly dialed-in release out of Anchorage, and a perfect opportunity to dig into a beer 100% hopped with the delicious Nelson Sauvín hop.

This pours a bright, glowing golden-straw color, capped by off-white foam. The aromatics are super generous

from the start, overflowing with tart lemon and pomelo grapefruit. It's a lot of pithy citrus and tropical notes, from lemons and limes to green mango and kumquat. It's a brilliant introduction to this beer, marrying the impacts of the *Brettanomyces* yeast and Nelson Sauvín hops into an incredible expression of tart fruits and herbaceous character. Refreshing elements of lime, especially, give a ton of brightness and lift from the moment this is poured.

The first sip reveals bold carbonation and expressive tart fruits, with that lemon-lime combo coming through with a whole bunch of vibrancy. For fans of the impactful Brett character of Anchorage, their Nelson Sauvín comes through with a whole lot of satisfying citrus and tart fruit, alongside a peppery cracker note. At this point, the acidity levels allow plenty of room to immediately dig in, with an initial punch of tartness followed by a satisfyingly smooth hit of grassy hops. There's a subtle underlying element of oak present from the time this saison has spent inside of its foudres, offering almond and vanilla hints. Smooth, toasty undertones.

There's a lot of complex fruit facets to dig into courtesy of the *Brettanomyces* and Nelson Sauvín, from the intense lemon-lime permeating the whole business, to tropical notes of mango and passion fruit and beyond, presented alongside elements of oak and herbs and its softly toasty malt. There's so much to love about this beer, and it's possibly the most eminently drinkable beer we've ever had from Anchorage. The Nelson Sauvín hops do wonders, while the Brett's both bright and complex. Let this warm up a touch for all those elements to fully play out.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

This is bottle conditioned and the Brett component will likely give this some added longevity, but for maximum Nelson Sauvín effect we would definitely encourage our RBC members to check this out fresh. It seems like a fair bit of that lime and fresh herbaceous character could drop off pretty quick. We couldn't help but want to try this one alongside Key lime pie, with that electric lime core, but the vibrant citrus also make this primed for spicy braised pork.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: NELSON SAUVIN HOPS

BY KEN WEAVER

Anchorage Brewing Co.'s Nelson Sauvín, one of the two Rare Beer Club featured beers this month, is brewed with 100% Nelson Sauvín hops—a particularly forward variety originating from New Zealand's Plant & Food Research back in 2000. The variety comes from the New Zealand "Smooth Cone" hop, itself an offspring of old-school California Cluster.

Characteristics of Nelson Sauvín hops emphasize a focus on "fresh crushed gooseberries" (a common descriptor for New Zealand's Sauvignon Blanc). The hops also can include tropical character along the lines of lychee, passion fruit, lime, mango... Nelson Sauvín was one of the major early impact hops, and it can bring exceptional potency and zest into a beer.

If you're digging the Anchorage Nelson Sauvín, where its

pungent qualities are set alongside the impact of *Brettanomyces*, there are at least a couple other examples highlighting these hops (with greater availability). Alpine Beer Co.'s Nelson IPA is one of the key options with larger distribution, while 8Wired's HopWired IPA is packed with Nelson Sauvín alongside various other New Zealand varieties. Mikkeller's also featured a variety of Nelson-Sauvín-y releases.

Have a local New Zealand-hop beer you've been digging? Something like Motueka more your thing? Let us know what's been hitting the spot on Twitter at @RareBeerClub.

Ken Weaver (@KenWeaver) is a beer writer and cartoonist based in Petaluma, California. He makes a weekly webcomic about a brewery at the end of the world at massivepotions.com.