

The RARE BEER CLUB

GARDEN PATH FERMENTATION MAY 2019 SPECIAL OFFER

THE EASYGOING DRINK

Style: Foudre-Fermented Grisette w/ native Skagit Valley yeast

ABV: 4.4% **Serving Temperature:** 40–47° F **Suggested Glassware:** Nonic, Tumbler, or Tulip Glass



Our latest Rare Beer Club special offer brings together four exceptionally unique beers from Garden Path Fermentation in Burlington, Washington, following up on the strong response to their recently featured The Garden Paths Led to Flowered. Garden Path is the product of Ron Extract and Amber Watts, who were both previously employees at Jester King Brewery down in Austin. The couple relocated to the Skagit Valley to focus on slow-fermented beers made with local products: grains from Skagit Valley Malting, honey from The Valley's Buzz (for bottle-conditioning their beers), local fruits, and Pacific Northwest hops. Their beers are all fermented in oak with a house yeast culture focusing on native *Saccharomyces*, and the end results are some of the most nuanced, drinkable, unique releases we've had in a while.

Garden Path Fermentation beers are self-distributed within Washington with a slight amount being distributed outside the state, frequently in conjunction with the brewery's special events. Each of their beer names represent a garden-path sentence, reinforcing the core aesthetic of the brewery: "A garden path is a beautiful way to get someplace you may not have meant to go. Our products, the result of blending, aging, and curation, may take you in directions you didn't anticipate and we hope you enjoy." While fermented with native yeast, these beers are focused on nuance and drinkability over overt sourness—often showing just a bit of tartness and helping to emphasize the flavorful Skagit Valley grains going into each of these beers.

The first of these four special-offer beers, The Easygoing Drink, does exactly that. Brewed with quite a lot of raw grain—including raw wheat, flaked oats, and flaked rye—the super-drinkable result allows the brewery's house culture to show through nicely, with pepper and subtle spices emphasized. Grisettes are generally low-alcohol, saison-like beers, finding their roots originally as a drink for the coal and stone miners in Belgium's Hainaut province, and this interpretation from Garden Path is a particularly refreshing take. There's subtle, lemon-driven tartness present, as well as some soft underlying oakiness. After primary fermentation in oak foudres, 52% of the final blend of this grisette saw secondary fermentation in stainless steel, while the remaining 48% went into oak barrels. This blended final result shows a solid tannic structure courtesy of its oak aging, with hints of almond skin more than vanilla. It's a generous, impeccably presented grisette, with massive amounts of depth for a sub-5% beer.

Aging & Pairing Notes: Garden Path beers are frequently kept for a few months after bottling before being released, giving the flavors time to meld and condition. As such, these four beers in this special offer are all ready to drink, but the grisette feels especially in its prime right now. For pairings the peppery, lemony, saison-like core provides a ton of flexibility for working with lighter fare. The firm oak undertone (plus pepper and lemon) had us pondering grilled seafood options.

THE WET HOPPED SHIP.

Style: Skagitonian Fresh Hop Blend

ABV: 5.2% **Serving Temperature:** 42–49° F **Suggested Glassware:** Nonic, Tulip, or Teku Glass



While Garden Path Fermentation typically sources Pacific Northwest hops in its beers, this one uses hops that were actually grown just a few miles away from the brewery. In the years before Prohibition, the western parts of Washington were a huge player in the country's hop-growing industry, but in the time since most of the state's production has shifted east toward the Yakima Valley and elsewhere. Hop Skagit, a hop operation in the Skagit Valley, harvested its very first hop crop this past fall, and the team from Garden Path was on site to help them pick the fresh Comet and Cascade. Within hours, these hops were added to the hot wort in a waiting coolship to provide initial flavor and aroma contributions, and this became the basis of The Wet Hopped Ship. Ron at Garden Path mentioned that, as far as they've been able to learn, this beer uses all of the hops grown in their region of Washington in quite a long time.

Don't think lambic. Don't think traditional wet-hop beer. This one's its own thing entirely.

(Continued on reverse)

THE WET HOPPED SHIP. (CONT'D)

The Wet Hopped Ship is ultimately a complex blend of coolship- and foudre-aged beers, and the hop contribution appears throughout with endearing grass, lime, and lemon pith, providing herbaceous, citrusy backing for the peppery contributions of the native Skagit Valley yeast. At first approach, this lands as nicely handled foudre-fermented saison, but it goes way deeper than that: well-placed oak tannins, endearing contributions from the Hop Skagit hops, and further depths from the raw wheat and Garden Path's house culture.

Aging & Pairing Notes: Despite being wet-hopped, and the typical expectations that go along with this practice, this beer is held at the brewery for two to three months after bottling to allow it time to properly come together. This one's now drinking at its prime, and we'd encourage members to enjoy it on the sooner side. For pairings, much like with The Easygoing Drink, this is very flexible overall, and that grassy/citrusy/oak combo had us craving fish tacos with a squeeze of lime.

THE DRY HOPPED STREAMS WELL.

Style: Dry-Hopped Skagitonian Ale conditioned w/ Honey

ABV: 5.3% **Serving Temperature:** 42–49° F **Suggested Glassware:** Nonic, Tulip, or Teku Glass



If you enjoyed Garden Path's recently featured The Garden Paths Led to Flowered, this one should be very much in your wheelhouse as well. Inspired by hoppy Belgian beers like De la Senne's Taras Boulba, The Dry Hopped Streams Well is led by flavor and aromatic hops in tandem with the brewery's native Skagit Valley house yeast culture. Per usual, this one's been fermented in an oak foudre and gets bottle-conditioned with Skagit Valley honey from The Valley's Buzz. This blend of three different beers actually comprises various oak-foudre and solera-puncheon-aged components, along with a wide range of hop additions: PNW Mount Hood, Perle, Willamette, Simcoe, and Loral, plus dry-hop additions of Sterling and Cascade.

After The Old School The New, this is the most hop-forward of the group, combining the charismatic house culture of Garden Path with an herbal, grassy, lemony edge throughout. A well-structured oak-tinged core provides much of the baseline profile, plus pepper, almonds, and soft vanilla underpinning. Like all these Garden Path beers, a central focus is its mélange of nuanced saison-like yeast contributions and deftly executed barrel aging, but those various hop components bring this one to an entirely different space. That initial grassiness and hint of lemony acidity set the stage for a hugely drinkable, subtly tart beer with expressive hops.

Aging & Pairing Notes: The Dry Hopped Streams Well affords a solid example of where the Garden Path beers are likely to head with a bit more time in the bottle, as the Skagit Valley house culture, etc. have built up a touch of juicy lemony acidity at this point. In general, these beers should age pretty gracefully for their respective ABVs, though keep in mind the hop impacts will drop off over time. For pairings, that touch of lemony acidity plus hop bitterness suggests this should play very nicely beside herbaceous goat cheese or white pizza. We're also thinking lamb kebabs.

THE OLD SCHOOL THE NEW.

Style: Skagitonian IPA?

ABV: 7.2% **Serving Temperature:** 45–52° F **Suggested Glassware:** Nonic, Tulip, or IPA Glass



As the brewery puts it: "Our take on what IPA once was, using a coolship full of hops co-fermented with native yeast in an open-top oak foudre." Also good at setting expectations for this beer is its internal nickname—AntiIPA. This beer couldn't give a care about current trends in IPA, and we're totally here for it. The hops include Pacific Northwest Simcoe Cryo Hops from YCH Hops, plus whole-flower Santian, Sterling and Cascade from Indie Hops.

But the result is very much an old-world IPA. British in vibe, firmly hopped with earthiness over overt citrus, and with some purposeful age behind it to allow the hop additions time to mellow out—much in the same manner that a firmly hopped IPA would have arrived after a long boat journey way back in the day. The house culture offers nice nuance to accompany that general purpose, with hints of pepper and sourdough. Ditto for the underlying oak.

Held up to the light, this beer shows off its vibrant IPA-orange core, but it's definitely a bit darker than one would likely expect. The Old School The New is actually the darkest beer that Garden Path currently makes, employing Copeland Dark Malt and Dark 80 Malt, raw red wheat, and acidulated malt—all from nearby Skagit Valley Malting. That firm rudder of an amber-like maltiness does great work bringing all of the core elements of this old-school IPA into clarity: there's generous red fruit, loads of earthiness and floral and biscuity malts, and a subtle intriguing twist from the impact of the native yeasts and the time spent in oak.

The Rare Beer Club Time Machine Department is still sadly just a broom closet, but this gets us imagining ourselves in a long-ago India as boat-aged IPA barrels are being unloaded. And if we're being honest with ourselves... this version is probably way better than what our time machine would bring back. Brilliantly realized old-school IPA, with subtle Skagit Valley flair.

Aging & Pairing Notes: The Old School The New has already been purposely aged before release, as a minimum of two to three months after packaging is needed for the beer to hit its proper stride. As such, these are ready to drink and likely in their prime. Expect hop impact to continue mellowing with additional cellaring time. Old-school IPA pairings? We're thinking curry or vindaloo.