

# The RARE BEER CLUB

## THE LOST ABBEY SAN MARCOS, CALIFORNIA

### RIGHTEOUS SON (RARE BEER CLUB EXCLUSIVE)

Most of the beer geeks in our readership will instantly recognize the names “Port Brewing” or “The Lost Abbey”, or “Tomme Arthur”—a gifted brewer associated with both. All have come to mean excellence in brewing along with envelope-pushing, boundary-testing beers.

Walk into the original Pizza Port location in Solana Beach, CA, about 25 miles north of downtown San Diego, expecting to take in what the wellspring of San Diego’s craft-brewing scene ‘looks like’, and you might be confused.

You’ll find rows of picnic-style benches for mass seating, plus an informal, order-at-the-counter pizza place staffed by primarily college-aged kids who seem like they might be taking a short break from surfing to take your food and drink order. Looks can be deceiving, though. Were it not for the brewing vessels visible behind the counter

or the eclectic list of beers and style/flavor descriptions above the beer-order counter, you might think this place was a ‘Budweiser

and Coronas & lime only’ place. Instead, you see everything from younger crowds to families with kids in tow, all chowing down on great oven-fresh pizzas and drinking pitchers and pints of some truly world-class beers. All served with that distinctly Californian laidback demeanor.

So how did it come to pass that a basically beach-front pizza shop started making some seriously high gravity, intense, world-class beers?

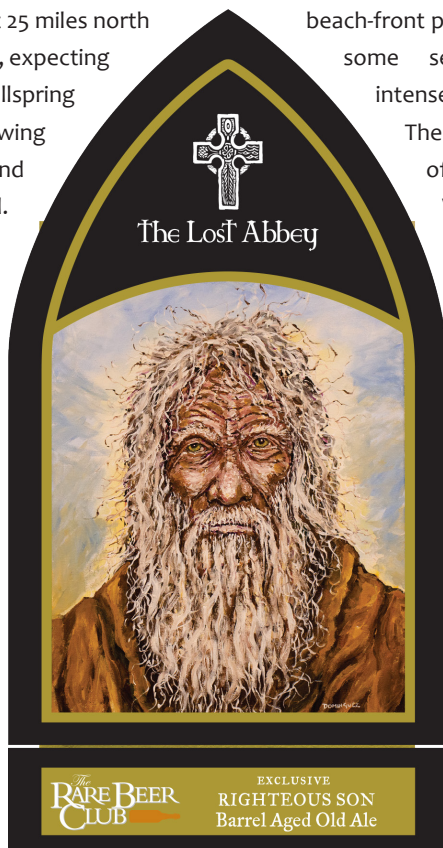
The founders and owners of Pizza Port, Gina and Vince Marsaglia, set up shop in Solana Beach 20+ years ago in 1987, and Tomme Arthur started working there as head brewer ten years later (they’ve since opened up various additional locations—each with amazing beers and food). A native San Diegan, Tomme was proud to promote his hometown as an up-and-coming center for better beer, with his own work right at the forefront of that

claim. While his professional brewing career had started less than 18 months prior to joining Pizza Port, he had already worked on

a beer with his former employer that brought San Diego its 2nd gold medal ever from the Great American Beer Festival. In his ongoing efforts to promote San Diego as a great beer city, Tomme worked to create many unique beers, and his ongoing experiments included revolutionary techniques of oak-aging beers, incorporating fruits, herbs and spices along with numerous wild yeasts and micro-organisms. Each of these experiments further emboldened him to try new processes as he and the brewers of Pizza Port Solana Beach “sought to make the most interesting beers possible.” During the eight-plus years that Tomme was head brewer in Solana Beach, the brewery won 13 Great American Beer Fest medals. In 2003 and 2004, Pizza Port Solana Beach was named Small Brewpub of the Year.

So what then is “The Lost Abbey?” The concept started in Vince Marsaglia’s mind when he was inspired by the various Abbey beers he had tried from Europe. When

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### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**

Barrel-Aged Old Ale

**Alcohol By Volume**

10.75%

**Serving Temperature**

50–57° F

**Suggested Glassware**

Snifter, Small Nonic, or Tulip Glass

Tomme Arthur joined the crew, he started brewing beers that were Belgian- and Abbey-inspired creations. Of course, to be an Abbey beer, though, you need an Abbey. And while one might argue Tomme Arthur is the head of a beer cult comprised of followers approaching quasi-religious devotion, there's no actual religious organization affiliated with these beers. Hence, these are a line of beers inspired by Abbey and Belgian traditions, but with no actual Abbey (leading us to... The Lost Abbey). Since many of Tomme's most revolutionary creations fell into this loose theme, a number of the beers brewed under the Pizza Port or Port Brewing name have been moved over to their new home in The Lost Abbey lineup. For more information about The Lost Abbey and the Pizza Port restaurants, visit [lostabbey.com](http://lostabbey.com) and [pizzaport.com](http://pizzaport.com).

Rare Beer Club's founder Michael Jackson (arguably the world's greatest beer writer) was a big fan of Tomme's beers, and the club featured a number of those early Pizza Port releases (Cuvee de Tomme, SPF 8 Saison, etc.). We think that Michael would've loved this month's Rare Beer Club exclusive from Tomme & Co.: a barrel-aged old ale called Righteous Son.

## RIGHTEOUS SON

We're pleased to have another Rare Beer Club exclusive this month from our friends at The Lost Abbey: a blended barrel-aged old ale Tomme & Co. assembled for the club. Righteous Son is a brilliantly presented blended beer overall—bringing forward complex sherry notes plus loads of deep dark fruit and caramelization. Bonus: this one also stays super drinkable.

Lost Abbey's Righteous Son pours a deep, dark caramel-brown color with reddish hints, a modest foam of light-tan bubbles capping things. Generous aromatics of dried dark fruits and dark caramel are immediately apparent in the nose, alongside some ripe red fruits and berry character. The aroma never overwhelms, bringing plush amounts of fruit and heat and restrained caramel throughout. Hints of plum and wine grape emerge as this warms.

There's a nicely enlivening presence of fine-bubbled carbonation to this old ale, giving more vibrancy and presence overall. There's so much going on that those bubbles do a lot of work giving this beer more space to express itself: the caramels, dates, dried

cherries, subtle vanilla, and all the other good stuff going on here. Generous degrees of dried red and dark fruits are a key pillar to Righteous Son—providing a luxurious, fruit-leather-like undertone that brings all of those other components together seamlessly. It's a great counterpoint for the caramels, the licorice, the sherry, the subtly sweet vanilla and almond of the barrels... Essentially all of the other parts sync up into a streamlined expression that feels anything but 'old'. As lux as a Belgian quad or abt, there's just a ton of layers to dig into with this beer, but it remains super drinkable and deliberate in its expression overall. Lots of nuttiness and toast in a crisp finish.

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

This could certainly stand for a little more cellaring time, just make sure the balance doesn't get too sweet from further caramelization. For food pairings, we could see this alongside a Stilton cheese, or spicy roasted pork (given that caramelization), or on its own as a digestif.

## BEYOND THE BOTTLE: OLD ALES BY KEN WEAVER

One of the two featured beers this month is Lost Abbey's Righteous Son, a barrel-aged old ale made exclusively for The Rare Beer Club. Old ales are a dark and maltier subset of beers tracing their origins back to England, and they typically emphasize a generosity of notes like caramel, toffee, nuttiness, and/or molasses (even a bit of roast)—essentially hitting some of the same malt spectrum as barleywine, though without the same intensity of hops or alcohol impact. The Rare Beer Club's founder Michael Jackson wrote old ales "should be a warming beer of the type that is best drunk in half pints by a warm fire on a cold winter's night."

While the above provides a basic sense of expectation for beers labeled as "old ale" today—higher in alcohol, darker malts, modest hops, often some sherry-like oxidative notes—there's a lot more nuance to what "old ale" referred to historically. Martyn Cornell's

article "So what is the difference between Barley Wine and Old Ale?" is a great resource for any deeper dive.

If you're digging Lost Abbey's Righteous Son (or old ales in general), tracking more of these down can sometimes be a bit of a hunt. English examples making it stateside are pretty few and far between, while many of the old-ale examples made stateside are more barley wine-y. Great Divide's longstanding winter seasonal Hibernation Ale (brewed annually since 1995) is one promising option that's easier to track down, and North Coast's potent Old Stock Ale is made year round. Got old-ale recommendations? Hit us up on Twitter via [@RareBeerClub](https://twitter.com/RareBeerClub).

Ken Weaver (@KenWeaver) is a beer writer, editor and cartoonist based in Petaluma, California. He makes a weekly webcomic—about a dysfunctional brewery/potion shop—at [MassivePotions.com](http://MassivePotions.com).

# The RARE BEER CLUB



## WEST SIXTH BREWING LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

### Snake Eyes

West Sixth Brewing hit our radar pretty early on after they were founded in 2012, and this sustainability-minded brewery in Kentucky has been making some exceptional beers that see very modest distribution. From their core year-round IPA (packed with Cascade, Centennial, Citra, and Columbus hops) to more occasional offerings like their exceptional Christmas Ale and imperial stout releases, West Sixth has been continually knocking it out of the park. The brewery distributes solely in its home state of Kentucky and

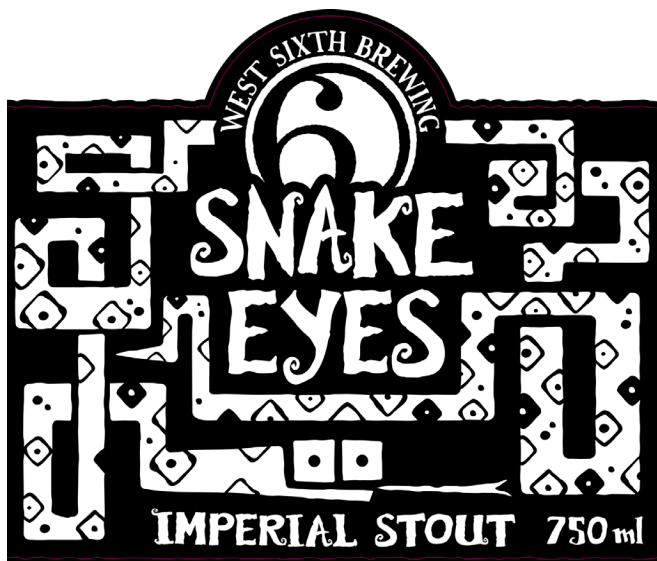
nearby Cincinnati, Ohio, but the local emphasis has also helped them grow in leaps and bounds over the past seven-ish years.

In addition to world-class beers, we appreciate the mindfulness West Sixth shows toward the surrounding communities, as well as their efforts toward environmental sustainability. Along with supporting nonprofits through campaigns like Sixth for a Cause, Wooden Nickel, Pay It Forward Cocoa Porter, and Pedaling

community involvement.

West Sixth currently operates two taprooms in downtown Lexington: the Main Taproom (at their original location in the historic Bread Box building) plus The West Sixth Greenroom, both of which offer 15–20 West Sixth beers on tap along with a selection of bottled releases. Ditto for the brewery’s West Sixth Farm, a 120-acre property on which West Sixth will grow all kinds of different regional ingredients for their beers: hops, blackberries, and raspberries (which they’re currently

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for a Purpose, the brewery also releases a sustainability report each year—highlighting efforts in areas like farming and land management practices, resource utilization/recycling, charitable giving, and

#### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Style</b>	Imperial Stout
<b>Alcohol By Volume</b>	11%
<b>Serving Temperature</b>	52–59° F
<b>Suggested Glassware</b>	Tulip, Snifter, or Pinot Glass

farming), along with barley, sorghum, squash, pawpaws, sugar beets, and chili peppers. Currently closed for winter, the West Sixth Farm reopens this spring, with free property tours (including its trellised hop yard, cider/berry orchard, chickens, and catch-and-release fishing pond), an on-site taproom, weekend food trucks, and four+ miles of mix-use trail system, the outer trails of which are open year-round... Now we want to go.

Ooh, also! The brewery's slated to open a large new location up in downtown Louisville, in the trendy NuLu neighborhood. West Sixth Nulu will include a brewery and taproom, and is expected to open up in early 2020. Learn more on the brewery's website at [westsixth.com](http://westsixth.com).

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## SNAKE EYES

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Of all the beers we've been able to sample from West Sixth Brewing, Snake Eyes imperial stout stood out as an incredibly generous and unique example of its style. We love tracking down delicious imperial stouts that manage to stand out from the sea of them, and the West Sixth Snake Eyes just brought a ton of complexity along

with an overall malt expression that felt like it occupied a lesser-explored part of the imperial-stout spectrum: leanly packed with cocoa and baker's chocolate and deeply roasted coffees, avoiding the sweeter terrain of milk chocolates and caramels. It's streamlined, packed with flavor, an overall pleasure to sip.

Snake Eyes pours an exceptionally dark chocolate-brown with caramel edges, capped by a nice amount of finely bubbled tan foam for an 11% imperial stout. There's a modest bit of viscosity to this beer in the glass, and those initial aromatics of baker's and bitter chocolate are apparent straight from the fridge. As this is allowed to warm up, a generous degree of nuttiness and sweet roast emerge, with touches of berry and red-fruit character underneath. For the degree of dark chocolate coming through this still feels quite light in the aroma, and the overall expression remains dry. The coffee serves as a smoothly integrated undercurrent, staying mellow and well roasted throughout. Hints of anise and vanilla appear.

A lively amount of CO<sub>2</sub> provides a good degree of lift for this stout, and,

working with the overall dryness of this hefty stout, keeps it an absolute pleasure to drink. Lots of cocoa and dark chocolate form the crux of the initial landing, and this remains lightly bitter despite not having a particularly overt hop presence. It's appealing, burnt-bread-crust bitter. There's a toasty, dry-chocolate core that serves as the baseline to this stout, and (as noted) Snake Eyes avoids a good bit of the sweeter territory of other stouts, in favor of deeper cocoa and berry terrain. A ripe cherry/currant note emerges clearly as this warms, beside some fruity, vinous heat, plus a fair bit of coffee and roasted nuttiness. This stout continues to unpack itself.

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Given the ABV, style and overall flavor profile, there seems to be room for a bit of cellaring time for West Sixth's Snake Eyes. Just pop a bottle every six months or so to ensure it's still around the balance you're looking for. For pairings, look to a juicy steak or leg of lamb.