

# The RARE BEER CLUB

## GARDEN PATH FERMENTATION BURLINGTON, WASHINGTON

### THE WHOLE SUM PARTS. (RBC EXCLUSIVE)

Garden Path Fermentation up in Skagit Valley, Washington has been crafting some of the most ambitious, successfully executed beers out there, and this month we've got a Rare Beer Club Exclusive

secured from these folks: Garden Path's delicious blended hoppy amber ale, The Whole Sum Parts. Garden Path's beers are bottle conditioned and yeast driven while focused on showcasing the region's wealth of locally grown ingredients—even

making cider, wine, perry and mead from Skagit Valley ingredients. They use 100% native yeast, but specifically cultivated their house culture to focus on native *Saccharomyces* (the genus that includes most traditional brewer's yeasts) rather than a pungent or acidic strain. They focus on making balanced, nuanced, drinkable products—uniquely produced in the

Skagit Valley.

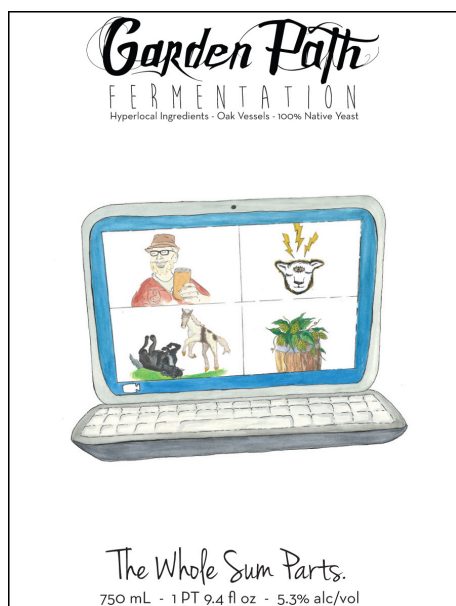
Founders Ron Extract and Amber Watts may be familiar names to some of you, as both are coming from positions at Jester

King Brewery in Austin, Texas. The pair wanted to realize a brewery with their own unique vision at the core, and Skagit Valley has proven to be optimal for them realizing the kind of hyperlocal, native-yeast-driven brewery they wanted to

things, though. The cooler temperatures and lack of summer heat, for instance—highs generally stay below 80—make for great fermentation conditions for a brewery focused on native yeast.

Everything that Garden Path does is typically blended to taste, with batches often separated into different fermentation vessels before being re-blended afterwards. Their emphasis on a native house culture and using open fermentation and oak foeders benefits from the lack of high temperature swings. It also reduces their need for artificial temperature controls. Every edition of a beer is approached as a recreation of a

*(Continued on next page)*



build. Garden Path's house culture was largely developed with their original lead fermentationist Jason Hansen, who'd come to Garden Path from the illustrious Sante Adairius Rustic Ales in Capitola, California. (He's since transitioned to a less-rural gig and to Garden Path's advisory board.) What Skagit Valley lacks in proximity it makes up for in many other

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**  
Hoppy Blended Amber Ale  
(blend of four beers)

**Alcohol By Volume**  
5.3%

**Serving Temperature**  
42-49° F

**Suggested Glassware**  
Tulip, Nonic, or Goblet

theme rather than a fixed replication, so these beer lines will further develop and evolve as additional editions are brewed. Ultimately, Garden Path Fermentation's looking to take people in directions they don't expect to go.

We've been loving everything we've tried from Garden Path up in Skagit Valley, and this month we're excited to bring the brewery's The Whole Sum Parts. to the Rare Beer Club. This is a four beer blend, that falls broadly within the saison and bière de garde tradition. The inclusion of Ron's Not Bitter., the brewery's riff on a traditional English bitter, in combination with Amber Dreams of Electric Sheep., their take on an amber bière de garde, The Little Horse Around., a hoppy table saison, and a single barrel that was aggressively dry-hopped with Ekuanot hops, make this blend especially unique and enjoyable.

Like everything we've had from Garden Path—this beer heads in some surprising, delicious directions. If you're up in Washington, Garden Path's tasting room opened up in April 2018. They're just a little over an hour north of Seattle. Find more about Garden Path and current visiting info at [www.gardenpathwa.com](http://www.gardenpathwa.com).

---

## THE WHOLE SUM PARTS.

---

For our annual collaboration with the Pints for Prostates organization, we've worked with the folks over at Garden Path Fermentation on a very special beer for this Rare Beer Club exclusive. This release, The Whole Sum Parts., is a custom blend of four different beers, ultimately

creating a hoppy amber ale that doesn't fit very neatly into any predefined style. The blend combines a barrel of beer heavily dry-hopped with Ekuanot, a hoppy table saison, an English-style bitter, and a tart amber bière de garde, and is naturally conditioned with local honey.

We worked with Garden Path and Rick Lyke over at Pints for Prostates to put this blend together, and we're looking forward to getting this tasty release out to our RBC members. This will be available exclusively through the club and Garden Path's taproom.

Pints for Prostates is a grassroots campaign that raises awareness among men about prostate cancer and the importance of early detection, and was founded by beer journalist Rick Lyke back in 2008. While Rick would normally host the annual (and much-anticipated) Rare Beer Tasting out in Denver each fall, pouring this collaboration beer alongside a bunch of other rare, incredible beers—not surprisingly, the Great American Beer Festival and the Rare Beer Tasting won't be happening this year. (Rick will instead be hosting a virtual tasting this fall.)

The Whole Sum Parts. pours a deep golden-amber hue. An immediate honeyed-malt aroma brings with it some of the fruit and herbaceous character of the Ekuanot hops, as well as the subtle funk and spice from Garden Path's native yeast. We found berries and fresh apples upfront, along with lightly tart citrus and hints of melon and eucalyptus. Expressive fruit and bitter herbs throughout this beer.

This dry-hopped, blended beer from Garden Path proves to be quite substantial overall: with firm but delicate underlying bitterness. Its bitterness and subtle acidity (plus barrel impacts) provide much of the key underlying structure. There's firm fruit, subtle tropical notes, plus layered bitterness and blended character that takes this beer well beyond one's normal expectations for an amber ale. Subtle acidity upfront is complemented by the expansive, herbal impacts from the Ekuanot hop, appearing almost lemon-lime in context, with engagingly bitter herbs.

There's a whole lot to dig into with this exclusive release from Garden Path—from its bold blending, to expressive hops, to the subtle barrel impact—and we're thrilled to celebrate its release in tandem with Pints for Prostates and Garden Path. As the latter phrased it: "This beer, the combination of a barrel heavily dry-hopped with Ekuanot and three finished beers (a table beer, an English-style bitter, and a tart amber), is unlike any of the components on their own—and, some might even say, greater than the sum of its parts."

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

We'd suggest drinking this on the fresher side for optimal hop impact. The core aspects of tree fruit, herbs, toasty malt, and the light undertone of tartness have us looking to pair this with roasted chicken, or some creamy cheeses and fresh seasonal fruit.

# The RARE BEER CLUB

## BRASSERIE DE SILLY SILLY, WALLONIA, BELGIUM

### PINOT NOIR BARREL AGED SCOTCH SILLY

This month we've managed to secure a very special release from Belgium's historic Brasserie de Silly, whose long-standing brewing heritage dates back six generations. The brewery was founded all the way back in 1850, in the small village of Silly, 25 miles southwest of Brussels. The brewery, founded by Marcelin Hypolite Mynbrughen (truly a good name), was originally called Cense de la Tour. Marcelin's first beer, Saison Silly, was created from his own malted harvest of barley, and this saison was the beginning of many great Belgian classics ahead.

In 1900, Mynbrughen's grandson Adelin received a silver medal for the brewery at the Paris World Exhibition. And it was during World War I, with the aid of Scottish soldiers stationed in Silly, that the brewery's Scotch Silly beer was born. In 1950, in addition to the brewery's existing top-fermented ales, a pilsner was added, and distributed by the brewery's own set of cafes. A series of beers under the



Enghein label—including Enghien Blonde, Enghien Brune and Enghien Noël—served to further extend the lineup starting in 1975.

Blanche de Silly, which may be familiar to many of you (it's a world-class witbier), was launched back in 1990. Brasserie de Silly, in the time since then, has also introduced new releases like Abbaye de Forest (a recognized “abbey” beer) and the organic Silly Pils BIO. Brasserie de Silly remains family-owned and their traditional, high-quality techniques and ingredients remain of the utmost importance, as demand for this Belgian brewery's classic beers continue to grow worldwide. As the brewery puts it: “Brewing at Brasserie de Silly has not changed substantially since 1850—the process is still very traditional.” U.S. availability of this month's featured selection from Brasserie de Silly—an incredible Scotch ale aged in Pinot Noir barrels—was particularly small, with 2020's allocation expected to

be limited to Rare Beer Club members.

#### PINOT NOIR BARREL AGED SCOTCH SILLY

This special release from Brasserie de Silly, a limited barrel-aged offering of the brewery's famous Scotch Silly ale, gets aged in a particular type of barrel, the variety of which varies each year. We have recently seen the likes of Bourbon-, Bordeaux-, and Cognac-barrel-aged versions. But this latest one, aged in Pinot Noir barrels, was something special. It combines the rich, caramelly impact of its Scotch Silly base with fruity, vinous counterpoints from that residual barrel character. Only about 600 cases were sold in the U.S. in 2019, across

*(Continued on next page)*

#### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**

Strong Scotch Ale aged in Pinot Noir barrels

**Alcohol By Volume**

10%

**Serving Temperature**

45–52° F

**Suggested Glassware**

Tulip, Goblet, Thistle, or Pinot Glass

5 states. No sales are planned for 2020 beyond the allocation for Rare Beer Club members.

For fellow fans of Pinot Noir, there's a lot of familiar elements to dig into in this release, as bright red fruit and plum emerge immediately from the aromatics. Plus, the initial pour itself is a vibrant, deep garnet, with golden-brown edges and an off-white edging of resilient foam. There's also some firm, engaging oak presence here as well, with notes of vanilla and almond and toast throughout—even a nudge of structure from tannins. But that delicious base beer is still never forgotten, and rounding out the barrel complexity is a velvety, caramelized base of the Scotch Silly, adding mellowing notes of sweeter caramel, leather, and generous toffee.

The aromatics here are generous in fruit and barrel elements, with tempered cherry and deep berry notes mixing with that

oaky interior of Pinot Noir barrels: lightly charred, but mellowed by those above vanilla-almond notes. The nose of this Pinot-influenced Scotch ale is smooth and super-friendly. But do allow things some time to warm up in your glass to better bring out those more subtle contributions from the barrel.

This special edition from Brasserie de Silly is incredibly easy-drinking for the amount of stuff going on here—with smooth texture, an effervescent underpinning of bubbles, and just a touch of warming, vinous alcohol making everything feel a bit more lean. Even beyond the dense aromatics, the flavor takes that cherry/red-fruit scale and seems to expand it in a huge way, bringing in notes of strawberries, fruit leather, candied oranges—even sweet, rich dates.

Trying to identify and dig into the various barrel contributions of barrel-aged beers

like these can challenge one's taste buds. Attempting to discern the fruity secondary notes of the Pinot barrels versus this ale's fruity esters tends to instead have us just enjoying the fact that certain central notes here approximate a caramel apple, and that some things work well for a reason. So many of Scotch Silly's core notes intertwine well with the barrel-aged sections here, and a ton of complexity's coming through from those barrels. A highly memorable special release.

#### PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

“Living Beer, Living Ale” is one of Brasserie de Silly's calling cards—and combining bottle-conditioning with 10% ABV suggests this one's built to develop for at least a couple years. The combo of red fruit and caramel has us going with pairings involving spicy roasted pork.

## BEYOND THE BOTTLE: BEER AND SURVIVAL BY KEN WEAVER

In recent months I've been checking in on how breweries here in Sonoma County have been handling COVID-19 complications, including California's statewide closure of indoor dining on July 13th. With that pitch-perfect 2020 timing: we now have wildfire season upon us. Here in Petaluma (20-ish minutes south of Sonoma County's biggest city, Santa Rosa) we've only seen ash and smoke thus far, but there are 500+ fires and 750,000+ acres burned statewide. Hazy skies. Scary-ass sunsets. Regularly checking our local air-quality numbers. Got our bug-out bags repacked. My wife just sent me over a Google spreadsheet of our “What would we grab in 20 minutes?” list. The house is prepped, in case friends need to evacuate here again.

For our local breweries, which had been finding COVID-19 workarounds like outdoor beer gardens, it means one more step backwards. All of the Santa Rosa breweries I mentioned

last month—Russian River, Moonlight, and Cooperage—have had to temporarily suspend their outdoor operations due to air-quality issues, all switching to take-out only for the moment. Here's hoping air-quality levels improve soon and fire season won't be as bad as it looks.

That said... this is familiar turf. We've endured wildfires, and everything 2020's thrown so far. We had N95 masks way before COVID. We'll get through this too. Here's hoping you are holding up ok through everything. Support the small businesses you want to stay open. Stay strong. I'm gonna go crack an apocalypse beer and fall asleep on our bug-out bag.

*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.*