

The RARE BEER CLUB

MAUI BREWING COMPANY
KIHEI, MAUI, HAWAII

GRANDMA'S COFFEE CAKE IMPERIAL PORTER

Maui Brewing Co. got its start back in 2005, starting as a single brewpub and small restaurant making its own beer locally. Co-founders Garrett Marrero and Melanie Oxley focused on the goal of creating authentic “Ale and Lagers brewed with Aloha,” and placing an emphasis on actually doing their brewing in Hawaii. In a few years, they’d begin packaging their beer too.

Fast forward to now, and Maui has four restaurant locations, significantly expanded brewing operations, and hundreds of employees. There’s the main brewhouse and restaurant in Kihei on Maui, as well as a second restaurant on that same island in Lahaina. And then Waikiki and Kailua

on Oahu. They currently distribute to around 20 states, plus D.C., and you might find them internationally in locales like Canada, Japan, and the

United Kingdom. Maui Brewing’s been a major part of Hawaii’s craft beer scene, plus they do things like have solar PV panels to provide a huge slice of their electricity needs, and doing CO2 reclamation to reduce their emissions. In 2017, the U.S. Small Business Administration recognized

Marrero and Oxley as National Small Business Persons of the Year to highlight the brewery’s accomplishments.

We’ve been fans of Maui since we first started seeing their beer here

stateside. Bikini Blonde Lager and Coconut Hiwa Porter were standouts in those earliest days, before our hop-loving souls gravitated to Big Swell. Lately Pueo Pale Ale’s been a nice go-to for hops, with slightly lessened ABV. The coconut porter in particular always stood out as being something special, and this month we’ve got something that’s also a porter... but also significantly bigger.

As a Rare Beer Club exclusive this month, we’re pleased to offer Maui Brewing’s Grandma’s Coffee Cake Imperial Porter, brewed with Maui-roasted Origin Coffee and coffee

(Continued on reverse page)



SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Imperial Porter w/ Coffee, Cinnamon, Brown Sugar, Lactose, and Grandma’s Coffee Cake

Alcohol By Volume

9%

Serving Temperature

50–58° F

Suggested Glassware

Small Nonic, Tulip, or Snifter

cake from Grandma's Coffee House. Grandma's is a century-old Maui institution of pastry—and this beer's got a few other special ingredients tucked in as well. This will be available exclusively through the Rare Beer Club and the brewery's tasting rooms. It's one of the best beers we've tried all year, and we can't wait to show off what Maui's put together for our club members.

While travel might not be the greatest idea in the world when you're reading this, should you find yourself over in Hawaii, best sure to check out what's going on at the brewery's various locations: Kihei and Lahaina on Maui; Kailua and Waikiki on Oahu. mauibrewingco.com

GRANDMA'S COFFEE CAKE IMPERIAL PORTER

We're thrilled to be able to offer up Grandma's Coffee Cake Imperial Porter from Maui Brewing as an exclusive to our Rare Beer Club members, available only through the club and the brewery's tasting rooms in Hawaii. They've put together an amazing beer for us. Brewed with Maui-roasted Origin Coffee, this is one of the most satisfying coffee beers we've had in a long while. And it also incorporates another famous local institution on Maui: Grandma's Coffee House, which was founded over a century ago and is well-known for their incredible pastries. If we're gonna do a pastry beer, we're not gonna mess around.

Maui literally added Grandma's coffee cakes to the mash when making this, as well as some subtler additions of cinnamon, vanilla, and brown sugar. It's a lot—but it's hard to argue with the final result.

We've long been fans of Maui's canned offerings that make it stateside, including the crispy Bikini Blonde Lager, Big Swell IPA, and Pueo Pale Ale. But especially their Coconut Hiwa Porter, and this imperial porter from Maui builds on many of the successes of that beer. This pours a dark, dark chocolate-brown color capped by dark tan foam, the liquid showing a bit of viscosity to it. Strong foam retention and lacing here despite the significant ABV.

The aromatics on this are huge from the initial pour, leading with expressive cinnamon and vanilla-tinged coffee cake. This combines the appeal of crumbly pastries with a stellar coffee character, as well-roasted, bright, beautifully expressed coffee serves to nicely accentuate the rest of this beer. The imperial porter base brings substantial milk chocolate, roast, and subtle licorice. One of the most expressive, deftly executed coffee aromas we've experienced lately, and the alcohol presence stays conveniently tucked away behind that coffee and porter base.

For how much is presented within this beer, it's super easy to get into. Nicely integrated CO₂ provides some lively

texture to this full-bodied imperial porter, with generous roasted coffee and cinnamon and milk-chocolate notes leading the charge. The porter base serves as a firm foundation for everything, with the coffee cake and other special additions adding in vanilla and pastry-like flourishes. Sweetness is kept in check by the roast and bitter specialty malts.

Overall, Grandma's Coffee Cake Imperial Porter serves as a perfect showcase for both the Origin Coffee and the coffee-cake additions, allowing each of these elements ample space to play out fully. Even that underlying imperial porter gets to show off its stuff: rich milk and dark chocolate, effortless nuttiness and roast, all syncing up well with the specialty additions. We make an effort not to gush about these beers—but we're just so impressed by this one. Lush, effortlessly drinkable, and a perfect example of what this island brewery's capable of.

PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

This is suitable to age for a bit, but we expect some of these special additions to be at their most expressive early on; already drinking great. We'd take Maui's suggestion of making this a breakfast beer (perhaps with actual coffee cake?), or pairing with a vanilla-focused dessert.

The RARE BEER CLUB



BRASSERIE DUBUISSON PIPAIX, BELGIUM

SCALDIS NOËL

Brasserie Dubuisson has been brewing continuously since 1769, when it was founded as the brewery of the estate of Domaine de Ghysegny, across the road from its present location. To put that into context, that was before Belgium was a country, and before the famed Trappist breweries of Belgium. It has been in the Dubuisson family since at least the 1890s.

The name Dubuisson translates to “bush” in English. At the end of the First World War, the brewery was liberated by a British battalion and, in appreciation, the brewery adopted the English spelling of their name as the moniker for their beers. In Belgium, the English spelling of *bière*, beer, was commonly used—hence, the nicely alliterative name of “Bush Beer” was adopted as far back as 1933. The term Bush Beer doesn’t tend to conjure up thoughts of great, artisanal beer for many U.S. consumers, since we know Busch Beer (with a “c”) as a relatively bland light lager.

However, in Belgium, Bush is recognized (at least regionally) as some of the finest and, for many years, the strongest beers made in the country (at 12%–13% ABV). Unfortunately when Bush Beer made its way over to America, it ran up against the Anheuser-Busch brand. So to better set themselves apart from the Busch beers, they

renamed the brands “Scaldis” for the U.S. and some other export markets, which is the Latin spelling of Belgium’s greatest river, the Schelde.

Today led by Hugues Dubuisson, the eighth-generation

family member to direct the business, Brasserie Dubuisson is still located in the province of Hainaut, the richest agricultural region in Belgium. It comes as little surprise that the Scaldis beers tend to feature complex and fresh orchard-fruit notes, as well as crisp, nutty maltiness. Dubuisson remains laser-focused on quality and their historic roots, even through a recent period of growth.

Notably, Hugues co-founded the Belgian Family Brewers Guild, dedicated to highlighting the contributions made by independent brewers, and making it easier for all consumers to distinguish between authentic independent brews and “label beers” that simply claim to be “Belgian.” It seems this brewery has tried to fight confusion about its beers for at least the past 30 years—be it “Busch” versus “Bush” beer, or production by Belgian families versus faceless bigger Belgian brands, and, in their efforts, have helped to enhance the global beer landscape for a whole lot of people. Of course, learning about beer is made all the more interesting with such top-shelf offerings—and Brasserie Dubuisson has been offering top-tier quality for generations. The Scaldis Noël we’ve selected for our members this month embodies this perfectly—and we think you’re going to

(Continued on reverse page)



SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Strong Dark Belgian Ale
Alcohol By Volume
12%
Serving Temperature
52–58° F
Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Goblet, or Chalice

love this holiday classic. Cheers!

SCALDIS NOËL

Scaldis Noël is one of our favorite Belgian winter beers, brewed especially for the holidays, and was first introduced to the world all the way back in 1991. This is brewed with caramel malts and candy sugar, and it remains unfiltered and gets refermented in the bottle. This famous Belgian brewery has seen relatively sparse U.S. distribution over the past 10 years after their previous importer shut down, and only about 250 cases of Scaldis Noël ended up being sold across the U.S. in 2019. We think this classic winter beer deserves more regard.

Scaldis Noël pours a deep, honey-golden amber in the glass, capped by firm tan foam. This offers up generous aromatics from the first pour, leading with nutty caramel, cola, and sweet banana. Touches of phenolic, pepper- and clove-like spices throughout—but all the spicing seems to be coming from Belgian yeast expression, rather than any

sort of special additions. A deftly executed aroma, with the periphery offering hints of pineapple and dried dark fruit.

Nicely rounded expression from the first sip, with subtle underpinning carbonation from the bottle conditioning. Vibrant red fruitiness as well as significant caramel and cola lead the first impact. The Belgian yeast character is beautifully developed and brings forth bananas, some red-apple fruitiness, and clove-like spice that contributes some significant welcome bitterness overall, balancing out this beer's sweeter elements. Given a bit of time to warm, that central caramelization and fruit expression (cherries, dark berries, etc.) continue to build. We found generous sherry-like notes present, along with dense toffee and nutty core malt character.

This avoids the overt holiday spicing of many other winter seasonals, in favor of exceptional Belgian yeast character that works beautifully with the specialty malt additions of this beer. A vibrant amber-malt

expression, layered and velvety smooth, permeates every aspect of this, while the underpinning of spritzzy carbonation from being refermented in the bottle keeps it feeling quite nimble, as does the subtle, vinous warmth courtesy this beer's 12% ABV. It's a touch warming, as you'd expect—but always super smooth. The long-lasting finish continues the dense fruit expression, cherry especially, alongside lingering toastiness and peppery clove from the yeast. One of the classic Belgian holiday releases, this beer just keeps on going.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Scaldis Noël should continue to develop nicely with some time in one's cellar, amplifying this beer's existent caramelization and sherry notes. For food pairings, we'd use that combo of chewy amber maltiness and red fruit alongside turkey or pork tenderloin. This beer's also perfectly built for a nightcap.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER BY KEN WEAVER

I'll refrain from any form of 2020 recap. Pretty sure we all agree it could've gone better.

We're still in purple Tier 1 (the worst tier) here in Sonoma County, with a little over 2% of the county having been tested positive for COVID thus far—such that we're still pretty far away from bringing certain elements of daily life back safely. After feeling low during a large portion of this year, it feels especially good to know that it's almost over. 2021 will likely do its best to make me regret typing that, but it's hard not to look forward to this all being past.

On the beer front: I'm looking forward to having a pint at a bar again someday... INSIDE, even. Without a mask on, or in my pocket. Without constantly worrying about distances and others'

nose coverage. Presuming we find a vaccine that sticks, our bartender also won't feel scared just to come to work. Brewery owners won't be wondering if they're shoveling money into a pit, adjusting to the latest reopening requirements, only for a new, different lockdown to emerge. Essential workers will be able to raise a pint more easily. We'll be able to properly mourn all of this past year's losses, with people we haven't seen in way too friggin long.

It's really, really hard not to look forward to these things. Here's to a better 2021.

Ken Weaver is a freelance beer writer and illustrator based in Petaluma, California. He makes a webcomic about beer and survival at MassivePotions.com | Insta, Twitter: @MassivePotions