

The RARE BEER CLUB



THE BRUERY
PLACENTIA, CALIFORNIA

MASH & COCONUT (2017 VINTAGE)

What The Bruery has done for beer in Orange County, California, while impressive, is just a part of their contribution to the greater brewing landscape. Once just a confusingly named, obscure little brewery from a curiously named little Southern California town, The Bruery is now known to the majority of beer geeks across the country and beyond. They've continued to develop their extensive barrel-aging program, launched the Bruery Terreux line, opened The Tasting Room at Bruery Terreux in Anaheim, and ultimately become one of the most respected breweries in the nation. They've even recently added a third Bruery location: The Bruery Store at Union Market in



Washington, DC, establishing a wee East Coast outpost.

As a result of their unbridled creativity and skilled brewing practices, The Bruery's beers are still some of the most highly coveted out there, period. It was back in 2009 that they released the beer that took the brewing community by storm: Black Tuesday, a massive imperial stout (clocking in around 20% ABV) aged in bourbon barrels for well beyond a year. Hugely oaky, rich, velvety smooth, and borderline nourishing, it caused both a stir and an annual tradition. The demand for this stout led people to drive and/or fly from hundreds (or even thousands) of miles away. A handful of

breweries have managed to take the "limited-release" concept as far as The Bruery has done with their beers, with annual vintages that sell out in a single day. Some folks have even gone one step further, creating the release equivalent of a serial novel, as The Bruery did with its recently completed 12 Days of Christmas series of annual beers.

This month, we're excited to feature a vintage selection from The Bruery's archives that we think has developed beautifully over these past few years: the 2017 vintage of the brewery's Mash & Coconut. This is a satisfying imperial brown ale at the core, aged in bourbon

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style	Imperial Brown Ale aged in Bourbon Barrels w/ Toasted Coconut
Alcohol By Volume	13%
Serving Temperature	52-58° F
Suggested Glassware	Tulip, Snifter, or Pinot glass

barrels and brewed with around 400 pounds of toasted coconut per batch. This beer is reaching its prime right now, with that toasted coconut addition working beautifully alongside the natural coconut-like elements derived from this beer's extensive aging period inside bourbon barrels. It was a tasty beer upon first release—now it's an ideal showcase for how these higher-ABV Bruery beers can continue to develop and improve with a bit of cellaring time behind them.

Should you be traveling to SoCal or DC, definitely swing by one of The Bruery's locations to check out what they're currently working on. We've been following the path of this brewery basically since they first opened (we featured their 2 Turtle Doves way, way back...), and the continued energy and innovation coming from these folks is inspiring. For more information on The Bruery, visit their website at thebruery.com, or give them a call at (714) 996-MALT.

MASH & COCONUT (2017 VINTAGE)

One of our two featured beers this month is a standout from The Bruery's archives that we think is drinking super well right now. Mash & Coconut (2017 vintage) is a bourbon-barrel-aged imperial brown ale that's brewed with about 400 pounds of toasted coconut per batch. This is a big beer, at 13% ABV, and the cellar time has done exceptional work in smoothing

out the edges here and making for a cohesive experience that's just unlike anything else.

In Mash & Coconut, the hefty addition of toasted coconut serves to amplify the coconut-like qualities derived from this beer's time spent aging inside of bourbon barrels, and the overall experience is decadent maltiness and deep coconut throughout. We found the robust notes from the coconut and the barrel contributions to be presenting so nicely right now. This is perfectly aged, drinking super smoothly, and it does an incredible job of having its coconut additions smooth out the edges of its potent core imperial brown ale and barrel character.

This pours a deep, deep reddish-brown color, capped by a modest degree of off-white foam. Despite the potent ABV, the foam in our glasses persisted for a bit, leaving substantial lacing behind. The generous initial aromatics point to brown sugar and deep caramel—a generous and superbly rounded start, emphasizing impactful core maltiness and barrel notes, with ripe red fruit and the beachside smoothness of the coconut. This lands like toasted marshmallow at times, or the top of crème brûlée. Layers of coconut and caramelized malts throughout.

A subtle but zesty underpinning of carbonation gives Mash & Coconut lots of vibrancy from the first pour,

bringing out so much of the core fruits and deep amber maltiness that serve to steer this beer's profile. Rich coconut, brown sugar, and toffee serve as some of the leading notes, with the complex sweetnesses tempered by its touches of vinous, berry-tinged alcohol and oak tannins from the barrel time. This is well structured and well cellared at this point, such that it feels like there's a lot of room to explore this beer. And there's a ton going on: intensely developed caramelization, ripe cherries, lots of coconut-tinged core warmth, and warming edges from the bourbon barrels' influence. A long-lasting finish leaves continued toasted coconut and dark maltiness, along with hints of oak and mineral bitterness. Beautiful, toasty ending. Our favorite sort of big beer: super generous, perfectly textured, lots of depth.

PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

We're really enjoying where this beer is currently, but Mash & Coconut is more than robust enough for some additional cellar time. This will need appropriately robust fare for pairings: spicy braised short ribs, or (for dessert) chocolate brownies or salted-caramel crème brûlée.

The RARE BEER CLUB



JESTER KING BREWERY AUSTIN, TEXAS

EL CEDRO

Michael Jackson once remarked on Austin, Texas’ counterintuitively rich beer scene. In the heart of a land not necessarily renowned for good beer, the Austin environs had numerous brewpubs and breweries, and offered a welcome breeding ground for better beer culture. Even the legendary Pierre Celis, famous resurrectionist of Belgian Witbier, settled there in the 1990s to open his U.S. brewery. Austin helped foster strong bits of creativity and growth for brewers in the microbrewery boom of the 1990s. But it didn’t last... Various downtown brewpubs were almost all shuttered, Celis’ own brewery was dismantled, and a few breweries evaporated in the brutal heat of Texas’ overall feelings about beer. That was back then.

For much of its more recent history, Texas’ craft brewers have had to be rather careful not to stray too far off the map, sticking to more traditional beer styles heading their lineups. It was an approach that seems to have lasted a bit longer than in other

states. But the craft beer movement has helped pierce that balloon, and the result’s been increasingly better and often more adventurous beer. The newest influx of Texas breweries hit the scene at a rapid pace.

One of them is the Jester King Brewery, located on a ranch in the Texas Hill Country on the outskirts of Austin. The folks behind the brewery have opted out of the “safe and careful approach,” instead to brew anything from authentic, oak-aged farmhouse ales made with wild Texas yeast harvested atop the brewery’s rooftop, to a European-inspired, porter-colored mild ale, to a monstrous double stout. Not the standard opening lineup of an amber, a blonde and a pale ale, they instead debuted with an oaked rye IPA called Wytchmaker, and Commercial Suicide, their English dark mild ale—a 3% ABV session brew that drinks like a beer twice its strength. They have a passion for marrying the extreme with poise—which means some of their beers are made using techniques such as open fermentation, whisky barrel

aging, and bottle-conditioning with wine yeast. Or, you know, brewed to 10%+ ABV, while staying refined and balanced overall.

The Jester King brand continues to evolve while maintaining its artisan vibe. Local artist Josh Cockrell, who was at the brewery during our three initial visits giving tours, sterilizing things, filling kegs, rolling barrels—whatever was needed at the time—designed their label artwork, brewery logos, and tap handles. We found a couple of his tap handles while in Austin checking out the local better beer scene, and these handles are truly works of art. We’ve long been fans of Jester King’s attention to detail, the passionate commitment to unleashing unconventional beers on the marketplace, the artisanship, the risk-taking, the do-it-yourselfism, the brewing prowess shown by these homebrewers turned pro, the will

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Hoppy Cedar-Aged Ale with Native Yeast & Bacteria
Alcohol By Volume
7%
Serving Temperature
43–50° F
Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Small Nonic, or Chardonnay Glass

to experiment, and the drive to source and use local, organic ingredients and harvested rainwater. We think you'll dig what Jester King's up to. For more info, check out their website over at jesterkingbrewery.com.

EL CEDRO

Jester King's El Cedro is brewed with Hill Country well water, malted barley and wheat, and fermented with a mixed culture of brewer's yeast along with native yeast and bacteria. This complex beer gets hopped with an assortment of piney, tropical hops (including Amarillo, Centennial, and Simcoe) and gets aged on spirals of Spanish cedar. El Cedro is unfiltered, unpasteurized, and 100% naturally conditioned in the bottle. We think our Rare Beer Club members are going to love this limited release from Jester King. It's the first batch brewed since 2019, and besides light availability in TX and just 70 cases that have gone out to CA, NC, and WI, the rest of this new batch has been available just through Jester King's tasting room.

This pour a deep, orange-golden color in one's glass, nicely hazed overall, and capped with a generous, off-white foam. Lots of effervescent carbonation present here, and the head stays well retained and leaves

significant lacing around the edges of the glass. Foam's continuously replenished by bubbles from below. The lead aromatics are piney, fruity, and tropically tart from the get-go, combining appealing, zesty aspects from those hop additions alongside the more lemony, bready impacts from this beer's mixed fermentation. The fermentation notes are very nicely integrated, with engaging notes of sourdough, fresh-squeezed lemon, crackery breadiness, and lime. Mouthwatering acidity and hop presence from the very initial impact.

There's vibrant carbonation here, as the initial pour suggests, providing some pillowy texture for the different components of this beer to play out. Expressive hop character, focusing on herbaceous, earthy, pithy-citrus qualities that sit seamlessly beside the complex, modestly tart acidities from the fermentation. This one's lightly funky, with a lean, mineral, lemony-citrus yeastiness that definitely reminds of us of some of our favorite Jester King releases over the years. The impact from the cedar provides an oak-like, tannic quality that helps with overall structure, and also brings some welcome almond and herbal woodiness into the mix.

Make no mistake: there's a ton going on in

this beer, but that combination of assertive hop qualities, complex yeast and bacteria contributions from the mixed ferment, and the notes from the Spanish cedar come together exceptionally well in El Cedro. Welcome bitterness throughout, a lean mineral edge, and just lots of vibrant tropical character—lemons, limes, passionfruit, mango...—have us returning to our glasses of this again and again. Great beer to spend some time exploring. Super expressive release from Jester King, with exceptional details and a finish that brings bitter pine, lime, and touches of grapefruit pith and cedar.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

The hop expression of this will be most pronounced early on, but its bottle conditioning and expressive yeast and bacteria character will keep this developing in the bottle with additional cellar time. The complexity of piney, earthy hoppiness and citrusy acidities, plus that impact of Spanish cedar, have us looking to focused, hearty counterpoints: vegetarian pizza with red sauce and creamy Mozzarella, or some pork loin or lamb to go with those herbal qualities.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: EXPLORING NON-ALCOHOLIC BEER BY KEN WEAVER

A friend recently brought over some bottles of Lagunitas' IPNA for me to try, back when he was doing Dry January—and I've found myself picking up occasional six-packs of it since. If you're not familiar: this is Lagunitas' non-alcoholic IPA, which they released toward the end of 2020. For me it's pretty comparable to an actual IPA and, as I've been trying to take more days off from alcohol throughout the week, it's been a helpful option for taking the edge off. I've had minimal experience with non-alcoholic beers, but it's made me curious to try more.

One of my local shops has a whole non-alcoholic beer section, and I've been slowly working through things, finding some good n/a options for the off days. Athletic Brewing's IPA was a bit less satisfying, but they've got a whole range of n/a releases: from hazy IPA to gose to a maple brown. Paulaner Weizen-Radler did the trick, combining a subtle hefeweizen core and spritzzy lemon juice, and these have

been solid beside spicy chicken sausages as a lunch-beer alternative. Weihenstephaner has an n/a wheat beer I need to check out, and I'll get around to the various spendy Mikkeller options out there (really enjoyed their Drink'in in the Sun a friend brought on a beach trip). Note that n/a options tend to be priced like normal beers; I see these as being an occasional pickup, when I'm looking for hops etc., just sans alcohol.

Have you headed down the non-alcoholic-beer path yet? Spelunked the non-alcoholic IPA caves? Finding anything particularly good? Hit us up on Twitter via [@RareBeerClub](https://twitter.com/RareBeerClub).

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