

The RARE BEER CLUB

SOUTH STREET BREWERY CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

IMPERIAL SATAN'S PONY

This month we're pleased to be able to introduce many of our Rare Beer Club members to the folks at South Street Brewery in Charlottesville, Virginia. South Street Brewery holds an extensive tradition as Charlottesville's longest-running brewery and pub, and they had new life breathed into the operation when the brewery was purchased in 2014 by Blue Mountain Brewery.

Blue Mountain will likely be a more familiar name, as we've featured any number of their delicious barrel-aged beers over the years, and two of the brewery's founders—Mandi and Taylor Smack—had worked for South Street almost a decade

earlier, with Taylor serving as brewer from 2001 to 2007. The new owners are committed to revitalizing this downtown Charlottesville landmark—and their beer releases have just been getting better and better.

Blue Mountain Brewery in Virginia has

already made quite a name for itself within Virginia's craft beer scene, including bringing home eight Great American Beer Festival medals since opening up in 2007. Many breweries would (and do) take the obvious route from there in terms of expansion: invest in a production facility, focus on pumping out as much of their best-selling offerings as possible, and settle in

for the long haul. With the opening in 2011 of their second location, Blue Mountain Barrel House, Master Brewer Taylor Smack and fellow partners gave a pretty clear indication that they are decidedly not like most breweries.

Taylor's brewing experience extends

back long before Blue Mountain's first location opened 13 years ago. As an enthusiast of world-class beer, you've likely heard of Bourbon County Stout from Chicago's Goose Island—one of the very first bourbon-barrel-aged beers in the U.S. It's still often considered one of the best examples out there, even long after

everyone's jumped on the barrel-aging bandwagon. For over a year, Taylor was the only person in the world producing that stout, after he'd taken over brewing responsibilities at Goose Island during 2000 and 2001. That one-of-a-kind brewing experience has certainly informed the direction Blue Mountain has been taking with their Barrel House projects.

Blue Mountain Barrel House, overlooking 4,000-foot mountains along the border of the George Washington National Forest, incorporates a wide range of lessons-learned over the years. The "rural brewpub" model at Blue Mountains' original location encouraged them to go off-grid with their water, drilling a well to ensure more consistent and

(Continued on reverse page)



SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Bourbon-Barrel-Aged
Imperial Red Ale

Alcohol By Volume
9%

Serving Temperature
48–55° F

Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Small Nonic, Snifter, or Goblet

pristine supplies than they'd likely get from conventional city water. Hundreds of barrels currently occupy the Barrel House—like Maker's Mark, Wild Turkey, Four Roses, and (Virginia to the core) Elijah Craig—allowing them to pursue a wide variety of experimental beers and blending programs.

This month we're pleased to offer RBC members our favorite release we've tried from South Street Brewery so far: their bourbon-barrel-aged imperial red ale, Imperial Satan's Pony. This is an amplified version of one of Virginia's longest-running beers, Satan's Pony, with double the malt and hops, aged in freshly emptied bourbon barrels for around two months.

For the latest info regarding South Street's draft lists, upcoming events, and operating hours, head to southstreetbrewery.com. And for all the latest details about Blue Mountain Brewery and Blue Mountain Barrel House & Smokin' Barrel Restaurant (in Arrington, Virginia, about 45 minutes southeast of South Street Brewery) visit them at bluemountainbarrel.com.

IMPERIAL SATAN'S PONY

For our annual collaboration with the Pints for Prostates organization, we've worked with the folks over at South Street Brewery to pick out a very special beer for this Rare Beer Club feature. \$1 per bottle sold of Imperial Satan's Pony will go to Pints for Prostates on behalf of Rare Beer Club and South Street. This limited-release beer was scheduled to be poured at the Pints for Prostates' annual Rare Beer Tasting in Denver this September, which

was recently cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns, so we're extra glad to be able to get this beer out into the wild through the Rare Beer Club. 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. Learn more at pintsforprostates.org.

South Street's Imperial Satan's Pony is a bourbon-barrel-aged imperial red ale clocking in at 9% ABV. The original Satan's Pony amber ale is one of Virginia's longest-running beers, and its imperial counterpart uses twice the malt bill and twice the hops, while aging the outcome for two months in freshly emptied bourbon barrels. Very much into barleywine-like territory, but especially smooth overall. Outside of the club, this beer sees distribution only in Virginia.

This barrel-aged imperial amber ale pours a deep ruby, reddish-brown color, like dark maple syrup. Rather dark overall with an amber glow, capped by a fine-bubbled, light-tan foam that leaves a modest ring of lacing. Generous aromatics of dried dark fruits (dates, raisins...) and caramels lead, though this stays fresh and vibrant overall. Plenty of plush red fruits and cola character, plus hints of maple syrup and an enjoyable, satisfying bourbon presence that never overwhelms the base beer. Burnt sugars, spicy malts, and some modest char from the barrel.

This is an exceptionally smooth 9% beer, emphasizing a robust, toasty amber core and the streamlined, focused impact of its

time spent in bourbon barrels. Moderate carbonation is ideally tuned for this rich, deeply malty offering, while hints of a subtle, warming alcohol presence keep it all feeling light. This is such a pleasure to drink, and as it warms we found more and more layers to dig into. Ripe red fruitiness, lightly salted caramel, a hint of high-ABV Zinfandel... We unpacked enormous amounts of core maltiness overall, with pinpoint texture and effortless drinkability. Its bourbon-barrel impact never oversteps, offering spicy,

toasty, oaky primary notes that work hand in hand with the imperial red base. We found this to be a hugely successful (and hugely drinkable) scaleup of a classic Charlottesville staple.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Imperial Satan's Pony is suitably sized for some modest aging, though watch the caramelized oxidative notes don't get to be too pronounced over time. In terms of pairings: core notes of deep red fruit and caramel have us looking to grilled pork dishes or a rich pecan pie.

The RARE BEER CLUB

BIRRIFICIO TORRECHIARA TORRECHIARA, PARMA, ITALY

PANIL BARRIQUÉE (2016 VINTAGE)

By now, you’ve probably heard all about the growth in craft beers in Italy. Years of headline-grabbing news from a country so well known for its wines made this seem like a surprising story. Maybe it’s simply the novelty of Italian beer, something that seemed oxymoronic (so far as U.S. awareness went) up until perhaps a decade ago, especially in the context of a craft beer selection. We think the best part of the story is the fact that it demonstrates quite clearly that craft brewing is alive and well—enough so that wine nations like Italy and France have all been experiencing a beer brewing renaissance and creating world-class beers. For years, if you were looking for an Italian beer in the U.S., you’d be limited to a somewhat bland set of a few pale lagers from a handful of Italian breweries. In recent years, selection has improved dramatically, and brewery numbers have exploded into the hundreds, though access has not. Until very recently, it was quite challenging to get many beer

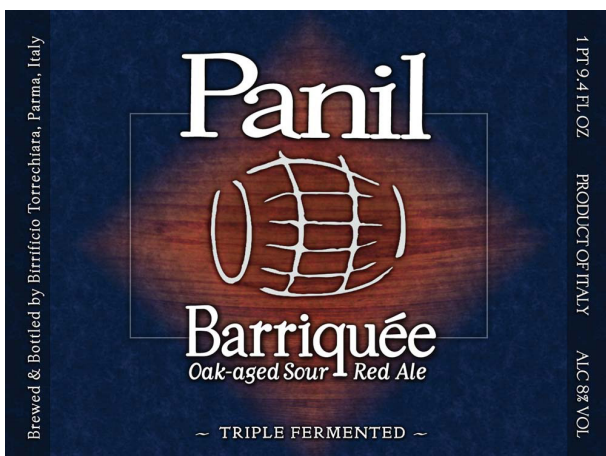
options from Italy in the States.

Nowadays there are more high-quality Italian beers making it to fine beer establishments in the U.S., and using our beer-combing skills, we’ve lined up one of the most unique for you, from a brewery that embodies the Italian beer renaissance wholeheartedly. Birrificio Torrechiara (aka Panil Birra Artigianale), located just south of Parma in Northern Italy, demonstrates the change in attitude toward beer in Italy very clearly. Since the 1930s, four generations of the Losi family have produced Lambrusco-style wine at their family-owned winery. In 2001, Lorenzo (Renzo) Losi persuaded his father to let him put his homebrewing talents to work, producing some game-changing beers under the name Panil. Today, Renzo produces more beer under the Panil label than wine. His philosophy is to produce beer naturally, absent any sort of chemical preservatives, pasteurization or filtration, permitting in his beer the most authentic,

wood, employing cognac barrels. According to Renzo, he is the first Italian brewer in modern times to use barrel fermentation; it’s an important move that brings “new tastes, or rather, the recovery of ancient tastes, [the] woody, winy [notes], are absolutely to be recovered,” according to Renzo. The result is an interpretation of Flemish red ale brewed in the style of Rodenbach that has earned critical acclaim as a truly remarkable beer; it does not employ added sugars to make the beer more palatable for the masses in the U.S. market, staying appropriately dry and keeping things au naturel, avoiding pasteurization which would kill the living, wild yeast in the bottle. Certainly one of the most intriguing takes on Flemish red ale we’ve crossed paths with. Redefining the style? Perhaps. Redefining Italian beer? Definitely.

This month we’ve managed to secure a special allotment of the brewery’s 2016 vintage of Panil Barriquée, and we think this

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natural flavors and preventing the “industrialization” that has struck even traditional producers who send their libations to the U.S. market. In short order, Renzo moved from only stainless steel fermentation to the barrel.

Panil Barriquée (from the French word for ‘barrel’) was his first to be fermented in

SPECIFICATIONS

Style	Oak-Aged Sour Red Ale
Alcohol By Volume	8%
Serving Temperature	45–52° F
Suggested Glassware	Tulip, Snifter, Chalice, or Cab Sauv Glass

well-cellaried bottling is the best example we've had of this classic Italian beer. The tannins and acidic impacts of the fresh version have developed into something that's tasting just incredible at this point in its life. Birrificio Torrechiara releases about seven different beers overall, with their oaked and wild-fermented releases being the most popular broad. For the latest info on the brewery, you can check their Facebook page at facebook.com/patlosipanilsoul/ or their website (with English option) at www.panilbeer.it.

PANIL BARRIQUÉE (2016 VINTAGE)

We're pretty pumped to be able to offer up this classic Italian sour ale to our Rare Beer Club members—and especially at such a comparatively low price point. Panil Barriquée is one of the truly impeccable old-school sour imports, and it often retails for around \$25 or more per bottle. Only a couple hundred cases of Panil Barriquée have usually been making it stateside each year, and this lingering allocation of their 2016 vintage has been aged to perfection.

Panil Barriquée is fermented three times: once in stainless steel, then for 3 months in

used Cognac barrels from Bordeaux, and, finally, in the very bottle you now have. It pours a dark, mostly clear amber with garnet hues when held to light. A medium beige head begins thick and fades to an everlasting perimeter. Expect a vibrant, vinegar-like and lemony acidity to strike the nose; one gets immediate refreshing tartness. Deep plum and unripe peaches play a key role, as do SweetTarts candy, faint impressions of oak and smoke, and subtle spiciness.

In the flavor, that firm tartness comes through on the palate, lean and focused, a nice wake-up call to the taste buds. This feels leaner, more focused, and more acidic than fresh bottles we've popped recently. There are biscuity notes in that malt framework, with fruity, vinous qualities (think Chianti), black raspberries, suggestions of clove, and some spicy plum notes. It's not surprising that this beer is remarkably wine-like, given its Italian home. A wonderful complexity comes from the cognac-barrel aging, and this imparts, as one might imagine, very subtle notes of cognac. As it warms, distinct notes of kaffir limes emerge, supplemented by flashes of sour cherry and berries. Giving a good swirl conjures up notes of bitter oranges. It finishes with a wine-like flourish

of grapes and tannic, oaky complexity. Worth noticing are the subtypes of sourness from the acids—both lactic (sour) and acetic (vinegary) notes here. Look for a ghostlike impression of stiff liquor along with mild vanilla notes and dry, woody oak character. Each batch of Panil Barriquée is unique, thanks to the wild yeast and bacteria and the barrel aging—but the quality is extremely consistent. We've sampled many vintages over the years, and this 2016 is truly exceptional.

PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

While drinking in its prime now, Panil Barriquée will remain refined with a bit of additional aging, with its acidity mellowing a bit over time. This is a perfectly aged, unpasteurized, raw, truly important conservatorium of wild fermentation and traditions. Try pairing with other local specialties, like sliced Parmesan cheese or prosciutto, or a heavier garden salad dressed with olive oil and Balsamic vinegar.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: ACQUIRED TASTES BY KEN WEAVER

One of the most interesting parts of exploring beer is starting to enjoy things that you didn't like before. Our friends recently popped some bottles of lambic to share at their house, and my wife Ali couldn't help but recounting the time that I'd tried my first sour beer. We'd been living in DC, it was around 2005—and I was on a mission to try said "sour beer." Such beers were a lot more scarce back then, and after assembling a target list of four or five of the well-rated sour examples over on RateBeer.com (where I'd been tasting through the various style categories), I managed to find my first sour beer: a \$26 bottle of Cantillon Lou Pepe Kriek.

I only recently learned Cantillon's Lou Pepe lineup of extra-impactful lambics took its name from a region of southwest France, where grandfathers are called Lou Pepe. Needless to say, I was not ready for grandpa lambic. I slowly drank it all because it

was a \$26 bottle of beer.

It's harder for me to get to that same degree of unfamiliar flavor turf now, fifteen years on, a lot of it spent as a professional beer writer and reviewer. But it's still fun to try and find that unexplored terrain... I recently picked up a Kölsch-style ale with Ceylon cinnamon and, uh, guava (from our local go-to HenHouse Brewing), which turned out shockingly good despite the disparate parts. And a friend shared an actually decent hard seltzer recently, from a local place called Ficks (made with real fruit juice). Who knew. What about you? What new drinks are you exploring? Working on any acquired tastes? Hit us up on Twitter @RareBeerClub.

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