

The RARE BEER CLUB

BRAU BROTHERS BREWING COMPANY MARSHALL, MINNESOTA

RUBUS BLACK (RBC EXCLUSIVE)

Straight out of college in 1999, Dustin Brau and his wife, Mary, bought a restaurant in the small town of Lucan, Minnesota (home to approximately 170 residents), which they named BrauHaus. In order to attract more of the local population to come enjoy a meal in town, the duo decided to begin offering their very own BrauHaus

beers made on-premises, thus turning their homebrewing hobby into a legitimate microbrewery. Their tiny 2-barrel system was barely enough to keep up with the demand of their restaurant, so in

2006 they moved their beer production to a larger building in Lucan. It was at this time that Dustin's brothers, Trevor and Brady, joined the enterprise, and their father, Dale, joined in to help too. With space to brew more beer, the team could now take the business to the next level. Brau Brothers Brewing Company was officially

founded. A bottling line was installed and their beer began flowing out of the town of Lucan to retail accounts throughout the area. They also began farming their own hops and barley on a few acres of nearby land.

In 2013, an even bigger step was taken

when Brau Brothers moved to an even larger facility in the city of Marshall, several miles to the west. BrauHaus was closed in order to focus entirely on the brewing company, which now enjoys 37,000 square

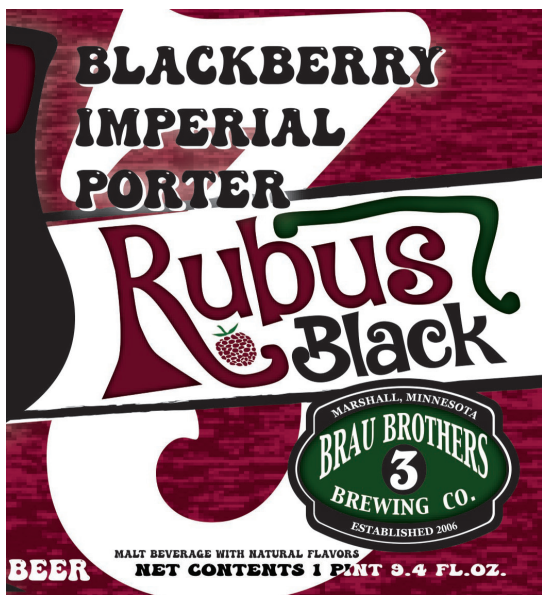
feet of space, 3,500 of which is devoted to barrel-aging, allowing Brau Brothers to produce a wider variety of beers, including sours, not to mention their own line of sodas. The brewery collaborates with a variety of smaller producers, from distilleries to coffee roasters, and the brewery's taproom offers over two dozen

taps. In addition to providing tasty pub fare, Brau Brothers also offers growler fills so visitors can take plenty of beer home with them. As one of our two featured beers this month, we're excited to offer a 750mL bottling of Brau Brother's Rubus Black: an exceptionally tasty blackberry imperial porter featuring a wide array of specialty malts, with a balancing addition of Target and Goldings hops. For the latest visiting info, you can contact them at (507) 929-BEER or visit www.braubeer.com.

RUBUS BLACK

Brau Brother's Rubus Black is a robust blackberry imperial porter clocking in at 8.5% ABV and 28 IBUs, with its hop bitterness coming from additions of

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Blackberry Imperial Porter

Alcohol By Volume

8.5%

Serving Temperature

50-56° F

Suggested Glassware

Snifter, Small Nonic, or Tulip

Target and Goldings. There's a hugely complex range of specialty malts present: Maris Otter, Chocolate and Brown Malt, Biscuit Malt, Wheat Malt, and Aromatic Malt, along with natural blackberry and chocolate flavors—with everything fermented by a British ale yeast.

First brewed back in 2006, Rubus Black was originally a one-off batch meant to cellar. The brewery's released it again from time to time ever since due to popular demand, and they've made a batch for a 750mL bottling specifically for our Rare Beer Club members, with a limited amount for their taproom. No further batches or distribution will occur for the foreseeable future.

This shows immediate, rich specialty-malt character from the get-go: layers of chocolate, toffee, nutty maltiness, and

well-roasted coffee throughout. The deep blackberry and red-fruit character are apparent from the aromatics as soon as this gets poured, and the impact of those fruity elements increases as this warms up in one's glass. Deep caramelization, loads of layered chocolate, and super generous from the start.

Rubus Black shows a full-bodied mouthfeel, leading with decadent chocolate, caramel, and blackberry elements from the very first sip. The raspberry and chocolate elements are nicely integrated within this imperial porter's malts, adding generous, bright contrasts with the core cereal, toffee, nougat, and rather deep caramelization present. As this warms, we found the complexity of those darker berry notes throughout this beer continue to amplify, while that berry-chocolate-caramel trio works beautifully throughout. Finishes

with lasting chocolates and roasted coffee, and underlying nuttiness—a hugely satisfying blackberry imperial porter.

PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

This was originally designed to be a cellarable beer; we'd encourage popping a bottle every six months or a year to ensure increased caramelization isn't changing the overall balance. For pairings, we'd be inclined to put this alongside chocolate-and-fruit-focused dessert courses to match those core notes of deep chocolate, caramel, and berry notes. Alternately: tiramisu, affogato, or some creamy vanilla-focused options to counterpoint the predominant notes in this imperial porter.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: SIPPING BERLINER WEISSE

BY KEN WEAVER

The origins of Berliner Weisse, like so many beer styles, is pretty fraught, but this tart, rather low-ABV style was once the most popular alcoholic beverage in Berlin—with around 700 breweries making it during its peak in the 19th century (per Fritz Briem's piece in *The Oxford Companion to Beer*). Made with wheat in addition to barley, fermented at least partially with lactic acid bacteria, these refreshing beers were often around 3% ABV and were traditionally served with a choice of raspberry or woodruff syrups—though those are a bit challenging to find in the U.S. these days. The majority of current-day examples here are consumed on their own, though many breweries lean heavier on acidity, ABV, or employ fruit in the beer itself.

The Rare Beer Club's highlighted a number of German-style Berliner Weisse versions over the years (in addition to this month's Lunar Interference from August Schell), including

at least a couple other releases from Schell's Noble Star Collection, such as Basin of Attraction (a dry-hopped take) and Solar Evolution (a mashup of the Berliner Weisse style and Flanders red ale). 1809 Berliner Style Weisse (created by Dr. Fritz Briem, who also wrote the Oxford Companion's "Berliner Weisse" entry) and The Bruery's Hottenroth are two of the examples you're more likely to find out in the wild, and both capture the style profile pretty well. Bear Republic's Tartare has been solid (but heavy-handed on the acidity), and Oregon's de Garde Brewing has spent a good bit of time here—creating a variety of intriguing fruited examples.

Ken Weaver is a freelance beer writer and watercolor-and-ink artist based in Petaluma, California. New original artwork is available from his webshop every few Fridays: kenweaver.com/shop.

The RARE BEER CLUB



AUGUST SCHELL BREWING COMPANY NEW ULM, MINNESOTA

NOBLE STAR COLLECTION: LUNAR INTERFERENCE (2017)

August Schell was born in Germany’s Black Forest region in 1828. After studying to be a machinist, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1848—traveling to New Orleans by a steamer ship before stopping in Cincinnati, where he found work at the Cincinnati Locomotive Works, as well as his future wife, Theresa Hermann. They married in 1853, before leaving Cincinnati with their two young children in 1856 as part of a contingent from the Turner Colonization Society of Cincinnati, traveling by river boat to see what lay further west. Led by Wilhelm Pfaender, their group founded New Ulm in 1857, with August finding work in a flour mill.

That didn’t last long. In 1860, August partnered up with Jacob Bernhardt, who had served as brewmaster at Benzberg Brewery (later to become Minnesota Brewing Company...), and the two built a small brewery nearby right along the Cottonwood

River, producing about 200 barrels of beer annually. The new brewery grew steadily over the years, and the Schells would build a mansion on the brewery grounds in 1885, complete with elaborate gardens and a deer park—all currently still around and listed in the National Register of Historic Sites. August’s arthritis would eventually have him back off of daily operations, with his sons stepping in to manage things. After August passed away in 1891, his son Otto led the brewery forward.

Over the years, the extended Schell family would expand the brewery, upgrading and buying new equipment, including refrigeration. Up until 1900, its brewing calendar was determined by the weather, with ice being collected from the Cottonwood River and stored inside caves under the brewery, controlling the fermentation temps, until the ice melted. As

Prohibition served to bring down a majority of breweries in the early half of the century, August Schell Brewing Company survived by transitioning their production line to making near beer (0.5% or so ABV), soft drinks, and candy. They kept a secret basement brewery for their workers.

The brewery survived many more challenges to follow, including a glut of new breweries in the 1970s and financial struggles in their myriad forms, but remained aloft and was the first brewery in Minnesota to produce craft beers in the 1980s, with German-style craft lagers. A wheat beer was added in 1984 (“the first wheat beer after Prohibition”), and by 1990 there were 38 different beers

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Dark Berlin-Style Weisse Beer
Alcohol By Volume
7.5%
Serving Temperature
42–46° F
Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Nonic, or Pokal Glass

being produced by the brewery. A new state-of-the-art brewhouse was added in 1999, the classic Grain Belt brand was purchased and kept alive in 2002 (after Minnesota Brewing Co. went bankrupt), and a new gift shop and taproom were added in 2005. All throughout the years, the brewery continued to adapt to the changing beer scene.

In 2012—and particularly key for one of this month's featured beers—August Schell began their Noble Star Collection, a series of beers inspired by German Berliner Weisse. Cypress wood from brewery tanks dating back to 1936 were repurposed for the project, providing porous material that was perfect for brewing this style of beer, and these tanks are used for each of the beers in the Noble Star line, starting with Star of the North in 2013. Starkeller, Schell's sour-beer-dedicated facility, opened its taproom to the public in 2017, allowing visitors to enjoy these German-style tart beers right next to the ancient cypress tanks they're aged in.

This month we're pleased to feature our favorite release to date from August Schell's Noble Star Collection—the dark Berliner-Weisse-inspired Lunar Interference. For those looking for a bit more history, learn more about this 150+-year-old brewery at www.schellsbrewery.com.

LUNAR INTERFERENCE 2017

August Schell's Lunar Interference is part of their Noble Star Collection of Berliner Weisse-esque beers, with this one being a

darker take on this tart wheat-beer style. The 2017 bottling is tasting incredible right now, and all of their current remaining stock is being cellared and held for our Rare Beer Club members. The Noble Star Collection is the brewery's ongoing project that explores different variations and interpretations of traditional German-style Berliner Weisses, and these releases have been exceptionally well done over the years. Lunar Interference goes in the opposite direction of many traditional elements of Berliner Weisses, with a dark and complex malt bill. It sees a more traditional mixed-culture fermentation and is aged for nearly a year in one of the brewery's original, 80-year-old cypress wood lagering tanks at their Starkeller brewing facility. Unfiltered, hand bottled, and bottle conditioned.

Lunar Interference pours a deep, dark black color with just a touch of light getting through at the edges. There's a modest tan head that quickly dissipates. This shows rich aromatics of baker's chocolate and cocoa alongside deep, tart raspberries and vibrant citrus notes. Some nice touches of licorice, a hint of smoke, and complex fermentation character throughout: tart lemons, subtle funk, and very nicely dry overall.

Medium-full mouthfeel with strong impacts of tart lemons and berries, followed up by the flip side of this beer: malty undercurrents of cocoa and chocolate and brown sugar. Some very nice caramelization is present from the cellaring time that serves as kind of a midpoint: generous toffee and dark

caramels broadening those central malt notes. Very refreshing vibe overall, despite the rich chocolate and the number of years behind this beer. The expressive lemony tartness satisfies on a Berliner-Weisse level, with welcome dry, toasty notes followed up by a stronger show of those specialty malts in the mid-palate. Very out-there concept, but this Noble Star Collection has yet to let us down—and we found this 2017 vintage to be just sublime right now. If you don't think that a dark German-style Berliner Weisse would work, Lunar Interference makes a very strong counterargument. This concludes nicely toasty, with cocoa and just a hint of spice.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

This should continue to age gracefully for another couple years at least. The combo of tartness and fruit have us looking to chocolate + fruit options especially: chocolate-covered cherries, or a cheese, chocolate, and fruit sampler plate to explore pairings—even indulgent chocolate desserts, with the acidity and citrus fruits cutting through some of that richness.