

The RARE BEER CLUB

BROUWERIJ ALVINNE
MOEN, WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM

LAND VAN MORTAGNE (RBC EXCLUSIVE)

Alvinne’s developed a very strong reputation among beer geeks for their barrel-aged beers and traditional Belgian-style releases. They rapidly developed a barrel-aging program upon opening in 2004, and frequently use a variety of unique wine barrels to ferment and finish their beers, incorporating Sherry, Calvados, Sauterne Banyuls (a French

fortified wine), Port, Cognac, and many others. They’ve developed a following for both their big beers and their Flemish sour ales, the latter

fermented inside five wooden foeders—which includes a gigantic “mega foeder” with a capacity of 60 hL (which can also be seen in the design of their logo!).

The brewery’s located in Moen, Belgium, right at the edge of the popular Mortagne area, and close to many of the historic breweries where old-school Flemish brown ales were created. Brouwerij Alvinne, perhaps most importantly, has its own proprietary yeast called Morpheus that is used throughout their lineup of beers—including Land Van Mortagne—and features heavily in their

mixed-fermentation sour ales as well (which they see as a hybridization of the Oud Bruin and lambic styles). Their resident yeast whisperer Marc De Keukeleire, head of yeast management and special projects, isolated the wild yeast from collections in the French Auvergne region and cultivated it into their now highly regarded Morpheus strain—



helping them to produce exceptional, highly unique sour and non-sour offerings alike. The brewery refers to their sour releases as “Flemish sour ales”, as the historical frameworks of Oud Bruins and Flanders Reds don’t quite encapsulate the variety of sours they produce. Many of these releases are available in both fruited and unfruited versions (using only whole fruits, such as cherries, raspberries, quince, sloeberries, gooseberries, smoked pineapples, and all sorts of other stuff), often with a Bordeaux-barrel-aged version offered in limited supply. We’ve seen a whole lot of weird special ingredients in our day, and Alvinne has tried some especially out-there stuff, including asparagus, espelette peppers, eucalyptus,

lingonberries, and sea buckthorn. The brewery also has a local Rare Beer Club-esque offering of their own: Alvinne’s Fellowship of Exceptional Ales, which gives their most loyal of fans the option to purchase their exceptionally limited releases (all with less than 400 liters of each produced). Alvinne only makes about 1,000 U.S. barrels annually, making all the releases quite limited!

This month we’re excited to offer the brewery’s Land Van Mortagne, a full-bodied amber quadruple that’s a beautiful showcase of this classic Belgian style. This one is 12.8% ABV, brewed with malted barley, hops, sugar, water, and yeast, featuring the proprietary Morpheus strain. This popular quad, our favorite of their beers we sampled, is also featured in Cuvée de Mortagne (aged in red wine barrels) and Cuvée de Mortagne Pedro Ximenez (aged in sherry barrels, and coming

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SPECIFICATIONS	
Style	Amber Quadrupel
Alcohol By Volume	12.8%
Serving Temperature	50–57° F
Suggested Glassware	Goblet, Chalice, or Tulip Glass

in at an exceptionally potent 16%). We're thrilled to be able to offer this as a Rare Beer Club exclusive, brought in specifically for our members. Their brewery is open from time to time, with updated hours available through the brewery's Facebook page: facebook.com/brouwerijAlvinne (they were open 8am to noon, Monday through Saturday, last time we checked).

LAND VAN MORTAGNE

Brouwerij Alvinne's Land Van Mortagne is a delicious, full-bodied, amber-colored Belgian quadrupel packed with specialty-malt character and tempering mineral bitterness. It pours a deep, amber-red hue capped by a modest light-tan head that quickly subsides to a perimeter of bubbles (not too surprising given the potent ABV...). Initial aromatics provide generous, plush red and dark fruitiness (emphasizing cherries, currants, strawberries) beside restrained

caramelization and some significant pepper and clove from the Belgian yeast. We found fruit leather, maraschino cherries, and well-restrained sweetness despite how malt forward this is.

Medium-full to full body, leading with a generous display of ripe red fruit: cherries, currants, apples—all counterpointed by welcome peppery notes and clove from the core yeast. Some warming alcohol is definitely tucked in here, but its surprisingly subtle, keeping the overall body lean and serving to balance out the core expression of generous maltiness. That clove, pepper, and vinous warmth serve as useful counterpoints, keeping this exceptionally easy to dig into despite a 12%+ ABV; there's definitely a wine-like feel overall, with impressive early sherry and deep fruitiness apparent. Land Van Mortagne's a vibrantly fruity, phenolic-driven quadrupel, where so many other beers within this space lean more strongly on a

caramel and heavier specialty-malt presence. "Amber quad" feels right for this—this is very vinous, super generous in its overall fruit expression, and extremely pleasurable to dig into as a nightcap. Lasting finish that's almost port-like, offering lingering cherries, strawberries, and warmth.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

The quad has got a very high ABV and is refermented in the bottle, such that it's built to last and develop further in one's cellar. This should continue to develop nice caramelization and sherry character with additional cellaring time. Vibrant red fruits and amber maltiness have it primed for pairings with roasted pork, turkey, and charcuterie.

BEYOND THE BOTTLE: SIPPIN' QUADS BY KEN WEAVER

The loosely defined Belgian-born style category of quadrupels or Abts tends to indicate the breweries' strongest core offerings: higher in ABV than a dubbel (but packed with similarly dark specialty-malt character), stronger too than blond tripels, and typically more restrained in core sweetness than the beers labeled Belgian dark strong ales. It's all a bit fuzzy. Quads / Abts are complex beers, but surprisingly smooth and rather easily paired with food courtesy of their Belgian yeast strains, which dry out the result, keeping overt sweetness in check. The end results are usually packed with generous dark malt character, as well as yeast expressions of clove, pepper, and other spices. Examples including Rochefort 10, Westvleteren XII, and St. Bernardus 12 are all outstanding examples of high-ABV brewing—with good reason. In spite of quite potent ABV levels (usually 10%+ or well beyond) they're very easy to dig into.

The Rare Beer Club's featured a wide range of quad / Abt examples over the years, including some renditions that stray well off the beaten path of the malt + yeast focus this style would traditionally stick to. Most recently, we've tasted La Trappe's Practise What You

Preach (a quad brewed with Scottish heather honey and American hops), Brouwerij Maenhout's Ferre (a paler, fruity quad that's more orange-amber than the amber-brown or darker we'd expect), Two Brother's QuadRadical! (a blended quad, incorporating rum-soaked fruits), and Strange Roots' Ancient Vortex (a blend of quadrupel and sour Flanders red ale). If you haven't tried the traditional examples, though, these are incredible beers to sip on: packed with dark fruits, vinous warmth, and often dense caramelization, even licorice notes. The very first three Abts / quads mentioned above can be tracked down with varying effort (Westvleteren's stateside availability comes and goes), but you can also look out for Lost Abbey's Judgment Day, La Trappe's Quadrupel, Unibroue Terrible—or check around at your local breweries. American renditions can sometimes be less careful with the Belgian yeast's role, but you'll get the gist.

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

The RARE BEER CLUB

HOF TEN DORMAAL TILDONK, FLEMISH BRABANT, BELGIUM

TRIPLE (RBC EXCLUSIVE)

The farm brewery Hof Ten Dormaal is situated in the fields of Tildonk, Belgium, on an old farm estate that dates back to at least the 13th century or so, back when it was the main farm for the manor of

Lauwendries. Farming and brewing remain closely linked at the brewery, as was often the case for traditional breweries in Belgium and far beyond, wherein the surplus production from the year's harvest would at least partly go into brewing beer during the cool months. That tradition lives on with the current owners, the Janssens family, overseen by father Andre Janssens and

two brothers, Jef and Dries, their goal being to create unique and innovative beers made almost exclusively from ingredients grown on-site (aside from a few of their more out-there special

ingredients—frequently sourced from surrounding farms).

Hof Ten Dormaal grows their own hops and grains in the brewery's surrounding

farmland, and the spent grain goes to feed their own on-site farm animals (which include the brewery's particularly intelligent and obliging Belgian draft horses). The brewery even has its very own maltery—described as the smallest in all of Belgium.

The brewery's main releases include a number of traditional Belgian styles that

incorporate the farm brewery's locally produced ingredients—including this month's featured Tripel, a witbier, a saison, and an oude kriel, as well as some more out-there renditions. Their

Wit Goud ("white gold") swaps in dried chicory roots in place of the usual hops. Their Lente Lambiek uses the brewery's own coolship and local wild yeasts; after a year of aging in oak barrels, they add elder and apple blossoms, red currants, gooseberries, and meadowsweet, after which the beer gets aged for another 18 months, before refermentation in the bottle. And their Zue van Tildonk traditional lambic is released both on its own or with additional fruits incorporated—such as cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, and Barbera grapes.

The bucolic farmhouse brewery's

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Tripel

Alcohol By Volume
8.0%

Serving Temperature
40–47° F

Suggested Glassware
Chalice, Goblet, or Tulip Glass

summerbar is currently open for limited hours on Fridays (5pm–9pm), Saturdays (noon–9pm), and Sundays (noon–6pm), featuring adorable waterside seating that gives one a pleasant view of their surrounding farm operations (and often some friendly livestock). The brewery's physical store is open most days from 10am through 5pm, with ordering info and discount codes for their webshop available through the main site.

Individual tours are available each Saturday at 3pm for a nominal fee (6 Euros per person for a 30-minute tour; notify the brewery in advance). Group visits are available throughout the week by reservation: 15 Euros per person for groups of a minimum of 10 people (or for 150 Euros for smaller groups), and these tours go for an hour and a half or so, including a tour of the malthouse, brewery, and farm, plus a guided tour of five different Hof Ten Dormaal beers. And for the fullest experience: there's a "hamburgerbuffet". Available throughout the week by reservation only, this package is 32 Euros per person with a minimum of 10 people per group and goes for about 2.5 hours or so. This includes an aperitif and snacks, tours of the malthouse, brewery, and farm plus an extensive beer tasting (as above), along with a (you guessed it) hamburger buffet: featuring meat from the farm brewery's own cows, and frozen desserts with the brewery's cherry beer, coffee, or digestif beers. For additional info

(some of which may require careful use of Google Translate), head on over to hoftendormaal.com.

TRIPEL

Hof Ten Dormaal's Tripel is brewed with barley malt, wheat, and sugar, the brewery's house yeast strain, and a combination of Magnum and Hersbrucker hops. It's a beautifully handled tripel that showcases the farm brewery's exceptional locally grown ingredients.

This tripel pours a bright, hazy golden-yellow color capped by some significant white foam; mousse-like head on this one, demonstrating excellent retention and lacing. Aromatics show plenty of honey, white pepper, and a range of tree fruits from the initial pour. Nicely toasty and rounded malt presence, and the yeast character is lemony while providing peppery, saison-like vibes to this beer throughout. Lightly sweet almond and vanilla notes add further depth. The approach shows a generous, beautifully developed tripel with some charismatic, crackly core malt character—amplified as this is allowed to warm up a bit.

Medium-full to full body, with plenty of accentuated golden malty sweetness and honeyed notes from the start. But there's also some really nice bitterness here courtesy the Magnum and Hersbrucker hop additions: herbaceous, minerally, and providing a subtle underpinning that

results in a solid balance to this beer's construction overall. Alcohol stays nicely tucked away throughout. Some really enjoyable elements from the expressive yeast, with notes of white pepper and clove working well alongside additional core notes of almond and hints of vanilla. An exceptionally satisfying take, highlighting delicious ingredients grown on-site.

It's quite rare to find beers made with so many ingredients the brewery's actually grown (and in this case, malted) itself, and Hof Ten Dormaal's execution of the classic tripel style makes us want to try everything this traditional, farm-based brewery's created so far. Lasting finish of pepper, toasty malts, and a lingering herbal bitterness. Carefully layered detail throughout.

PAIRING & AGING NOTES:

At 8% ABV, this tripel is sturdy and potent enough to stand some cellaring time. That said, the subtle hop bitterness will ease up slightly over time, letting perceived sweetness amp up a bit. Personally, we'd enjoy this sooner rather than later for best results. For pairings: look to traditional tripel pairings such as various seafoods with lemon and butter, or creamy cheeses, which both will work well alongside the pepper and honey and moderate mineral bitterness.