

# The RARE BEER CLUB

**HI-WIRE BREWING**  
 ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

## SOUR BLONDE WITH LEMON & ROSEMARY (RARE BEER CLUB EXCLUSIVE)

Hi-Wire Brewing got its start in the summer of 2013, founded by Adam Charnack and Chris Frosaker, and it quickly became one of the fastest growing craft breweries in North Carolina. Their bread and butter has been in creating well-balanced core beers like the Hi-Wire Lager, Bed of Nails Brown, and Hi-Pitch IPA, and their main production facility—affectionately known as The Big Top—opened up in 2015. Based out of Asheville, the brewery currently has two locations there, including the production facility as well as the South Slope Specialty Brewery & Taproom, which focuses more on their wild and sour ale offerings. As of today, Hi-Wire also operates spots in Durham, Knoxville,

Wilmington, Birmingham, Charlotte, and Louisville, with Cincinnati and Nashville coming soon.

The creation of the Big Top Production Brewery & Taproom has allowed their South Slope location to become more of an experimental hub for their barrel-aged beers and sour ales (of which we'll be featuring one this month—their Sour Blonde with Lemon & Rosemary). They've got a pilot system at South Slope that lets them focus on recipe development and smaller-batch creations—including this exclusive offering they've put together for the Rare Beer Club this month. Hi-Wire's been on our radar for a while now, ever since we were visiting World Beer

kept us coming back for more. This circus-themed brewery does a lot of charitable outreach, hires local artists for their artwork, and sources as many local ingredients as possible for their operations. They focus on creating a welcoming environment for friends to get together, and we're excited to be able to highlight the bounds of what this place has been brewing in recent years with this latest Rare Beer Club exclusive.

You may be able to find some of Hi-Wire's core releases in the southeastern part of the U.S., including their Bed of Nails Brown ale, Hi-Wire Lager,

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Festivals back in North Carolina, and their ability to successfully brew both traditional styles as well as out-there new concoctions has

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Style</b>
Sour Blonde Ale with Lemon & Rosemary
<b>Alcohol By Volume</b>
6.2%
<b>Serving Temperature</b>
48–55° F
<b>Suggested Glassware</b>
Tulip, Flute, or Chardonnay Glass

and their big range of flagship IPAs: including the Hi-Pitch Mosaic IPA, Lo-Pitch Hazy IPA, and Double Hi-Pitch IPA. They've also got a rotating flagship of session sour beers, in addition to the many one-off, seasonal, and specialty releases they've been creating. Hi-Wire has picked up a number of key awards over the years for their various creations, including being named the Best New North Carolina Brewery of 2013 by the folks at RateBeer, as well as winning gold at the Great American Beer Festival in 2016 for a German-style märzen, in 2019 for a sour brown ale aged on Palo Santo wood, and in 2021 for a Japanese Dry Rice Lager with Ben's American Sake Koji.

No reservations are needed at any of the tap rooms and all have space available to rent. The Big Top has its own beer garden and is home to all of Hi-Wire's large-scale events, and you can sample a pint of their latest creations next to the tanks where they were fermented. Hi-Wire currently distributes in draft and bottles to parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Indiana, and Virginia. They can also ship beer to various other states through their Online Beer Shop. For the latest info, head over to [hiwirebrewing.com](http://hiwirebrewing.com).

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### **SOUR BLONDE WITH LEMON & ROSEMARY**

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The Hi-Wire Sour Blonde with Lemon & Rosemary pours a hazy golden yellow,

with a thick pillowy white foam head. The tightly stacked bubbles retain the head quite well and leave behind fine lace. Visually stunning, this attractive brew gives off aromas of its main components as it's poured into the glass: lemon, in this case freshly zested, to capture the essence without adding needless acidity, and rosemary, as one would expect to find in an herb garden, and not some flavorless branch in a plastic box from a supermarket. Those aromas develop into candied lemon peel, floral lemon blossom, and a hint of lemon leaf. The rosemary bush adds a delicate fresh herbal note and an earthy quality as it warms slightly. There is a subdued amount of barnyard type funk woven in as well as hints of hop spice and ginger-like aromas. The mixed cultures working in the neutral oak barrels bring out a lactic vibe, with a hint of woodiness and vanilla, without any sweet or caramelized aromas to get in the way of the fruit and herbs. It thus brings out other citrus aromas such as mandarin orange, yuzu, and minneola. Pale malt aromas bring it all together in a satisfying olfactory experience.

Upon taking the first sip we are greeted with delicate tartness exemplary of the style and subtle sourness that build slightly upon every taste. The fresh lemon zest is perky and fruity, lasting from start to finish and working nicely with mild bitterness from a dose of Ekuanot hops. The rosemary is more subtle initially, but as we dive further into the glass the freshness the herb

adds to this beer is quite pleasing. The balance of citrus and herbs are complimented by the yeast and mixed cultures used in fermentation and bring out the spice flavors we experienced in the nose. The 2-row pale malt profile is lightly bready and cracker-like, and easy on the palate with light toastiness, allowing for woody notes and earthy flavors to come through. The Sour Blonde with Lemon & Rosemary is medium bodied and smooth with a light, prickly mousse, and a long, tart, mouthwatering finish inviting us back for more each time.

#### **AGING & PAIRING NOTES:**

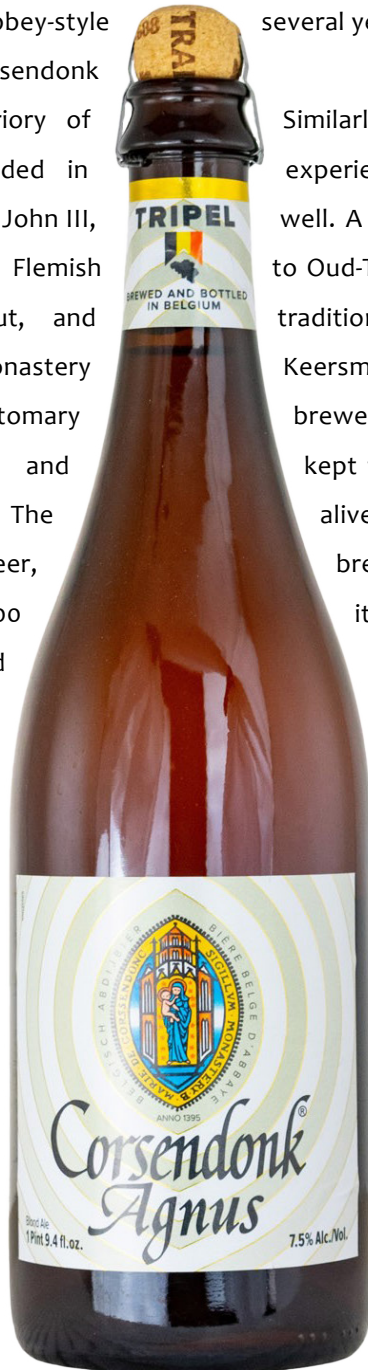
Drink the Hi-Wire Sour Blonde with Lemon & Rosemary now, or it can be aged up to a year for the freshest lemon and rosemary aromas and flavors. Beyond a year, we expect the impact of those special additions to start fading. For food pairings, we recommend playing off the beer's natural acidity and the lemon and rosemary character. Roasted chicken with rosemary lemon butter, or a simple lemon parsley couscous both sound perfect to us.

# The RARE BEER CLUB

## BROUWERIJ CORSENDONK (BRASSERIE DU BOCQ) TURNHAUT, BELGIUM

### CORSENDONK AGNUS TRIPEL

Like most Belgian abbey-style beers, the roots of Corsendonk go way back. The Priory of Corsendonk was founded in 1398 by the daughter of John III, Duke of Brabant in the Flemish town of Oud-Turnhout, and the monks of this monastery brewed beer as was customary throughout Flanders and Europe in general. The monastery, and its beer, flourished for almost 400 years until it was closed by Austrian emperor Joseph II in 1784. In the wake of the French Revolution in 1789, the monastery and all its property was seized and sold off. The monastery saw new life when its buildings were restored in 1968, evolving into a conference center, hotel, and restaurant complex over the next



several years.

Similarly, the priory's beer has experienced a restoration as well. A new breath of life came to Oud-Turnhout and its brewing tradition when Sir Henricus Keersmaekers founded a new brewery there in 1906, and he kept the abbey beer tradition alive. But, when the family brewery closed in 1953 it appeared the beer would again be lost to history, and indeed it was for almost three decades until Henricus' grandson, Jef Keersmaekers, revived the brand yet again in 1982. Because the family no longer owned a brewery, Jef partnered with another family brewery, Brasserie du Bocq, to brew the Corsendonk beer.

Brasserie du Bocq was founded by Martin Belot in 1858 in the tiny town of Purnode in the Walloon province of Namur. Originally brewing was a winter hobby while his farm was not producing and his workers idle, but due in no small part to the outstanding well water found on the farm, the beer was commercially successful. There were many beers on offer from Brasserie du Bocq, such as strong beers, seasonal beers, and celebratory Christmas beers. Today, the Keersmaekers family has taken over the brewery from the sixth generation of the Belot family, producing all the Brasserie du Bocq brands alongside the Corsendonk beers. A traditional Belgian brewery, all

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### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**

Belgian Tripel Ale

**Alcohol By Volume**

7.5%

**Serving Temperature**

48–52° F

**Suggested Glassware**

Tulip, Goblet, or Chalice

du Bocq's beers are bottle-conditioned, experiencing a secondary fermentation in the bottle to naturally carbonate the beer.

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## **CORSENDONK AGNUS TRIPEL**

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We were excited to taste the Corsendonk Agnus Tripel and it didn't disappoint. This tripel is brewed with all natural ingredients, including a malt bill composed of 93% barley (a blend of Plaisant and Triumph) and 7% wheat, along with Styrian Golding, Hallertau Hersbrucker, and Kent Challenger hops. Very little of this impressive offering from Corsendonk makes its way across the pond to our shores, and what little distribution it sees is limited to just five states.

As with many traditional Belgian Tripel ales, there is a sense of history to experience along with the flavors. Belgian monks have been brewing "Single," "Dubbel," and "Tripel" beer for ages. The Dubbels and Tripels were brewed as a means to cover their living expenses, upkeep, and maintenance of the building and grounds of their Abbeys, keeping the Single beer for themselves as sustenance. The "Single" beer, a pale colored ale, was historically the lowest in abv, think 5-ish%. The dark amber or brown colored "Dubbel" was up to about 7% abv, and the "Tripel" beers, being the highest of the three in abv, came in usually around 7.5% to 9%

abv. Tripels are typically complex with mild spicy flavors, yeasty aromas, fruity esters, and malty essence. They are very approachable and drinkable, tending to have a dry finish that won't fatigue the taster's palate. Many will also display a firm bitterness and pronounced hop expression that will satisfy the biggest hop-head but not turn away the basic lager drinker.

Corsendonk Agnus pours a bright pale golden amber with a hint of haziness. It has a thick pillowy white head made up of tightly grouped tiny bubbles which is retained for a great amount of time and leaves behind church window like lacing with every sip. Though slightly opaque, the golden hue invites your eyes to explore its depth as it is quite visually appealing. Once the glass is close to our noses we're greeted with a full spectrum of classic spice and fruit notes. Subtle white pepper, giving way to coriander and fennel seed, the impression of vanilla beans, with dried field herbs and garden flowers making up the initial wave of aromas. The next wave is made up of candied lemon rind aromas, with hints of tangerine, followed by crushed white grapes, and freshly peeled banana. A third wave of toasty malt reveals the foundation all these aromas are built upon. The spice, fruit, and malt aromas are accentuated by floral, bready yeast and piney hop esters that wash over the olfactory senses paving the way for the flavors

to make their mark.

The first sip brings all the aromas together in a tightly layered complex fashion. White pepper is noted but not pronounced, leaving the coriander and fennel seed to express themselves, and allowing the vanilla notes to be subtle and slightly sweet. Touches of dried herbs and a slight grip of piney hoppy bitterness come in mid palate all the way through the finish. The candied lemon rind and fleshy tangerine add a perky citrus acidity that keeps our senses heightened, while the slightly underripe freshly peeled banana ushers in the vinous crushed white grape flavors. Toasty malt and lively yeast drive home the quality of this medium bodied beer and creates a delicate finely bubbled mousse on the palate. A long, clean, dry finish is held in place by just enough bitterness to leave you anticipating the next sip all the way to an empty glass. Better get a few of these...

### **AGING AND PAIRING NOTES:**

With all due respect to the "Best before date" on the bottle, Corsendonk Agnus can be confidently aged 5-8 years in a dark place without high temperature fluctuations. Of course, you can enjoy it now with grilled fish or poultry, or try it with Belgian moules et frites as recent traditions would suggest.