

The RARE BEER CLUB

BRASSERIE FANTÔME
SOY, BELGIUM

RARE BARLEY DARK PROJECT (RARE BEER CLUB EXCLUSIVE)

There is a fermentation-friendly phantasm at work in one brewery in Soy, Belgium. Thankfully this ghost doesn't have any malicious intent, though she can get a bit wild when she decides to spike the brewer's recipes with a blend of secret herbs and spices. And she plays other tricks, like ensuring that the same beer is often radically different from batch to batch... She's even been known to convert stout to a Belgian strong dark ale. More of a prankster than poltergeist, her mischief is accented by her supernatural talent for creating some truly haunting spiced farmhouse beers. More evidence of her non-demonic demeanor is that she plays well with others, permitting human pal Dany Prignon to take most of the credit for these world class, award-winning beers (in



exchange, of course, for having the brewery named after her).

Brasserie Fantôme (the Phantom Brewery) has come to represent unabashed creative freedom of expression, and earned itself a reputation for being, well, borderline insane. Between the ghost stories, the 'spirited' behavior of Monsieur Prignon, the wild variation from beer to beer, being exceptionally guarded about what spices have been used in the recipes, or experimenting to the point of acute eccentricity (mushroom beer anyone?), you can maybe understand why some people think there may be a madman involved. Hey, you know what they say, behind every good madman there's... a phantom.

Wait, we may have

screwed that up... you get the idea. But it's not really the reputation for zany flare that has made Fantôme's beers highly sought after—it's the beer. Their namesake beer, Fantôme Saison, a golden brew of 8% alcohol by volume, was rated a perfect 10 in "The Beers of Wallonia," a worthwhile read penned by authors John Woods and Keith Rigley. The brewer (either Dany or the phantom) uses local ingredients and herbs, such as dandelions found growing outside the brewery, to spice their numerous farmhouse ale variants with such skill and panache that people have been taking notice since the brewery was founded in 1988.

But it's easy to throw a bunch of spice in
(Continued on reverse page)

SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Belgian Dark Farmhouse Ale w/ Spices

Alcohol By Volume

7.5%

Serving Temperature

45–52° F

Suggested Glassware

Tulip, Teku, or Goblet

a beer. Making it taste good, however, and bringing out the best elements of an unusual spice without crushing the beer's natural flavors or spooking the yeast into catatonia—that's the real magic and mystique in the Fantôme beers. To boot, these are some of the most freshly fruity beers found in Belgium—how “they” do it we really don't know—it really is almost paranormal. Another odd conundrum is the fact that their beers aren't particularly well known, even within Belgium. But for those who have had the pleasure (or occasionally, the peril) of tasting Fantôme's concoctions, the experience is not soon forgotten. And that's another reason the name is quite apropos; Fantôme's beers are very difficult to track down, materializing only rarely. When we recently had the chance to capture the elusive Fantôme, we suited up like Ghostbusters, donned our proton packs, and zapped as much of the stuff as we could into our ghost traps. It's a risky business, but our members are worth it. To find out more information about the brewery, brush up on your French and head over to www.fantome.be.

RARE BARLEY DARK PROJECT

Dany almost never gives up the ingredients list to Fantôme releases, but at least we can say for sure that the brewery's Rare Barley Dark Project features spices, barley, water, yeast,

hops, and Belgian candi sugar. How do we know such secrets? Well, it says so on the label. Of course, Dany will never give the exact amount of an ingredient used, but that lends more intrigue to the experience and mystery of each beer. Sipping, tasting, and smelling the beer is the best way to know the end result each ingredient contributed, and we enjoyed every facet of it.

The Rare Barley Dark Project pours a slightly hazy deep, dark, amber to brown with a tremendously pillowy and tightly bubbled head made of tan foam. Held up to light it exhibits dark red highlights towards the rim. The aromas seem to waft out of the glass and release a rich tapestry of complex scents. A prominent blend of dark fruit notes comes to the foreground with plums, raisins, and figs, creating a hint of jamminess. This is followed by earthy and spicy notes, with clove taking center stage, with anise in support, along with banana peel, and a touch of bubblegum. The darkly roasted barley adds rich caramel and toffee, and just a touch of coffee and cocoa. The bouquet is further enhanced by a bit of farmhouse funk and floral, yeasty esters.

Sipping the Rare Barley Dark Project reveals a wonderful interplay between sweet and savory notes with the dark fruit and dark barley malt aromas carrying through as flavors. Plums, raisins, and figs are again joined by banana peel, complemented by the toasty malt which

adds a crusty dark bread layer to the flavors. Mid-palate, delightful spiciness unfolds, offering hints of clove, anise, a hint of bubblegum, and a dash of pepper. The spices harmonize with the fruity and malty sweetness, and farmhouse earthiness, resulting in the flavors being well integrated and balanced.

The Rare Barley Dark Project has a smooth and round mouthfeel, is medium bodied, with a creamy mousse. The finish is long and dry, with the sugars being well attenuated, leaving the palate asking for more. This is where this beer's farmhouse qualities shine. There's subtle funkiness that emerges, characteristic of the yeast used in Belgian farmhouse ales, which is accompanied by a mild acidity that cuts through the sweetness, cleansing the palate and leaving a lingering finish of dark fruit and spices.

The Rare Barley Dark Project is a Rare Beer Club exclusive and only available in the US through the Rare Beer Club.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

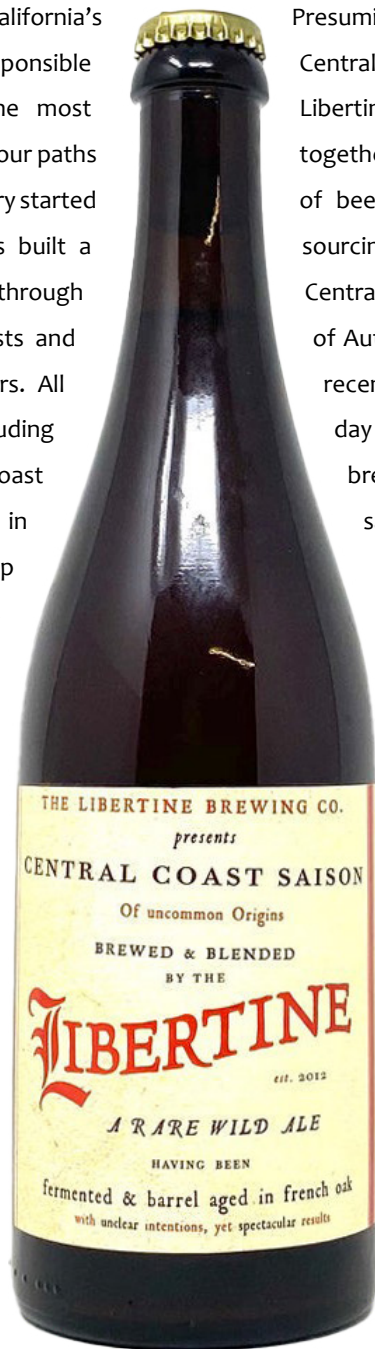
The Rare Barley Dark Project can be aged for many years to come, or do like we did and drink it all now. For pairing we recommend trying oven roasted fowl, cheeses such as Blu del Moncenisio or Morbier, and desserts like oven-baked pears and apples, dense chocolate cakes, and almond sweets.

The RARE BEER CLUB

LIBERTINE BREWING COMPANY
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA

CENTRAL COAST SAISON (2016)

Libertine Brewing Co. in California's Central Coast has been responsible for making some of the most exciting wild ales to cross our paths in recent years. The brewery started up back in 2012 and has built a growing name for itself through its use of local wild yeasts and carefully barrel-aged beers. All of their wild ales, including the featured Central Coast Saison, spend the night in the brewery's open-top coolship. As Libertine puts it, "This process allows the local wild yeasts of our area to naturally start the fermentation process. Relying on our environment gives our beers a true Central Coast terroir." We found Central Coast Saison to be a beautifully rendered expression of what the folks at Libertine are up to, with nuanced yeast character and very careful details.



Presuming you find yourself liking Central Coast Saison as well, Libertine's been slowly putting together an exceptional catalog of beers inspired by (and often sourcing ingredients from) the Central Coast. The ongoing line of Authentic SLO Wild Ales most recently incorporated a multi-day blending session of the brewery's various barrel-aging saisons and golden, wheat and blonde ales—which typically have resided in barrels for between one and three years. Their limited-release Gary, named after the father of Libertine founder Tyler Clark, combines their house saison with Central Coast oaked Chardonnay from The Fableist winery in Paso Robles. And their Pacific Ocean Blue Gose, as one other fun example, made use of local sea water for its salt addition. Libertine

has also done a number of collaborations, including a well-received hazy pale ale with the folks at Alvarado Street Brewery called Yeast of Burden, made with Simcoe and Medusa hops and released locally in a limited run of 16-ounce cans.

For folks traveling to California's gorgeous Central Coast, Libertine has got some excellent visiting options. Their original brewpub in Morro Bay is called The Libertine Pub and offers views of the nearby bay and Morro Rock, as well as 37 taps and a full menu, with live music to enjoy the spectacular views. In downtown San Luis Obispo is The Libertine: a 9,000-square-foot production facility, as well as the company's flagship restaurant—offering up 77 taps, a full menu highlighting local farmers and

(Continued on reverse page)

SPECIFICATIONS

Style
Wild Saison

Alcohol By Volume
6%

Serving Temperature
46–53° F

Suggested Glassware
Tulip, Goblet, Chardonnay Glass

creameries, and what is, appropriately, called “the rarest bottle list in the country.” That sounds like it could be worth a stop. There is also a new Libertine tasting room in Avila Beach offering 12 Libertine beers on tap featuring their famous Wild Ales and new collaboration series beers. And if you’re into barrel-aged cold brew (or think you might be), consider the quaint Libertine Coffee Bar in downtown SLO.

Though Libertine Brewing Co. has definitely been making its presence known in the Central Coast, their beers can still take a good bit of effort to track down, with distribution generally limited to parts of Central California and the Central Coast. Their Central Coast Saison can be a particularly difficult find, so we’re excited to have had the opportunity to acquire a rare aged cache of this wild ale produced in 2016 to bring to you as a featured club offering—we think you’re going to love it. Aside from just a sprinkling of cases in select retail shops in and around California’s Central Coast, this beer will be very difficult to obtain outside of the Rare Beer Club. For the latest Libertine releases, openings and more, check out www.libertinebrewing.com.

CENTRAL COAST SAISON (2016)

Libertine Brewing Co.’s wild ales are among the best we’ve ever experienced from the U.S., with layered tartness and precise blending, and we couldn’t possibly pick a better beer from this brewery to start with than the expressive Central Coast Saison. This saison, like all of Libertine’s

wild ales, gets exposed to the local yeast and bacteria through an overnight stay within the brewery’s coolship, which introduces a complex melange of microflora that ultimately helps contribute all sorts of nuances to the final product, and this exceptional saison is further fermented and barrel aged in French oak. Libertine beers are generally limited to a modest presence in California—and we’re looking forward to getting this saison out into the wild.

The Central Coast Saison pours a bold golden-orange color, with flecks of amber and copper, which gets capped by a replenishing, fine-bubbled white foam. This beer essentially glows in the glass, with Champagne-like bubbles and a look that had us thinking of some of our favorite barrel-aged saisons and lambics. While this gets billed as both a wild ale and saison, the aromatics had us thinking of Belgian lambics, for sure—as this is a mouthwatering beer, packed with funk and sour lemons, and just immensely structured fermentation-wise for a quieter brewery in central California. The aroma is filled with vibrantly tart tree fruits, the rich funk of blue cheese, plus lots of herbs and toasty grain. The bright expression of being dry-hopped with Lemon Drop and Boadicea hops adds to the aromas and complements the funky yeast. After a swirl or two in the glass, dense earthy aromas arise with barnyard and horse blanket notes, dry herbs, and pebbly minerality.

So much good stuff going on in this beer... That fine-bubbled carbonation contributes

just a ton to this saison, providing an effervescent lift that gives it a plush feel overall. It goes beautifully with the potent, multidimensional sourness, which provides a ton of dimension in terms of both subtle, yeast-y layers and full-on sour: there are potent tart limes, kaffir leaves, plus lemon and passion fruit, in terms of the core fruit components, and the barrel character provides some welcome supporting structure, adding in soft oak tannin and toasted almond.

As some of our longstanding members will know without us saying: we love saisons like this one. Libertine’s Central Coast Saison combines a rustic touch of pale malt and toasty grains with complex tartness, careful barrel-aging, and all of those perfect details that make a barrel-fermented saison like this disappear.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Libertine’s Central Coast Saison from 2016 should continue to develop quite pleasantly in the bottle over at least another a year or two, and it seems structured well enough (despite the 6% ABV) with that wild ale acidity to age with some of the same longevity of certain lambics. Just keep an eye on aging bottles, as this one’s too tasty to lose to oxidation. For food pairings, this beer will be exceptionally versatile. While it’s a little lean in body to stand up to a steak, the lemon, herbaceous and oaky components at the core of this saison seem primed for goat cheese, wood-baked seafood, or herb-roasted chicken.