

The RARE BEER CLUB

BRASSERIE DUBUISSON
PIPAIX, BELGIUM

SCALDIS NOËL

Brasserie Dubuisson has been brewing continuously since 1769, when it was founded as the brewery of the estate of Domaine de Ghysegnies, across the road from its present location. To put that into context, that was before Belgium was a country, and before the famed Trappist breweries of Belgium. It has been in the Dubuisson family since at least the 1890s.

The name Dubuisson translates to “bush” in English. At the end of the First World War, the brewery was liberated by a British battalion and, in appreciation, the brewery adopted the English spelling of their name as the moniker for their beers. In Belgium, the



English spelling of *bière*, beer, was commonly used—hence, the nicely alliterative name of “Bush Beer” was adopted as far back as 1933. The term Bush Beer doesn’t tend to conjure up thoughts of great, artisanal beer for many U.S. consumers, since we know Busch Beer (with a “c”) as a relatively bland light lager. However, in Belgium, Bush is recognized (at least regionally) as some of the finest and, for many years, the strongest beers made in the country (at 12%–13% ABV). Unfortunately when Bush Beer made its way over to America, it ran up against the Anheuser-Busch brand. So to better set themselves apart from the Busch beers, they renamed the brands “Scaldis”

for the U.S. and some other export markets, which is the Latin spelling of Belgium’s greatest river, the Schelde.

Today led by Hugues Dubuisson, the eighth-generation family member to direct the business, Brasserie Dubuisson is still located in the province of Hainaut, the richest agricultural region in Belgium. It comes as little surprise that the Scaldis beers tend to feature complex and fresh orchard-fruit notes, as well as crisp, nutty maltiness. Dubuisson remains laser-focused on quality and their historic roots, even through a recent period of growth.

Notably, Hugues co-founded the
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SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Strong Dark Belgian Ale

Alcohol By Volume

12%

Serving Temperature

52–58° F

Suggested Glassware

Tulip, Goblet, or Chalice

Belgian Family Brewers Guild, dedicated to highlighting the contributions made by independent brewers, and making it easier for all consumers to distinguish between authentic independent brews and “label beers” that simply claim to be “Belgian.” It seems this brewery has tried to fight confusion about its beers for at least the past 30 years—be it “Busch” versus “Bush” beer, or production by Belgian families versus faceless bigger Belgian brands, and, in their efforts, have helped to enhance the global beer landscape for a whole lot of people. Of course, learning about beer is made all the more interesting with such top-shelf offerings—and Brasserie Dubuisson has been offering top-tier quality for generations. The Scaldis Noël we’ve selected for our members this month embodies this perfectly—and we think you’re going to love this holiday classic. Cheers!

SCALDIS NOËL

Scaldis Noël is one of our favorite Belgian winter beers, brewed especially for the holidays, and was first introduced to the world all the way back in 1991. This famous Belgian brewery has seen relatively sparse U.S. distribution over the past 10 to 15 years after their previous importer shut down, and only about 70 cases of Scaldis Noël ended up being sold across the U.S. in 2022. The Rare Beer

Club has obtained the vast majority of the total cases imported for 2023, with the remaining handful of cases sent to a select few artisanal beer retailers.

This is brewed with caramel malts and candy sugar, and it remains unfiltered and gets refermented in the bottle.

Scaldis Noël pours a deep, honey-golden amber in the glass, capped by firm tan foam. This offers up generous aromatics from the first pour, leading with nutty caramel, cola, and sweet banana. Touches of phenolic, pepper and clove-like spices throughout—but all the spicing seems to be coming from Belgian yeast expression, rather than any sort of special additions. A deftly executed aroma, with the periphery offering hints of pineapple and dried dark fruit.

Nicely rounded expression from the first sip, with subtle underpinning carbonation from the bottle conditioning. Vibrant red fruitiness as well as significant caramel and cola lead the first impact. The Belgian yeast character is beautifully developed and brings forth bananas, some red-apple fruitiness, and clove-like spice that contributes some significant welcome bitterness overall, balancing out this beer’s sweeter elements. Given a bit of time to warm, that central caramelization and fruit expression

(cherries, dark berries, etc.) continue to build. We found generous sherry-like notes present, along with dense toffee and nutty core malt character.

This avoids the overt holiday spicing of many other winter seasonals, in favor of exceptional Belgian yeast character that works beautifully with the specialty malt additions of this beer. A vibrant amber-malt expression, layered and velvety smooth, permeates every aspect of this, while the underpinning of spritzy carbonation from being refermented in the bottle keeps it feeling quite nimble, as does the subtle, vinous warmth courtesy this beer’s 12% ABV. It’s a touch warming, as you’d expect—but always super smooth. The long-lasting finish continues the dense fruit expression, cherry especially, alongside lingering toastiness and peppery clove from the yeast. One of the classic Belgian holiday releases, this beer just keeps on going.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Scaldis Noël should continue to develop nicely with some time in one’s cellar, amplifying this beer’s existent caramelization and sherry notes. For food pairings, we’d use that combo of chewy amber maltiness and red fruit alongside turkey or pork tenderloin. This beer’s also perfectly built for a nightcap.

The RARE BEER CLUB

BROUWERIJ DE HALVE MAAN
BRUGES, BELGIUM

STRAFFE HENDRIK TRIPEL

The current location where Brouwerij De Halve Maan sits has been in operation as a brewery for five centuries. Leon Maes, aka Henri I, became the owner of Brouwerij De Halve Maan in 1856. After many “Hendriks,” fifth generation brewer Veronique Maes, being one of the first female brewers in Belgium at that time, enters in 1981. That same year, being dedicated to making exceptional beer which captured the heritage and history of the brewery, she brewed the first Straffe Hendrik, an homage to all the brewers before her.



Straffe Hendrik became the most important beer the brewery made and set the course for the next four decades and beyond.

For over a century, the brewery on Walplein has been crafting distinctive beers, preserving the age-old tradition of brewing that has been handed down through generations. Now with Xavier Vanneste leading as the sixth generation, Brouwerij De Halve Maan remains dedicated to upholding these time-honored customs. Their journey of innovation spans from the

days of home delivery by horse and cart to the establishment of a remarkable beer pipeline for efficient beer transportation. Presently, Brouwerij De Halve Maan proudly stands as the sole authentic family brewery nestled in the historic heart of Bruges, boasting a legacy rich in history and tradition.

STRAFFE HENDRIK TRIPEL

This month we're proud to bring you a very special beer from a world class brewery and one of our favorites, Brouwerij De Halve

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Belgian Tripel Ale

Alcohol By Volume

9%

Serving Temperature

52-59° F

Suggested Glassware

Tulip, Chalice, or Goblet

Maan: the Straffe Hendrik Tripel. This is a very lightly distributed beer throughout the United States and the Rare Beer Club's allocation is the largest portion of what was imported for 2023.

As we poured it into our glasses, we were taken in by its deep gold-to-amber hue and its dense, creamy, long-lasting head made of tightly packed fine bubbles. Leaning in to breathe in the aromas, we were greeted by pronounced fruity esters of banana, apple, pear, and quince. The fruit aromas persisted with candied orange peel, lemon zest, fleshy apricot, and ripe peach. Then, intriguing spice notes emerged with clove and white pepper up front followed by coriander, ginger, a hint of anise, a waft of bubblegum, and a touch of honey. We were also pleased by the aroma of Saaz and Styrian hops and lightly toasty caramel malts, giving a well-rounded and balanced impression.

As we took our first sip we were rewarded with flavors of toasted bread, hints of white cherry, and golden raisins, adding to the layers unveiled in this beer. With the next sip came flavors of banana, yellow apple, Bartlett pear, and fragrant

quince. As we continued to indulge in the Straffe Hendrik Tripel, the layers of flavor next turned to stone fruit and citrus, with apricot and peach showing prominently, with the addition of yellow plum, and followed by candied orange and lemon peel. These fruit flavors were mingled together handsomely with subtle spice notes of clove, coriander, and white pepper, along with an infusion of star anise and a hint of ginger.

The Straffe Hendrik Tripel was very well balanced between the semi-sweet malts with notes of caramel and honey, and the contrasting bitterness of Saaz and Styrian hops, which also contributed their own earthy, spicy, and herbal flavors. We even picked up on classic flavors of mango and lemongrass the Styrian hops offer which added even more depth to this well layered ale.

Thankfully the experience didn't stop there as the Straffe Hendrik Tripel exhibits a round mouthfeel and has a rich, full-bodied texture. It also has a luxurious and creamy mousse made of fine, tightly packed bubbles. Its finish is long and smooth, fully attenuated, and delicately layered leaving our

palates ready for the next delicious sip.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Straffe Hendrik Tripel is appropriate for some cellaring time, perhaps up to 5 years or so, but that's not necessary for getting the most enjoyment out of it. Drinking now is very rewarding. For pairings, we'd use that combination of fruits, malts, and honeyed elements alongside some pork tenderloin with an apple glaze, roasted duck with an orange reduction sauce, or Belgian Boudin Blanc sausage. Side dishes make a great pairing as well, such as southern-style dressing, rosemary red potatoes, and pommes frites with mayonnaise. For dessert pairing try Liege Waffles with your favorite topping, Crème brûlée, or vanilla-driven desserts.