

The RARE BEER CLUB

BROUWERIJ CORSENDONK (BRASSERIE DU BOCQ)
TURNHAUT, BELGIUM

CORSENDONK PATER DUBBEL

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 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 du Bocq's beers are bottle-

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Belgian Abbey Dubbel Ale

Alcohol By Volume

7.5%

Serving Temperature

48–52° F

Suggested Glassware

Tulip, Goblet, or Chalice

conditioned, experiencing a secondary fermentation in the bottle to naturally carbonate the beer.

CORSENDONK PATER DUBBEL

Once again, we were excited to taste the Corsendonk beers and they didn't disappoint. This time we chose the Pater Abbey Dubbel as our Rare Beer Club offering. As with many traditional Belgian Dubbel 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, ours being 7.5%, and the "Tripel" beers being the highest of the three in abv came in usually around 7.5 to 9% abv. Dubbels are typically complex with pronounced malty flavors, yeasty aromas, fruity esters, and nutty 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 mild bitterness and pronounced toasty expressions that will draw in a true beer aficionado. The Corsendonk Pater Abbey Dubbel has seen our shores before, but in smaller

quantities year after year. The Rare Beer Club was able to obtain a significant percentage of the allocation of 750mL bottles for 2024, making it quite hard to find outside of the club.

Corsendonk Pater pours a deep amber to brown with a slight opaqueness. It has a thick pillowy off-white to tan head, made up of a creamy mousse, and exhibits great retention. It even leaves behind thin layers of lacing with every sip, decorating the inside of the glass. Though slightly opaque, the deep amber-brown hue invites your eyes to explore its depth as it is held up to the light. As we lifted the glass and held it close to our noses, we were greeted with a full spectrum of classic toasty malt aromas, baking spices, and dark fruit notes. After a few swirls in our glasses, more aromas came forth in the form of toasted bread, brown sugar, caramel, medium roast coffee, and hints of licorice. The aroma hit parade continued with dark fruit notes of plum, figs, raisins, and dates with subtler hints of dark red apples and black cherries. These aromas were capped by aromas of warm spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, and black pepper. The spice, fruit, and malt aromas are supported by floral yeast esters that cling to our olfactory senses.

As we sip this inviting brew all the aromas are woven together as tightly knit flavors. We first encountered warmly toasted dark caramel malt and

toasted bread flavors with brown sugar and toffee close behind. The flavors continued with notes of coffee beans, plump raisins, dark plums, and chewy figs. This dense layer of fruit went on to exhibit the subtle dates, red apples, and black cherries we experienced as aromas with a crescendo of cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, and cocoa. This full-bodied Belgian Abbey Dubbel has a creamy, tightly knit mousse, and a long, lingering finish. With all those flavors and aromas, it is surprisingly easy to drink, and we never felt overpowered or weighed down. The 7.5% abv didn't even register in the aromas and was almost imperceptible on the palate. As we've said before about these astonishing Corsendonk Abbey ales, you better get a few of these, because they go very fast...

AGING AND PAIRING NOTES:

Corsendonk Pater Abbey Dubbel seems to be built for confident aging of 3-5 years, if kept in a dark place, without high temperature fluctuations. However, further maturity and aging is not necessary to enjoy now, as the samples we had were well balanced and approachable. For food pairings we recommend meat stews, barbeque, and medium rare prime rib. French Morbier or washed rind Epoisses, Taleggio, and Munster are great cheeses to pair with as well, and for dessert try it with chocolate bread pudding and butter truffles. Yum.

The RARE BEER CLUB

OLD BEERSEL
BEERSEL, BELGIUM

OUDE KRIEK VIEILLE 2014 (RARE BEER CLUB EXCLUSIVE)

Situated roughly six miles from the heart of Brussels, Belgium, the historic Oud Beersel stands as one of Belgium's last bastions of authentic lambic brewing. Its roots trace back to 1882 when Henri Vandervelden, initially a seasonal worker at De Kroon brewery, embarked on his own brewing venture. Amidst fruit-picking seasons, Henri's dedication culminated in the establishment of his brewery on Kasteelstraat in Beersel, later christened Oud Beersel. Today, the brewery is one of very few to still be employing spontaneous fermentation in this classic brewing region—maturing lambic for up to three



years in barrels—which can in turn be blended to go into the brewery's classic Oude Geuze. For the brewery's Oude Kriek, our featured beer, sour cherries go through a primary fermentation in lambic, as well as refermentation in the bottle. The local microflora in the air gives these beers their unique fermentation characteristics, and, quite simply, the lambics and geuzes of Belgium are some of the most expressive and delicious beers on the planet. We're very grateful to have this lambic producer still around.

Egidius, Henri's eldest son, inherited the brewing mantle, passing it on to his

own son, Henri Vandervelden II. Through the decades, the brewery endured tumultuous periods, including World War II rationing, during which innovative substitutes were employed to keep the brewing tradition alive. However, the turn of the 21st century heralded a dark chapter for Oud Beersel, as the lack of a clear successor threatened its closure in 2002.

In a fortuitous turn of events, Henri Vandervelden II found an ally in Gert Christiaens, a fervent admirer of Oud Beersel's Oude Geuze. Determined to revive the brewery, Gert collaborated with

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SPECIFICATIONS

Style

Vintage Oude Kriek

Alcohol By Volume

6%

Serving Temperature

46–54° F

Suggested Glassware

Lambic Tumbler, Flute, or Tulip Glass

Henri, culminating in a three-year transition period during which Gert collected the malting, brewing, and fermenting knowledge and experience that would be needed for such a vast undertaking, restarting one of the last lambic producers. Henri brewed with him during this period—gradually passing on the brewing knowledge the Vanderveldens had accumulated over the past century-plus.

Today, under Gert's stewardship, Oud Beersel honors its heritage while embracing modern advancements and exploring the nuances of spontaneous fermentation. Their Oude Kriek stands as a testament to this legacy, with the 2014 vintage exemplifying the pinnacle of spontaneously fermented fruited lambic. Furthermore, Oud Beersel's innovative spirit shines through initiatives like their pressure-resistant bag-in-box lambic packaging, underscoring their commitment to tradition and progress.

In essence, Oud Beersel's resilience and dedication ensure that the legacy of authentic lambic brewing endures, inviting enthusiasts to savor the distinctive flavors of Belgian lambics and geuzes.

OUDE KRIEK VIEILLE 2014

Oud Beersel's Oude Kriek Vieille

2014 epitomizes the authentic methods of crafting Oude Kriek, a tradition safeguarded under European protection, ensuring no compromise with added sugar, artificial flavors, or preservatives. In a meticulous process, sour cherries are slowly infused into the lambic, with an impressive rate of approximately 400 grams per liter—setting a standard within Oud Beersel's realm. The result is a sweet-tart symphony where lush, tart cherries intertwine with subtle notes of vanilla and almond.

This extraordinary brew bears a remarkable longevity, with a best-by date extending an impressive 20 years beyond its release. Our focus on the 2014 vintage stems from its entrance into the pinnacle of flavor complexity—a sentiment echoed by the scarcity of its U.S. distribution, with only a handful of the final cases available exclusively through the Rare Beer Club, and no inventory available via further imports.

Pouring a radiant ruby, Oud Beersel's Oude Kriek Vieille 2014 captivates with its modest off-white foam cap and core reminiscent of fine Pinot Noir, exuding a vibrant burgundy allure with deep variations in its hue. The aromatic journey is equally enticing, with deep red fruitiness leading the charge, underscored by the comforting presence of

almonds and toasty oak. A delightful interplay of plush fruitiness and complex acidity delights the senses, with each sip revealing layers of juicy tartness and nuanced sweetness.

The hallmark cherry character of Oud Beersel's krieks shines brightly in this 2014 vintage, offering a harmonious blend of bold acidity and rounded cherry notes. A perfect equilibrium between sweetness and tartness unfolds, complemented by nuances of toasty vanilla, almonds, and subtle oak tannins, with a hint of comforting cinnamon adding to the complexity. This Oude Kriek is a true delight to savor, its well-developed profile inviting one to linger and contemplate its intricate flavors. As it continues to evolve over the years, its generosity promises an enduring journey of discovery, making it a cherished gem among cherry beers.

AGING & PAIRING NOTES

The brewery gives Oude Kriek a 20-year shelf life, which we're at the half-way point of, so expect it to age gracefully for at least another decade. For pairing we recommend char-broiled salmon, roasted pheasant, seared duck breast with a cherry reduction sauce, cherry-wood smoked chicken, or turkey pot pie. It can even be paired with cherries jubilee or cherry pie for dessert. Cheers!