

# The RARE BEER CLUB



## INVERTASE BREWING COMPANY PHILLIPSBURG, NJ

1726

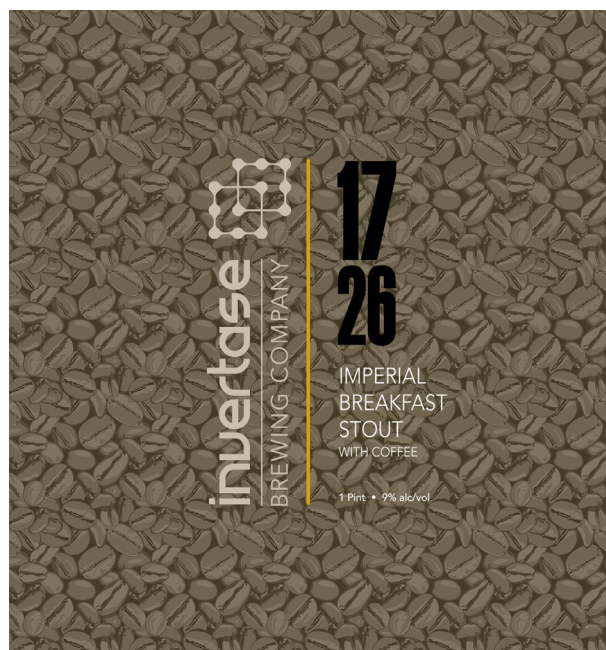
The story of the family-owned Invertase Brewing Company begins like that of so many other craft breweries we've encountered over the years – with a simple homebrewing kit. 14-year-old Stephen Zolnay gave one to his dad Steve for Father's Day, and, despite their first primitive batch coming out pretty crappy as they made a total mess of the kitchen, it was the start of a multi-year journey for this homebrewing father & son team. By the time he was in college, Stephen was producing some truly excellent beers and competing successfully in homebrewing competitions.

After graduating college with a degree in mechanical engineering, Stephen worked in the engineering field for a few years until deciding he was finished looking out over a sea of cubicles every day. He called up his dad and proposed they start their own brewery, and within six months they were at work personally building their brewery in Phillipsburg, NJ themselves. When they opened for business in October 2019, they had just four taps, but their growth since then has been dramatic as they've expanded their selections and built out their taproom with the largest beer garden in the Garden

extremely scientific-oriented brewery. In addition to brewmaster Stephen's mechanical engineering background, Steve's background is in biochemistry while mom Karen is a microbiologist. This is about as good a scientific team as a brewery could hope for. The brewery maintains a full lab that analyzes each batch to make sure it's hitting all of its target values, and they perform tests for bacterial and wild yeast growth at multiple steps in the process to ensure absolutely no off-flavors will arise in the finished product.

The Invertase team puts an emphasis on sustainability and community involvement, supporting local farmers by purchasing local ingredients whenever

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State, where they host live music and events. The team is currently working hard on a second location which will be in Lambertville, NJ, scheduled to open soon this year. It'll feature a taproom and a smaller brewery to augment their main facility in Phillipsburg.

The name Invertase is a nod to an enzyme that works on sugars, and it's an appropriate moniker for this

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Style**  
Imperial Breakfast Stout

**Alcohol By Volume**  
9%

**Serving Temperature**  
50–55° F

**Suggested Glassware**  
Tulip, Snifter, Teku

practical, and collaborating with local musicians and artists. Their family- and dog-friendly taproom and beer garden is designed to be an energetic location for their community to come together and celebrate good times. The brewery maintains about five core beers that they seek to always have on tap, including this month's featured 1726, and they produce a wide array of rotating offerings as well. For more info, check them out at [invertasebrewing.com](http://invertasebrewing.com).

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## 1726

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You may be wondering what the name 1726 stands for. Well, being an engineer, brewmaster Stephen Zolnay is fond of numbers, and many of Invertase's beers have numbered names like 1954, 425, 1600, or 571. His dad Steve tells us, "They're secret codes that only he knows, but they all are significant in some way – history, style, ingredients, etc." Well, we love a good mystery! Invertase distributes just in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania, so it's been our pleasure to have the opportunity to work with this family brewery to secure enough of their small-production 1726 Imperial Breakfast Stout for our club members this month. We're excited to introduce this very skilled and uber-scientific brewery to our members for the first time, and we're looking forward to seeing more from these folks in the years ahead.

1726 is a bold coffee stout that pours opaque and virtually black in our large

Duvel tulip. It's topped by that sort of well-retained fluffy head of dark brown foam that just screams "I'm a big ass stout" before receding to a lasting collar. In other words, it looks great. On the nose, this comes across wonderfully rich, led by prominent robust coffee notes at the center of a multitude of inviting aromas. We picked up plenty of bittersweet chocolate impressions in addition to the big coffee notes, along with touches of scorched toast, deep and dark caramelization, notions of fresh leather, shades of roasted nuts, and hints of ash and smoke, plus touches of sawn wood and earthiness, especially after a good swirl.

The story continues much the same way in the flavor, which is very roasty indeed. Waves of dark-roasted coffee take the lead here, backed by dark chocolate and deeply toasted bread crust. As the beer evolves in the glass with some aeration and warmth, look for flashes of dried dark fruits to pop through here and there amidst hints of roasted nuts and light peat or smoke. Hops add further decoration with a certain earthy, spicy, and zesty character and the malty core retains some residual sweetness which offers a satisfying counterpoint to balance the bitter elements. While building with warmth over time, that sweetness never steps over the line into cloying; this stout maintains an impressive balance that's ultimately quite dry from the prominent roast, healthy hop bitterness, and elevated alcohol level – which adds some bite

while remaining quite well hidden overall. Smooth, creamy, and certainly full-bodied – without being excessively chewy – 1726 struck us as the complete package for a coffee stout: generous coffee, silky smoothness, tons of subtle nuances, and effortlessly enjoyable.

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

The brewery urges us to drink 1726 fresh and recommends against aging. Case closed, right? Yep... mostly. Coffee stouts are best when fresh, as the coffee notes that are so central to their character will fade over time, much the same way as hops (which is why we don't typically age IPAs). But, the beer itself, being a 9% ABV imperial stout, should be able to stand up to considerable cellar time and still be enjoyable. Some of us feel a little age tends to increase the perceived smoothness and body of coffee stouts, but at the cost of the coffee character. 1726 is drinking beautifully smooth now, with bold coffee and perfect balance, so we'll be polishing off our cans pretty quick.

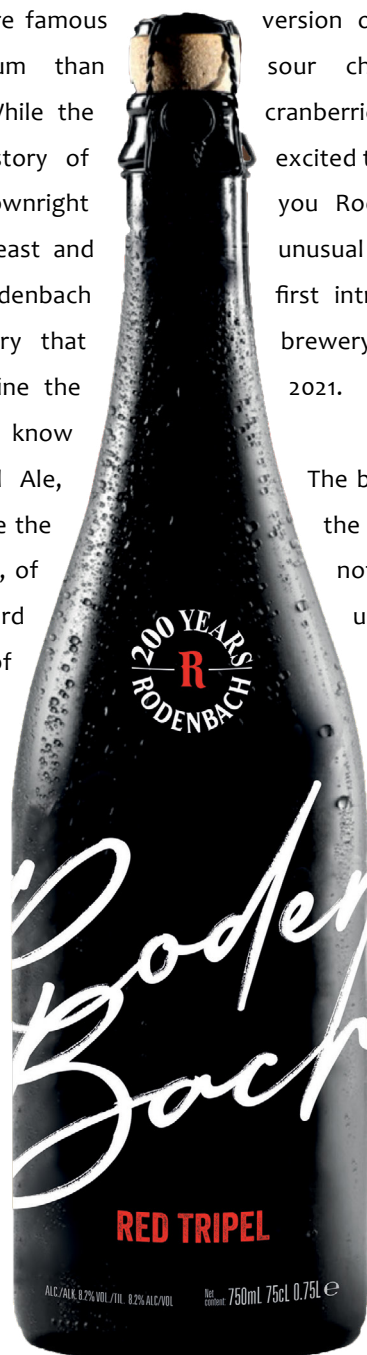
For pairing options, barbecued, grilled, and roasted meats and vegetables are hard to beat, with the roasty notes of dishes like beef brisket finding a happy partner in the beer. On the other hand, dessert pairings including chocolate, vanilla, and/or caramel can be revelatory, as can salty blue cheeses like Stilton or hard nutty cheeses such as Gouda and cloth-bound Cheddars.

# The RARE BEER CLUB

**BROUWERIJ RODENBACH**  
ROESELARE, WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM

## RODENBACH RED TRIPEL

There is perhaps no more famous brewery in all Belgium than Brouwerij Rodenbach. While the country has a long history of brewing both tart and downright sour beers using wild yeast and bacteria, it was Rodenbach in the late 19th century that helped pioneer and define the specific style of beer we know as Flanders/Flemish Red Ale, considered by many to be the most vinous, or wine-like, of all beer styles. The standard Rodenbach is a blend of approximately 75% fresh and 25% 2-year aged ale, while Rodenbach Grand Cru incorporates much more aged beer (approx. 66%). Long-time club members will be familiar with Rodenbach's much more limited offerings, like their annual Vintage, which features 100% aged beer derived from a single huge cask, and Caractère Rouge, a



version of Vintage produced with sour cherries, raspberries and cranberries. This month, we're excited to have the chance to bring you Rodenbach's Red Tripel, an unusual Tripel/Flanders Red hybrid first introduced to celebrate the brewery's 200th anniversary in 2021.

The brewery bears the name of the Rodenbach family, who not only contributed their unique beer to the world, but also helped contribute Belgium to the world, at least as an independent country. The brewery was founded in 1821 by Rodenbach brothers Pedro, Alexander, Ferdinand, and Constantijn. All four played critical roles in the Belgian Revolution of 1830, which led to the secession of Belgium from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In fact,

when Leopold I greeted the crowd from the balcony of the House of the Nation after being crowned king, Alexander (who ran the brewery from 1821 to 1836, and happened to be blind), appeared at his side.

In 1878, Pedro's grandson Eugène became manager of the family brewery. From a brewing perspective, as opposed to a political one, Eugène is certainly the most influential Rodenbach in the family line. During his travels to southern England, he was exposed to, and learned much about, the early porter beers popular in London at the time. In the 19th century, these early porters were typically aged for at least several months in giant barrels where they matured and acidified. Eugène

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### SPECIFICATIONS

#### Style

Belgian Tripel blended w/ 2-yr Aged Flemish Red-Brown Ale

#### Alcohol By Volume

8.2%

#### Serving Temperature

50–57° F

#### Suggested Glassware

Tulip, Teku, Chalice, Pinot Glass

took what he learned and applied it at home in Belgium, developing and refining the technique, and creating the style of Rodenbach beer we know today. Sadly, Eugène died in 1889 at the age of just 39.

Rodenbach's red ales undergo a primary and a secondary fermentation, with both yeast and lactobacillus bacteria, creating a beer with a distinctively acidic, sour quality. However, it's when the beers enter the maturation stage that the fun really begins. The beer is aged (typically for two years) in 294 huge oak barrels known as "foeders" (a Dutch term, pronounced like "foo-der") some of which are older than 150 years, and which range in size between 3,100 and 17,000 gallons. Of these impressive foeders, Rare Beer Club founder (and arguably most prominent beer writer and historian in the world) Michael Jackson wrote, "Rodenbach, in Roeselare, has ten or eleven halls full of these tuns. There is nothing comparable in any brewery elsewhere in the world, and the whole establishment is a temple of industrial archaeology." Indeed, Rodenbach stands as a historical monument to brewing to this day, and their beers remain benchmarks within the Flemish red-brown style category.

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## RODENBACH RED TRIPEL

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Combining two classic Belgian styles, Rodenbach Red Tripel blends a traditional Belgian tripel with a Flemish red-brown ale that's been aged for two years inside of 4,000-gallon oak foeder casks. Created in celebration of Rodenbach's 200th

anniversary in 2021, this exceptional beer offers classic Rodenbach sour-ale character, while accentuating the best elements of both of the underlying classic styles. Lots to appreciate about this beer.

Rodenbach Red Tripel certainly lives up to its name, pouring a striking reddish hue heading into burgundy, almost like berry juice, with an ultimately vinous look capped by off-white foam. On the nose, this is boldly fruity, with big notes of sour Luxardo cherries and underripe stone fruits riding over top and grabbing our attention straight out of the gate. Yeast-driven phenolic spice notes follow – not as strong as with most pure tripels but quite noticeable nonetheless, especially after a good swirl – as core aspects of both the tripel and Flemish red ale shine through, bringing loads of pepper and clove from the former and no lack of plush red fruits, berry-like tartness, and wisps of balsamic via the latter. We found lots of toasty oak, and the brewery's notes of "apricot, caramel, pastry, and white Burgundy" for aromatics were particularly on point. It's a very generous, engaging nose, with notes of fresh-baked bread lurking below as a foundational element.

There's a medium-full mouthfeel here emphasizing red fruits, berries, and a nice balance of subtle tartness, peppery phenolics, and some residual malty sweetness. In fact, the sweet-sour interplay is impressively realized, as the beer's tart lactic and acetic character (whose intensity is definitely softer in this blend compared to Rodenbach's

pure 2-yr aged sour beers like Vintage or Caractère Rouge) finds a delicious foil in the sweeter, toasty bread character at the beer's core. We found significant fruit leather, caramelization, and rounded oak-barrel character contributed by the Flemish red. The Belgian tripel part provides inviting honeyed maltiness, a crisp pop of mineral bitterness, and a nice mixture of peppery and clove yeast notes that work great with the vanilla and almond of the oak casks' contribution. Very engaging, restrained sweetness throughout; this offers up a deft blend of two exceptional beers. If you're a fan of tripels and Flemish reds, this tasty, fascinating, and super-unique offering from Rodenbach is not to be missed.

### AGING & PAIRING NOTES:

Most Flemish red-brown sour beers are well-known for being quite long-lived, and though Rodenbach's Red Tripel is a hybrid blend, it should be sturdy enough for considerable time in the cellar. It's blended to be very drinkable upon release, but we've recently enjoyed bottles from the original 2021 release that still drank beautifully and were an absolute delight. So, we'd recommend stocking up and hanging on to some bottles for a while. The brewery suggests pairing this beer's fruity, fresh characteristics with the sweet and salty components of bouillabaisse, in addition to veal and poultry. We also feel it's ideal for pairing alongside various rich stews, with fresh rustic bread and creamy cheeses.