



Beer of the Month Club

April 2005 Selections

Trumer Pils

Trumer Brauerei, Berkeley, California

4.9%abv \$8.50/6x12oz

Austrians are a very deliberate and thoughtful people – with some rather famous recent and local exceptions, of course! This may help explain why a successful Austrian brewery would wait more than 400 years before opening their second location. Trumer Brauerei was founded in Salzburg, Austria, in the year 1601. The brewery was run by a succession of local concerns over its first 175 years, slowly building its reputation for fine beers, but it was the purchase of the company by the Sigl family in 1775 that would begin their ascent to the top of the European brewing tradition. The Sigls proved to be exceptional businessmen, and within a few years of their purchase of Trumer, they were producing the finest beers in all of Austria. It was the invention of the Pilsner-style beer, in Pilsen, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), and Trumer's version of this new style of lager that would make them truly famous. In 2003, Josef Sigl VII, the current owner, combined forces with the Gambrinus Company (owners of the Spoetzel Brewery in Shiner, Texas, and Bridgeport Brewing in Portland, Oregon) to open an American branch. Eventually, they purchased the old Golden Pacific Brewing Company brewery in Berkeley, California. They chose Berkeley because the soft water there most closely matched that of Salzburg. After a complete overhaul of the brewing machinery – converting from ale brewing to lager brewing – the brewery began production of the new Trumer Pils in the fall of 2004. While the draft version of Trumer Pils has been available in restaurants and pubs around the Bay Area for about six months now, PlumpJack Noe Valley is the first retailer in San Francisco to offer the beer in bottled six-packs.

Trumer Pils is one of the very few versions of a 'true' Pilsner beer made in the United States. Most American Pilsners are made with just enough barley to ensure that they taste at least *somewhat* like a Pilsner, but actually get most of their fermentable sugars from filler grains such as rice and corn. This method makes for quick fermentations at low cost to the brewer, but sacrifice the kind of flavor that even these lightest of beers are actually capable of. The Trumer Pils is brewed using a combination of Pilsner malts from Germany and Austria. One of the extra steps that Trumer puts into their Pils production is the removal of the barley husks after the initial steeping of the grain. This labor- and time-consuming process ensures greater purity in the finished beer, and is most notable in the tiny, Champagne-like bubbles that rise from the bottom of the glass, making most other Pilsner beers appear clumsy by comparison. The fermentation is performed by Trumer's proprietary yeast strain, brought from Salzburg, and the beer is hopped using an Austrian variety for bitterness, and then Austrian and German Saaz hops for aroma. As with all Pilsner beers, the Trumer Pils tastes its best when consumed from a tall, thin, and well-chilled Pilsner glass at the coolest temperature that you can manage. First, pour a small amount of beer into the bottom of the glass to form an aggressive head, then let the glass rest for a minute. Next, pour the rest of the beer slowly through the foam in the glass, all the way to the top. Ideally, you will have a tall dome of lacy white foam at the top of the glass.

The Trumer Pils pours with a crystal-clear, light golden color. A cascade of tiny bubbles slowly rises to a foamy white head. The aromas are lightly malty, but with a citrusy crispness. On the palate, it is bright and very lively, instantly refreshing. Lightly toasted grains and resinous, citrus-inflected hop flavors dominate. The finish is very long, yet not at all bitter, due to the purity of the beer. A fine match for *Wiener Schnitzel*, or good old American wieners at the ballpark!

Jacobite Ale

Traquair House Brewery, Innerleithen, Peeblesshire, Scotland

8.0%abv \$5.25/330ml

Traquair House is the oldest inhabited building in all of Scotland, with a history dating back to at least 950AD. By the time King Alexander I of Scotland gave Traquair House its Royal charter, in 1107, it was already a haven for kings and other royalty, who used it as a lodge for hawking, hunting and fishing. When the British invaded Scotland in 1286, the House was briefly occupied by both King Edward I of England (the bad guy from *Braveheart*), and his son Edward II, but was restored to the Scottish crown on the ascension of Robert the Bruce in 1306. In 1491, James Stuart was named the Laird of Traquair, a title that is still held by his ancestors, the current residents at the House. Over the succeeding centuries, the House played host to such historical figures as Mary, Queen of Scots and Bonnie Prince Charlie. It was a visit by Prince Charlie in 1745 that led to one of the more romantic moments in the estate's history – the locking of the gates at Traquair. As the Prince was leaving the estate after an extended stay, the current Laird locked the gates behind him, swearing that they would remain locked until the house of Stuart was restored to the Scottish throne. Although they soon built another gate in the castle wall, those original gates remain locked shut to this day, awaiting the return of a Stuart King.

Brewing has been done on the premises since its earliest history, as was common in the middle ages. For most of this time, though, the beer produced was for the consumption of the Laird, his many royal visitors, and the senior household staff. The brewery eventually did fall into disuse in later centuries, until 1965, when the 20th Laird of Traquair revived the brewery and began brewing ale once again, albeit this time as a commercial venture. Today his daughter, the 21st Lady of Traquair, is both owner and brewmaster, continuing a family tradition that dates back for more than 500 years. Total production at the brewery is a mere 600-700 barrels of ale per year, which amounts to about one half the size of a single fermentation vat at Anheuser-Busch. Traquair's Jacobite Ale is named for an earlier Laird of the estate who had been imprisoned at the Tower of London around the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries for his part in a religious uprising known as the Jacobite Rebellion, when Scottish Catholics rebelled against the Church of England.

All of Traquair House's ales are brewed in a truly traditional fashion, using ancient, uncoated wooden fermentation vats for the steeping of the wort and initial fermentation. The Jacobite Ale is begun by steeping local barley from the farm of Hugh Baird and Sons in the wooden vats using water from the estate's own mountain spring. When the wort is drawn off the solid materials, it is boiled with East Kent Goldings hops, as well as both fresh coriander leaves (cilantro to us *gingos*) and dried coriander seed. The ale is then fermented with a yeast strain that has been in use at Traquair for so long that no one is really sure of its origins, and conditioned in a combination of stainless steel and old oak casks. The Jacobite Ale is filtered just before bottling to maintain the freshness of the spices, but is still robust enough to withstand up to five years of bottle aging. Like most strong ales, the Jacobite is best enjoyed at cellar temperature, or slightly cooler (say, 50-55°F), and I have found that a red wine glass, or similar goblet, will show the spiciness of the beer to its full advantage.

Traquair's Jacobite Ale has a deep, ruby-tinged coffee color and a rocky, tan colored head. It is hard not to notice the strong aromatics of this amazing little beer, because they practically leap from the glass. Big, expressive aromas of sweet fruits, Fig Newtons, vanilla and other spices accentuate the roasted barley core. The taste is strongly malty, with hints of old wood, spices, chocolate covered raisins, and other dried fruits. The finish goes on forever, turning from chocolate to slightly drying brown spices. While this spiciness is never really identifiable as coriander, it is prevailing, and definitely defines the character of this unique ale. It would be a great dessert all on its own after a long day of fishing in the cold, but it would also work quite well with fire-roasted salmon, or a wild Scottish hare done in a rich stew.