



## Beer of the Month Club

April 2007 Selections

### Krušovice Černé

**Královský Pivovar Krušovice (Royal Brewery of Krušovice), Krušovice, Bohemia, Czech Republic**  
3.8%abv      \$2.50/500ml

The Royal Brewery of Krušovice (differing opinions tell me it is pronounced either *kru-ZO-vi-cheb* or *kroo-so-VEE-cha*) is one of the oldest breweries in the Czech Republic, dating to a royal decree of 1517, in which the Bohemian crown allowed the aristocracy to brew beer on their own properties. In 1581, the son of the brewery's founder sold the property to Emperor Rudolf II, thus earning the title 'Royal Brewery'. In 1685, the brewery was sold back into private hands, and it changed hands several times over the succeeding two and a half centuries before being nationalized in the years following World War II, when the communists took over what was then Czechoslovakia. In 1991, following the collapse of the communist regime and the splitting of Czechoslovakia into the independent Czech and Slovak Republics, the company was privatized, and has been owned by Dr. Oetker and his family ever since. In 1993, a major modernization and expansion was begun, and by 1997, production had exceeded 1 million hectoliters (that's about 26.5 million gallons!), and exporting began in earnest. Krušovice beers just reached the West Coast for the very first time this spring.

The Krušovice Černé is a *schwarzbier*, literally "black beer", but also referred to as a dark lager. You wouldn't know it today, but prior to World War II, both Bavaria and Bohemia were much more famous for their dark beers than they were for the now ubiquitous pale lagers. In fact, the lager is a fairly recent invention itself, and historically the beers of these two regions were ales, although very few ales are produced in Germany or the Czech Republic any longer. Krušovice have been famous for their dark lager for well over 100 years, and it is considered their specialty. Even when the fad for pale lagers convinced many brewers to abandon the older and less popular beer styles, Krušovice – thank goodness! – stuck to their guns. The Krušovice Černé (I'm not certain, but have been told that Černé is Czech for 'black') is brewed using pale, crystal and chocolate malts made from barley grown in nearby Moravia; hops grown locally in the Zatec region of Bohemia; a proprietary strain of yeast that the brewery has been using for close to 200 years; and spring water from the nearby Křilovát Woods. After fermentation, the beer is clarified by filtration, carbonated, and lagered (basically, aged in cold storage for mellowing) for sixty days before being shipped. Like most lagers, the Krušovice Černé is best served well-chilled, but not icy enough to cover up its complex flavor profile. It should be served in a tall, chilled Pilsner-style glass to best highlight its clarity and fine bead of carbonation.

The Krušovice Černé pours into the glass with a crystal clear mahogany color. The head is a foamy dark beige that fades fairly quickly, but leaves a nice lace in the glass, and is quickly revived with a brisk swirl of the glass. The nose is rich with aromas of roasted grains, dark fruits, and hints of dark flavors like coffee and licorice. It is a fairly full-bodied lager, with a creamy mouthfeel, and fine carbonation. The roasted aromas continue on the palate, with notes of brown bread, coffee and spice draped over a core of sweet, fruity malt. The finish is perhaps a bit short, but only if you compare it to a more full-bodied ale; it will stand up with the very best lagers from anywhere. I think the Krušovice Černé would be a perfect match for a rustic meal of dark bread, cheese and sausages, but those of you with a bit more familiarity with the region should try pairing it with traditional local foods.

## **Monkman's Slaughter ESB**

**Cropton Brewery, Cropton, Yorkshire, England**

**6.0%abv      \$5.50/500ml**

Cropton is a small town in the hills of northern Yorkshire, in the north of England. Brewing has been taking place in Cropton since at least 1613, although any brewing done at that time would have been illicit. The tradition in Britain at the time would have meant that brewing was done by the women of the household, while the men worked the fields, but it has been a long time since women were prominent in the brewing industry in England. Today, Cropton Brewery is the only female-owned and operated brewery in the U.K. The brewery was established in 1984, in the cellars of the New Inn in Cropton, and their earliest brews were produced only in cask, and for the sole use of the Inn. In a very short time, however, the beers of Cropton had achieved such a loyal local following that production was increased, so as to be able to supply pubs further afield. In 1994, a new, purpose-built brewery was constructed at Woolcroft, an old farm behind the New Inn. Within a year, production had doubled again, and the brewery began to package their beers in bottle for the first time. The brewing process at Cropton is still entirely traditional, with every step from the mash to bottling and labeling done by hand.

No monks were harmed in the production of this ale! Monkman's Slaughter is a great name for a beer, but it came about its name in a rather unusual way. Mr. Monkman is the local farmer that grows the barley used by Cropton Brewery; Mr. Slaughter is the brewery's head brewer and chemist. The Monkman's Slaughter is an ESB, or Extra Special Bitter. The Bitter is a style of ale distinct to Britain, and most ale breweries there will brew at least one as a part of their lineup. Bitters are generally more malt-driven ales than Pale Ales or IPAs, with the hops used primarily for bittering the ale, not for aroma, as in an IPA. When more than one bitter is produced at a given brewery, the higher gravity beer will be called a 'Best Bitter', and if a third, even stronger ale is added, it is usually labeled as an 'Extra Special Bitter'. The Monkman's Slaughter is brewed using locally farmed barley, malted at the brewery, and kilned to the pale and crystal level. After the grains are mashed, the wort is transferred to a traditional copper brewing kettle, where Kent Golding and Challenger hops (organic when possible) are added prior to a one hour boil. After the boil, more hops are added (this is what is referred to as 'dry-hopping'), and the 'hopped wort' is transferred to open top fermenting vessels, where yeast is added and fermentation begins. After 3-5 days, the beer is ready for bottling, where a small dose of yeast and sugar is added for the final bottle fermentation. The Monkman's Slaughter is never filtered or pasteurized, and will cast a slight sediment, which you can decant the ale off of if you prefer a clear quaff. Like all bitters, this should be served in a traditional pint glass, and enjoyed at what would be cellar temperature in the British Isles, around 50-55°F.

The Monkman's Slaughter pours into the pint glass a dark amber, almost brown ale color. Its head is a rocky, off-white color, and it lingers in the glass fairly well, leaving a delicate lace as it dissipates. The nose is immediately fruity, showing citrus and pit fruits, with just a hint of resinous, almost grapefruity notes from the dry hopping. It is medium- to full-bodied on the palate, with lots of fruity esters, good acidity, and plenty of hops for bitterness. Where it differs from many in the style is the amount of aroma hops, giving it an almost West Coast, USA, ESB character, if not quite that pungent. This is a classic ale for Pub Grub: think Bangers & Mash, steak and kidney pie, fish & chips. Or, you could go out on a limb, and try it with an Indian curry!