



# Beer of the Month Club

January 2005 Selections

A couple of fine Winter Seasonals from Humboldt County, California!

## Winterbraun

**Lost Coast Brewery, Eureka, California**

**6.5%abv      \$8.50/6x12oz**

Lost Coast Brewery began as the dream of two women – Wendy Pound and Barbara Groom – who were fed up with their 9 to 5 existences. Operating on the theory that the only thing that could possibly be more fun than brewing their own beer would be to make a living at it, the two embarked on a multi-year project of practicing their brewing skills and acquiring recipes for new and interesting brews. After several trips to the great pubs of England and Wales (for research!), the two entrepreneurs felt they were ready to go for it. The Lost Coast Brewery & Cafe opened in downtown Eureka, California in 1993 to local accolades, and their beers soon began to attract the attention of beer lovers throughout the Pacific Northwest. Located in an historic 1892 building, it truly captures the feel of an authentic old-world pub, and is a registered historical landmark. Over the years, demand for their products became strong enough for them to expand the brewery and add a bottling line, so they could make their products available to a wider audience. Then, in 2003, Lost Coast opened a new off-site brewery to produce their packaged ales for even wider distribution, although the original brewpub still brews draught ales for its own use. Their most popular ale, Downtown Brown, is one of the most award-winning beers in the country over the past decade, taking in literally dozens of awards at major beer competitions. The Winterbraun won a silver medal in 1998 at the World Beer Championships.

The Winterbraun is a strong brown ale, in the style of the strong winter warmers of northern England and Scotland. These ales are typically brewed to a higher strength than a brewery's 'regular', or year-round brown ale, and are meant to be consumed as restoratives at the end of a long day of hard, cold work. Winterbraun is slow-brewed using a combination of caramel, chocolate, and American pale malts, and is moderately seasoned with Pacific Northwest Saaz hops. After a short conditioning, the ale is bottled or kegged, then shipped throughout California, Oregon, and Washington, as well as select other markets around the country. Drink your Winterbraun slightly chilled - so as to take away your own chill – from a traditional pint glass.

The Winterbraun ale pours a rich, chocolate-brown color. It has a very fine, cappuccino-colored head that dissipates fairly quickly. The aromas are initially grainy, with plenty of roasted malt, and hints of brown bread and dark cocoa. With time in the glass, though, some sweet fruitiness begins to show itself in the form of dates, raisins, and other dried fruits. It finishes long, and quite complex, with a sense of chocolate-covered berries and spiced cake. While the Winterbraun is perfect on its own as a winter warmer in front of a fire, it pairs quite nicely with cold roast beef on a slab of hearty bread with spicy mustard, too.

## John Barleycorn Barleywine-Style Ale

**Mad River Brewing Company, Blue Lake, California**

**9.0%abv      \$10.99/6x12oz**

In what has become a familiar story among the microbrewers of the West Coast, Mad River began with the humble aspirations of an amateur brewer, Bob Smith. Bitten by the brewing bug in the late 1970's, Smith joined with a small group of men and women that would soon become the foundation of the new craft beer movement of the eighties. After years of searching for ingredients, ideas, and knowledge, Smith was able to put together a small group of investors and open the Mad River Brewing Company in 1989.

Located in the small town of Mad River, just northwest of Eureka, in the coastal hills of Humboldt County, MRBC is a microbrewery in the truest sense, with no pub or restaurant to rely on for sales. They produce two lines of ales on a year-round basis - Steelhead Ales, modeled after the traditional styles of the British Isles; and Jamaica Ales, which exploit the West Coast penchant for experimentation, making ales of a more challenging nature. The John Barleycorn Barleywine is their winter seasonal ale.

John Barleycorn is an ancient, mythical personification representing the barley grain (in Europe, the word 'corn' is used to represent any grain; what we call 'corn' is known as maize to the rest of the world) and all its worth. In pre-literate England there was a long tradition of folk tales passed around by mouth. Many of these tales served as lessons in morality or educational tools, as well as entertainment, and the tale of John Barleycorn was sort of an oral history of the grain and all its uses, from seed to cup. Told in verse, it is a long and colorful tale, and MRBC use a single line of that verse on the label of each year's bottling, along with a unique piece of woodcut art by local artist Janis Taylor. The John Barleycorn barleywine-style ale is brewed in ten barrel batches using organically grown American barley. Three types of hops are used, two in the boiling kettle, Columbus and Brewers' Gold, and Perle hops are used with the other two as finishing, or flavoring hops. It is brewed to a fairly high degree of alcohol, yet still retains a touch of unfermented sugars, which is common to the style. Drink your JB at just below room temperature to enjoy its full flavor profile, and serve it in a nice red wine glass or brandy snifter to retain the aromas in the glass.

John Barleycorn looks just awesome in a wine glass, with a deep, crimson-tinged copper color and a lacy, cream-colored head. Aromas of brandied cherries, dried fruits, bourbon wood and caramel fairly leap from the glass. After warming in the glass, and giving it a swirl, faint hints of citrusy hops will pop out, but the aromatic profile is still dominated by sweet fruity notes. In the mouth, this ale is very round and mouth-filling, and surprisingly dry, considering the fruitiness of the nose. Flavors of dried fruits, treacle, brown spices and roasted hazelnuts slowly unfold. The finish lasts for minutes, slowly drying on the palate, but continually echoing the sweet fruitiness that was so evident before. This is a beer that is built for the cheese or dessert course, and does especially well with a sharp and nutty cheese, such as a farmhouse cheddar.