



January 2009

Saison Rue

The Bruery, Placentia, California

8.5%abv \$13.50/750ml

Bay Area weather has hit record temperatures this month. It's January and we're forced to be thinking spring. Where we would typically gravitate towards more burly offerings to keep you warm, our selections would be fine for the picnic table as well as the hearth.

It's no longer news to read that great brews are coming out of southern California. We are starting to expect it and can't wait for them to reach our neck of the woods. The newest contributor is certainly no exception and yet another pedigree boost for the region. Our first selection comes from The Bruery. The semi-onymous brewery was founded by Patrick Rue and opened in May of 2008. Like many craft brewers, Patrick's brewing career began on a stove top and grew from a hobby into a passion. Fortunately or unfortunately, all this happened while in law school resulting in the monumental decision between lawyer and brewer. You can guess which route was taken. After a few years of planning, convincing, bureaucracy and construction, a fresh law school background turned into The Bruery. It all makes perfect sense to us! So far, The Bruery has focused on Belgian inspired concoctions with a wide range of ingredients to create an overall depth of interesting flavors and character for each beer. The line-up features three year-round beers, several seasonals, and an annual homebrewing contest that rewards the winner with a batch brewed at The Bruery. The first edition of this contest resulted in batch number one produced at the new brewery. Not only is this a great way to endear yourselves to the local enthusiasts, the resulting beer won bronze at the 2008 LA International Beer Competition. As stated, The Bruery produces Belgian inspired beers that incorporate interesting ingredients like lavender (Orchard White), chamomile (Black Orchard) and Thai basil (Tradewinds). These ingredients undergo primary fermentation using proprietary Belgian yeasts and secondary fermentation is in the bottle resulting in 100% bottle conditioned, unfiltered and unpasteurized beers. Each beer proudly states its unique ingredients and the subtleties are not going unnoticed. At less than a year old, The Bruery is already garnering high praise from critics and enthusiasts in print and across the blogosphere.

For our selection, we chose the Saison Rue. The Saison Rue is one of the year-round selections and is a Belgian/French style farmhouse ale. Like the rest of the line-up, this is a bottle conditioned beer that is unfiltered and unpasteurized. Patrick was kind enough to give us the entire rundown of the recipe and process. Of interest in the grain bill is the 30% proportion of malted rye. Rye doesn't tend to overpower in terms of flavor, but it contributes to the overall complexity of the result. The bittering hops are German Magnum and aroma hops are Sterling. The primary yeast strain is a proprietary Belgian yeast that begins fermentation at 55 degrees. The natural process of the yeast activity jumps the temperature up to about 90 degrees. Secondary fermentation occurs in the bottle and for Saison Rue, *brettanomyces* is added before bottling. You may be familiar with *brettanomyces*. It lends a character that is briefly described as 'funk' and more colorfully described as 'horse blanket' or 'barnyard'. For a growing portion of beer aficionados, this is definitely a good thing and opens up a whole world of new ideas for micro and home brewers. The beer is built for enjoyment now and will change in complexity if allowed to age. Serve it in a traditional Belgian ale chalice, or from a red wine glass, to get the full impression of its complex aromatics. It should be served around 50° F.

Your Saison Rue pours a deep golden straw color supporting a nice white head. The body is slightly cloudy and appropriate for the style with a minor amount of sediment, which is impressive for a beer that undergoes secondary fermentation in the bottle. Secondary fermentation is typically the holding area that allows beer to clarify. The aroma is a compelling balance of citrus, clove, bread and the welcome tinge that accompanies beers using *brettanomyces*. The considerable proportion of rye and Sterling hops for aroma (similar to Saaz in spiciness) contributes and blends with the aroma well. On the tongue the balance continues and is remarkable. The beer follows some of the typical saison characteristics of being a crisp and refreshing Belgian style farmhouse beer. That is just the start for this version. The impact of the rye malt, bittering hops, and brett are all discernible but each in their right place. The mouth feel is light and spicy and the high-alpha bittering hops are evident on the finish even with an overall dryness. Try your Saison Rue with a mild savory cheese like aged Gouda and homemade bread (tends to have better yeast flavors).



Schneider & Brooklyner Hopfen-Weisse

Private Weissbierbrauerei G. Schneider & Sohn, Kelheim, Bavaria, Germany

8.2%abv \$4.75/500ml

Schneider Weisse is already world famous as the producer of the legendary Aventinus. The family can reasonably claim to be one of the initial curators and eventual saviors of wheat beer. In 1872 Georg I. Schneider acquired the rights to boil wheat beer for King Ludwig II. The style of beer was falling out of favor and Schneider had resurrected it. That recipe holds true today and he is revered by wheat beer producers and connoisseurs world-wide. The current primary brewery in Kelheim is the oldest wheat beer producing facility in Bavaria. It has brewed continuously since 1607. Schneider has since modernized it considerably to keep with the times. Another brewery in Munich did not survive the bombings during WWII, and was destroyed in 1944. As for keeping it in the family, we're now on Georg the VIIth who is 14 years old and has a fairly solid career opportunity ahead of him.

Schneider Weisse has maintained a level of excellence for so long by adhering to strict rules regarding all of its ingredients and process. All water comes from clear spring water. The wheat and barley must come from growers that offer full transparency into their growing practices. No preventative infestation treatments, no wheat from soils where corn was the last crop grown, regular soil examinations, you get the picture. Hops are primarily Hallertau aroma varieties. They don't tend to be the star of the beers, rather aroma, head and shelf-life enhancements. The production of the beers is fairly standard. Primary fermentation is open and all beers are bottle conditioned, unfiltered and not pasteurized.

Our selection is the remarkable result of the first collaboration Schneider has ever done. Garrett Oliver, brewmaster at Brooklyn Brewery and his counterpart Hans-Peter Drexler at Schneider have been friends for over a decade. Oliver respected Drexler's consistent quality and balance and Drexler was enamored with Brooklyn's East India Pale Ale. This resulted in a two part collaboration. The first was brewed at Brooklyn to create Brooklyner-Schneider Hopfen-Weisse. The result was a pale weissbock brewed to 8% abv using Drexler's favorite American hops for dry-hopping. The beer was fermented with Schneider's yeast. This beer has been released and is likely already sold out. The second portion of the collaboration is the reverse of the first and brewed in Germany. The recipes are essentially the same with the dry-hopping done with locally grown Hallertau Saphir hops. If this was the first experiment in dry-hopping, they were not planning to tread lightly. For each barrel, 3 pounds of hops were used. This was all but unheard of for German beers and even more remarkable for such a deep rooted traditional brewery. The goals were simple and directly from the press release: Says Drexler, "We did this collaboration in order to learn some things and to create some nice new beers, maybe even a new beer style. And, more importantly, to have fun." The result is our second beer of the month, Schneider & Brooklyn Hopfen-Weisse. Not very much of this made it to the Bay Area and everything we got is Beer Club only! Drink this one from a tall Hefe-Weissen glass, or a traditional pint glass. Try your Schneider & Brooklyn Hopfen-Weisse at refrigerator temperatures. As it warms the phenolics of the yeast develop as well as some of the resin qualities of the hops.

Your Schneider & Brooklyn Hopfen-Weisse pours brassy colored with a slightly olive tinge. There is a trademark crisp and foamy white head that dissipates quickly. Sediment left during bottle conditioning results in an overall turbid appearance. Aroma is where you instantly see the dry-hopping come into play. The layer of hops on top of the almost sweet characteristic normal in Schneider's beers is clear. The soft pine and citrus notes of the hops are just as apparent as the banana and coriander contributions of the yeast. You can already tell from the nose that they accomplished the marriage of the two ideals. The taste is soft on the palate overall with an interesting combination of sweet and bitter. Also a characteristic of Schneider beers is a well hidden alcohol. The 8% is barely noticeable and rounds out the flavor. This style will pair better with a dish like grilled fish with papaya salsa than the typical German fare, but you could also pair it as you would an IPA.