



Beer of the Month Club

July 2006 Selections

Samuel Adams Patriot Brewer Collection

Boston Brewing Company, Boston, Massachusetts

5.4-5.7%abv \$11.00/4x12oz

We have made controversial beer selections in the past, but usually the controversy was about what was *in* the bottle. This month we are expecting even more controversy, both for the bizarre individuality of the brews, but also for the brewer itself. Is Sam Adams still considered a microbrewer? Are they the macro-micro, or have they become the first micro-macro? Whichever the case may be, it is hard to denigrate the quality of the products they produce, if not the size of their operation. That said, the Patriot Brewer Collection is a very limited release by the brewery, being shipped only to major markets, and in very limited quantities (only 144 cases for Northern California, and we bought more than 20 of those), so we hope you haven't experienced them yet!

The Boston Beer Company was founded in 1984 by Jim Koch, the fifth generation of Kochs to become a professional brewer. Jim's father, Charles, had left the brewing industry around the end of the sixties, when America's thirst for watery pilsners finally closed the doors of the small regional brewer he had worked for in Ohio. By the early 1980's, Jim had noticed the beginnings of a resurgent microbrewing movement in the US, and he decided the time was right for the Koch legacy to continue – even if his father thought he was crazy. So, in rifling through his father's accumulated collection of five generations' worth of brewing records and memorabilia, Jim decided to dust off a recipe belonging to his great-great-grandfather, who brewed in St. Louis in the 1870's. This was the beer that became Samuel Adams' Boston Lager, and launched a brewing dynasty. By year two, Sam Adams was already being distributed fairly widely in New England, and even exported to Germany. By 1988, production had passed 36,000 barrels per year, and the beer was being distributed coast to coast. Now well into their third decade, The Boston Beer Co. has amassed more than 650 awards and trophies for their products, more than any other brewer in the world.

Samuel Adams himself was a brewer, patriot, businessman, and politician, although historical records show he wasn't particularly successful in business or brewing. Most of his political contemporaries were also brewers, and the Brewer Patriot Collection is meant to honor the lives (if not the actual brews) of our founding fathers. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were all known to brew for their own consumption, if not professionally. In fact, there was a time when Madison was pushing for the government to sponsor a National Brewery in Washington, D.C. (never happened!), and Washington encouraged home brewing as a way to be less reliant on imports from England. Although very few actual recipes exist, records of the types of ingredients used still do, and these four beers are meant to reflect the types of beer that were brewed at that time by our forefathers.

The **Traditional Ginger Honey Ale** is based on beers brewed in the colonies as early as 1700. Thomas Jefferson and his wife were known to have brewed about 15 gallons of a ginger beer with honey and lemons every two weeks for their own consumption. This beer is brewed using a selection of pale malts, plus fresh ginger, lemon peel, and wildflower honey. It has a slightly hazy, orange-gold color, and a delicate white head. The aromas are sweet and citric, with a touch of honey. The palate is bright and crisp, with a mead-like honey flavor, and a nice balance of citrus fruits. The slightly sweet finish tells be it would work best at cooler temperatures, and try pairing it with foods that have sweet and tangy flavors, like traditional American BBQ, or some Hunan-style or Cantonese dishes.

The **George Washington Porter** is a tribute to that great man's favorite tippie, as Washington was known to have been an avid brewer of Porters. Like the traditional Porters of Washington's time, this beer

is brewed using barley that was malted, then hand-kilned over burning wood. Molasses is used to increase the amount of fermentable sugars, and in addition to the one pound of East Kent Goldings hops used for each barrel of beer, licorice is also added, to provide earthiness and spice. The beer pours a deep coffee color, with just a wisp of lacy brown head. The aromas are deep and roasty-smoky, with just a hint of spice. On the palate it is quite dry, but still shows hints of molasses and caramel, as well as smoke and a bit of earthy spice and licorice in the finish. Try this one just a bit warmer than refrigerator temp, and pair it with a Yankee pot roast, or other such patriotic fare.

The **James Madison Dark Wheat Ale** is loosely based on the beers that Madison himself brewed at his Virginia home. Madison malted and kilned his own barley and wheat, using red and white oaks from his estate. Sam Adams have replicated this by securing wood from that very same property, and using it to smoke-dry the malt for this beer. It has a cloudy mahogany color, and a lacy, off-white head. The aroma here is fairly faint, with hints of smoke and toasted grains. The lightness of the palate belies its heart of wheat, and the fruity flavors of the wheat also make themselves known. As the beer warms in the glass, the toast and smoke notes become more prevalent, but never overwhelm the balance of the beer. Try this one around 50°F to let the flavors and aromas to fully express themselves, and try it with roast turkey (or other light-meat game birds) or grilled, firm-fleshed fish.

The **1790 Root Beer Brew** is said to be patterned after the style of beer that Sam Adams brewed in Boston at the end of the 18th century. The ingredients here are authentic to the hard root beers enjoyed in colonial times, and include (besides malt!) sassafras root bark, blackstrap molasses, licorice, vanilla, honey, and wintergreen. While it pours into the glass with more of a cream soda color, the nose is all about root beer – sweet and spicy, with a dominant sassafras character. On the palate, it is drier than one might expect based on the nose, but still has an overriding sweetness. The spices are very noticeable, especially the wintergreen, which comes in on the finish. This is one beer that should be sampled on its own, I think, unless you want to add a scoop of vanilla ice cream!

Double Daddy Imperial IPA

Speakeasy Ales & Lagers, San Francisco, California

9.5%abv \$8.50/4x12oz

Speakeasy Brewery was founded in the Bayview District of San Francisco in 1997. Co-founders Eric Chang, Forest Gray, and brothers Michael and Steve Bruce were all experienced homebrewers, and the Bruce brothers ran a small homebrew supply shop on Clement Street. Their initial goal was to be a draft-only brewery, providing beer in keg only to local pubs and restaurants. Soon, though, they found that the demand for bottled beer far exceeded that of draft products, and a bottling line was added shortly thereafter. Their first commercially released beer was a West Coast style of amber ale with significant hop character called Prohibition Ale, a nod to the legislature that almost killed the brewing industry in California (and the rest of the country). Prior to Prohibition, San Francisco was home to more than forty small, local brewers. Only eight managed to survive Prohibition, and by the time Anchor Brewing opened its doors in the sixties, none were left. With a current capacity of around 7500 barrels per year, they are still quite small, albeit second only to Anchor (100,000bbl) in San Francisco.

The Double Daddy is a classic version of what the West Coast is rapidly becoming know for – the extra-hoppy Double, or Imperial, IPA. It is brewed using a selection of pale and Crystal Munich malts; and Cascade, Centennial and Tomahawk hops from the Pacific Northwest. It is fermented using Speakeasy's own proprietary strain of ale yeast. Drink your Double Daddy from a traditional pint glass, and be sure to serve it a bit above refrigerator temperature to get the full spectrum of flavors.

The Double Daddy pours into the glass with a rich, apricot-gold color, and a lively white head. The aromas are big, and immediate: a blast of grapefruit, Pacific Northwest hops. Only by burying ones nose in the foam does any hint of malt aromas surface. On the palate, though, the huge dose of malt announces itself in the body of the beer, which is quite heavy, almost viscous, but balanced well by the intensity of hop character. Intense, sweet and fruity malt notes are buttressed by a very well-balanced hop attack, with an overriding grapefruit pith flavor. Try this beer as a summer thirst quencher (but only if you have already mown the lawn!), or with all of your favorite IPA-friendly foods. Ballpark dogs, anyone?