



Beer of the Month Club

June 2007 Selections

Cerveza Diablo

Jerome Brewing Co., Potrerillos, Mendoza, Argentina

7.5%abv \$5.75/22oz

Eduardo Maccari grew up in the Argentine province of Mendoza, high in the foothills of the Andes Mountains. In the late 1980's, Eduardo befriended a visiting group of Czech mountaineers that had come to Mendoza explore the local mountains. One afternoon, Eduardo was told that one of his friends had gone off to climb El Plata, the highest of the local peaks, and had not yet returned. Fearing that an accident may have occurred, Eduardo dashed off to the nearby Air Force base, where he was able to convince the authorities to take him, via helicopter, in search of his friend. Shortly after reaching the mountains, they saw the tent belonging to Eduardo's friend. Upon landing, they found him unconscious, frozen, and nearly dead. After flying him to the nearest trauma center, the Czech was able to make a full recovery, and returned home to Europe when he had recovered. A few years later, Eduardo was invited to visit his new friends in the Czech Republic, where he had his first exposure to world-class beer. Eventually, Eduardo met and befriended an older local gentleman that was happy to teach him the art of brewing, and upon his return to Mendoza, he began brewing at home as a hobby. By 1999, when Eduardo's family dog passed away, he was ready to make an attempt at commercial success with his beers, and the newly founded brewery was named for the beloved pet – Cervezeria Jerome was born. Located nearly 7000 feet up in the Andes, Jerome takes advantage of the cool mountain air to maintain steady temperatures in the brewery – important for quality and consistency in an ale brewery that uses no refrigeration in the brewing process – as well as the pure, glacial melt water that is the heart of all the Jerome beers.

The Cerveza Diablo (Devil's Brew) is sort of a hybrid of styles: the finished beer most resembles a strong bitter or amber ale in the British mode, but it is in fact brewed using a Belgian strain of yeast that is most often used for 'Abbey Double' style ales. Abbey Doubles tend to be a bit darker than a British Amber, but the real key is the yeast, which imparts a deep fruity resonance in the finished product. All of the beers at Jerome are brewed using exclusively Argentine ingredients (except for the yeast, of course). The malt for this ale is a blend of pale and crystal malts from the Pampas, in south-central Argentina, and the hops are Cascades, grown organically in Patagonia, in the deep south of the country. The water is pure glacial melt from the nearby Andes. The beer is hopped twice, once in the brew kettle for bitterness, and again in the fermenting vat for aroma. The beer is lightly filtered at bottling, so it does have a finite shelf life. Like most full-bodied beers with ample hop bitterness, the Cerveza Diablo is best consumed only slightly chilled, about 45-50°F, form a classic pint glass or other wide-mouthed vessel.

The Cerveza Diablo pours into the pint glass with a dark gold, almost copper color. The head is rocky, and just off-white, with great staying power that slowly fades to a coarse lace on the glass. The nose shows a roasty, malted character married to the classic citrus and pine notes of Cascade hops. The palate is fairly full-bodied, and initially very dry, although as your palate adjusts, deeper fruitier notes emerge, namely pit fruits such as apricot or pluot, and candied citrus. As the bitterness and dryness of the beer fade from the palate, there is a long echo of fruitiness borne by the Belgian yeast strain. Try your Cerveza Diablo with such classic Argentine pairings as grilled steak with *chimichurri* or blue cheese and onion *empanadas*.

Floris Apple Witbier

Brouwerij Huyghe, Melle, Ghent, Belgium

3.5%abv \$5.00/330ml

The small village of Melle, just outside of Ghent, in East Flanders, has been a center for brewing since at least 1654. Originally, the area was as well known for the quality of its apple ciders as it was for its beers, but over the centuries, cider making fell out of favor as beer became the national drink of Belgium. In 1902, Léon Huyghe purchased an older brewery in the village, renaming it the “Brouwerij-Mouterij den Appel” (the Apple Brewery-Maltery), in honor of the village’s past industry. Like most of Belgium’s breweries, the Appel Brewery was nearly decimated during World War I, when the German army stripped every bit of usable war materiel to be shipped back home for the war effort – including all of the copper mashing and brewing vessels from the breweries. When peace returned to Melle, Huyghe was able to buy out several of his pre-war competitors, and by combining all of the remaining brewing equipment into one facility, was able to recommence production right after the war, although the brewery still needed much new investment to get up to full speed. In 1938, just before the next big war, the brewery was officially renamed Brouwerij Léon Huyghe. For most of the twentieth century, Huyghe, like nearly every brewer in Belgium, produced lager beers almost exclusively, as that was what the demand was for. By the mid-1980’s, however, as the first waves of corporate consolidation swept through the beer world, Huyghe found themselves up against the wall, financially speaking, as they had neither the size nor the budget to compete in the international lager market with the mega-breweries. As a result, they decided to focus their energies on making small-production, high-quality craft beers. The first release, called ‘Artevelde’ set the stage, but it was the introduction of their infamous ‘Delirium Tremens’, in 1989, that made the brewery indispensable to beer lovers the world over, and in 1997, famed British beer expert Michael Jackson and the World Beer Championships in Chicago both named “DT” the Best Beer in the World.

In 1993, the brewers at Huyghe decided to pursue an experiment to revive, at least in part, the brewery’s history as a cidery. However, rather than brewing a cider, they decided to experiment with apple juice co-fermented in beer. The base beer for the Floris Apple Ale is a classic Belgian Witbier, or White Ale. These beers are fermented using a combination of pale barley and wheat malt (60%-40%, respectively, in this case), along with coriander seed and bitter Curaçao orange peel for spice. Hops are used in moderation, purely for their preservative effects. By adding unfermented green and red apple juices to the brew kettle, the brewers are able to successfully marry the two styles, resulting in a crisp, lighter-bodied beer with a refreshing, green apple and spice character. This beer is re-fermented in the bottle, so it will pour with that classic wheat beer haze, the result of spent yeast cells in the brew. Normally bottle-fermented beers have an extended shelf life, due to the fact that they are essentially ‘alive’, and still fermenting in the bottle. While this is technically true of the Floris Apple Ale, we have found that most fruit beers tend to lose the intensity of their fruit flavor with time, so we do recommend that you enjoy yours over the course of this summer, to be sure to get full enjoyment from the beer. Like most wheat beers, the Floris Apple Ale is best consumed fairly well chilled, around 40-45°F, and we found that we prefer it in a tall, narrow glass, such as a Champagne flute, Pilsner flute, or specialized Lambic glass.

The Floris Apple Ale pours into the glass with a hazy lemon-yellow color, with golden highlights that are noticeable when the glass is held up to a light source. The head is white, with a very fine mousse that slowly recedes, leaving a beautiful lace in the glass. The aromas are at once sweet and tart, with a big burst of apple fruit, and only the slightest hint of malt and apple pie spice. The palate is light to medium-bodied, with crisp acidity, although perhaps a bit more sweetness than I would consider ideal. Still, the apple aromas and flavors are intense and quite appetizing, with a mid-palate tartness that matches the beer well to food. The finish is the driest part of the flavor profile, with just enough bitter and tart flavors for it to finish cleanly, leaving a lasting apple perfume. This beer may be best alone, as a refreshing end to a day out in the sun, but we have found that it also works quite well with Camembert and other milder, soft-ripened cows milk cheeses, as well as grilled chicken-apple sausages with spicy mustard.