



March 2009

Corne du Diable

Dieu du Ciel, Montreal, Canada

6.5%abv \$5.00/11.5oz

When considering the beer pedigree of any given country, a few are fairly easy to categorize, with Belgium and Germany having particular distinctions of quality. The USA has succeeded in forging a considerable name in the micro-craft brewing industry. When it comes to our Canadian neighbors, Unibroue may be the only craft brewery that easily comes to mind and its products tend to adhere to Belgian traditional styles. In reality, there are quite a few microbreweries in Canada, we just don't see very many here. We can't feel too bad as each province determines its own distribution practices. The federal government has touted free trade nationally, but inter-province nuances still make it difficult for even Canadians to get Canadian micros. The result is a perception that the craft brew movement is muted in comparison to the USA. Completely contrary to this, the local scenes in the major locales of Montreal, Quebec and Vancouver are thriving. Our selection comes from an excellent young brewery in Montreal, *Dieu du Ciel!*

Literally translated as "God in Heaven!" the term is more colloquially used as slightly less weighty expression. *Dieu du Ciel!* is located just outside the city center in the hip Mile-End neighborhood. Translation aside, these young brewers approach their practice with absolute reverence and profess to follow no trend other than their own superb products. To get to that point, many early stage brewers benefit greatly from the study of molecular biology or related science. A few colleges, including UC Davis offer undergraduate degrees in fermentation science also referred to as 'zymurgy'. When it comes to the complexities of cultivating the microorganisms called yeast and understanding the impact of so many other factors in the production of beer, knowing the science behind the process is a key asset. Two of the founders of *Dieu du Ciel!* share this background and interrupted their studies to start the brewery. The third founder had twelve years of experience in electrical engineering work for microbreweries and an award winning homebrewing track record. Add inspiration to personnel and it would seem that the odds are favorable for a successful venture.

To review the rotating list of beers on offer at the brewpub, the principles are clear: Experiment, review, modify then perfect. The resulting line-up of constants and seasonal offerings are remarkable, however most only see daylight in the brewery. The beers that are currently making it to the US, include *Route des Epices* and *Rosee d'Hibiscus*. The former is comprised of multiple peppercorn varieties and rye malt. The latter is a wheat beer brewed with flower petals that results in a beer that is refreshing and almost tropical in aroma. We chose their *Corne du Diable* or "Horn of the Devil". Back to the US's reputation when it comes to craft beer, the west coast version of India Pale Ale has become our oft-imitated style. The abundant use and variety of hops has become our signature and contribution back to the world of brewing. *Corne du Diable* is the American IPA interpretation from *Dieu du Ciel!*

Your *Corne du Diable* pours a crisp, but deep, copper color with a tight beige head that is well latticed and sticks to the glass. As it is a robust ale, it is best served at 45°-50° degrees into a traditional pint glass or a wider-mouth goblet. Aesthetically, the beer is well balanced with solid head retention, clarity and coloring. On the coloring, the beer appears to fall into the red ale category rather than the pale ale category. The aroma lives up to the billing of a traditional west coast IPA. The floral and citrus contributions of the hops are overt but balanced by a caramel and bready malt counterpart. The taste re-affirms the suspicions of this falling into the Imperial Red category rather than a traditional pale ale, but that is not a slight on the experience to say the least. The fullness on the palate and fleeting dry bittering on the aftertaste make for a remarkable beer. Caramel flavorings of the malts stand up very well to the bittering and aroma of the hops making this a beer that can be as complex as needed or just simply satisfying. As the beer warms, some of the resinous aspects of the hops show a bit more. Beers of this fullness tend to fall into the higher alcohol ranges. At 6.5%, this is one that can stand repeat reviews. As for pairing with food, this one will complement both sides of the hearty and non-hearty range. This matches with a brisket just as well as with a few salty bar snacks. On the extravagant end, using this as a base contribution for slow roasting the aforementioned brisket or substitute for brandy to deglaze a mirepoix.



Triple Nightcap

Slaapmutske Brewery, Melle, Belgium

8.1% abv \$4.50/330ml

In the other selection for this month, we mentioned beer pedigree by nation. For Germany, we think of the wheat beers of Bavaria. For England, we think of ESBs and porters. For right here in the USA, we are now the IPA mavens. When it comes to Belgium, our first inclination is to think of the Abbey Tripel. Tripels have a long tradition and are probably the most revered and imitated style of beer outside of Belgium. Some of the more recognizable names include Westmalle, Maredsous 10, Bosteels (Triple Karmeliet) and Chimay (Cinq Cents). When a brewery labels a beer 'Belgian-style', it's largely due to yeast characteristics emblematic of a tripel.

So what is a tripel? Going way back, the Trappist monks (of which there are only seven breweries that can claim that designation today) used a basic numbering system to delineate the strength of their brews. Enkel, dubbel and tripel in the order of weakest to strongest. As far as the distinction between the latter two, dubbels are more malt forward with darker colors and a sweet overall profile. Tripels are effervescent light golden in body with complex aromas and tastes. The amount of base malt going into a tripel is typically larger allowing for more fermentable sugars that result in a higher alcohol content ranging from 8 to 12%. Other common characteristics include a fragrant nose, well-balanced hopping, muted alcohol and an active head. Flavors are complex and spicy including coriander, banana, clove, pepper and orange rind. Some of the spice is imparted by the particular strains of yeast, and in some cases these spices are added directly to the brew.

Finally to our selection, which, unlike the larger names cited above, is from a very small operation just outside of Ghent in East Flanders. *Slaapmutske* is the labor of love for Dany De Smet and Marleen Vercaigne. Dany was a long time brewing engineer that served as the brewmaster for Huyghe. Huyghe is the lesser-known brewery moniker behind Delerium Tremens. It was his homebrewing exploits that brought Marleen into the process. They brewed a special batch to commemorate the birth of their son that was given to guests as way to celebrate the occasion. That particular batch proved popular amongst friends and lead to offers to buy more. At the point where the hobby turned into a source of income, it was time to go full-time. Lacking a name for their brewery, they took a cue from the medicinal qualities the homebrew had on getting a crying newborn to sleep. Dipping the pacifier in homebrew sent their son to sleep, presumably content. Marleen remarked that it was as if the beer was the baby's 'nightcap' and literally translated, that is where we get *Slaapmutske*. In terms not related to the baby, the name refers to sipping a stronger brew at the end of the evening to send you to sleep happy. The self-designed label does the translation for you.

The small town where they are located quickly absorbed all of the beer they produced. This is an inventory manager's dream, but a nightmare if you want to expose the world to your beer. Thankfully, there was an efficient way to grow with a facility close to home thanks to the efforts of another husband and wife team who had the facility and capability to catapult *Slaapmutske* to a broader audience. They happened to be the founders of De Proef brewery. De Proef is no stranger to the brewing world. In May of 2006 we featured a selection from De Proef called Zoetzuur. This brewery was created for almost completely scientific purposes as a development ground for brewers worldwide. In addition to producing their own brews, they also produce other people's recipes as contract brewers. One of the more popular brewers at the moment, Denmark's Mikkeller, contracts most of their production to De Proef. De Proef's pedigree is rich and allows us to sample wonderful selections from around the world.

Your Triple Nightcap pours a golden straw coloring with a healthy white head. We tend to serve beers like this around 45° into wide-mouth goblets. Colder temperatures will normally keep the head to a minimum and allow for the layers to completely accentuate as they warm. After all, these are sippers. The nose is appropriately complex for the style with soft citrus, candied fruits and a bit of earthiness. On the palate this is a full beer that remains crisp. The complexities of spice mentioned above are all present, including pepper, and some of the sweeter malt notes come through, finishing with a hint of hop bitterness. As the beer warms the alcohol becomes less faint and the hop interplay with the yeast intensifies. This beer will pair well dishes that have a wide spice profile and it will accentuate characteristics such as those found in jerk sauces, curries and gumbo.