



## Beer of the Month Club

### May 2007 Selections

We have two six-packs of beer for you this month that are both brand new to us here in the Bay Area, and beers that our regulars have been inquiring about for months, if not years. We know that our Club Members are scattered far and wide, and one or the other of these may actually be available to you in your local market, and if that is the case, we apologize! However, both of these are perfect beers for summer “session” drinking once your weather warms up, so we hope you enjoy!

#### Extra Pale Ale

**Green Flash Brewing Co., Vista, California**

**4.9%abv      \$8.99/6 x 12oz**

Mike Hinkley ran a popular and successful beer bar for many years, but always wanted to become a brewer himself. Finally, with encouragement from friends and family, he sold his beer bar, took on a couple of outside investors, and in 2002 founded the Green Flash Brewing Co. in northern San Diego County. The company is named for a rare atmospheric phenomena of the same name that is sometimes seen just as the sun drops below the horizon, over water, and when all the atmospheric conditions are just right, and usually in the tropics or sub-tropics (for a look at a green flash, check out: [www.intersoft.it/galaxlux/GFseq250501.htm](http://www.intersoft.it/galaxlux/GFseq250501.htm)). Green Flash is a true ‘Micro’ brewery, with just five employees and a very small production, but Mike and head brewer Chuck Silva have crafted an amazing lineup of ales. While the recent tendency on the West Coast, and in San Diego county in particular, is for ‘extreme’ beers, Green Flash are notable in that they make fine session beers as well, beers that you can enjoy more than one of, without having to become overly contemplative or getting smacked upside the head with truckloads of hops.

It can be difficult these days to find a well-hopped, but lighter bodied and drinkable, pale ale. It seems everyone wants to impress with their beers these days rather than comfort. Green Flash’s Extra Pale Ale is the perfect warm weather beer for those of us that want drinkability, but don’t want to sacrifice flavor. It is a classic West Coast-style Pale Ale, brewed using 2-row, Carapils, and C15 malts, hopped in the brew kettle with Cascade hops, and dry-hopped in the fermenter using the more citrusy Chinook hops. It only has a bitterness of 19.0 IBUs (International Bitterness Units – basically, a measurement of the hoppyness and bitterness of a beer. Bud has about 5.0 IBUs; some of the more extreme IPA’s these days run to 100+ IBUs), which is just enough to finish crisp and dry without any oppressive bitter notes. Like most pale ales, this one is best served fairly cold (40-45°F) from a traditional pint glass. The Extra Pale Ale won the Bronze Medal at the 2005 Great American Beer Festival (GABF), and Silver Medal at the 2006 World Beer Cup in the Pale Ale category.

The Green Flash Extra Pale Ale pours with a slightly hazy, rich golden color. The head is just off-white, fairly delicate, and fades quickly to a faint lace in the glass. The nose really shows the Chinook hops, and features big citrus aromas and slight notes of herbs and pine resin. It is medium-bodied on the palate, and quite dry, but there are further whispers of citrus fruits, as well as a slightly drying and herbaceous hop character. The finish is dry, with just a touch of bitterness in the end. This classic American Pale Ale works great with grilled meats and other summery dishes, and I found it to work most excellently with pepperoni pizza!

## Sunset Wheat

**Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Co., Chippewa Falls (and Milwaukee), Wisconsin**

**4.9%abv      \$8.99/6 x 12oz**

The Leinenkugel family's history in the beer industry can be traced back to at least the 1790's, when Christian Leinenkugel operated a small roadside tavern in the small Prussian village of Meckenheim. Like most tavern owners of the time, Herr Leinenkugel brewed his own beer for sale at the tavern, and even grew much of his own barley and hops. Both of Christian's sons were trained in the craft of brewing, and it was Matthias Leinenkugel that, in 1845, emigrated to the United States with his wife and four young sons. Upon arriving in the US, the family steadily worked their way to the west, finally settling in the territory that would soon become the state of Wisconsin, due to the fact that the area reminded them of home. All four of Matthias' sons would be trained as brewers, and all four would go on to found their own breweries around the state, but it was the second youngest son, Jacob that would settle in the young lumber town of Chippewa Falls. At the time, the population of Chippewa Falls was about 2500, almost entirely male, almost entirely German, and entirely thirsty for good beer. Founded in 1867, Jacob's Spring Brewery (so named because of the abundant pure spring water in the area) was an instant success. The brewery would continue to be passed down through the generations, surviving Prohibition, unlike many other small brewers, by converting to the bottling of 'Near' Beer and mineral water. The biggest challenge to the family business actually occurred in the post-WWII years, when television and print advertising, along with the development of the Interstate Highway system, allowed the largest breweries to pursue a national customer base. This spelled the death of many small regional breweries, but Leinenkugel's managed to survive those lean years by maintaining the highest brewing standards, and their customers remained fiercely loyal to the brand. Eventually, in 1988, the brewery was sold to the Miller Brewing Company, the second largest in the world at the time (guess who #1 was/is). One condition of the sale, however, was that the Leinenkugel family would stay on to run the operation, and although there was some butting of heads and raising of voices in the early years, as both companies tried to learn to live together, the relationship has matured, and to this day there are no less than five descendants of Jacob Leinenkugel working for the company, from president to brewer. Leinenkugel's beers have been one of the most requested items since we opened our store in 2001, as people from the upper Midwest still remain amazingly loyal to the brand, and we are extremely happy to finally be able to supply that demand. In 2006, the first year it was brewed, the Sunset Wheat won the Silver Medal at the GABF and Bronze Medal at the World Beer Cup in the Herb & Spiced Beer category.

Leinenkugel's (Leinie's, in the local parlance) Brewery makes a full selection of seven beers that are available year-round and four seasonal brews. They are most famous for their standard lager, which is brewed using 100% barley malt, unlike most of the national brands, but we have chosen one of their specialties, the Sunset Wheat, as our selection this month due to its affinity for sunny spring and summer weather and its delicious quaffability. The Sunset Wheat is an homage to the Belgian Witbier, or White Beer, style. It is brewed using a combination of wheat and pale barley malts, whole Cluster hops, and dried coriander seed for spice. Unlike the Belgian Whites, the Sunset Wheat is brewed with a bottom fermenting lager yeast rather than a top fermenting ale yeast, which gives it a lighter body. This is one beer that likes to be cold, and it should be served straight from the cooler, poured into a tall, narrow glass such as a Pilsner or German Hefeweisse glass. Pour it fairly vigorously, to develop a nice head, which will slowly release the spicy aromatics. The brewery recommends garnishing the glass with a slice of orange to accentuate the beer's citrusy qualities, but this is obviously optional.

The Sunset Wheat pours into the glass with a cloudy apricot-orange color, with a big, fluffy white head that slowly dissipates to a fine lace in the glass. The nose shows big aromas of candied citrus and dried pit fruits, with just a hint of spiciness from the coriander. It is light, crisp, and very effervescent on the palate, and the fruitiness of the nose follows through in the taste of the beer. The finish is crisp, but slightly sweet, with more fruitiness, and even a hint of banana, probably a product of the yeast used in fermentation. This would be a great beer for summer seafood dishes, such as salads, Louies and pastas, and also goes well with a variety of milder white cheese, especially feta.