



May 2009

Each month we look for selections that meet a varied combination of several criteria. We're looking for breweries that might be new to you, exceptional releases from breweries we've featured in the past, styles that are rare or are excellent interpretations of classics, items that are highly unlikely to be available across the country (and in some cases even in our own city), and selections that expand the definition of beer. There are greater conundrums in life, but this is some background in preparation for how May's two selections meet and perfectly exemplify what we're trying to provide each month. We hope you enjoy!

Blue Apron Ale

Brooklyn Brewery, Brooklyn, New York

7.2% abv \$10.00/750ml.

Some selections are exclusive by region. Our first has a bit of that going for it as well as being exclusive to a renowned restaurateur. This offering is from Brooklyn Brewery, whose collaboration with Schneider-Weisse we enjoyed for the January selection. Much like that one, we're excited to have Blue Apron to share with you. No collaboration this time, rather an honor as it is made for the Thomas Keller group of eateries, which include The French Laundry and Per Se, both 3-star Michelin rated venues that have long been at the forefront of American cuisine.

We didn't delve too deeply into Brooklyn Brewery in January, so here is a little background information. In 1976 the sole Brooklyn-based brewery, Rheingold, shut its doors after falling victim to larger Midwest breweries that were able to cheaply mass-produce many of the pilsners that are well known today. In 1984, Steve Hindy (a former AP Middle East correspondent) and his Park Slope neighbor, Tom Potter (a lending officer at Chemical Bank) sought to bring brewing back to New York City. With limited resources early on, their beers were brewed upstate in Utica while being aggressively sold by the team in NYC. The first offering was Brooklyn Lager, which can be found all over NYC today. To aid in sales, the designer of the iconic "I Love NY" logo was hired to produce the Brooklyn identity. Undaunted by the lack of independent distribution, they took to distributing on their own. A turning point occurred in 1994 when Garrett Oliver was brought on board to oversee production and simultaneously plan a brewery in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. Two years later, Rudy Guiliani was cutting the ribbon to welcome brewing back to New York City. Today Brooklyn Brewery is revered throughout the east coast as well as six countries in Europe and Asia.

Blue Apron is the result of two parties steeped in the joys of fine food and drink. On the Brooklyn side, Garrett Oliver is the author of "[The Brewmaster's Table](#)", a book that makes a passionate argument that beer's complexities in production and variation are, at the very least, on par with wine in terms of food pairing. Tom Potter is now the Executive Director of the American Institute of Wine & Food. That Thomas Keller is working with Brooklyn is no surprise and an appropriate honor that acknowledges craft beer amongst wine dominated lists. We couldn't agree more considering the vast array of flavor profiles produced in craft brewing.

The exclusivity of this selection leads to a dearth of information, but Blue Apron is closest aligned to a Belgian Dubbel. Dubbels are characterized by dark, rich and malty flavors that tend to seem a bit more robust than their Trippel counterparts, even with lower alcohol content.

Your Blue Apron pours a deep, almost opaque, bronze with a thin beige head that clings slightly to the glass. This is best served at 50°F in a typical Belgian goblet. The aroma is of dried fruit, caramel as well as the orange and chocolate described on the label. On the palate the crisp carbonation balances the sweetness with almost no lingering bitterness. There is a slight smoked character that again offsets some of the malt sweetness. Dried fruit of the nose continues with a bit of raisin in the flavor. The hop presence is only evident in producing a dry finish that cuts the sweetness from coating the mouth. In terms of food pairing, the bottle lists it for you with hearty foods. However, there is a difference between what the beer will hold its own against and a true pairing complement. For this a perfect match is a nutty cheese like Manchego served with quince paste (aka *membrillo*) and hazelnuts for a savory pairing. Artisan chocolates spiced with orange would make a nice sweet pairing.



Reserve Wheat Ale

Telegraph Brewing Company, Santa Barbara, CA

5.0%abv \$11.50/750ml.

Our next selection comes from the three-year-old Telegraph Brewing Company of lovely Santa Barbara. Located in a small warehouse not far from the beach, head brewer Brian Thompson produces beers that stay true to European production processes while keeping the door open for new ideas. The brewery sets out to use as many locally sourced ingredients as possible including herbs and oranges. When it comes to the brewing water, stripping out the chlorine is the only process it undergoes. The mineral content of the water is indicative of the region.

The consistent line-up includes California Ale, Golden Wheat Ale, and a Stock Porter that is made in the old publican tradition of adding new porter to a barrel-aged version. All have won awards and the seasonal line-up continues to evolve. Distribution is almost solely Southern Californian due to volume and we are fortunate to be one of a few locations with Telegraph in Northern California. One step further, we were able to provision enough of a limited production release specifically for the club.

Absolutely perfect for a warm sunny day, Reserve Wheat is a sour beer in the tradition of a Berliner Weisse. Berliner Weisse dates back to at least the Middle Ages and as you can expect, has the legal designation of only being produced in Berlin. It is a tart, sour and highly effervescent beer that is refreshing and contains very little alcohol. The alcohol is low enough to qualify for the German tax category of *Schankbier* or what we might call a “session beer”. The gravity attained in the mash is so light that some recipes call for no boil or a brief fifteen-minute boil. If you find yourself in Berlin and have a chance to partake in a Berliner Weisse, some things to look out for in the descriptions: “*Ein Rotes*” means “a red one”. “*Ein Grünes*” means “a green one”. “*Mit Shuss*” is the general term for adding a shot of sweet syrup. Interestingly, because of the beer’s tartness, they are almost always served with one of these sweet shots of raspberry or woodruff (similar to baby’s breath and almost impossible to find in the US) syrup in the beer. What arrives at the table is a bowl-shaped goblet of red or green liquid topped with creamy foam. When you’re acclimated, just order a ‘red’ or ‘green’. A few more interesting items about Berliner Weisse: Napoleon occupied Berlin in 1809 and dubbed the beer the “Champagne of the north” while the people just considered it the workers beverage. Berliner Weisse is never served on draft and can be stored for up to five years gaining fruity sourness over time.

Finally onto our selection and we had the pleasure of dealing directly with brewer Brian Thompson. Here is his own description: “Telegraph Reserve Wheat Ale is a sour beer in the tradition of a Berliner Weisse, which is a very endangered style of beer indigenous to Berlin. German beer tastes have shifted away from these “odd” sour, old-fashioned beers in favor of modern lagers and we want to do our part to keep the style from fading away completely. We brew our version of it with locally grown lemon verbena herb. The farm that takes the spent grain from our brewing process for use as mulch, compost, and pig feed, also grows some of the best herbs in Santa Barbara county. We’re lucky to get from them some lemon verbena, which is a leafy green herb that has a very strong lemon aroma. We also brew the beer using lactobacillus and Brettanomyces, which are wild yeasts that add a distinct earthy sourness, in addition to our house ale yeast, which is a traditional, European-origin *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* strain of ale yeast.”

Your Reserve Wheat pours a slightly hazy pale yellow with a quickly dissipating bright white head. As the Berliners do, serve this one cold in a goblet. The nose is a balance of faint lemon, grain and an earthy funk, no doubt imparted by the wild yeasts. On the palate this is very light but leaves behind the dry complexities that match the characteristics of the aroma including herbaceous lemon and a tart clean edge of the wild yeast. Enjoy this with its perfect match of oysters on the half shell with lemon. German food tends to be hearty but if going for the grill, lighter herbed sausages are going to bring out these flavors. For salads, lemon vinaigrette over a spinach salad with Gruyere or bleu cheese will bring out the sour and earthy character. We tend to pair wheat beers with the sun in general (see almost every major brewery’s summer seasonal). While this one is very refreshing, it deserves much more attention and even appreciation for keeping a great style alive.