



Beer of the Month Club

November 2005 Selections

Old Engine Oil Special Reserve

Harviestoun Brewery, Dollar, Scotland

6.0%abv \$4.50/330ml

Ken Brooker was a design executive for Ford Motor Company's Scottish division as a young man. His boss at Ford was an amateur home brewer, and inspired Ken to take up the hobby. Later in his career, as Ken approached his 40th birthday, his wife and friends pitched in to buy him a trip to Munich for Oktoberfest. Unfortunately for Ken, he had a new boss at Ford by this time, and his new boss would not give him the time off for the trip. Finding himself at a bit of a crossroads in life, Ken decided that he would rather quit his job than forego his birthday trip. Thus, a professional brewer was born! In 1985, Ken purchased a 200 year old stone barn in the village of Dollar. When he went shopping for brewery equipment, he found that the state-of-the-art equipment that he wanted to buy was well beyond his means. Being an engineer, he decided that his only recourse was to fabricate his own, which worked just fine for a start-up operation. A couple of years later, a relatively new brewery in a neighboring town closed down, and Ken was able to buy their brewing system for pennies on the dollar, and he was finally able to up his production to a level that would allow him to brew commercially. The brewery still has that original ten barrel brewing capacity – one of the smallest in all of the British Isles.

One of Harviestoun's early award winners was a beer called Old Engine Oil, a name inspired by his earlier career in the auto industry, and a beer that was patterned after the first homebrew that his original boss at Ford had made in the early days. Much later, he began brewing the Special Reserve version of the OEO, a beer that was brewed to slightly higher strength than the original, then aged in used whisky barrels. The OEO Special Reserve is brewed using pale barley malt, malted oats, and copious amounts of heavily roasted barley, which is used both for color and for the slightly astringent bitterness that it adds to the brew. The wort is boiled for an extremely long time to fully extract all the fermentable sugars. To balance all of this sweet, roasted malt, he uses a fairly large amount of hops for a Scottish ale, including the somewhat sweet Galena variety from Washington state as well as East Kent Goldings and Worchester Fuggles from Britain. After the fermentation has completed, the beer is transferred to casks from the Dalmore distillery, where it ages for six months, slowly leeching extra flavors and complexity from the whisky barrels. This is a beer that is best enjoyed only slightly chilled – cellar temperature of 55-60°F would be ideal, and served in a brandy snifter or red wine glass for aromatic retention.

The OEO Special Reserve pours with a deep, almost coffee-like brown color, with a very fine, creamy tan head. The nose is sweet and smoky, with loads of fruity, Christmas cake character, hints of brandy (or whisky!), and a touch of oak. This beer is extremely full-bodied and viscous on the palate – almost oily! – with flavors of dried dates, caramel, balsamic, and a slight hint of lactic acid, which commonly appears in barrel-aged beers. The finish is quite long, and surprisingly dry, with hints of oak and whisky. While the Harviestoun Old Engine Oil Reserve would probably work quite well with desserts and blue cheeses like Stilton, I think it would make the perfect *après ski* warmer all by itself next to a crackling fire.

Santa's Private Reserve

Rogue Ales, Newport, Oregon

~6.0%abv \$5.50/22oz

Rogue Ales was founded in Ashland, Oregon, in 1988 by three self-described 'corporate types' who each had a deep love for the food and beverage industry. The original brewery had the capacity to brew only in ten barrel batches, which the company quickly outgrew. In 1989, a second brewing facility was opened in nearby Newport, this one with a capacity of fifteen barrels at a time. After a disastrous flood in the winter of 1997, the Ashland brewery had to be shut down due to flooding damage, and the entire brewing operation had to be moved to their Newport facility, which was upgraded the following year to fifty barrel capacity. As the business grew over the years, Rogue has expanded by opening brewpubs in Portland and San Francisco, as well as purchasing two small, formerly defunct brewpubs in Eugene, Oregon and Issaquah, Washington, which both serve Rogue ales on tap as well as brewing their own local beers.

Santa's Private Reserve is – quite obviously – Rogue's winter Holiday seasonal ale. It is essentially a double-hopped version of their St. Rogue Red, brewed to a stronger strength for the winter. Santa's Reserve has a plethora of malt components, including Two-row Harrington and Klages, Hugh Baird, Carastan, Crystal and Munich malts. The hops are Chinook and Centennial, and are exclusively from the Pacific Northwest, and the yeast used for fermentation is their own proprietary strain called Pacman for its voracious appetite for turning fermentable sugars into alcohol. Try your Santa's Reserve well chilled from a classic pint glass for best results.

Santa's Private Reserve pours into the glass with a deep, reddish-copper color and a rocky, tan-colored head. While the head dissipates fairly quickly, there is a constant fine bead of carbonation, and a quick swirl of the glass brings back the head briefly. The nose is a beautiful combination of sweet, fruity malt notes balanced by the citrus and spruce aromatics of the hops. On the palate, it has a nice, medium body, and an excellent balance of sweet and savory flavors. Spice cake, brown bread, and dried cherries all make a brief appearance, then the palate dries up a bit to reveal the toasty grains and bitterness of the hops. This classic strong red ale will work well with a variety of wintry foods, from roasted turkey and all the fixings to heartier fare such as a standing rib roast with Yorkshire puddings.