

ERIK VERDONCK | LUC DE RAEDEMAEKER





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**BELGIAN BEER  
STYLES AND OTHER  
BEER STYLES**







# ABBEY BEER

**A**bbey beers are typically Belgian. Our beer culture would not be the same without them. Some abbey beers refer to abbeys that still exist and where brewing has been done since time immemorial. Others remind us of abbeys that were wiped off the map many centuries ago. These days the majority of abbey beers is brewed under licence by breweries that have no relationship with the abbey. The brewery is allowed to use the name and, in return, pays royalties to the existing abbey. Abbeys that are still in operation will use these reimbursements for their own subsistence and to fund charitable activities. Abbey beer, or 'Abdijbier' is not a protected beer style. Rather, it can be compared to a denomination of origin (AOC). The Federation of Belgian Brewers brought clarity to this story in 1999 by introducing the 'Recognised Belgian Abbey Beer' label to combat commercial excesses. This label is a guarantee that there is a demonstrable historic link between the beer and an abbey, either still in operation or consigned to the history books. Proof could consist of ancient writings describing brewing activity, drawings or paintings depicting a brewery or even physical evidence of brewing found amongst the abbey ruins. Abbey beers are generally blond or dark beers with quite a high alcohol content but they can also include strong triples and quadruples. There is a great variety in aromas and tastes.





### **Abbaye de Brogne Brune (7,5%)**

#### **Organic dubbel**

In earlier days, if you ordered a 'Trappist' – or any other robust specialty beer – you could count on a dark 'double' being placed in front of you. However, times have changed and the Belgians are now going mad for strong blond beers. Think of a dark double and a strong, full-mouthed beer with more than a hint of sweetness will spring to mind. Abbaye de Brogne Brune is the exception to the rule. This organic abbey beer proves to be relatively light and rather dry. The toasted caramel malts provide a slight coffee aroma. Abbaye de Brogne, launched in 1982 by Brasserie Desfosses, has been through quite a journey. It travelled to Affligem and Lefèbvre before ending up at La Binchoise. This beer has recently been flowing out of the tanks of a brand new brewery established at the site of the abbey, just like it does at Villers-la-Ville, another initiative by Bruno Deghorain, brewer at La Binchoise. Bruno strives to produce beers that give balance in the glass and with an easily recognisable signature. A good beer has to excite the nose and caress the taste buds. The beer drinker is intrigued, asks himself what he has just tasted and wants to order a second glass to get to the bottom of it.

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*This is quite a dry beer where the malt takes centre stage with its impressions of nuts and touches of coffee, chocolate and caramel. The roast malt does not affect the balance of this beer at any stage. A mild, tender, delicately bitter and fruity beer.*

[www.abbayedebrogne.be](http://www.abbayedebrogne.be)

### **Affligem Tripel (9,5%)**

#### **Complete with yeast glass**

The abbey of Affligem can look back proudly upon a brewing tradition that has been sustained for centuries. Monks started cultivating hops in this region. The recipe for the Affligem abbey beers goes all the way back to the original medieval Formula Antiqua Renovata, carefully stored at the abbey. The Affligem abbey beers are brewed with the very best summer barley malt and aroma hops. The yeast is considered the 'soul' of the beer. The fermentation method produces esters with impressions of tropical fruits. All Affligem abbey beers re-ferment in the bottle. After a fourteen-day stay in the warm chamber they emerge as complex and layered beers: strong blonde or amber-coloured top-fermented beers in which hops and malt are beautifully balanced.

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*A delicate aroma of malt with intense aromas of ripe fruits, bananas in particular. The onset is slightly sweet with nuances of stone fruits and citrus – emphasised by the re-fermentation in the bottle – that evolve into a pleasantly refreshing bitterness. This beer tastes full in the mouth and is richly layered. Exquisitely balanced despite the high alcohol percentage. With a long and enjoyably bitter finish.*

[www.affligembeer.com](http://www.affligembeer.com)













WHAT LIGHT IS  
TO THE EYES,  
WHAT AIR IS  
TO THE LUNGS,  
WHAT LOVE IS  
TO THE HEART,  
BEER IS  
TO THE SOUL  
OF MAN

*Robert Green Ingersoll*

# **BEER KITCHEN**

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# **AND FOOD PAIRING**

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The ability to digest alcohol is in our genes; we have been doing it for hundreds of thousands of years. We have now also mastered the art of brewing beer. The general term of 'beer' covers a wide range of aromas and tastes. Chefs and sommeliers are discovering the culinary riches offered by beer. In this chapter, we are handing the microphone over to them. You will find inspiration for pairings with fish, shellfish, seafood, burgers, game, chocolate, cheese, pasta, bread, pizzas and Eastern cuisine. Finally, we will act as your guide and take you to the best Belgian beer restaurants.

## **Alcohol Habituation**

We have been drinking alcohol for hundreds of thousands of years. We are able to digest alcohol thanks to the enzymes contained in our bodies. Since when have we had this ability? The answer is not clear-cut by any means. Some scientists state that alcohol became part of our diet when we started fermenting food, around 9,000 years ago. Others are con-

vinced that primates were able to absorb alcohol from fruit 80 million years ago. Matthew Carrigan of Santa Fe College in the USA and his colleagues studied the ADH<sub>4</sub>-enzyme that plays an important part in processing alcohol. His analysis shows that mankind started fermenting alcohol around 10 million years ago. This era saw the forests of East Africa make way for grasslands and savannahs. Primates descended from the trees to start life on the ground. Fruit that has fallen





on soil ferments far more quickly. This fermentation creates alcohol. Individuals with the enhanced ADH<sub>4</sub>-enzyme were more able to cope with alcohol. Professor Frank Wiens and his team at Bayreuth University observed the pen-tailed tree shrew in Malaysia. This small animal often feasts on palm flower nectar, which contains alcohol. However, it shows no signs of inebriation. The alcohol only serves as a source of food and energy. Amongst all of the living beings, the pen-

tailed tree shrew most closely resembles the common ancestor of simians. Ancient humans too were able to obtain their portion of alcohol from rotting fruit. We were born with the capacity to break down alcohol. However, we humans do get drunk when we absorb alcohol over and above the quantity our ancestors derived from rotting fruit.







ARDENNE SAISON

Be Saison



BRASSERIE ARDENNE SAISON

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**'I CAN  
RESIST EVERYTHING  
BUT TEMPTATION.'**

**OSCAR WILDE**

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**The ultimate seduction**

A successful marriage, as it turns out. 'Beer'. This word alone makes many men drool. 'Chocolate' has the same effect on women. Or, at least, so the cliché has it. Beer as well as chocolate are said to be the ultimate seduction, although many foodies are of the opinion that it is difficult to find a pairing between chocolate and fermented alcoholic drinks. However, in a country like Belgium which, after all, is a beer and chocolate heaven, many harmonious combinations can still be found. Thanks to the large variety of tastes and structures, it is possible to pair chocolate with beer or else to use beer to lend flavour to a recipe. In classic gastronomy, traditional 'chocolate beers' like a Chimay Bleue, Rochefort 10 or Gouden Carolus are usually paired with dark chocolate. The roast, bitter, coffee-like touches from the toasted malts form the perfect complement to dark, fondant chocolate. These beers are also suited to chocolate with a dark, bitter filling. Praliné with a powerful flavour of nuts goes well with amber beers of the Spéciale Belge type. These beers have a subtly nutty taste complemented by touches of caramel and malts. Honey beers are the perfect complement to chocolate with a honey filling but nougat also yields fine results. We are in



*Chocolatier Dominique Persoone  
disguised as a surrealist.*

search of harmony. Thanks to its creamy taste, a St Bernardus Tripel goes hand in hand with a buttery truffle. And the sour character of a 'Manon Blueberry' performs a perfect symbiotic dance with a Rodenbach.

We could follow a different path and aim for contrast. Try this same Rodenbach with a 'Coconut'. The praline provides a sweet and exotic touch whereas the Rodenbach adds a subtly sour taste – a classic example where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Less evident is the combination of 'chocolate and hoppy beers'. However, a Palm Hop Select and an ice praline made with vanilla ice cream give a playful whole. A great IPA suits a milk chocolate. In some cases, the citrusy touches of the IPA are reinforced by the chocolate. Savoury chocolate dishes and beer also make for a successful match. A chicken with a zesty Molle Poblano sauce from Mexico suits a white beer. The refreshing, calming beer tones down the 'hot' sauce. The fullness from the wheat stands up to the intense taste of the chocolate sauce.

*Jean Le Chocolatier: "A great beer paired with a delicious chocolate. You won't find anything more Belgian. Two lovely products that reinforce one another or melt in the mouth to make a beautiful whole. A pleasure to work with!"*





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# BEER TOURISM

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Brewing runs through the veins of every Belgian. Spread across the length and breadth of our country you will find breweries that vary in size from tiny to huge. We are making beer in a garage, an empty warehouse, on a brand new site using the latest technology or within ancient abbey walls. Each brewer and every single brewery tells their own story. Discover the brewing country of Belgium. This chapter provides you with all the guidance you need.

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## BREWERY VISITS

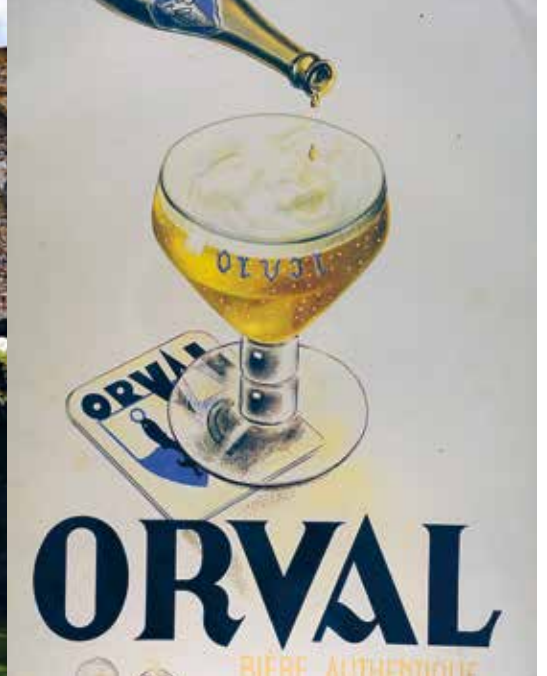
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### Monuments

'Once you've seen one brewery, you've seen them all,' you often hear. However, it is just when you have been to several breweries that you start to notice the differences. The details make it twice as interesting. Many abbeys are sited in extraordinary places. This stands to reason as the monks were invariably in search of an oasis of peace and quiet. If there is a brewery within the abbey walls, the monks want to keep the noise down. This is why you often find yourself in front of

a closed door. If there is a visitors' centre or a café, in Westvleteren, Westmalle, Chimay and Orval for example, this is tidily tucked away outside the abbey walls. In Orval you visit the ruins of the medieval abbey whilst enjoying the view of the monumental 'new' abbey, as if you were making a leap through one thousand years of history. The splendid historic brew halls of Westmalle and Rochefort are closed to the public. If you do want to sample the atmosphere of an abbey and tour an active brewery within the abbey walls, the abbey ruins of Abbaye d'Aulne are the place to go, with its idyllic location on the banks of the Sambre to the south of Charleroi. Another destination is Val-Dieu in the Green Land of Herve in the vicinity of Liège. We also recommend De Kluis in Achel, where you can see the brewer at work behind a glass wall.









Trompieri Westvliet



bevat  
gerstemout

BIER  
8% VOL

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