

# BEER BUZZ

BEER BUZZ IS A BIMONTHLY SERIES OF ARTICLES FOCUSED ON BRINGING ATTENTION TO THE WORLD OF BEER.

## White Hot Summer by Justin Cody

Texas summers...gotta love 'em!!! Depending on where you live, all summer long you could battle 100% humidity, sand storms, drought conditions or lip-chapping bone dry air. No matter your location, we have some tools to help you survive and have fun doing it.

Whether you call them Wit Bier, White Ale or Wheat beer, these Belgian liquid libations are the answer. They are the epitome of the perfect summer drink. They are light, refreshing, have the perfect amount of carbonation and actually have body and taste. These are the beers that I recommend to the most discrete, anti-beer palates. If after you drink one of these and you still say, "I don't like beer", I won't believe you!!! In fact, I think it is scientifically impossible not to like these.

The beer is called Wit, or White, due to the suspended yeast and wheat proteins which cause the beer to look hazy when it is cold. This style descends from medieval beer styles which were not brewed with hops, rather they were flavored with a blend of spices and plants referred to as "gruit". Nowadays, the "gruit" typically persist of coriander, orange and bitter orange with minimal hops. A common misconception is that wheat beers, white ales and wit biers from all over the world are the same. The names are the main culprit for the confusion. I give you all special permission to relate beer to wine in this one instance, for educational purposes only. Imagine Pinot Noir—Pinot from hot and sunny California will be much different than a Pinot from the cooler states of Washington and Oregon. They all have some similar qualities and the same ingredients, but they remain very different. Without getting into the brewing process, which would reveal most of the differences, just know in this article we are only referring to the Belgian style.

Wit Biers have been brewed for centuries, but only recently has the style gained much notoriety in the United States. World-wide, much of the growth and popularity of the style is attributed to Pierre Celis. After noticing a steady decline in popularity and availability of Wit Bier, Celis began brewing what would become Hoegaarden (pronounced who-garden) in a cow shed in 1966 in the town of Hoegaarden, Belgium. The beer did exactly what he thought it would do, became an instant sensation. The beer did extremely well until an InBev buyout that led to a reduction in quality of the beer and the quality of goods used. In the early '90s, Celis wanted to start over. He had friends in Austin, Texas and the natural spring water was similar to what he had been using in Belgium, so he relocated. It seemed perfect. He opened Celis Brewery in March of 1992 with help from a few investors. There he created Celis White, a US version of Hoegaarden brewed the way it was always meant to without the corporate governance. Ironically, in 1995 his investors sold their share to Miller Brewing Co. The same disgraceful quality-reducing antics that occurred with

InBev, and the increased meddling in the day to day operation of the brewery, drove Celis to sell out as well. As a result, the brewery and the beer went belly up in 2001. Pierre Celis, still convinced of the style's potential, tried once again with a joint-venture in Blanco, Texas at the Real Ale Brewery. In 2006, Celis planned to brew "Brussels White", but marketing laws and legislation have prevented that from occurring. Until then, I vow to keep the dream alive and spread the word about Wit Bier and all its glory.



Giving credit where credit is due, Blue Moon sparked the fire in the US and invoked other breweries to offer this once forgotten style. Today, there are several imported Wit Biers as well as a few domestically produced Belgium Style White Ales that should be used this summer to fight off the heat and thirst. Here are the ones we recommend that can be found at Spec's.

### St. Bernardus Wit

Brewed in Belgium following a recipe the Pierre Celis helped formulate, this is rated the best Wit beer in the World in several beer communities. This one pours a milky lemon color with beautiful pillow-like head. A quick whiff brings bright citrus zest and a slight sweetness to the nose. The palate will welcome this beer with open arms. This beer is light and refreshing but complexity remains. On the front orange and lemon citrus is noticeable but not dominant. The coriander spice, slight yeast fruit and flavor from the grain are picked up on the finish. Completely refreshing. 5.5% ABV

### Allagash White

This is actually the flagship beer for this brewery. Allagash has been in Texas for years and so has the white...kind of. The beer is produced year-round, but due to unfamiliarity of the style, in years past it has only been shipped to Texas in the hotter months. That changed this year. With the growing popularity of the style, this domestic replica looks to be a real player this year. Try this one! It rates as the #1 wit made in the USA!!! 5.0%ABV

### Abita Satsuma Wit

Coming this summer, this will be a new seasonal addition for Abita. As the name alludes to, the brewery will use Satsuma oranges native in and around Louisiana. This one should be unique. Be on the lookout!

### Celis White

After the brewery in Austin went under, Michigan Brewing bought the rights and continues to brew the beer following Pierre's original Celis White recipe. This one has a little more citrus on the nose and on the palate than do others of the same style.



### New Belgium Mothership Wit

A USDA organic version of the classic style. Employees for New Belgium refer to the brewery in Fort Collins, Colorado as the Mothership. This being their first stab at an all organic beer, it tied in perfectly with the environmentally friendly brewery. So, the brewers decided to pay homage and refer to the beer as Mothership Wit. 2008 GABF Gold Medal winner in the Belgium-Style Wit category!



### Samuel Adams Blackberry Wit

Obviously this one is a little unique. Sam Adams use Marion Blackberries from Oregon to add a little tart and fruit sweetness to the wit bier. While it is much more transparent than other wits, it is quite drinkable. The blackberries do exactly what they should do, add to the beer, not dominate it. Give this one a try. It is much better than the syrupy, overdone Samuel Adams Cherry Wheat. 5.5% ABV.

### (512) Brewing Wit

Made in the style of the Belgian wheat beers that are so refreshing, the (512) Wit is a hazy beer with coriander and citrus peel aromas. Brewed using 50% US 2-row malted barley and 50% US unmalted wheat and oats make this a light, crisp beer suited well for hot Texas weather. Currently only available in draft. Kegs available for order at all Austin area Spec's stores. 5% ABV.

### Unibroue Blanche de Chambly

This Canadian version is produced from an interesting blend of unmalted Quebec wheat and pale barley malt, to which spices and natural aromatics are added, along with a light hopping. The Blanche (white) is only partially filtered so that it retains the full benefits of its natural ingredients. This gives it the cloudy appearance that was characteristic of pale beers in the Middle Ages. 5% ABV. ☺



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with feedback.