

# BEER BUZZ

## Into Battle...

by Joey Williams



It's taken more than three decades, but the American artisanal brewers have gained the upper hand in the revolution against the beasts of mediocrity and sameness. The number of breweries in America is as high as it was just before Prohibition and the styles of beer you can find at your local store are more varied than ever before.

Those same powers that were responsible for the homogenization of beer culture in America have taken their toll on some of the great brewing nations that influenced our revolution. England and Germany are both suffering the wrath of large corporations and their fizzy yellow liquids taking the place of real beer in pubs and bars. It would seem that the success of our revolt and the unwillingness of our brewers to sell out have made other countries targets.

Just as it was in America, though, brewers are beginning to stand up to the corporate powers and match their million dollar ad campaigns with well made, handcrafted beer influenced by the successful uprising in America. In 2007, James Watts and Martin Dickie founded BrewDog in Scotland to battle the industrial giants and pass on their love of flavorful, well made brew. In the last two years, Watts and Dickie have made waves with their use of Scotch whisky barrel aging, aggressive flavors and "take no prisoners" attitude. Many of the beers are an intriguing blend of old and new Scottish brewing mixed with the excessive American style. BrewDog has even collaborated with Stone Brewing on two separate occasions to create mind-blowing new concoctions. Watts and Dickie are making huge steps in the right direction on a long journey back from a wrong turn.

In other parts of the world, beer and brewing isn't a well established part of life. Having only industrial brew is satisfactory and if something else is desired, then homebrewing is the alternative. This alternative is exactly where Mikkeller emerged from in Denmark. A pair of homebrewers, Mikkel Borg Bjergso and Kristian Klarup Keller, began in their home kitchens and expanded into the production facilities of regional breweries. A "gypsy-brewer", Mikkeller doesn't have a production brewery of their own to this day, opting instead to travel around the globe brewing with others who share their passion for beer. Influenced by the eccentric and ancient beers of Belgium and the excessive nature of American brewing, Mikkeller produces world class beers garnering international praise.



Not all of the change is coming from new upstart brewers; many well established breweries are joining the fray. G. Schneider & Sohn, the brewery famous for offering hefeweizen to the German public, teamed up with Garret Oliver, well known brewmaster of Brooklyn Brewery, to create a strong wheat beer with noticeable hop presence. The collaboration gave birth to two beers, Schneider-Brooklyner and Brooklyner-Schneider Hopfen Weisse, two pale weizenbocks combining yeasty complexity with a strong hop aroma and flavor.

Another collaboration between a German and American brewer recently made headlines when it was announced that Weihenstephaner and Samuel Adams have been working for years on new style of beer they plan to unveil in the Spring of 2010.



Belgian brewers at DeProef aren't missing out on a chance to deal some of their own blows to the corporate beast. Each year for the last three years Dirk Naudts, "The Professor", the brewmaster at DeProef has invited an American brewer to his brewery to create a new concoction to add to the Signature Series. Signature Ale, a collaboration between Dirk and brewing celebrity Tomme Arthur, of the famed Lost Abbey, is a Belgian IPA with the addition of Brettanomyces. Not to be outdone, Jason Perkins of Allagash Brewing brought out the big guns the following year in the form of their newly discovered house strain of Brettanomyces to pair with Dirk's favorite strain of Brett. The result, Les Deux Brasseurs, is a double-barrel assault of Brett character in the form of a Belgian Strong Pale ale with tons of tropical fruit aromas, funk and flavor. This year, Bell's brewery was tapped to make the trip and returned with Van Twee. The beer has just been released as this article is being written and should be on store shelves in the coming weeks. The beer is described as, "a cherry infused 'mash-up' of the Porter and Dubbel styles." Expect lots of chocolate covered cherry goodness amidst the flavors of multiple yeast strains and the usual DeProef surprises.

Most interestingly, a Trappist monastery has joined the ranks and is set to release their own version of a bottled assault with the help of a domestic brewer.

Brewmaster Jean-Marie Rockof Orval is making a pilgrimage to Kansas City, Missouri to visit old friend, brewmaster Steven Pauwels, at Boulevard Brewing. The pair will create an Imperial Pilsner using methods of brewing, fermentation and lagering that are no longer employed. If all goes well, the beer will appear in January as part of the Smokestack Series, a lineup of 750ml beers that began hitting store shelves last year.

Things have come full circle. It started with German and English immigrants bringing the craft to the states and grew into a strong, distinct brewing culture that's able to give back and help others around the world to get good beer in the hands of those that enjoy it. Keep up the good fight and go enjoy a beer. ☺



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