



The Herald Tribune



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Newsletter of the Ann Arbor Brewers' Guild

December 2009

December Meeting

This month's meeting of the AABG is Friday December 11th. It will be hosted by **Rolf Wucherer**. See the map and directions on the next page. The featured style is **Sour Ale**.

17. Sour Ale

- 17A. Berliner Weisse
- 17B. Flanders Red Ale
- 17C. Flanders Brown Ale/Oud Bruin
- 17D. Straight (Unblended) Lambic
- 17E. Gueuze
- 17F. Fruit Lambic

17D. Straight (Unblended) Lambic

Aroma: A decidedly sour/acidic aroma is often dominant in young examples, but may be more subdued with age as it blends with aromas described as barnyard, earthy, goaty, hay, horsey, and horse blanket. A mild oak and/or citrus aroma is considered favorable. An enteric, smoky, cigar-like, or cheesy aroma is unfavorable. Older versions are commonly fruity with aromas of apples or even honey. No hop aroma. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Pale yellow to deep golden in color. Age tends to darken the beer. Clarity is hazy to good. Younger versions are often cloudy, while older ones are generally clear. Head retention is generally poor. Head color is white.

Flavor: Young examples are often noticeably sour and/or lactic, but aging can bring this character more in balance with the malt, wheat and barnyard characteristics. Fruity flavors are simpler in young lambics and more complex in the older examples, where they are reminiscent of apples or other light fruits, rhubarb, or honey. Some oak or citrus flavor (often grapefruit) is occasionally noticeable. An enteric, smoky or cigar-like character is undesirable. Hop bitterness is low to none. No hop flavor. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium-light body. In spite of the low finishing gravity, the many mouth-filling flavors prevent the beer from tasting like water. As a rule of thumb lambic dries with age, which makes dryness a reasonable indicator of age. Has a medium to high tart, puckering quality without being sharply astringent. Virtually to completely uncarbonated.

Overall Impression: Complex, sour/acidic, pale, wheat-based ale fermented by a variety of Belgian microbiota.

History: Spontaneously fermented sour ales from the area in and around Brussels (the Senne Valley) stem from a farmhouse brewing tradition several centuries old. Their numbers are constantly dwindling.

Comments: Straight lambics are single-batch, unblended beers. Since they are unblended, the straight lambic is often a true product of the "house character" of a brewery and will be more variable than a gueuze. They are generally served young (6 months) and on tap as cheap, easy-drinking beers without any filling carbonation. Younger versions tend to be one-dimensionally sour since a complex Brett character often takes upwards of a year to develop. An enteric character is often indicative of a lambic that is too young. A noticeable vinegary or cidery character is considered a fault by Belgian brewers. Since the wild yeast and bacteria will ferment ALL sugars, they are bottled only when they have completely fermented. Lambic is served uncarbonated, while gueuze is served effervescent. IBUs are approximate since aged hops are used; Belgians use hops for anti-bacterial properties more than bittering in lambics.

Ingredients: Unmalted wheat (30-40%), Pilsner malt and aged (surannes) hops (3 years) are used. The aged hops are used more for preservative effects than bitterness, and makes actual bitterness levels difficult to estimate. Traditionally these beers are spontaneously fermented with naturally-occurring yeast and bacteria in predominately oaken barrels. Home-brewed and craft-brewed versions are more typically made with pure cultures of yeast commonly including *Saccharomyces*, *Brettanomyces*, *Pediococcus* and *Lactobacillus* in an attempt to recreate the effects of the dominant microbiota of Brussels and the surrounding countryside of the Senne River valley. Cultures taken from bottles are sometimes used but



AABG 2009

January	Rolf Wucherer	Strong Ale
February	Mike O'Brien	English Pale Ale
March	Chris Frey	1.080+*
April	Matt and Rene Greff	Extract
May	Stephen Krebs	Scottish and Irish Ale
June	Mark Zadvinskis	Spice/Herb/Vegetable
July	Steve Darnell	Fruit Beer
August	Jay Howe	Amber Hybrid*
September	Bob Scholl	European Amber Lager*
October	John Rathmell	Pilsner
November	Chris Frey	Belgian Strong Ale*
December	Rolf Wucherer	Sour Ale

* Denotes AHA Club Only Competition Style
All meeting are the second friday of each month beginning at 7:30 p.m., except for the July meeting (BeerBQ) which is the second saturday.

AABG Pico System

The guardian of the club's pico system is Mike O'Brien. Anyone wishing to use it should contact him at: 734.637.2532 or e-mail: mobrien315221MI@comcast.net

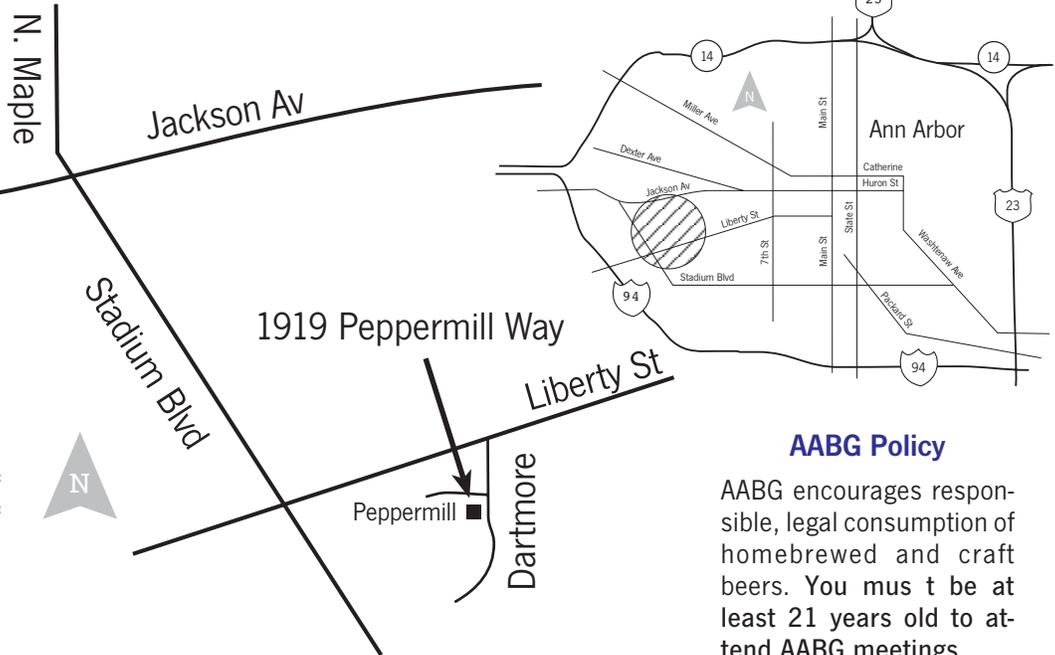
When and Where

Friday, Dec. 11, 7:30 pm

Rolf Wucherer
1919 Peppermill Way
Ann Arbor MI
665-5184

Directions

Rolf's house is the first right off Dartmoor, which is off Liberty east of Stadium (and west of Seventh), near Eberwhite Woods. The house is the first one on the left. Park around the cul-de-sac and in the street.



AABG Policy

AABG encourages responsible, legal consumption of homebrewed and craft beers. You must be at least 21 years old to attend AABG meetings.

Guide for New Members

Bring 1-2 bottles per batch of your beer that you'd like to share, or an interesting commercial beer. Bring tasty munchies to cleanse the palate and sop up the alcohol and **a small sampling glass to keep your host from having to provide one**. Feel free to share and sample with other members and make and accept constructive comments. Please use good judgment while imbibing and don't drive while intoxicated.

... *Lambic continued*

there is no simple way of knowing what organisms are still viable.

Vital Statistics:

OG: . . . 1.040 - 1.054
FG: . . . 1.001 - 1.010
IBUs: 0 - 10
ABV: 5 - 6.5%
SRM: 3 - 7

Commercial Examples: The only bottled version readily available is Cantillon Grand Cru Bruocsella of whatever single batch vintage the brewer deems worthy to bottle. De Cam sometimes bottles their very old (5 years) lambic. In and around Brussels there are specialty cafes that often have draught lambics from traditional brewers or blenders such as Boon, De Cam, Cantillon, Drie Fonteinen, Lindemans, Timmermans and Girardin.

Types of Lambic and Derived Beers

Lambic (pure)

Unblended lambic is a cloudy, uncarbonated, bracingly sour beverage available on tap in only a few locations. Generally three years old. A bottled offering from Cantillon named Grand Cru Bruocsella can be found outside of Belgium.

Gueuze

A mixture of young (one-year) and old (two and three-year) lambics which has been bottled. It undergoes secondary fermentation, producing carbon dioxide, because the young lambics are not yet fully fermented. It keeps in the bottle; a good gueuze will be given a year to referment in the bottle, but can be kept for 10-20 years. An obscure German top-fermenting style, Gose, is not to be confused with gueuze.

Mars

Mars traditionally referred to a weaker beer made from the second runnings of a lambic brewing. It is no longer commercially produced. In the 1990s, the Boon brewery made a modern Mars beer called *Lembeek's 2%* (the 2% referring to the alcohol content), but its production has since been discontinued.



Faro

Historically, a low-alcohol, sweetened beer made from a blend of lambic and a much lighter, freshly brewed beer (called *meertsbier*, not necessarily a lambic) to which brown sugar (or sometimes caramel or molasses) was added. Sometimes herbs were added as well. The use of the lighter beer (or even water) and of substandard lambic in the blend made this a cheap, light, sweet beer for everyday use. The 19th century French poet Charles Baudelaire commented on Faro's (to him) disagreeable aftertaste, "It's beer that you drink twice", believing that the Faro in Brussels was brewed from the waters of a river (the Senne or Zenne) that was also used as a sewer.

The sugar was originally added shortly before serving, and therefore did not add carbonation or alcohol to the beverage (because the sugar did not have the time to ferment). Modern faro beer is still characterized by the use of brown sugar and lambic, but is not necessarily a light beer. The use of meertsbier has disappeared, and modern faro is not viewed as cheap or light. Modern faro is bottled, sweetened and pasteurized to prevent

Types continued on next page...

... *Types continued*

refermentation in the bottle. Examples are produced by Cantillon, Boon, Lindemans or Mort Subite.

Kriek

Lambic refermented in the presence of sour cherries (morello cherry) and with secondary fermentation in the bottle results in kriek. Traditional versions of kriek are dry and sour, just as traditional geuze.

Fruit

Lambic with the addition of raspberry (framboise), peach (pêche), blackcurrant (cassis), grape (druif), or strawberry (aardbei), as either whole fruit or syrup. Other, rarer fruit lambic flavorings include apple (pomme), banana, pineapple, apricot, plum, cloudberry, lemon, and blueberry. Fruit lambics are usually bottled with secondary fermentation. Although fruit lambics are among the most famous Belgian fruit beers, the use of names such as kriek, framboise or frambozen, cassis, etc. does not necessarily imply that the beer is made from lambic. The fruit beers produced by the Liefmans brewery, for example, actually use a brown ale (Oud Bruin), rather than a lambic as a base. Many of the non-traditional fruit beers derived from lambic that were commercialized in the last decades are considered to be low quality products by many beer enthusiasts. These products are typically artificially sweetened and based on syrups instead of fresh fruit, resulting in a taste experience that is quite remote from the traditional products.

Flanders Red Ale

Flanders red ale is a style of sour ale usually brewed in Belgium. Although sharing a common ancestor with English porters of the 17th century, the Flanders red ale has evolved along a different track: the beer is often fermented with organisms other than *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Lactobacillus* being common to produce a sour character attributable to lactic acid; long periods of aging are employed, a year or more, often in oaken barrels, to impart an acetic acid character to the beer; special red malt is used to give the beer its unique color; and often the matured beer is blended with a younger batch before bottling to balance and round the character.

The beer appears deep red to brown in color, and should remain fairly clear in a glass. The aroma is a complex mixture of fruits: citrus,

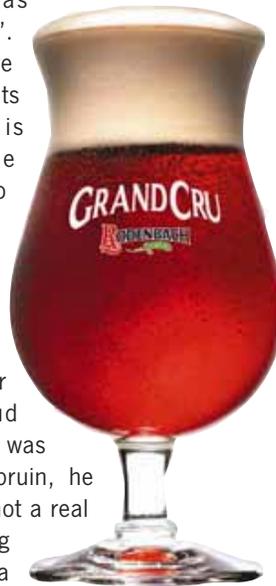
cherries, plum, raisin as well as some vanilla or chocolate undertones. The sourness of the beer can also be apparent in the aroma.

Flanders reds have a strong fruit flavor similar to the aroma, but more intense. Plum, prune, raisin and black cherry are the most common flavors, followed by orange and some spiciness. All Flanders red ales have an obvious sour or acidic taste, but this characteristic can range from moderate to strong. There is no hop bitterness, but tannins are common. Subsequently, Flanders red ales are often described as the most “wine-like” of all beers. However, this is also likely due to their distinctive red color.

Oud Bruin and Flanders Red Ale

Another manifestation of Belgian sour beer, Flemish brown ale, or Oud Bruin, can boast the same boldly lactic character of the lambic family but generally without the horsey character. Another variety of sour ale is referred to as “Flander’s red ale”.

Though there are different viewpoints on this, there is much reliable information to suggest oud bruin and Flanders red are really the same style. When commenting to a Belgian bartender that Oud Zottergem’s bruin was not particularly bruin, he told me color is not a real issue in defining oud bruin. This idea was first posed to me by Johnny Fincioen, the owner of the Global Beer Network, a native Belgian who imports a wonderful line of beers. A contributor to this site commented that the difference between red and brown ale was actually regional. Don Feinberg of Vanberg & DeWulf added that the reference to “red ale” was likely to have come about due to the creation of Rodenbach. As it was clearer, reder and generally more beautiful than the typical oud bruin (which I believe is true) it was deservent of it’s own designation. Anyway, though there are differences between classic oud bruin and



the benchmark red ale, Rodenbach (sometimes referred to as the “Burgundy of Belgium”), they are outweighed by their similarities.

The most recognized Oud Bruin, Liefmans Goudenband, is a spectacular beer though I believe it has gone down hill in the last year. None the less I will always remember my first sip of this fabulous brew fondly. Other examples of the style are more or less lactic, some leaning towards the sweet side. A bruin originating from the same town as Goudenband, Felix, is noticeably more tart. I would guess, based on its flavor, that it is not blended. Despite producing a benchmark bruin, Liefman’s makes a beer called Oud Bruin that is not Goudenband. The difference between two is the oud bruin is not blended.

Blending is a very significant practice in oud bruin production. Aging oud bruin makes it overwhelmingly (for most, not for me) tart. The malty sweetness some have is generally because younger beer has been blended with a lesser amount of aged, sour beer. Ichtegem’s, for example, is a blend of 70% young beer to 30% old. Oud Zottergem’s is another example of a beer that is only slightly tart, with a breadly sweetness being more dominant.

Rodenbach makes three different versions of their beer, including the unblended red and the blended grand cru. The third is a sweetened beer, having cherry essence added to aged beer.

The general profiles that all share go something like this. Final gravity is about 1/4 starting gravity and the average ABV is around 5.5%. Duchesse de Bourgogne is the most powerful I have found with an ABV of 6.2%. They tend to not have hoppy aromas, nor is the use of black patent or chocolate malt or roasted barley given away by the nose. Aromas are usually tart, fruity and floral, never with the buttery scent of diacetyl or spices.

Hop character in the taste is always beaten back by sourness with some examples also emphasising sweetness or fruitiness. The afore mentioned grains are seldom the source of color. This is usually the result of crystal malts and long boils. Lighter versions, such as Rodenbach, derives color from more medium colored malts like Vienna.

– from *Syles of Belgian Beer*, www.belgianstyle.com