

The Boston Globe Celebrates Newport Storm Annual Release '11 - Rhode Island's First Collaboration Beer! December 3, 2011 issue



“Newport Storm '11 may be the best thing this brewery has produced.”

Storm's a-brewin' in R.I.

A strong, dark beer for the snifter set

By Steve Greenlee
GLOBE STAFF

Newport Storm '11 is being heralded as the first beer that draws on the expertise of every professional brewer in Rhode Island.

99 BOTTLES
Last February, they all gathered at the Newport Storm Brewery and got the brew going: Derek Luke from Newport Storm, Dave Sniffen from Mohegan Cafe and Brewery on Block Island, Sean Larkin and Tom Tainsh from Trifinity Brewhouse in Providence, Aaron Crossett from Union Station Brewery in Providence, and Marshall Richter from Coddington Brewing Co. in Middletown.

The brewers are calling it “Rhode Island Red,” which might suggest that it's an amber ale. It's not. If anything, it's more like a Belgian strong dark ale that has been aged on wood. And indeed it was aged in rum barrels before it was bottle conditioned with local honey.

Corked and sealed with wax in a dark blue 750-milliliter bottle, Newport Storm '11 has all the trappings of a classy beer. The cork comes out with a great pop, and the smell of hops and alcohol bursts out.

Poured into a snifter, Newport Storm '11 is reddish-brown with a woody aroma that bears traces of caramel and toffee. Sweet and syrupy, it's not bitter, despite the heavy doses of magnum and santiam hops.

The Belgian yeast that ferments Newport Storm '11 imbues the beer with the qualities of a strong dark Belgian ale or even a quadrupel. Notes of dried fruit — raisins and plums — round out the flavor profile. And there's more than a little alcohol burn; this serious beer is 11.7 percent alcohol by volume.

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Here are two more excellent new releases — one of which also commemorated 11-11-11 — that have a lot in common with Belgian strong dark ales:

Stone Vertical Epic 11.11.11

Stone Brewing Co.'s Vertical Epic series, which began in 2002 with 02.02.02 and ends next year with 12.12.12, is designed



STEVE GREENLEE/GLOBE STAFF

with “vertical tastings” in mind. In a vertical tasting, bottles of different vintages of the same beer (or wine) are opened and tasted at the same time, so drinkers can perceive the effects of aging. Stone's Vertical Epic releases, however, have all been different styles, so it is a bit of a twist on the idea.

In theory, Vertical Epic 11.11.11 is a strange beer. It's a Belgian-style ale brewed with green chilies and cinnamon. Wait, where are you going? Come back. It's actually quite a tasty beverage.

Pristine ruby, the beer smells almost exactly like Troegs Mad Elf, which is odd because that beer is brewed with cherries. Indeed, though, Vertical Epic 11.11.11 boasts an unusual aroma of cherries, licorice, and cinnamon. Interestingly, the chilies don't rear up in the aroma.

They do, however, spring up in the taste, as do the cinnamon and Belgian yeast. Yes, there they are, the chilies, without the heat. Any burn comes from the alcohol, since 9.4 percent of this beer is alcohol. The finish is bitter, with those chilies showing themselves again on the after-taste.

Samuel Adams Thirteenth Hour

Staying with the number theme: Samuel Adams refers to the new installment in its Barrel Room Collection as a Belgian stout, but Thirteenth Hour has more in common with Belgian strong dark ales.

Thirteenth Hour, which gets

its name from its 13 ingredients, pours black with a short head that quickly dissipates. Notes of cherries (cherries again?) overpower the malt profile, and then the Belgian yeast and licorice notes come through.

Aged in oak barrels, this well-carbonated beer (9 percent ABV) is sweet up front and bitter on the swallow, with chocolate notes everywhere. Just don't expect a typical stout. It's not thick and rich like that. It's more in line with Belgian strong darks. It's also delicious.

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