

Brews are like fine wine at Quadrupel Brasserie in Pasadena

By Merrill Shindler

Posted: 03/25/2010 06:55:43 PM PDT

Looking at the sizable beverage list for the new Belgian beer-centric Quadrupel Brasserie on Union Street in Old Pasadena, it's easy to assume that in Belgium, they neither produce wine, nor do they drink it.

For although there are dozens of Belgian beers on the menu, there isn't a single Belgian wine. Now, admittedly, it's the rare restaurant that carries Belgian wines here in the United States. Even though there are several dozen grapes grown in Belgium - with exotic names like Bacchus, Auxerrois, Madeleine Angevine and Regent - wine runs a distant second when it comes to the beverage of choice in Belgium. This is the land where beer rules.

There are some 125 breweries serving the needs of this land of barely 11 million souls. They regularly produce about 800 beers - what are known in the trade as "standard" beers. But when you add on the special beers produced by those breweries, the number of different beers available in Belgium every year soars close to 9,000.

The average Belgian drinks 25 gallons of beer a

year. In the U.S., we drink just under 22 gallons per year. And as much as the Belgians love their beer, more is consumed per year in the United Kingdom (26 gallons), Austria (28 1/2 gallons), Australia (29 gallons), Ireland (nearly 36 gallons) and the Czech Republic (44 1/2 gallons - twice the consumption in the U.S.).

I've been in Prague, where I did my best to add to the per capita consumption; Czech beer is one of the great joys of the modern world. (Just try a bottle of Pilsner Urquell, the Czech export beer, which is the equal of the best drafts served anywhere.)

But what Belgium also has is more types of beer than anyone else. The styles are multitudinous and varied - there are Pale Lagers, Amber Ales (Ambree and Speciale), Blonde and Golden Ales, Brown Ales, Scotch Ales, Flanders Red Ales, Flanders Sour Brown Ales (Oud Bruin), Dubbels, Tripels, Quadrupels, Lambics (Gueuze and Fruit), Saisons, White Wheat Beers, Winter Christmas Beer, Trappist Ales, Biere de Champagne, Belgian IPA - and goodness knows how much more. In Belgium, they like their beer - and they like their beer really complex.

There are 65 beers spread over 12 categories at Quadruple Brasserie, and it surely is the biggest selection of Belgian beers in town. It also is an excess of riches that will surely befuddle those of us who thought we were pretty cool for drinking Anchor Steam and John Adams. As good as those beers are (and they're very good), they are simple choices compared to what you'll find on the brew menu at this Old Pasadena beer

Advertisement



USF
UNIVERSITY of
SAN FRANCISCO

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

- SEO & Paid Search
- Online Branding
- Web Analytics
- Internet Law
- Media Buying
- Social Media

→ 1-800-268-9943
USanFranOnline.com/FD

pub, with its upscale pub grub.

Seated at the bar in the rear, a real hive of activity, the knowledgeable bartendress was happy to offer some suggestions, in between filling an endless series of orders from the restaurant. We determined that as a lifelong fan of Pilsner Urquell, I should probably begin with the IPAs (Indian Pale Ales) or the Pale Ales. And since I liked the name, I ordered a glass of Lucifer Ale. Which appealed to me more than Devotion Ale. Though I do plan to work my way up to the Quadrupel Beer called Three Philosophers, and the Dark Ale with the fine moniker Delirium Nocturnum. There's also a Dubble Beer called Lost and Found. It may be a dumb way to order, but I like beers (and wines) with colorful names.

I also like colorfully, even artfully drawn menus. And although the culinary options at Quadrupel aren't quite as exotic as the beers, there are definitely some moments. Where the beers are Belgian, the dishes are Internationally Eclectic - or perhaps they're Eclectically International. However you choose to view the cuisine, it's not the same old, same old.

The top half of the one-page menu is divided a tad redundantly into "Snacks" and "Appetizers," along with a sort of free-floating section of California cheeses. Belgium is famous for its pommes frites (calling them "french" fries would be so wrong). And these are good: skinny, crispy and crunchy; good beer food.

Instead of onion rings, they do shallot rings - think of what you'd get if you cross-bred an onion with garlic, or at least chives, and you'll have a sense of the flavor. They could have been a bit crunchier (perhaps the nature of shallots is to resist crunch), and the sweet & sour flavor wasn't quite right; garlic and salt would fit better. But then, I don't tend to like sweet as a rule.

There's an order of meatballs made from ground pork and pancetta bacon, served in a smoky tomato sauce. And there's "A Sampling of Sausages" - a best of the wurst of bratwurst, bockwurst and chubby Polish, served with pickles and kraut, along with two kinds of mustard. The word "Snack" fits this very well.

When you move into the realm of "Appetizers," the dishes get serious, perhaps even too serious for a beer pub. There's something about lobster bisque that cries out for wine, not beer. And luckily, there are plenty of options on the wine list, which is twice the size of the beer list. Unfortunately, none of them are Belgian, though there are plenty of French wines to choose from; it's always good to find a nice crisp Sancerre (Roger et Christophe Moreux) among the selections. Especially if you're ordering the bisque.

There's a bosc pear salad with candied pecans, which I tend to think of as a sweet pretending to be a savory. There's a snappy salad of grilled asparagus, prosciutto and poached egg. And a salad made with roasted bone marrow and a vinaigrette built around pancetta; proof that just

Advertisement



**UNIVERSITY of
SAN FRANCISCO**

End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!

Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing

→ SEO & Paid Search	→ Internet Law
→ Online Branding	→ Media Buying
→ Web Analytics	→ Social Media

➔

1-800-268-9943

USanFranOnline.com/FD

because it's a salad, it isn't necessarily low in fat.

Indeed, in what I've come to think of as the Belgian style, there is a notable penchant here for butter and cream, just as there is in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent - places where I ate till I could barely walk down the street.

The seared mussels come in a saffron cream sauce. One of the options for steamed mussels is a very rich lobster sauce. There are baked vegetables topped with parmesan and bleu cheese. The paprika-cruste striped bass come with a beurre blanc ... the Jidori chicken roulade with a mushroom-marsala cream sauce ... the steak frites with a Bordelaise sauce sweetened with molasses. The gnocchi is described as being served in a "creamy wild forest mushroom ragu."

And of course, there are 10 California cheeses to choose from. Luckily, my personal research into the matter seems to indicate that a nice foamy mug of beer cuts through all sorts of creamy, buttery, cheesy dishes. Beer is the universal solvent. And how lucky we are that it tastes so good. And even better if it's Belgian.

mreats@aol.com

Advertisement

 UNIVERSITY of SAN FRANCISCO	End-to-End Training as It Should Be: 100% ONLINE!	
	Earn Your Master Certificate in Internet Marketing	
	→ SEO & Paid Search	→ Internet Law
	→ Online Branding	→ Media Buying
	→ Web Analytics	→ Social Media
		1-800-268-9943 USanFranOnline.com/FD