

Belgian & Trappist Dubbels

Chimay Première (Red)

Bières de Chimay S.A. - Hainaut, Belgium - TRAPPIST
7% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

Ingredients: Pilsner malt (French barley from Champagne); wheat starch or flour (10% - 15%); dextrose (5%); malt extract (0.1%); hop extract from German Hallertaur (aroma) & American Galena (bittering) hops. Yeast & liquid invert sugar added to the bottled beer.

Top fermented beer, refermented in the bottle, unpasteurised.

Westmalle Trappist Dubbel

Brouwerij Westmalle - Westmalle, Belgium - TRAPPIST
7% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

3-week secondary fermentation. Since 1856 the monks have also been brewing a dark Trappist beer along with their table beer. Since the recipe was modified in 1926, they have been brewing slightly heavier beer. This is the foundation of today's Dubbel.

The 33 cl bottles are distributed individually, in baskets of six or in 24 bottle crates. The Westmalle Dubbel is also the only dark Trappist beer available on draught in some 300 selected hotels, restaurants and cafes, from kegs of 30 and 50 litres. Dubbel Trappist continues to ferment, making the draught version slightly sweeter than the bottled version.

Trappistes Rochefort 6

Brasserie de Rochefort - Rochefort, Belgium - TRAPPIST
7.5% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

The brewery is located inside the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Saint-Rémy, near the town of Rochefort, and has been brewing beer since 1595. There are approximately 15 monks resident at the monastery. As with all other Trappist breweries, the beer is only sold in order to financially support the monastery and some other charitable causes. Like many strong Belgian beers, those produced at Rochefort age well and can be cellared for at least five years while maintaining quality. The water for the beers is drawn from a well located inside the monastery walls.

The beers are called Rochefort 6, 8, and 10, referring to their gravities in the obsolete (but quite practical) system of Belgian degrees, in which 6 corresponds to an original gravity of 1.060 (15 degrees P), 8 corresponds to 1.080 (20 degrees P), and 10 corresponds to 1.100 (25 degrees P).

La Trappe Dubbel

Bierbrouwerij De Koningshoeven B.V.
Berkel-Enschot, Netherlands - TRAPPIST
7% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

Affligem Dubbel

Brouwerij Affligem - Opwijk (Op-wike), Belgium
7% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

The Op-Ale brewery in Opwijk Belgium was licenced by the Affligem Abbey to brew beers under the Affligem Abbey brand name, along with their own Op-Ale, as well as beers under the brand name of the Postel Abbey. Affligem was taken over by Heineken who renamed it the Affligem brewery.

The brewery produces a range of beers,[14] including Affligem Blonde, a 6.8% pale ale; Affligem Dubbel, a 7% dubbel, Affligem Tripel, a 9.5% tripel and Affligem Patersvat, a 6.8% belgian ale.

St Bernardus Prior 8

Brouwerij St. Bernardus NV - Watou, Belgium
8% ABV. Year round. Bottles, draft.

In the late 19th century, the "Refuge Notre Dame de St. Bernard" was established, originally as a cheese production financed Abbey activities. In the 1934 it was decided to close the Belgian annex and return all monastic activities to France. Evarist Deconinck took over the cheese factory and built a first building at the Trappistenweg in Watou where the cheese was further developed and commercialised. After 1945, the Trappist Monastery St. Sixtus decided it would stop the sale of its beer.

An agreement was reached where inside the walls of the Monastery the monks would brew only beer for their own consumption but would sell to the public at the gates of the Monastery and also for a few taverns connected to the Monastery. Deconinck brewed and sold the Trappist Beers under license (for a period of 30 years). A new contract was agreed in 1962. In 1992, the agreement came to an end because the Trappist Monasteries (6 in Belgium and 1 in the Netherlands) decided that the qualification 'Trappistenbier' could only be given to beers brewed inside the walls of the Trappist Monastery. Since 1992 the beers brewed in Watou are sold under the new brand name of 'St Bernardus'.

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Ample evidence indicates that many monasteries maintained breweries as a matter of common provision, just as some made wine and others liqueurs.

Until this century, beer or wine (depending largely upon climate) was generally drunk with meals in preference to water, primarily because it was much safer to drink than the water from open wells and other sources prone to contamination.

Monks had an additional reason to prefer beer in that it provided a degree of nutrition during the Lenten (and other) fasts. Because the Trappist order had abjured meat, they had perhaps a yet more pressing reason to find beer attractive, and the brewing of beer was carried on at abbeys, along with baking, cheese-making, and the growing of vegetables.

Sketchy, but entertaining (if highly questionable) accounts describe a practice of producing the beer in two strengths, "one for the priests, and one for the nuns!" The stronger of the two was, for that reason, referred to as "Priests' Beer" and was considered a very strong beer, even by the standard of the day.

Michael Jackson credits the Abbey of Scourmont, at Chimay, with being the first to brew commercially, in the 1860s. Four other Trappist abbeys followed in Belgium, plus one in the Netherlands. These six abbeys are the only breweries that can properly call their products Trappist beers, because they are the only Trappist abbeys brewing commercially. The name has the significance of an appellation, but an appellation of origin, rather than being a strict stylistic descriptor.

All of the Trappist beers have a few elements in common: they are all ales, all are bottle-conditioned, and none are simple thirst-quenchers. From there, however, the picture grows cloudier. Two (perhaps three) recognized substyles exist, and some Trappist beers fit into none of them. These substyles are generally termed Single, Double, and Triple, often expressed in their Flemish spellings (Dubbel, Tripel; I know of no Trappist beers that are labeled Single by their producer).

It's said that all three are made from a single wort to which they add varying amounts of dark candy sugar, but while the flavors of the beers would suggest that this is indeed the case, I have been unable to verify it.

Sugar is another very important ingredient in these styles, and in many places getting the right sugars can pose some significant problems. Sugars are quite commonly used adjuncts in brewing, and the form in which they are generally used in Belgium is "candy sugar." This sugar is created by superheating and then cooling a highly concentrated sucrose solution. One Belgian producer lists a candy sugar syrup suitable for use in baking, confectionery, phar-

maceutical syrups, and "special high fermentation beers" as being 79-80% dry extract, composed of approximately equal amounts of sucrose and invertose, available in color ranges of either 300-425 EBC units or 1700-2000 EBC units. For a Double, this would be exactly what's needed.

Much of the defining flavor of these styles comes from the yeast. It is important to use a yeast known to produce the sort of flavor you are looking for and to use a strain tolerant of high-gravity beers. Many yeast strains behave differently at high gravities than in more normal ranges, in some cases becoming quite temperature sensitive. Generous pitching rates should be the rule.

The cleanest and softest flavor is achieved by using low-alpha "noble" hops as bittering hops; Saaz, Hallertauer, and Tettnanger all work very well in these styles. Styrian Goldings give an outstanding flavor to Doubles.

Trappist Breweries

In 1997, eight Trappist abbeys—six from Belgium (Orval, Chimay, Westvleteren, Rochefort, Westmalle and Achel), one from the Netherlands (Koningshoeven) and one from Germany (Mariawald—stopped producing beer in the 50s) – founded the International Trappist Association (ITA) to prevent non-Trappist commercial companies from abusing the Trappist name. This private association created a logo that is assigned to goods (cheese, beer, wine, etc.) that respect precise production criteria. For the beers, these criteria are the following:

The beer must be brewed within the walls of a Trappist abbey, by or under control of Trappist monks.

The brewery, the choices of brewing, and the commercial orientations must obviously depend on the monastic community.

The economic purpose of the brewery must be directed toward assistance and not toward financial profit.

7 active Trappist breweries:

Chimay
Westmalle
Rochefort
Orval
Westvleteren
Achel
La Trappe