

BREWERY ROWE NEWS, HAPPENINGS AND MUSINGS IN THE BEER COMMUNITY

QUICK SIPS: LENTEN EDITION

CELEBRATOR



From: Ayinger, Aying, Germany
ABV (Alcohol By Volume): 6.7 percent
Style: Doppelbock
Drink or dump: Drink. Baked

apple aromas cap this rich, hearty beer. Dark fruit flavors blend with strong coffee and unsweetened cocoa, leading to a dry finish. A great rendition of a classic German style.

OPTIMATOR



From: Spaten, Munich, Germany
ABV: 7.6 percent
Style: Doppelbock
Drink or dump: Dump. There was an off-

putting musty quality to my beer, despite text on the bottle insisting it would be in its prime until "07 2024." Really? By mid-February, this was no longer an optimal Optimator.

DARK CRATOR



From: Boulevard Brewing, Kansas City, Mo.
ABV: 12.5 percent
Style: Doppelbock
Drink or dump: Drink. Dark Crator is a beauty,

with a chestnut stallion's red-brown hues. Full-bodied and sweet, D.C. offers notes of candied apples, toffee and spice cake. This is what people mean when they refer to certain beers as "liquid bread."



Monks in Germany were the first to create the rare doppelbock beer. GETTY IMAGES

Exploring the dark and hard-hitting history of doppelbock beers

We are about midway through Lent, the pre-Easter time of fasting, reflection and repentance, so it's appropriate that I make a confession: For years, I had maintained that doppelbocks, a dark and malty German beer style, was a Lenten creation meant to nourish famished monks.

Not quite. Monks did invent doppelbocks, the authoritative "Oxford companion to Beer" maintains. Doppelbocks are "double bocks," stronger versions of a dark lager named for its birthplace, Einbeck, Germany.

In 1774, my source reports, German monks brewed the first doppelbock to toast their order's founder, St. Francis of Paula. "Oxford" adds that "this beer once helped the monks through the long fasting days of Lent," but this appears to have been a side benefit.

Common in Germany, doppelbocks are often ignored by American brewers. That's true in San Diego County's 150-plus commercial breweries.

"Doug Hasker of Puesto famously makes the best bocks (Doppel, Mai, Helles) in town and will put one on tap from time to time," noted Chris Leguizamon, beer education program manager at Pure Project and a San Diego Brewers Guild's board member.

Others dabbling in doppelbocks, Leguizamon said, include AleSmith and Stone-Liberty Station.

If you stumble upon these rare brews, show some respect. The labels on doppelbocks often contain images of goats, doubtless because — with an alcohol content typically between 7 and 13 percent — doppelbocks can hit hard.

Answering every famished monk's prayer.

— Peter Rowe, freelance writer

Stone gets fishy

When I heard that Stone's Buenaveza Salt & Lime Lager is in the batter wrapped around Del Taco's new fish tacos, I was — let's be kind — skeptical.

Stone brews Arrogant Bastard Ale, whose label famously proclaims "You're not worthy."

As for Del Taco, based on a single visit 15 years ago, I viewed this chain as a third-rate drive-thru, serving greasy, inauthentic "Mexican" grub.

They're worthy? Actually, yes.

While Rubio's remains the gold standard in fish tacos, after tasting the goods, I have to admit Del Taco's version is a worthy rival.

In 2022, Del Taco adopted the "Better Mex" slogan, reflecting a desire to upgrade the menu, noted Noah Chillingsworth, vice president of marketing. The shakeup includes birria and — as of Feb. 1 — the Stone beer-battered fish taco.

Again, this may seem an odd pairing. While Stone's portfolio includes Buenaveza, it is owned by a Japanese brewer (Sapporo) and headquartered in Southern California (Escondido). It's not particularly Mexican in culture or outlook.

But its south-of-the-border bonafides are stronger than the brewery it replaced as Del Taco's beer batter supplier: the Boston Beer Co.

The next round

Now: Original 40 Brewing Company's Page Turner Mexican Lager is a beer with benefits. Half of all proceeds from this brew will be donated to the United Way of San Diego County's school-readiness and literacy programs. 3117 University Ave., San Diego. original40brewing.com

Today through Sunday: Deft Brewing will wrap up its annual winter celebration of Belgian Beer Styles this weekend. For instance, Deft de Garde, a Biere de Garde; Sunset in Bruges, a tart Flanders red, and more. 5328 Banks St., Suite A, San Diego. deftbrewing.com

Saturday: Women's Month kicks off with "Viva La Mujer Market," spotlighting the wares of 40 vendors at Mujeres Brew House. 1983 Julian Ave., San Diego. mujeresbrew-house.business.site

Thursday: AleSmith hosts an Art & Beer Night Market, 2 to 7 p.m., with more than 50 vendors. 9990 AleSmith Court, San Diego. Tickets are free at alesmith.com.



Del Taco's Beer Battered Crispy Fish Tacos made with Stone Buenaveza Salt & Lime Lager. DEL TACO