

THE BEER ENTHUSIAST'S

DRAFT

LIFE ON TAP



BEERS *of the* YEAR

** The Holiday Issue **

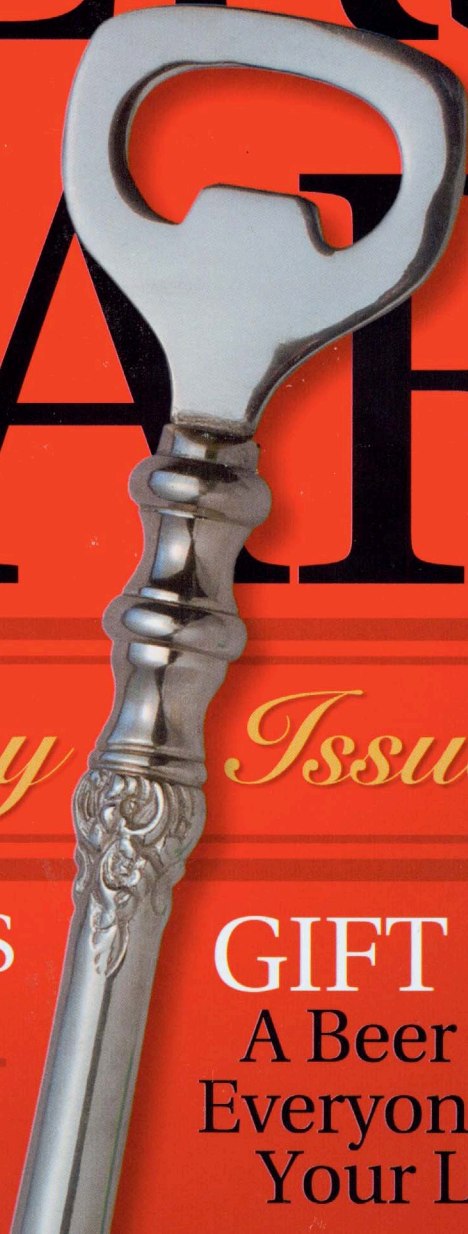


NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2010

12 BREWERIES
to Watch in 2011

Try 2010's
100-POINT ALE

GIFT IT!
A Beer for
Everyone on
Your List





THE TOP
25
BEERS OF THE
YEAR

From classic styles to rule-bending experiments, this year's beer took many inspired turns. We sipped, quaffed and guzzled our way through bottles, barrels and kegs to pare down the best of the best from 2010.

cial examples are few and far between—this spot-on re-creation of a classic working man's beer is the perfect drink after a long day at the office.

312 URBAN WHEAT ALE
Goose Island Beer Co.

American Wheat

This year was undeniably huge for Goose Island's 312 Urban Wheat Ale: The brewery's long-time, best-selling beer made international headlines twice, first during a conference between President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron, and again when the President used this beer to pay off his World Cup beer wager to Cameron. While that may have increased its sales 18 percent, we've been fans all along; it's the top-scoring American wheat we've judged to date. The beer's wheat-citrus twang and refreshing effervescence makes it a constant in our fridge, and its 2010 GABF gold medal backs up the media hype.

RUBIO FUMANDO
Fretail Brewing Co.

Smoked Beer

Sometimes just a little tweak transforms a classic style into a profile entirely new, and in the case of Rubio Fumando, the results can be extraordinary. Using 20 percent German Rauchmalz along with Pils and Vienna malts, the recipe starts like a classic rauchbier. Throw in Warrior hops and trade out German yeast for the brewery's house Belgian strain, and you've got something jaw-dropping. Smooth campfire smoke carries over a solid malt base while fruity yeast notes brighten the deep flavors.

GUAVA GROVE ALE
Cigar City Brewing

Fruit Beer

We adore classic, refreshing saisons, but this delicious tropical version flips the style upside-down. Cigar City straddles Belgium and Florida with this effervescent saison fermented on local flavor: guava. The brew's tart yeast profile plays against the fruit, creating a candylike sweetness that is as delicious as it is fun. Part Old World, part tropical vacation, this brew raises the bar for the fruit beer style.

KEY LIME PIE
Short's Brewing Co.

Specialty Beer

Embodying the spirit of Willy Wonka, founder Joe Short's experimental beers are liquid imagination, and Key Lime Pie might just be Short's Everlasting Gobstopper. Made with fresh limes, milk sugar, graham cracker and marshmallow fluff, this beer bends all the rules. Creamy marshmallow flavors are perked up by tart lime as graham cracker notes create a perfect foundation with the beer's golden ale base. "Unique" gets thrown around often in beer, but this brew is its definition, gar-

nering a gold medal in the experimental category at the 2010 GABF.

FROM THE WOOD
Marble Brewing Co.

Barrel-Aged Belgian Specialty Ale

To take an already complex Belgian dark ale, age it in bourbon casks and spike it with *Brettanomyces* is gutsy; the result has just as much opportunity for brilliance as it does for disaster. From the Wood lands squarely on the side of the former: Figs and plum immerse the tongue before simultaneous waves of spicy bourbon and funky Brett wash back. Instead of battling for attention, the bourbon's vanilla notes meld seamlessly into the flavor, achieving a stunning level of sophistication.

NECTAR OF THE HOPS
Redstone Meadery

Dry-Hopped Mead

Redstone's David Myers has a history of blending his mead with beer, but Nectar of the Hops, which is dry-hopped with 22 pounds of pellets, is certainly the gateway mead for hop-heads. Based on the meadery's Nectar, an 8%-ABV, slightly sweet sparkling gem, this version unleashes a hefty dose of bitterness and a dank, wonderfully hoppy aroma. Sweet, refreshingly dry and accented by beer's rock-star ingredient, consider this a diplomat of the industry, uniting two sets of drinkers in one common space.

VELVET MERLIN
Firestone Walker Brewing Co.

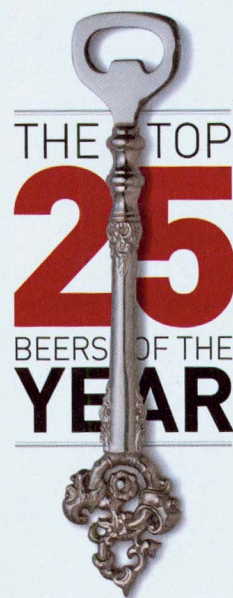
Blended Oatmeal Stout

Released this year to much fanfare and anticipation, Velvet Merlin's a recipe Firestone Walker brewmaster Matt Brynildson's been perfecting since his homebrewing days. Although the brewery's known for its pale ales, this dark stout simply hits it out of the park: Irresistibly smooth, Merlin washes back easily, coating the tongue with bold coffee and chocolate notes, while hops add a balance, bitterness and earthiness. And with a little bourbon barrel-aged Velvet Merlin blended in for good measure, this beer is oatmeal stout at its finest.

KIWANDA CREAM ALE
Pelican Pub & Brewery

Cream Ale

This brew is an exemplar of its style, a refreshing everyday beer and one we can't keep stocked in our beer fridge. Kiwanda Cream Ale wins our hearts—and this year's gold medal for golden/blonde ales at the GABF—by proving subtlety is just as inspiring as shock and awe. Lightly toasted grains segue into balanced bitterness, and its bright citrusy finish never disappoints. Representing a classic, American-designed style, this cream ale keeps our country's brewing history alive one sip at a time. ●



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