



# Belgian Dark Strong Ale

Style Overview and Brewing Tips

# BJCP 18E: Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Style Numbers:

- OG: 1.075 – 1.110
- FG: 1.010 – 1.024
- IBU: 20 – 35
- SRM: 12 – 22
- ABV: 8 – 11%
- BU/GU: 0.26 – 0.31

## Commercial Examples:

- Westvleteren 12
- Rochefort 10
- St. Bernardus Abt 12
- Chimay Grand Reserve
- Gulden Draak

# BJCP 18E: Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Aroma:

- Complex, rich malty sweetness
- Significant esters and alcohol
- Caramel, toast and/or bready
- Fruity esters of raisin, plum, dried cherry, fig or prune
- Peppery spicy phenols
- No diacetyl, dark / roast malts or recognizable spice additions

# BJCP 18E: Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Appearance:

- Deep amber to coppery brown
- Dense, moussy cream to light tan-colored head

## Flavor:

- Flavors similar to aroma profile
- Moderately malty or sweet on palate
- Trappist will be drier than Abbey beers

# BJCP 18E: Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Mouthfeel:

- High Carbonation without carbonic acid “bite”
- Smooth alcohol warmth
- Trappist-styled beers will be medium-light to medium bodied
- Abbey-styled beers will have fuller bodies and can be creamy

## Overall:

- Rich
- Complex
- Smooth and Dangerous

# Brewing Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Water:

- Adjust for pH
- Consider adding Calcium Chloride to enhance maltiness

## Hops:

- Continental varieties: alcohol & dryness will help balance malt sweetness
- Lower Alpha acids: low IBU and BU:GU ratio
- Bittering, no flavor or aroma

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<b>Belgian Dark Strong Recipe Grist Analysis</b>				
<b>Malt</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Avg</b>	<b>Incidence</b>
Belgian Pale or Pilsen Malt	85%	50%	64%	100%
Munich and/or Aromatic	38%	0%	12%	68%
Cara/Crystal up to 60° L	22%	0%	6%	71%
Roasted or Chocolate Malt	12%	0%	2%	32%
Special B	9%	0%	4%	89%
Wheat	25%	0%	1%	25%
Sugar	19%	0%	11%	96%

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Some White Labs and Wyeast Belgian Yeast Strains and their Flavor Profiles

Product ID	Name	Origin	Attenuation	Flavor High Temps (75 - 85°)	Flavor Med Temps (65 - 75°)	Flavor Low Temps (58 - 65°)
WLP500	Trappist Ale	Chimay	75 - 85%	Fruity, Mod. Phenolic, Solvent	Spicy, Lt. Phenol, Fruity	Clean, Balanced, Earthy
WLP510	Belgian Bastogne	Orval	75 - 85%	Spicy, Acidic, Solvent	Spicy, Acidic, Clean	Clean, Crisp, Lt. Phenol
WLP530	Abbey Ale	Westmalle	75 - 85%	Spicy, Phenolic, Solvent	Spicy, Lt. Phenol, Fruity	Peppery, Spicy, Lt. Phenol
WLP550	Belgian Ale	Achouffe	80 - 90%	Earthy, Phenolic, Solvent	Fruity, Phenolic, Sulfur	Clean, Lt. Phenol, Spicy
WLP570	Belgian Golden	Duvel	70 - 80%	Fruity, Mod. Phenolic, Sulfur	Fruity, Mod. Phenolic, Sulfur	Phenolic, Spicy
WY1214	Belgian Ale	Chimay	72 - 76%	Clove, Bubblegum, Banana, Alcohol, Rose, Fruity	Clove, Alcohol, Phenolic, Fruity	
WY1388	Belgian Strong Ale	Duvel	65 - 75%	Alcohol, Phenolic, Fruity, Tart, Banana	Lt. Fruity, Alcohol	
WY1762	Abbey II	Rochefort	73 - 77%	Solvent, Alcohol, Phenolic	Clean, Lt. Fruity	
WY3522	Belgian Ardennes	Achouffe	72 - 76%	Clove, Bubblegum, Tart, Phenolic	Clean, Malty	
WY3787	Trappist High Gravity	Westmalle	75 - 80%	Bubblegum, Clove, Alcohol, Fruity, Tart, Lt. Solvent	Clove, Alcohol, Pineapple	
WY3538	Leuven Pale Ale	Corsendonk	75 - 78%	Bubblegum, Solvent, Banana, Clove, Phenolic, Lt. Solvent	Bubblegum, Fruity, Clove	
WY3864	Canadian/Belgian Ale	Unibroue	75 - 79%	Banana, Lt. Clove, Fruity	Fruity, Lt. Clove, Sulfur	

- Buckeye Brewing Nighty Night was brewed with WY3711 French Saison
- Mike Ontolchik's St. Bernard was brewed with WLP500



# Brewing Belgian Dark Strong Ale

## Brewing Tips:

- Use Belgian and Continental Ingredients
  - American / English malts will provide wrong flavors
  - Source locally if possible
- Hops are a secondary thought, provide enough bittering to help balance recipe
- Mash low, let specialty malts provide character
- Pitch yeast based on flavors desired
  - More = Cleaner, less flavors
  - Less could be too much and may not attenuate
- Most sugars will work
  - Doesn't have to be fancy, table sugar could do
  - Stay away from molasses-like sugars

# Brewing Belgian Dark Strong Ale

Mike Ontolchik's St. Bernard

OG: 1.100, FG: 1.010

IBU: 30, ABV: 12%, SRM: 35

15 lb. Dingeman Pilsen

3 lb. Weyermann Munich

1 lb. Dingeman Aromatic

½ lb. Dingeman CaraMunich

½ lb. Dingeman Special B

2 lb. Dark Candi Inc. D2

3 oz Hallertauer Mittlefrueh  
(4.3% AA) @ 60 min

Mash at 150° F for 90  
minutes

Boil for 60 minutes

Pitch at 65° F

Let fermentation free rise for  
48 hours, push a couple of  
degrees a day to 86° F and  
hold till complete

# References



- Brew Like a Monk, Stan Hieronymus
- Trappist, Jef Van Den Steen
- Designing Great Belgian Dark Strong Ales, Gordon Strong
- Yeast Strains at Mr.Malty.com, Jamil Zainasheff
- Several late nights in a Belgian Beer Bar