

Exploration of Saison, Yeasts
and a Rant on the meaning of “Farmhouse”

A SAISON FOR EVERY SEASON – THE WEB VERSION

THE STORY

- ✘ Romance
- ✘ Fields of Grain
- ✘ Thirsty Farm hands

Combine them together and what do you get?

Saison

WHAT'S THE REAL STORY

- ✘ “In Belgium there are no styles”
 - Peter Bouckaert
- ✘ The Romantic Story courtesy of brewers (via Michael Jackson)
- ✘ Liège – in text - 1900’s – oats, buckwheat, spelt.
- ✘ No mention by Jean De Clerck.
- ✘ The Saison is a 20th century amalgamation of tradition

WHAT MAKES A SAISON SAISON

- ✘ Is it really the BJCP Dupontish model?
 - + You know the drill – orange colored, rocky head, spicy, fruit aromas with a dash of hops
- ✘ How do we reconcile:
 - + Dupont Vielle Provision
 - + Dupont Avec Les Bon Voeux
 - + Fantome Pissenlit
 - + Fantome Automne
- ✘ First person to say “Belgian Specialty” gets a kick to the knee.

WHAT SAISON IS NOT

- ✘ A heavily spiced beer that reeks of coriander and oranges.
- ✘ Cloyingly, clingly sweet
 - + Brett is not an excuse for these flavor
- ✘ Flat
- ✘ Acetic Sour

WHAT MAKES A SAISON – DREW’S MANIFESTO

- ✘ Dry
 - + We’ll leave the sweetness to the Abbey
- ✘ Earthy
 - + Needs that grounding middle malt and “dirt”
- ✘ Spicy
 - + Want spicy tones (eugenol, etc) – better if from the yeast
- ✘ Lively
 - + CO₂ and acidity.
- ✘ Tart?
 - + Only as a secondary characteristic.
- ✘ Yeast Driven

THE EXPERIMENT

- ✘ Gather together as many different Saison strains as possible
- ✘ Brew a simple wort
- ✘ Pitch simply (and fresh)
- ✘ Ferment the same (with exceptions)
- ✘ Brewing by Eagle Rock Brewery





YEAST ON PARADE

Kindly provided by the fine folks of White Labs, Wyeast, East Coast Yeast Company and the Bruery.

THE YEASTS

White Labs

- ✘ WLP565 Belgian Saison 1 (heated/ambient)
- ✘ WLP566 Belgian Saison 2
- ✘ WLP568 Saison Blend
- ✘ WLP555 Belgian Spice*
- ✘ WLP585 Belgian Saison 3*

Wyeast

- ✘ 1056 American Ale (Control)
- ✘ 3522 Ardennes
- ✘ 3711 French Saison
- ✘ 3724 Belgian Saison

East Coast Yeast Company

- ✘ ECY08 Saison Brasserie
- ✘ ECY03 Farmhouse Brett

The Bruery

- ✘ Fantome Brett*

* = not commercially available



SAISON EXPERIMENTALE (SCALED 5.5G)

Malt/Grain/Sugar

8.75 lbs Pilsner Malt

0.5 lbs Flaked Wheat

1.0 lbs White Table Sugar

Hops

0.5 oz Magnum (12.9%) 60 min

Mash

149F for 60 minutes

~1.048 OG (11.8P), 19 IBUs



THE BREW DAY

- ✘ The course of true love never run smooth
Midsummer Night's Dream – Shakespeare
- ✘ And never did a brew day either
 - Beechum
- ✘ “Nice” long protein rest – for about 2 hours
- ✘ Beer was boiled, chilled and transferred to individual 6.5 gallon carboys and pitched
- ✘ Thanks to Kent Fletcher, Nancy Gold, Gregg Van Citters, Ed Kochanowski, Lee Bakofsky, Erick Garcia for carboys

SAISON METHODOLOGY

- ✘ Mash Low – 148-150F
- ✘ Aggressively Chill – low 60's
- ✘ Pitch appropriately
- ✘ Let free rise to mid 70's. (Dupont exception – more steam!)
- ✘ Use water baths to temper swings
- ✘ Pitch blend – for maximum effect
- ✘ Feed late additions of Brettanomyces.

WHAT YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE ON BREWDAY



WHAT YOU DO WANT TO SEE

4 days into fermentation.

4 strains were already at 5.X Plato

- Wyeast 1056 – American Ale
- Wyeast 3522 - Ardennes
- ECY08 – Saison Brasserie
- ECY03 – Farmhouse Brett

All others were at 8.xP*

The exception – the heated portion of WLP565 sitting at 9.2P (unheated – 8.8P)



EXPERIMENT SUMMARY

- ✘ By the end of one month strains were completely finished.
- ✘ Brett – Pellicle by the end of month 2
- ✘ All beers were racked and forced carbonated
- ✘ No F.G., all that matters is perception.



TASTING NOTES

- ✘ FV1 = Wyeast 1056 Am. Ale
 - + Inoffensively bland, grain character predominated
- ✘ FV2 = Wyeast 3522 Ardennes
 - + Subtle nose, dry, spicy, tropical with a touch of ham
- ✘ **FV3 = Wyeast 3711 French Saison**
 - + Leathery, big fruity nose, spicy approachable – not a fan of the warm ferment
- ✘ FV4 = Wyeast 3724 Belgian Saison
 - + Phenols, fruit in balance, beautifully dry
- ✘ **FV5 = WLP 565 Saison 1 Heated**
 - + Deep, dry spice, dry as hell, slightly medicinal – driven up to 85F immediately. Not recommended – let ramp
- ✘ **FV6 = WLP 565 Saison 1**
 - + Fruit, cherries, subdued spices, more balanced – nice and dry

TASTING NOTES PART DEUX

- ✘ **FV7 = WLP 566 Saison 2**
 - + fairly neutral, light phenol, spicy sandalwood flavor
- ✘ **FV8 = WLP 568 Saison Blend**
 - + more phenolic nose, beer comes in balance, but muted
- ✘ **FV9 = WLP 555 Belgian Spice**
 - + Cabbage, phenolic – NOT WHITE LABS Fault
- ✘ **FV10 = WLP 585 Saison 3**
 - + fruit driven nose, lactic (yogurt), ginger, possibly the sweetest finish
- ✘ **FV11 = EC 408 Saison Brasserie**
 - + cinnamon, pear, "mellow", feels fluffy, nice finishing zing - not quite "dry" dry
- ✘ **FV12 = EC 403 Farmhouse Brett**
 - + horsey, leathery, horehound, crisp pop, earthy, but not muddled (mushrooms)
- ✘ **FV13 = Fantome (Bruery)**
 - + berry - strawberry with a phenol, (greenish), "light cloudy" body, malted milk, eugenol

OK, THE RANT...

- ✘ Dupont is fantastic, but the “Dupont”ish strains you can buy are supposedly incomplete
- ✘ Why are we trapped by the notion of a single brewery – is this “California Common”?
- ✘ What is the true meaning of a farmhouse ale?

KNOW YOUR “FARM”

- ✘ Look around you. What could you use?
- ✘ I get to cheat - I live in California.
- ✘ If you live in Vermont, why not a Maple Saison?
- ✘ What’s your local character?

MY FARM

- ✘ Tonight at Club Night:
 - + Citra Saison
 - + Saison Vin
 - + Saison Guacamole
 - + Jasmine Dragon Saison
 - + Sangreal Saison
 - + Big Ghost Saison

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS / COMPLAINTS

- ✘ THANK YOU EVERYONE
- ✘ Ask away!
- ✘ Ask later:

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