

# Authentic TRAPPIST ALE NOW BREWED IN THE U.S.

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA



It is no small accomplishment for a brand to display the Trappist logo on its packaging. In fact only ten abbeys in the world have been granted this status by the International Trappist Association (ITA) for such goods as preserves, wine, cheese, and the beer they produce.

For many beer lovers, these monk-crafted ales hold a special place on their personal top 50 favorite beers list. Assuredly, it is each abbey's commitment to brewing in the Trappist tradition that has gained these beers worldwide recognition for their quality and their unique flavor profiles.

## WHAT IS AUTHENTIC TRAPPIST ALE?

For the ITA to grant the use of the Trappist logo to a Trappist beer, the abbey and the monastic community must:

- Brew the beer within the walls of a Trappist abbey, and by or under control of Trappist monks.
- Control the brewing decisions and the commercial orientations.
- Operate the brewery with an economic purpose that is not intended for making profit; the income derived from the goods sold is used to cover the living expenses of the monks and the maintenance of the buildings and grounds; and the remaining is donated to charity for social work and to help persons in need.

Finally, to be called a Trappist Ale, the beverage must be brewed by the Roman Catholic order of cloistered monks of the Order of Cistercians of the strict obser-

vance, commonly known as "Trappists."

The ten abbeys that currently brew authentic Trappist beer are: In Belgium, Brasserie de Rochefort, Brouwerij der Trappisten van Westmalle, Brouwerij Westvleteren/St Sixtus, Brouwerij der Sint-Benedictusabdij de Achelse Kluis (Achel), Brasserie d'Orval, and Bières de Chimay; In Austria, Stift Engelszell; in The Netherlands, Brouwerij de Koningshoeven (La Trappe); and in the United States, St. Joseph's Abbey.

## ABBEY ALE VERSUS TRAPPIST ALE

So, is there a difference between Abbey ales and Trappist ales? Absolutely! The most obvious difference is that Abbey ales are not brewed by Trappist monks, and the Trappist monks rely solely on the income they can generate from their goods to sustain themselves.

Abbey ales are brewed in a monastic style, however they are usually brewed under contract with an existing or an aban-



doned abbey and in most cases the abbey must be allowed to be involved in some aspect of the business. Some portions of the profits go to the abbeys involved; however it is not their main source of income.

Some examples of abbey beers are Leffe (Stella Artois), Grimbergen, Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina in California (in collaboration with Sierra Nevada), Abbey Brewing Company in New Mexico, and Maredsous (Duvel).

Brewed in America: Spencer Trappist Ale locally known for producing Trappist Preserves, St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, is the first American monastery to produce an official Trappist Ale, and the first outside of Europe. The abbey began producing its ale in 2013.

"Brewing beer is a contemplative experience and so it fits well with our monastic lifestyle," said Fr. Isaak Keeley, Director of Spencer Brewery. The result of this contemplation is a hazy, golden-hued ale with fruity accents, a dry finish, and light hop bitterness (10 SRM, 25 IBU, 6.5% ABV). The Abbey brewery has a 10,000 barrel capacity and they are currently planning to produce 4,000 barrels this year. Spencer Trappist Ale is available in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Due to the brand's unique flavor and limited availability, it is a highly sought after beer, enjoying an ever increasing popularity.

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