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1. BJCP Style Guide, Rev 2004

18C. Belgian Tripel

Aroma: Complex with moderate to significant spiciness, moderate fruity esters and low alcohol and hop aromas. Generous spicy, peppery, sometimes clove-like phenols. Esters are often reminiscent of citrus fruits such as oranges, but may sometimes have a slight banana character. A low yet distinctive spicy, floral, sometimes perfumy hop character is usually found. Alcohols are soft, spicy and low in intensity. No hot alcohol or solventy aromas. The malt character is light. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Deep yellow to deep gold in color. Good clarity. Effervescent. Long-lasting, creamy, rocky, white head resulting in characteristic “Belgian lace” on the glass as it fades.

Flavor: Marriage of spicy, fruity and alcohol flavors supported by a soft malt character. Low to moderate phenols are peppery in character. Esters are reminiscent of citrus fruit such as orange or sometimes lemon. A low to moderate spicy hop character is usually found. Alcohols are soft, spicy, often a bit sweet and low in intensity. Bitterness is typically medium to high from a combination of hop bitterness and yeast-produced phenolics. Substantial carbonation and bitterness lends a dry finish with a moderately bitter aftertaste. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body, although lighter than the substantial gravity would suggest (thanks to candi sugar and high carbonation). High alcohol content adds a pleasant creaminess but little to no obvious warming sensation. No hot alcohol or solventy character. Always effervescent. Never astringent.

Overall Impression: Strongly resembles a Strong Golden Ale but slightly darker and somewhat fuller-bodied.

History: Originally developed at the Trappist monastery at Westmalle.

Comments: High in alcohol but does not taste strongly of alcohol. The best examples are sneaky, not obvious. High carbonation helps to bring out the many flavors and to increase the perception of a dry finish.

Ingredients: The light color and relatively light body for a beer of this strength are the result of using pilsner malt and up to 20% white candi sugar (sucrose). Noble hops or Styrian Goldings are commonly used. Belgian yeast strains are used – those that produce fruity esters, spicy phenolics and higher alcohols – often aided by slightly warmer fermentation temperatures.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.075 – 1.085

IBUs: 25 – 38 FG: 1.010 – 1.016

SRM: 4.5 – 6 ABV: 7.5 – 9%

Commercial Examples: Westmalle Tripel, Chimay Cinq Cents (White), Val-Dieu Triple, St. Bernardus Tripel, Affligem Tripel, Grimbergen Tripel, La Trappe Tripel, Witkap Pater Tripel, Corsendonk Abbey Pale Ale, St. Feuillien Tripel, New Belgium Trippel, Unibroue La Fin du Monde, Brooklyn Triple, Dragonmead Final Absolution

2. Hallmarks of Style

- a) Blonde deep yellow color, basically all base malt with Pilsner malt most common
- b) High alcohol, 7.5 to 9%
- c) Very good attenuation, typically beyond 80% and up 90%
- d) Spicy yeast derived phenolics
- e) Good pale malt flavor

3. Style Chart

Brewery	OG	FG	Attenuation	Alcohol	IBU	BU/GU
Tripel BJCP Low	1.075	1.010	87%	7.5%	25	.33
Tripel BJCP High	1.085	1.016	81%	9%	38	.45
Westmalle Tripel	1.081	1.010	88%	9.6%	39	.49
Affligem Tripel	1.076	1.013	83%	8.3%	31	.41
Tripel Karmeliet	1.081	1.013	84%	8%	20	.25
Class Tripel Base	1.068	1.0115	83%	7.2%	33	.49
Class Tripel Sugar	1.079	1.008	90%	9.2%	33	.42
Strong Gold BJCP Low	1.070	1.010	86%	7.5%	25	.36
Strong Gold BJCP High	1.095	1.016	83%	10%	35	.37

4. How Tripels are different from other beer styles

- a) Barley Wines: Tripels are much better attenuated than barley wines. Barley wines tend to have attenuation closer to 75% leaving a much bigger body. Color is noticeably darker, this gives the beer a different malt character. Bitterness is greater. They have very similar alcohol levels.
- b) Helles Bock: Helles bocks are lagers so they have less fruity esters and generally a cleaner malt profile due to the fact that it is not being covered up with yeast by products. Clove and pepper phenols are not present the Helles bock. A big Helles can be the same OG as a small Tripel but again the attenuation is less leaving more body and less alcohol in the Helles bock.
- c) Strong Golden Ale: Similar alcohol levels, although style guide allows a lower OG of 1.070 and higher up to 1.095. Both are similar in color, thus malt bill, attenuation and hop rates. Yeast used on the Strong Golden tends to produce a different type of phenol, green pepper and bubble gum notes are common, while the Tripel is more black pepper and clove phenols. The yeast strains used in Strong Golden does not tend promote malt profiles even though attenuation rates are identical.
- d) Belgian Blond Ale: Again similar in color and attenuation. OG is lower, stopping where a triple starts. Light fermentation flavors, can be almost lager like, but still can have light phenols and esters.

5. General Observations

Tripels are the Trappist's answer to the blond pilsner. They are light and drinkable but noticeable different, with a big alcohol punch that is usually gentle not harsh or overly hot. They tend to have spices in the flavor that can be either yeast derived or additions to the kettle. Common spice notes are pepper and clove, these can be all yeast derived. Kettle additions range from coriander to secrete spices. They need to be subtle, if you can easily taste them they are to heavy. Orange and other citrus notes can be from spice additions or from the addition of American hops. If hops are used for the citrus flavors, they need to be added with a delicate hand so they are not the aggressive bold hop profile we tend to desire in the USA. Belgian character tends to be the spicy phenols such as clove and pepper versus the bubble gum and green pepper flavors. While they are very attenuated they can be malty and sweet, giving the impression of less attenuation. Tripel Karmeliet is a good example.

6. Common Judging Mistakes

- a) Claiming that the beer is not attenuated enough. Affligem and Tripel Karellet are both sweeter in finish.
- b) Excessive hop bitterness
- c) Excessive hop flavor

7. Suggested Reading

Brew Like a Monk by Stan Hieronymus

8. Triple recipe

14.25 gallons OG 1.079 33 IBU 5 SRM
29# Pilsner Malt H Bairds
2# Vienna Wyerman
Mash at 149° till converted
1.3 oz Cascade 6.2A 90 minutes
3.5 oz Cascade 6.2A 30 minutes
2.2 oz Summit 15A 5 minutes
Ferment 3944 till complete at 62 to 65°, add sugar break down to 5 = batches
.75# Cane sugar C&H
.75# Brown sugar, C&H dark brown
.75# Corn sugar
.75# Belgian light candy sugar

The goal of this recipe is to create a unique beer, not a copy of a great beer. It may not fit the style completely, with a touch of the North West. We will decide on tasting after it has aged a touch more. The use of Cascade is not normal, although their use is not a detracting. Also the use of Summit hops to add some orange flavor, adds a nice citrus fruit notes that can be construed to be in style. Naturally the hop leaf flavor is to much at least it was on my initial tasting. The cold ferment was employed to increase drinkability by reducing distracting esters that tend to fill the pallet. It also makes a smoother beer that in my mind has more drinkability due to the reduced phenols.

9. Tasting Notes

1) Westmalle Tripel

2) Tripel Karmeliet

3) Base Tripel with NO sugar

4) Tripel with _____ sugar

5) Tripel with _____ sugar

6) Tripel with _____ sugar

7) Tripel with _____ sugar

10. Test Tripel

Circle the correct answer.

- a) Which can be stronger in alcohol, Dark Strong Belgian or Tripel?
- b) Which can be stronger in alcohol, Strong Golden or Tripel?
- c) Which can be stronger in alcohol, Belgian Blond or Tripel?
- d) Which has the lowest attenuation rate, Tripel or Helles Bock?
- e) Which has the highest attenuation rate, Tripel or Barley Wine?
- f) Attenuation is important to Tripels due to, leaves a big body or a lighter body?
- g) Which has the darkest color, Tripel or Barley Wine?
- h) Which has the darkest color, Tripel or Dark Strong Belgian?
- i) Which has a larger malt presence, Tripel or Strong Golden?
- j) Are phenols allowed in the aroma and flavor of a Tripel? T F
- k) Is sugar used to make commercial Tripels? T F
- l) Which Brewery first developed a Tripel? Hoegaarden Westmalle Budweiser
- m) Do Trappist breweries brew Tripels? T F
- n) Which has the biggest body, Tripel or Barley Wine?
- o) Which has the biggest body, Tripel or Traditional Bock?
- p) Which beer would you expect more malt flavor from Duvel or Chimay White?