



The eighth wonder of the beer world

Trappist beers are the best beers in the world. Now the six Belgian abbeys and the one in the Netherlands are joined by an eighth Trappist beer brand: Mont des Cats, France. With cunning and luck, German beer expert Sylvia Kopp (bierbotschaft.de) got hold of some bottles ahead of time

Closed on Tuesdays. Not even the monastery shop is open – and the monks hide behind high walls. But suddenly, one of the hermetic doors opens and out shoots a forklift. Loaded with dozens of orange boxes printed on which are the words “Mont des Cats – Bière trappiste”. Yes, it’s the new Trappist beer that has lured me to France and driven up Mont des Cats in French Flanders. A sign from heaven?

The monks had followed their vow of silence. Their only message to me had been: “The public can buy the beer from June 16 at the monastery shop or order a glass of it at the Auberge.”

We still have June 14, the only day that I can interrupt my research trip to Belgium in order to take care of emerging French monastery breweries. I hurry to the forklift. And actually ... in the face of the tower case compassionate Frenchmen let me take a box of early bottles. I am among the first to taste this beer!

It’s a feeling like unwrapping your presents two days before Christmas. And it is no disappointment. A glass of “Mont des Cats” ale lights coppery with fiery orange hues and an opaque shimmer, topped with a cream-colored foam. The scent is subtle: a hint of wild strawberry, a hint of burnt sugar. The first sip is bitter-sweet. There is even a slight tingling acidity on the palate which, together with the pronounced bitterness, provides for an earthy character. The finish is dry, with a long, fresh-bitter aftertaste. A tough beer, simple, well balanced. For its 7.6 abv, one of the smoothest among the Trappist beers.

But is it a true Trappist beer at all? That is discussed with hoppy bitterness in the professional world and especially among Belgian beer connoisseurs – because “Mont des Cats” is not made on the Mont des Cats, but with brotherly help in the Belgian abbey of Scourmont. Their “Chimay” is one of the currently seven recognized Trappist beer brands, six of which are located in Belgium and the seventh just behind the border in the Netherlands. For beer lovers all over the world the logo “Authentic Trappist Product” is a clear sign of excellent taste and quality real ales, the “Orval” from the south of Belgium is regarded by many as the best beer ever.

In contrast, is “Mont des Cats” beer just a purely commercial arrangement? Does it, as the Belgian beer consumer organization “Zythos” means, water down the reputation of genuine Trappist beers?

The Trappists respond to such questions with what they master at least as skillfully as brewing: silence. And those beer-lovers for whom the contents of the glass are more important than the label just enjoy.



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