



# BEER BEACON

By Shawn Matott





## The Beers of Summer

**T**he mission of the Beer Beacon is to guide the GLBN readership to some of the best beers available in the Great Lakes region. To this end, an informal tasting is convened at a local pub before every issue, and a team of tasters (some expert and some novice) sample a variety of selected beers available on draft and/or in bottles throughout the region. The theme for this month's column is "Summer Beers", and a variety of bottled seasonals were blind-tasted and rated on a scale of zero to five mugs. The tasting was carried out at the Pizza Plant Italian Pub in Williamsville, New York.

### *Leinenkugel Honey Weisse*

The first beer sampled was Leinenkugel's Honey Weisse, described by the brewer as a refreshing American style wheat beer with a clean, crisp and sweet taste. Taster reviews were mixed; Karl and Pasty described the beer as delicious, smooth, quenching and likable. Others were impressed with the aroma, but found the body to be on the lighter side. Overall, the tasters agreed that, if served cold, Honey Weisse would make for a satisfying way to beat the summer heat.

**Average Rating: 2.25**





Vinny   
Hop Jack   
Magistrate   
Pasty   
Annie no pints

Karl 

### *Ithaca Apricot Wheat*

This wheat beer from Ithaca Brewing is infused with apricot puree to produce a light-bodied beer intended for the easy-drinking days of summer. Some of the tasters found the fruity nose and malty sweetness of the beer to be overwhelming, and Hop Jack suggested that more hops were needed to balance things out. Other tasters enjoyed the fruity malt character and felt that the combination of sweetness and apricot tartness worked well.

**Average Rating: 2.00**

Vinny   
Hop Jack   
Magistrate   
Pasty   
Annie no pints  
Karl no pints

### *Victory Whirlwind Witbier*


Victory's summer offering is a Belgian-style white ale produced using imported Belgian yeast. It is a delicate beer with a spicy aroma and body that the tasters generally found both enjoyable and refreshing. Hop Jack described it as "very nice, a good example of the style-balanced and refreshing". Annie inferred the witbier style and called it "gentle, with a characteristic banana-clove finish". Vinny thought


Victory's interpretation of the style was "clean and refreshing - it's simple but it works". Pasty registered a dissenting opinion, calling the beer soapy: "It smelled like soap. It tasted like soap..."

**Average Rating: 2.92**

Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 

Annie 

Karl 

**Unibroue Blanche de Chambly**

The 4th beer to be sampled was Blanche de Chambly from Unibroue. It is a white ale that is lightly-hopped and unfiltered, so the beer contains fresh yeast in suspension. Relative to the Victory Whirlwind, tasters agreed that the Blanche de Chambly offering was a lighter interpretation of the style. While some tasters faulted the beer for its lightness, others found Blanche de Chambly to be quite enjoyable. Vinny liked the beer's lingering tartness, and Pasty (who strongly disliked the Whirlwind) called it "the most traditional beer yet."

**Average Rating: 2.92**


Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 

Annie no pints

Karl 


**Anchor Summer Beer**

Anchor's summer offering surprised most of the tasters, as they expected more from such a reputable brewery. It is an all-malt brew, and more than 50% malted wheat. The beer has been around since

1984 and is the first modern American wheat beer. While the brewers intend Anchor Summer to be light and refreshing, most tasters found the beer too light and lacking in flavor. Vinny and Pasty found that Anchor's brew grew on them. Vinny enjoyed the "sweet berry nose" and thought the body developed into something reminiscent of a pale-ale at the finish.

**Average Rating: 1.75**

Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 


Annie no pints


Karl 


**Blue Point Summer Ale**

Blue Point Brewing also produces its Summer Ale using a blend of wheat and barley malt. A dash of lemon and a secret ingredient are added to give the beer a light and quenching citrus flavor. Tasters liked the pilsner quality of the beer and Magistrate commented that the "malty pilsner nose smelled great-like Urquell." Although the beer lacked a solid hop finish, it was generally appreciated as a good summer beer that could be taken hiking (Pasty) and would go well with a picnic lunch (Karl). Vinny has had Summer Ale on draft and maintains that it is "totally different on tap."

**Average Rating: 2.17**


Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 

Annie no mugs

Karl 

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### **Southern Tier Hop Sun**

Southern Tier's Hop Sun was the best reviewed of the eight sampled summer beers. This wheat beer is filtered and dry hopped, resulting in a refreshing session beer that is meant to accompany a variety of summer activities. Annie commented that the beer "combines the notion of summer with a pale-ale", and Hop Jack found it to be "well-balanced--my kind of summer beer." Vinny detected some spice and a hint of lemon in the body, which had "a nice, fresh hop follow through."

**Average Rating: 3.83**

Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 

Annie 

Karl 

### **Wolaver's Organic Pale Ale**


Based out of Middlebury, Vermont, Wolaver's line of organic ales is distributed throughout the northeast and in an increasing number of Great Lakes states. Wolaver's Organic Pale Ale is made in the classic American Pale Ale style using certified organic barley and hops, resulting in a full-bodied beer with a characteristic hop finish. The tasters agreed that the organic pale ale showed promise and were inclined to regard the beer as a

work in progress. Annie "wanted more out of it" and Pasty concurred that the beer "started out good, but is not quite there." Other tasters enjoyed the body and hop finish, but described the nose as "very faint" (Hop Jack), and "like a [paper] ballot" (Vinny).


**Average Rating: 2.67**

Vinny 

Hop Jack 

Magistrate 

Pasty 

Annie 

Karl 

For the most part, the tasters found something they liked in each of the eight summer beers that were sampled. Many self-proclaimed hop-heads will no doubt regard beers described as "average", "pretty mild", "traditional", and/or "light" with a certain level of disdain, but on a hot summer day, is there anything quite as refreshing as a light-bodied beer with a mild hop finish? Maybe that's what summer beers are all about.

*Questions and comments are greatly appreciated and may be sent to [BeerBeacon@hotmail.com](mailto:BeerBeacon@hotmail.com).*