

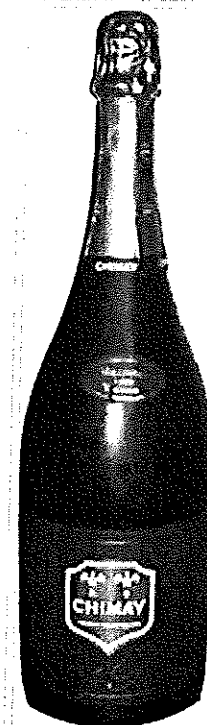
Trappist beer

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **Trappist beer** is a beer brewed by or under control of Trappist monks. There are a total of 174 Trappist monasteries worldwide (as of April 2011); only seven (six in Belgium and one in the Netherlands) produce Trappist beer and are authorized to label their beers with the *Authentic Trappist Product* logo that indicates a compliance to the various rules of the International Trappist Association.

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Chimay is one of Belgium's famous Trappist beers

History

The Trappist order originated in the Cistercian monastery of La Trappe, France.

Various Cistercian congregations existed for many years, and by 1664 the Abbot of La Trappe felt that the Cistercians were becoming too liberal. He introduced strict new rules in the abbey and the Strict Observance was born. Since this time, many of the rules have been relaxed. However, a fundamental tenet, that monasteries should be self-supporting, is still maintained by these groups.

Monastery brewhouses, from different religious orders, existed all over Europe, since the Middle Ages. From the very beginning, beer was brewed in French cistercian monasteries following the Strict Observance. For example, the monastery of La Trappe in Soligny, already had its own brewery in 1685. Breweries were only later introduced in monasteries of other countries, following the extension of the trappist order from France to the rest of Europe. The Trappists, like many other religious people, originally brewed beer as to feed the community, in a perspective of self-sufficiency. Nowadays, trappist breweries also brew beer to fund their works and for good causes. Many of the trappist monasteries and breweries were destroyed during the French Revolution and the World Wars. Among the monastic breweries, the Trappists were certainly the most active brewers: in the last 300 years, there were at least nine Trappist breweries in France, six in Belgium, two in the Netherlands, one in Germany, one in Austria, one in Bosnia and possibly other countries.

Today, seven trappist breweries remain active, 6 in Belgium and 1 just over the Belgian border, in the Netherlands.

In the twentieth century, the growing popularity of Trappist beers led some brewers with no connection to the order to label their beers "Trappist". After unsuccessful trials, monks finally sued one such brewer in 1962 in Ghent, Belgium.

International Trappist Association

In 1997, eight Trappist abbeys—six from Belgium (Orval, Chimay, Westvleteren, Rochefort, Westmalle and Achel), one from the Netherlands (Koningshoeven) and one from Germany (Mariawald) - founded the International Trappist Association (ITA) to prevent non-Trappist commercial companies from abusing the Trappist name. This private association created a logo that is assigned to goods (cheese, beer, wine, etc.) that respect precise production criteria. For the beers, these criteria are the following:

- The beer must be brewed within the walls of a Trappist abbey, by or under control of Trappist monks.
- The brewery, the choices of brewing, and the commercial orientations must obviously depend on the monastic community.
- The economic purpose of the brewery must be directed toward assistance and not toward financial profit.



Beers from all seven trappist breweries available in 2009, from left to right: Achel, Westvleteren, Orval, Rochefort, Chimay, Westmalle and La Trappe (Koningshoeven)

This association has a legal standing, and its logo gives to the consumer some information and guarantees about the produce.

There are currently seven^[1] breweries that are allowed to have the products they sell display the *Authentic Trappist Product* logo:

Brewery ↗	Location ↗	Year Opened ↗	Annual Production (2004) ↗
Bières de Chimay	■ ■	1863	123,000 hL
Brasserie d'Orval	■ ■	1931	45,000 hL
Brasserie de Rochefort	■ ■	1899	18,000 hL
Brouwerij der Trappisten van Westmalle	■ ■	1836	120,000 hL
Brouwerij Westvleteren	■ ■	1838	4,750 hL
Brouwerij der Sint-Benedictusabdij de Achelse Kluis	■ ■	1998	4,500 hL
Brouwerij de Koningshoeven	≡	1884	145,000 hL

18. BELGIAN STRONG ALE

18A. Belgian Blond Ale

Aroma: Light earthy or spicy hop nose, along with a lightly sweet Pils malt character. Shows a subtle yeast character that may include spicy phenolics, perfumy or honey-like alcohol, or yeasty, fruity esters (commonly orange-like or lemony). Light sweetness that may have a slightly sugar-like character. Subtle yet complex.

Appearance: Light to deep gold color. Generally very clear. Large, dense, and creamy white to off-white head. Good head retention with Belgian lace.

Flavor: Smooth, light to moderate Pils malt sweetness initially, but finishes medium-dry to dry with some smooth alcohol becoming evident in the aftertaste. Medium hop and alcohol bitterness to balance. Light hop flavor, can be spicy or earthy. Very soft yeast character (esters and alcohols, which are sometimes perfumy or orange/lemon-like). Light spicy phenolics optional. Some lightly caramelized sugar or honey-like sweetness on palate.

Mouthfeel: Medium-high to high carbonation, can give mouth-filling bubbly sensation. Medium body. Light to moderate alcohol warmth, but smooth. Can be somewhat creamy.

Overall Impression: A moderate-strength golden ale that has a subtle Belgian complexity, slightly sweet flavor, and dry finish.

History: Relatively recent development to further appeal to European Pils drinkers, becoming more popular as it is widely marketed and distributed.

Comments: Similar strength as a dubbel, similar character as a Belgian Strong Golden Ale or Tripel, although a bit sweeter and not as bitter. Often has an almost lager-like character, which gives it a cleaner profile in comparison to the other styles. Belgians use the term "Blond," while the French spell it "Blonde." Most commercial examples are in the 6.5 – 7% ABV range. Many Trappist table beers (singles or Enkels) are called "Blond" but these are not representative of this style.

Ingredients: Belgian Pils malt, aromatic malts, sugar, Belgian yeast strains that produce complex alcohol, phenolics and perfumy esters, noble, Styrian Goldings or East Kent Goldings hops. No spices are traditionally used, although the ingredients and fermentation by-products may give an impression of spicing (often reminiscent of oranges or lemons).

Vital Statistics:	OG: 1.062 – 1.075
IBUs: 15 – 30	FG: 1.008 – 1.018
SRM: 4 – 7	ABV: 6 – 7.5%

Commercial Examples: Leffe Blond, Affligem Blond, La Trappe (Koningshoeven) Blond, Grimbergen Blond, Val-Dieu Blond, Straffe Hendrik Blonde, Brugse Zot, Pater Lieven Blond Abbey Ale, Troubadour Blond Ale

18B. Belgian Dubbel

Aroma: Complex, rich malty sweetness; malt may have hints of chocolate, caramel and/or toast (but never roasted or burnt aromas). Moderate fruity esters (usually including raisins and plums, sometimes also dried cherries). Esters sometimes include banana or apple. Spicy phenols and higher alcohols are common (may include light clove and spice, peppery, rose-like and/or perfumy notes). Spicy qualities can be moderate to very low. Alcohol, if present, is soft and never hot or solventy. A small number of examples may include a low noble hop aroma, but hops are usually absent. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Dark amber to copper in color, with an attractive reddish depth of color. Generally clear. Large, dense, and long-lasting creamy off-white head.

Flavor: Similar qualities as aroma. Rich, complex medium to medium-full malty sweetness on the palate yet finishes moderately dry. Complex malt, ester, alcohol and phenol interplay (raisiny flavors are common; dried fruit flavors are welcome; clove-like spiciness is optional). Balance is always toward the malt. Medium-low bitterness that doesn't persist into the finish. Low noble hop flavor is optional and not usually present. No diacetyl. Should not be as malty as a bock and should not have crystal malt-type sweetness. No spices.

Mouthfeel: Medium-full body. Medium-high carbonation, which can influence the perception of body. Low alcohol warmth. Smooth, never hot or solventy.

Overall Impression: A deep reddish, moderately strong, malty, complex Belgian ale.

History: Originated at monasteries in the Middle Ages, and was revived in the mid-1800s after the Napoleonic era.

Comments: Most commercial examples are in the 6.5 – 7% ABV range. Traditionally bottle-conditioned ("refermented in the bottle").

Ingredients: Belgian yeast strains prone to production of higher alcohols, esters, and phenolics are commonly used. Water can be soft to hard. Impression of complex grain bill, although traditional versions are typically Belgian Pils malt with caramelized sugar syrup or other unrefined sugars providing much of the character. Homebrewers may use Belgian Pils or pale base malt, Munich-type malts for maltiness, Special B for raisin flavors, CaraVienne or CaraMunich for dried fruit flavors, other specialty grains for character. Dark caramelized sugar syrup or sugars for color and rum-raisin flavors. Noble-type, English-type or Styrian Goldings hops commonly used. No spices are traditionally used, although restrained use is allowable.

Vital Statistics:	OG: 1.062 – 1.075
IBUs: 15 – 25	FG: 1.008 – 1.018
SRM: 10 – 17	ABV: 6 – 7.6%

Commercial Examples: Westmalle Dubbel, St. Bernardus Pater 6, La Trappe Dubbel, Corsendonk Abbey Brown Ale, Grimbergen Double, Affligem Dubbel, Chimay Premiere (Red), Pater Lieven Bruin, Duinen Dubbel, St. Feuillien Brune, New Belgium Abbey Belgian Style Ale, Stoudts Abbey Double Ale, Russian River Benediction, Flying Fish Dubbel, Lost Abbey Lost and Found Abbey Ale, Allagash Double

[Category continued on next page.]

Trappist beer

While the other monastic breweries, in Austria and Germany, make beers in the typical styles of their countries, the abbeys of Belgium and the Netherlands have evolved a range of highly distinctive products with at least some shared characteristics.

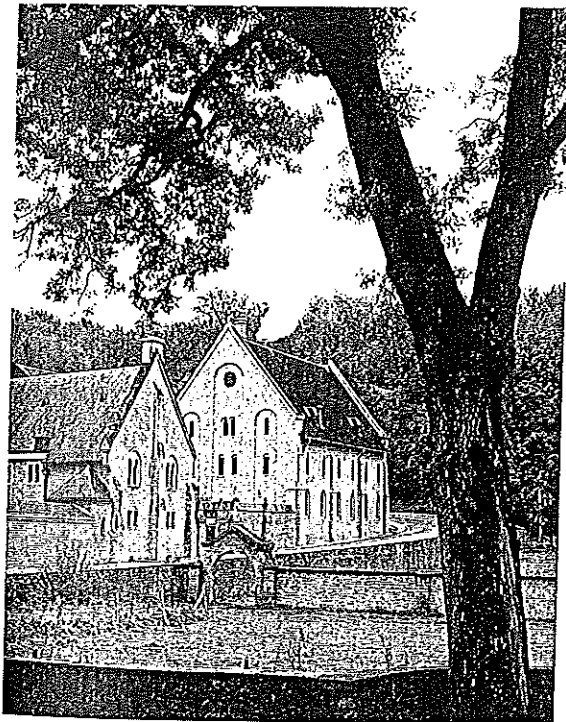
Five Belgian abbeys (Chimay, Orval, Rochefort, Westmalle and Sint Sixtus at Westvleteren) and one in the Netherlands (Schaapskooi at Koningshoeven) make beer. All are of the Trappist order. These abbeys may be classified as monasteries in the strictest sense that they are enclosed communities; abbeys of some other orders pursue pastoral work in their villages, in which case the brothers may consider themselves not to be monks.

These six are the only Trappist breweries in the world. No other brewery is entitled to use the word Trappist on its labels. The term is in law an appellation of origin, not style, but it is impossible to overlook the contribution that these breweries, and their family of beers, make to the pantheon of styles. Between them, the monks of the six Trappist abbeys

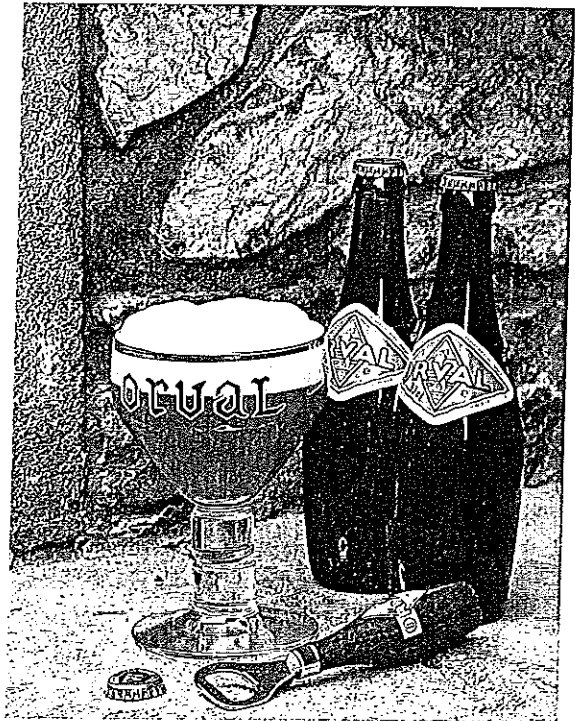
Only a brew made at a Trappist monastery can use this appellation. These brews have a number of shared characteristics. All are top-fermenting and bottle-conditioned. Some are dry, but more are sweet. All are strong. They represent a family of styles in Belgium and the Netherlands; elsewhere, monasteries make more conventional styles.

in Belgium and the Netherlands produce around 20 beers. All are top-fermenting ales; all relatively strong; all bottle-conditioned, with plenty of yeast sediment; all very fruity and aromatic. Several have some of the rummy flavor that can come from the use of candy sugar in the kettle.

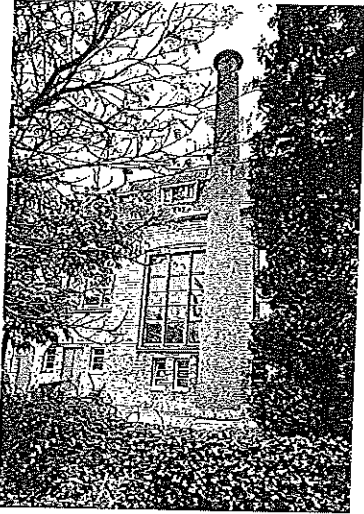
In the 11th century, Benedictines from the home of monasticism, southern Italy, founded an abbey on the



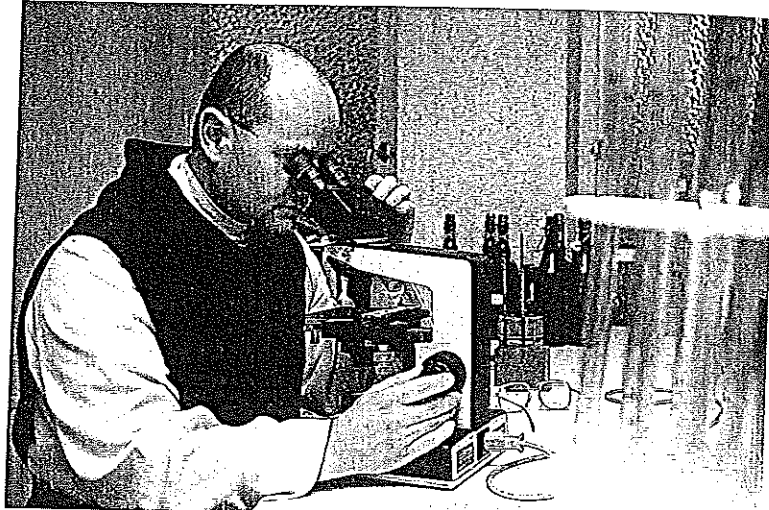
Orval's brewery buildings look more like chapels, but the monastery beyond blends Romanesque and Burgundian references with 1920s' boldness.



Orval makes not only beer but also bread, and two cheeses: a mild Cheddar and a Trappist type like that first made by monks at Port Salut in France.



Rochefort abbey was restored in 1887, and the brewery a dozen years later.



One of today's brewers keeps an eye on Chimay's distinctive yeast, originally isolated by the monastery's renowned Father Théodore. The yeast is used in both primary fermentation and bottle-conditioning.

site that became known as Orval. This is the oldest-established monastery among those that now brew, though its history has been interrupted for lengthy periods. Over those centuries, the monks of Saint Benedict, being judged by some brothers to have become too liberal, experienced a breakaway, known as the Cistercians (named after their founding abbey at Cîteaux, in Burgundy). They in turn saw a defection to a yet stricter order begun by the abbey at La Trappe, Normandy.

Avoiding contact with the ungodly world outside, the Trappists remained true to the rule of living off their own land, labor and resources. Such principles gave a strong foundation to their tradition of brewing, while other orders allowed the art to be lost.

After the interruption to monasticism caused by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period, Trappists began to leave France and head for Belgium and the Netherlands, to restore old communities or form new ones. Rochefort, founded in 1230, began to brew again in 1899. Westmalle, founded in 1794, began to brew for the brothers in 1836, started to sell the beer in the village in the 1870s, and became a commercial brewer around 1920. Its most famous beer, the immensely complex Tripel, was developed after World War II.

Brothers from Westvleteren, founded in 1831,

went on to establish Chimay, in 1850. Between the two World Wars, Chimay popularized the term Trappist beer. After World War II, Chimay's then brewer Father Théodore worked on yeast strains and other questions with the great Belgian brewing scientist Jean De Clerck, and helped shape Trappist beers as we know them today. When Jean De Clerck died, in 1978, he was buried at the abbey, an honor to both him and the brewery.

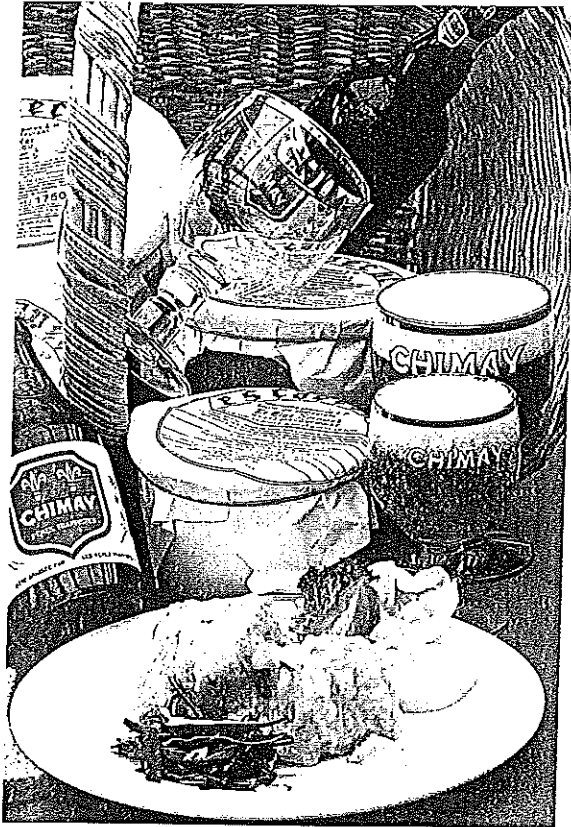
The Schaapskooi brewery was founded in 1884–5 to finance the building of Koningshoeven monastery. Orval restarted brewing in 1931, to provide funds for its restoration, and successfully petitioned in the 1960s for Trappist beer to be made a legal appellation of origin.

In each case, the abbey owns the brewery, and a monk is assigned to its overall management. Some have monks as head brewers, others recruit from the secular world. Secular employees and monks work alongside one another, but the brothers must obey half a dozen calls to prayer during the day. The monks are permitted to have a table beer with their meals, and the amount taken is at their discretion. Stronger beers may be enjoyed on religious holidays. A novice monk once told me he rarely drank his monastery's strongest beer "because it gives me a red head." I think he meant it made him feel muzzy.

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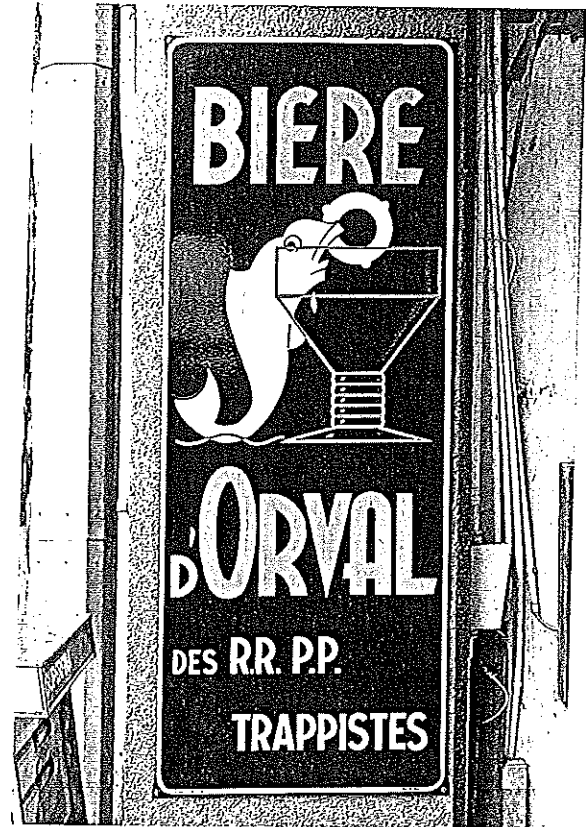


The dry Chimay White is served locally (and harmoniously) with vinegary, peppery *escavèche*, a fish dish the Belgians gained during Spanish rule.

Chimay and Orval have their own inns nearby, where their beer (and the cheese they make) can be sampled. Visits to the breweries may be made only by appointment. Because the breweries are within the cloister, the monks are not allowed to admit women.

Abbey beers

While only the Trappists still have their own breweries, other orders in Belgium made beer in the past. The Benedictine monastery of Affligem (dating from 1074), northeast of Brussels, seems to have been the last to cease production, during World War II. Its monks are also credited with the introduction of hops to Belgium (perhaps from Picardy) in the 11th century. Hops are still grown next to the abbey. When I visited Affligem in the mid-1980s, I found a brother making cherry wine in the cellars. Affligem now earns a royalty from a range of fruity, dryish beers made

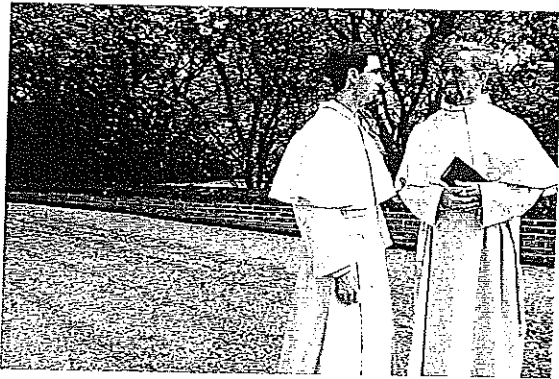


The trout that rescued the golden ring for the princess avoided being turned into *escavèche*, and was immortalized instead in Orval's stylish graphics.

under license by the nearby De Smedt brewery.

A Bavarian community of Benedictines at Maredsous, south of the town of Namur, became an abbey in 1878, and now has flowery beers made on its behalf by the Moortgat brewery, better known for its satanic Duvel (see page 130).

Several other abbeys now license brewers to make beers bearing their names. These brews cannot be labeled Trappist, though they may use the word abbey (*abbaye* in French, *abdij* in Flemish or Dutch). They do not represent a distinct style, but their methods of production, aroma and palate make clear their inspiration. Sometimes there is no business relationship with a monastery, and a commercial brewery simply produces "abbey-style" beers named after an ecclesiastical ruin, shrine, church or local saint. Some of the abbey beers are excellent, characterful brews, but none is a classic.



Cherry trees bless the abbey of Grimbergen, which licenses Maes to make its beer.

The abbey of Leffe (founded in 1152) was the first to enter a licensing agreement, in the early 1950s. The contract arose from the abbot telling a local brewer that the community was having financial difficulties. The very rounded, firm Leffe beers are now made by the Artois company Interbrew. The abbey itself, on the river Meuse, near Dinant in the province of Namur, produces tisanes from locally grown herbs.

Just north of Brussels, the monastery of Grimbergen, with its magnificent Flemish Baroque church, has a range of rather sweet beers made by Alken-Maes, the Kronenbourg subsidiary.

Corsendonk, near Turnhout, was a renowned Augustinian priory in the 15th century. It has been restored as a venue for high-level conferences, and offers Corsendonk beers to the heads of state and captains of industry who attend. The dark, chocolaty Pater Noster is made by Bios, of Ertvelde in East Flanders. The golden, perfumy Agnus is produced by Du Bocq, of Purnode, in the province of Namur.

The ecclesiastical allusion also has some currency in Belgium's neighboring countries. The fruity Abbaye de Crespin Saint Landelin beers made by Enfants de Gayant, in Douai, south of Lille, have their origins in the defunct Rimaux abbey brewery on the borders of France and Belgium.

In the Netherlands, the Budels brewery launched, in the mid-1980s, a fruity, smoky, strong brew called Capucijn, the name being a reference to a monk's cowl. The Raaf brewery, near Nijmegen, has a rounded Dubbel and Tripel. In Amsterdam, t'IJ has four dryish, assertive examples, and there are others.

It was a greater leap of faith when "abbey" beers began to be brewed in the United States.

The first was in Cambridge, a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. The Cambridge Brewing Company, in a conservatory-like bar and restaurant, opened in 1989, initially making American-style ales and a porter. It was soon so successful that proprietor-brewer Phil Bannatyne needed some help at the kettle. He hired Darryl Goss, who happened to be a fan of Belgian styles. In 1991, Goss started work on a *tripel*, and this has since reappeared as a seasonal beer. It is brewed to a gravity of 1080–8 (20–22 Plato) from pale malt, with some dextrose in the kettle, and is spiced with whole oranges and coriander, as well as American bittering hops and Liberty (an aroma variety grown in Washington but derived from Hallertau Mittelfrüh). It emerges with a complex fruitiness; an aromatic character in which the coriander just overtakes the hops; and a frisson of alcohol (7 percent by weight, 8.75 by volume). Its name is Tripel Threat.

In 1992, Jeff Lebesch, with his wife Kim Jordan, started the New Belgium Brewing Company in Fort Collins, Colorado. Lebesch, an electrical engineer (of distantly Bohemian origin) had developed a passion for Belgian brews on business trips to Europe. He had spent 16 months brewing commercially in the basement of his home in Fort Collins, and had now established himself in a building previously used as an unloading shed on the railroad.

New Belgium's products include the soft, malty, fruity Fat Tire Amber Ale; a tart fruit beer made with Montmorency sour pie cherries, widely grown in Colorado; and two brews sinfully subtitled "Trappist Style Ale": one called simply Abbey, the other Trippel. The tawny, darkish Abbey, made with five malts and demerara sugar, to a gravity of 1066 (16.5 Plato, 5.2 percent alcohol by weight, 6.5 by volume), with American Hallertau and Willamette hops, has a creamy palate and a fruitiness reminiscent of figs. The golden-amber Trippel (1074; 18.5; 6.4; 8), dry-hopped with American Hallertaus and Bohemian Saaz, has a huge, earthy floweriness. It is hard to imagine anything less congruous in Colorado, even in eccentric Fort Collins, which has no fewer than five breweries before the Wild West of Wyoming.

