

**16C. Saison**  
*By*  
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# Introduction

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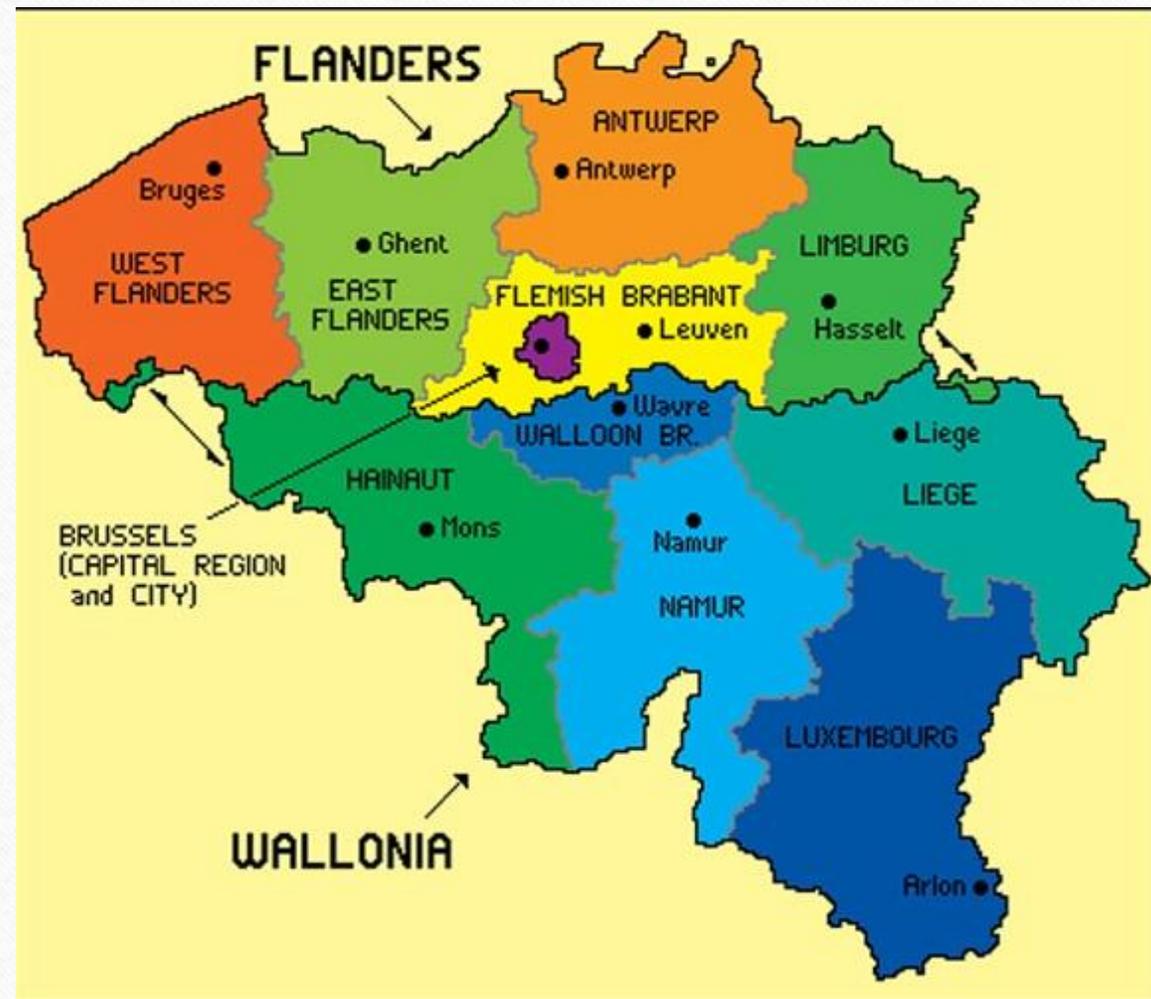
- Saison is a French word meaning season
- Basics of a Saison: Mostly Pilsner malt, lightly colored, dry, crisp, can be fruity, tart, peppery, earthy, 4.5% ABV – 7%
- Rustic, from the farm, was made to quench the thirst of the farm workers
- Refreshing – dry, crisp, slightly sharp
- Specialty malts – Munich, Vienna, Oats, Wheat, Rye, Spelt
- Spices (optional): peppercorn, grains of paradise, ginger, lemongrass, lemon peel, coriander

# History

Brewed in Winter months (Nov – March)

Had to survive from winter to summer without becoming too infected

Saison's originated in Wallonia



# History - continued

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- Workers were given up to 5L per day to consume during a work day
  - Fortifying and refreshing, but not too high in alcohol
  - Was sometimes safer than the local drinking water
  - Likely served flat, not carbonated
- Most Saison at that time was 2.5% - 3.5%, and heavily hopped
  - Heavily hopped to keep for months and months
  - Mixed fermentation, brett, bacteria and Saccharomyces
  - Vinous character important, wine like, sign of an aged beer that was well made

# Saison Dupont

Probably the most notable and classic example of the style

**Brewery:** Brasserie Dupont  
Tourpes, Belgium

**ABV:** 6.5%

**Malts:** 100% Pilsner Malt

**Fermentation Temp:** 80° – 95°F

**Notes:** Almost became extinct before U.S. importers brought it into the United States. Moinette was most popular beer



# Brewing Ingredients

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- Barley was grown on many farms, they would malt it themselves
- Pale malt was unevenly kilned, and likely darker than Pilsner malt these days
- Wheat, buckwheat, oats and spelt was also used
- Belgian hops were 2-4% alpha, harsher bitterness and considered lesser quality than German or English hops
- Other spices: Star Anise, coriander, lemon peel, sage, green peppercorn, cumin, and ginger was used

# Brewing Techniques

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- Infusion mashes, not decoction because of rudimentary equipment
- High attenuation
- Some would do third runnings and make a table beer .8% - 1.2% ABV
- Long boils – 5 -8 hours – open fire

# Fermentation

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- Top fermenting yeast
- Fermented in wooden casks and yeast would be used over and over again
  - Borrowed from neighbor if their yeast wasn't performing or got an infection
- Some farmers would use a coolship and spontaneously ferment (not lambic)
- Old Saison and young Saison were sometimes blended
- Two types of Saison's emerged (1870's)
  - Bière de conserve – premium Saison, stronger, high quality storage
  - Vielle Bière – regular barrels, less alcohol

# Saison D'Epeautre

**Brewery:** La Brasserie de Blaugies  
**Blaugies, Belgium**  
**ABV:** 6%  
**Malts:** Pilsner, Spelt



# Saisons in the 1920's

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- Industrial revolution reduced the necessity of seasonal workers
- Nearly all farmhouse breweries vanished
- Started increasing gravity of Saisons 10 – 14° Plato
- Traditional Saison would be bottled in 75cl champagne style bottle to withstand high CO<sub>2</sub> pressure

## BJCP Guidelines – 16C Saison

**Aroma:** High fruitiness with low to moderate hop aroma and moderate to no herb, spice and alcohol aroma. Fruity esters dominate the aroma and are often reminiscent of citrus fruits such as oranges or lemons. A low to medium-high spicy or floral hop aroma is usually present. A moderate spice aroma (from actual spice additions and/or yeast-derived phenols) complements the other aromatics. When phenolics are present they tend to be peppery rather than clove-like. A low to moderate sourness or acidity may be present, but should not overwhelm other characteristics. Spice, hop and sour aromatics typically increase with the strength of the beer. Alcohols are soft, spicy and low in intensity, and should not be hot or solventy. The malt character is light. No diacetyl.

**Appearance:** Often a distinctive pale orange but may be golden or amber in color. There is no correlation between strength and color. Long-lasting, dense, rocky white to ivory head resulting in characteristic “Belgian lace” on the glass as it fades. Clarity is poor to good though haze is not unexpected in this type of unfiltered farmhouse beer. Effervescent.

**Flavor:** Combination of fruity and spicy flavors supported by a soft malt character, a low to moderate alcohol presence and tart sourness. Extremely high attenuation gives a characteristic dry finish. The fruitiness is frequently citrusy (orange- or lemon-like). The addition of one or more spices serve to add complexity, but shouldn't dominate in the balance. Low peppery yeast-derived phenols may be present instead of or in addition to spice additions; phenols tend to be lower than in many other Belgian beers, and complement the bitterness. Hop flavor is low to moderate, and is generally spicy or earthy in character. Hop bitterness may be moderate to high, but should not overwhelm fruity esters, spices, and malt. Malt character is light but provides a sufficient background for the other flavors. A low to moderate tart sourness may be present, but should not overwhelm other flavors. Spices, hop bitterness and flavor, and sourness commonly increase with the strength of the beer while sweetness decreases. No hot alcohol or solventy character. High carbonation, moderately sulfate water, and high attenuation give a very dry finish with a long, bitter, sometimes spicy aftertaste. The perceived bitterness is often higher than the IBU level would suggest. No diacetyl.

**Mouthfeel:** Light to medium body. Alcohol level can be medium to medium-high, though the warming character is low to medium. No hot alcohol or solventy character. Very high carbonation with an effervescent quality. There is enough prickly acidity on the tongue to balance the very dry finish. A low to moderate tart character may be present but should be refreshing and not to the point of puckering.

**Ingredients:** Pilsner malt dominates the grist though a portion of Vienna and/or Munich malt contributes color and complexity. Sometimes contains other grains such as wheat and spelt. Adjuncts such as sugar and honey can also serve to add complexity and thin the body. Hop bitterness and flavor may be more noticeable than in many other Belgian styles. A saison is sometimes dry-hopped. Noble hops, Styrian or East Kent Goldings are commonly used. A wide variety of herbs and spices are often used to add complexity and uniqueness in the stronger versions, but should always meld well with the yeast and hop character. Varying degrees of acidity and/or sourness can be created by the use of gypsum, acidulated malt, a sour mash or Lactobacillus. Hard water, common to most of Wallonia, can accentuate the bitterness and dry finish.

<b>Vital Statistics:</b>	<b>OG: 1.048 – 1.065</b>
IBUs: 20 – 35	FG: 1.002 – 1.012
SRM: 5 – 14	ABV: 5 – 7%

# Ommegang Hennepin

**Brewery: Brewery Ommegang  
Cooperstown, NY**

**ABV: 7.7%**

**Malts: Pilsner, Belgian Aromatic,  
Flaked Maize, Biscuit Malt, Candi  
Sugar**

**Ale brewed with Grains of Paradise,  
Coriander, Ginger and Sweet Orange  
Peel**



# Commercial Strains – White Labs

- WLP565 (Belgian Saison I)
  - Classic Saison yeast from Wallonia. It produces earthy, peppery, and spicy notes. Slightly sweet. With high gravity saisons, brewers may wish to dry the beer with an alternate yeast added after 75% fermentation
- WLP566 (Belgian Saison II)
  - Saison strain with more fruity ester production than with WLP565. Moderately phenolic, with a clove-like characteristic in finished beer flavor and aroma. Ferments faster than WLP565
- WLP568 (Belgian Style Saison Ale Yeast Blend)
  - This blend melds Belgian style ale and saison strains. The strains work in harmony to create complex, fruity aromas and flavors. The blend of yeast strains encourages complete fermentation in a timely manner. Phenolic, spicy, earthy, and clove like flavors are also created
- WLP670 (American Farmhouse Blend)
  - Inspired by local American brewers crafting semi-traditional Belgian-style ales. This blend creates a complex flavor profile with a moderate level of sourness. It consists of a traditional farmhouse yeast strain and Brettanomyces. Great yeast for farmhouse ales, Saisons, and other Belgian-inspired beers

# Commercial Strains – Wyeast

- 3711 (French Saison)
  - A very versatile strain that produces Saison or farmhouse style beers as well as other Belgian style beers that are highly aromatic (estery), peppery, spicy and citrusy. This strain enhances the use of spices and aroma hops, and is extremely attenuative but leaves an unexpected silky and rich mouthfeel. This strain can also be used to re-start stuck fermentations or in high gravity beers
- 3724 Belgian Saison
  - This strain is the classic farmhouse ale yeast. A traditional yeast that is spicy with complex aromatics, including bubble gum. It is very tart and dry on the palate with a mild fruitiness. Expect a crisp, mildly acidic finish that will benefit from elevated fermentation temperatures. This strain is notorious for a rapid and vigorous start to fermentation, only to stick around 1.035 S.G. Fermentation will finish, given time and warm temperatures. Warm fermentation temperatures, at least 90°F (32°C), or the use of a secondary strain can accelerate attenuation.

# Commercial Strains – East Coast Yeast

- ECY08 (Saison Brasserie)
  - A combination of several Saison yeasts for both fruity and spicy characteristics accompanied by dryness. Apparent Attenuation: up to 80%. Suggested fermentation temp: 75-85° F.
- ECY03 (Farmhouse Brett Saison Blend)
  - Saison Brasserie blend with a pure *Brettanomyces* isolate from a small but fascinating producer of saison. Produces a fruity and funky profile with some acidity gradually increasing over time

# Commercial Strains – The Yeast Bay

- Wallonian Farmhouse
  - Isolated from a unique farmhouse-style ale that hails from the Walloon region of Belgium, this yeast is one of the funkier "clean" yeast we have in our stable. It imparts a slight earthy funk and tart character to the beer, and is a very mild producer of some slightly spicy and mildly smokey flavor compounds.
  - This yeast exhibits absurdly high attenuation, resulting in a practically bone-dry beer. If desired, we recommend controlling the dryness by adjusting the mash temperature or adding malts or adjuncts to the mash tun that will lend some body and residual sweetness to the beer
- Saison Blend
  - A blend of two unique yeast strains isolated from beers that embody the saison style, this blend is a balance of the many characteristic saison flavors and aromas. One yeast strain is a good attenuator that produces a spicy and mildly tart and tangy beer with a full mouthfeel. The other yeast strain is also a good attenuator that produces a delightful ester profile of grapefruit and orange zest and imparts a long, dry and earthy finish to the beer. Together, they produce a dry but balanced beer with a unique flavor and aroma profile.

# Spins on Traditional Saisons

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- Barrel Aged (typically white wine, Chardonnay) HF Flora, Art, Sante Adairius Nonna's Blend, Tired Hands HandFarm, Crooked Stave Surette Reserva, Side Project Saison du Ble and Saison du Fermier
- Barrel Aged Mixed (wine/spirit)
  - Upright Anniversary Saison – Wine and Gin
  - Crooked Stave Surette in Leopold Whiskey Barrel
  - Sante Adairius Cask 200 – Foeder BA Saison
- Brett only – Saison Brett, Seizoen Bretta,
- Dry hopped
- American citrusy hops (Citra, Amarillo, Sorachi Ace, etc.)
- Fruited (Pêche n Brett, Grassroots Brother Soigne – lime, hibiscus and blood orange;

## Saison Recipe

### Specifications

Volume: 6 Gallons (at the end of the boil)

Original Gravity: 1.056

Terminal Gravity: 1.007 (or lower)

Efficiency: 74% (*tweak recipe to match efficiency of your brew house*)

Boil Length: 90 Minutes

Color: 4.6 SRM

Alcohol: 6.4%

Bitterness: 25.6

### Ingredients

10.5 lb (82.4%) Belgian Pils

1 lb (7.8%) Munich 10L

.75 lb (5.9%) White Wheat Malt

6 oz (3%) Acidulated Malt; Weyermann

16 g (8.5%AA) Magnum (17 IBU's) – added during boil, boiled 60 m

28 g (2.9%AA) Saaz (5.3 IBU's) – added during boil, boiled 30 m

1 ea Whirlfloc Tablets (Irish moss) – added during boil, boiled 15 m

.75 tsp Wyeast Nutrient – added during boil, boiled 10 m

28 g (2.9%AA) Saaz (2.8 IBU's) – added during boil, boiled 15 m

White Labs WLP565 Belgian Saison I Ale Yeast (1 Liter Starter on stir plate for 48 hours)

## **Water**

½ Carbon-filtered San Diego water which is high in sulfates and ½ reverse osmosis. All salts added to grist before mashing in.  
4.0g Calcium Sulfate (Gypsum)

## **Mash**

90 Minute Saccharification Rest at 148° F)

Sparge at 170° F and collect sufficient runnings to hit pre-boil volumes.

## **Fermentation**

Chill wort to 68° F and pitch yeast slurry of White Labs WLP565, give a bit of extra oxygen, I go 75 to 90 seconds of pure oxygen.

Keep at 68° for 24 hours, then let it free rise until yeast flocculates and activity drops off. Don't let temp drop until it is done.

Beer could be anywhere from the mid 70's, to mid 80's. Check gravity after 1 week to see how far beer has attenuated to.

## **Keys to Brewing**

High attenuation is the heart of Saison's very nature. Because of this, it is important to push the fermentation with high temperatures and design the grain bill and mash profile to encourage maximum fermentation. Low 90's percentage-wise is a starting point for a good attenuation rate.

Don't use crystal malt in your saisons (including carapils). It tastes odd to me and really clashes with the overall nature of the beer. If you want more malt character that is not sweet or caramel like, try malts like Munich, Victory, Biscuit, etc. that add interesting notes without adding lots of unfermentable sugars. If you're worried about head retention, add some wheat.

# Other beers I considered buying locally

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- Saison Brett
- Seizoen Bretta
- BFM XV 225 Saison
- Firestone Walker Opal
- Red Barn
- Upright Four
- Prairie Ale 92
- Allagash Saison
- Crooked Stave Surette
- Boulevard Tank 7