



Our "13" Thirteenth Anniversary Ale – Notes from Brew Master, Matt Brynildson

We are extremely honored to present to you our 13th Anniversary barrel aged blend! This is our fourth barrel aged release and each year is another adventure into the flavor unknown. Our oak aging cellar continues to grow and so do the blending possibilities. We peaked at just over 120 barrels in our program this year, yet only 53 barrels made this year's final blend. We have stayed true to our original goal of making straight ahead strong ales and letting them rest in wood barrels to mature and develop flavors slowly and naturally. We again met with some of the area's best wine makers and allowed them to guide us to the finished product. Most of the beers that are in this blend are old friends who we know well. Dark and ominous Parabola along with the rich and complex Bravo Brown were brewed again this year and together became the center piece of this blend. Other beers like the Rufus and Opal along with Sean Paxton's Saucerful of Secrets are still tucked away in the cellar in their original first generation form, gaining character with extended aging. Velvet Merkin has established itself as a real barrel loving beer, although it is only 6%, it carries barrel qualities beautifully. A new beer, that was created this year by our Cellar Master Ali Razi, is Double Double Barrel Ale and it found its way into this blend as well. In the end, this year brought us seven wine makers and seven beers to counter balance our lucky thirteenth year of brewing beer on the Central Coast. The brewery is alive and well and oak is as much a part of our program today as it was back in 1996!

The People

Our anniversary beer continues to be a celebration of the year's accomplishments and the talented group of people who make it all possible. We have been blessed to have so many good souls in our midst and the family continues to grow. Beers like the one you are about to enjoy are not made in factories or processing plants, they are made in hand worked, craft centered breweries where the artisans guide the process and create real magic. Every day, this amazing group of artisans comes together to create Firestone Walker beer. We make the beer we love and we are proud to share it with you!

The Winemakers

We were once again honored to enlist seven of the best winemakers from the Paso Robles region to assist in blending. The blend was created in two sessions over the course of two weeks. Scott Hawley (www.torriwinewine.com) joined us again this year. He is an exceptional wine maker who makes some incredible small lot wines and does a good deal of vineyard and winemaking consultation. Matt Trevison (www.linnecalodo.com) played a huge part in this year's blend. Sherman Thacher from Thacher Winery was with us this year. Sherman was a brewer for more than 15 years before he turned to wine making. His skills were again a wonderful addition to our blending efforts. My very good friend Steve Martell (www.kaleidoswine.com) joined us for the fourth year in a row. Neil Collins (www.lonemadrone.com & www.tablascreek.com) was another major force in this blend. Also from Tablas Creek, assistant winemaker Chelsea Magnusson sat in on our first session and added some great flavor vocabulary to the mix. Making his first appearance as a beer blender, Eric Jensen (www.bookerwines.com) joined the team. Eric has developed the amazing Booker vineyard and winery on Paso's west side. Along with the wine makers, Tom Griffin who provides many of our barrels, Rick Sellers from Draft Magazine (www.draftmag.com), Pete Slosberg of Pete's Wicked Ale fame and Arie Litman sat in on the final tasting. Special thanks go out to Michelle Brown, for organizing the sessions and keeping the notes. This process can get more than a little confusing at times.

The Finished Piece

As a finished beer, 13 is more sublime than last year's blend. It is all about the subtleties and quiet tones. It has deep dark chocolate notes and is accented with dried fruit and licorice. There are hints of molasses and even a little cherry in the middle complimenting the vanilla and coconut notes brought in by the oak. These barrel qualities are very well integrated and meld well with the roast malt and caramel undertones. It is best enjoyed in a half filled brandy snifter or wine glass. Allow it to warm to 55F to fully enjoy the pleasing and complex aromas. If left in a cool dark place, I suspect that this beer will age well. It was a pleasure in the making and I truly hope you enjoy our fourth oak-aged blend!

The Components

39% of final blend:

Parabola (13% ABV) - aged in bourbon barrels
-Russian Imperial Oatmeal Stout (brewed 04-30-09 and 09-17-09)
OG = 28P FG = 7.5P IBU = 80 Color = Black
Hopped with Simcoe, Bravo, Styrian Golding and East Kent Golding

15% of final blend:

Velvet Merkin (6% ABV) - aged in bourbon barrels
-Traditional Oatmeal Stout (brewed 10-02-08)
OG = 15P FG = 5.5P IBU = 32.5 Color = Black / 15% Oats
Hopped with 100% U.S. grown Fuggles

6% of final blend:

Rufus (11% ABV) - aged in rye barrels
-Continental Imperial Amber Ale (brewed 8-17-07)
OG = 22.5P FG = 4.5P IBU = 40 Color = 15
Brewed with Belgian dark candi syrup, hopped with Styrian Goldings and Saaz

4% of final blend:

Saucerful of Secrets (9% ABV) - aged in bourbon barrels
-Belgian Strong Ale (brewed 10-30-07)
OG = 23.4P FG = 6.1P IBU = 25 Color = 39
Brewed with Belgian dark candi sugar and everything else but the kitchen sink

24% of final blend:

Bravo (11% ABV) - 2 barrel varieties- bourbon (50%), brandy (50%)
-Imperial Brown Ale (brewed 2-10-09)
OG = 22P FG = 4.8P IBU = 35 Color = 32
Hopped 100% with U.S. grown Fuggles

6% of final blend:

Opal (11% ABV) - aged in rye barrels
-Wheat Wine (brewed 2-25-08)
OG = 22.4P FG = 6.2P IBU = 45 Color = 17
Brewed with torrifed and malted wheat, lightly hopped with Saaz

6% of final blend:

Double Double Barrel Ale (10.9% ABV) - aged 100% in retired FW union barrels
-Double English Pale Ale (brewed 12-03-08)
OG = 24.0P FG = 5.8P IBU = 30 Color = 16
A double version of our flagship created by Cellar Master, Ali Razi