

## Gadd's

## Sixpack

The great monastic ales of Belgium provide a long and winding trip down Abbey Road

by David Gadd



**Affligem Tripel** Cloudy with particulate matter—mostly yeast, but it's tempting to think it also includes fragments of frayed medieval manuscripts. The abbey was founded in the 11th century by repentant brigands, but the venerable beer is now brewed in Opwijk and is part of the Heineken portfolio. Immediate flavors as intense and luscious as biting into a perfectly ripe peach, but the nectar-like presence on the tongue slowly reveals further depths of bacon fat, horehound and white chocolate. The citrus-bitter finish is perfection. Among the world's greatest beer.

STAR BRAND IMPORTS

**Bornem Double** In the 1960s the Trappist monks at Bornem licensed the brewing of their abbey ales to the Van Steenberge brewery. The almost sticky malt-and-maple nose reminds me of steaming bowls of Maypo and the stuff seems unquestionably nourishing—a drinkable meal that satisfies and cures the soul. Perfect for fasting.



WIN-IT-TOO

**Maredsous Dubbel** In 1963 the Benedictine monks at Maredsous entrusted the brewing of their beer to Duvel Moortgat, who also own Upstate New York brewery Ommegang (see featurette). gorgeously burnished and deeper in color than the Tripel, the Maredsous Dubbel is surprisingly nimble and playful on the palate, with dry chocolate-spice-caramel tones and a teeth-clinching finish.

DUVEL MOORTGAT

**Westmalle Dubbel** Westmalle is a relative latecomer to the abbey ale scene, the Dubbel having first been brewed only in 1836. Murky and unfiltered, with an estery nose full of spice and some tar overtones. Similarly dark and mysterious on the palate, its rather solemn flavors sing plainchant in unison rather than going for showy harmonies.

MERCHANT DU VIN

**Chimay Grande Réserve** The planet's most celebrated abbey ale is a pilgrimage stop for any beer lover. The Grande Réserve (blue label) version boasts 9% alcohol and shows opaque, unfiltered mahogany color and rich, vinous yet tangy flavors and an angelic touch of sherry-esque rancio. Heavenly stuff.

MANNEKEN-BRUSSEL IMPORTS

**Trappistes Rochefort 6** Rochefort 6 is the 7.5% version of this authentic Wallonian Trappist beer, from one of just six Trappist breweries left in Belgium. By regulation, it's brewed within the abbey compound and the proceeds benefit only the monastic community and its charities. The flavors are medicinal—there's a distinct whiff of peaty Islay Scotch—and haunting, with notes of Dutch cocoa, cola and wild herbs. Proof that God loves beer.

MERCHANT DU VIN