

Another Round: More Words of Wisdom About Beer

By Scott Laird

"Fermentation may have been a greater discovery than fire." -David Rains Wallace

Ninkasi Brewing -- Worship the Goddess -- I have been hearing about Ninkasi Brewing in Eugene for a while now, but hadn't had the opportunity to try one of their beers until very recently. Started in 2006, it's a new brewery supposedly producing some very fine brews. I had run across two IPA's they make, Total Domination and Tricerahops Double IPA, but not being a big IPA drinker, that wasn't what I was looking for. On a recent visit to Eugene, some friends and I went looking for the tasting room that was listed on their website. But if I had read a little further, I would have realized tasting takes place right in the brewery which apparently closes early, as the address we had was dark and the fence was padlocked. Finally-- salvation, as I came across their limited release of bottled Oatis Oatmeal Stout. And yes-- it was worth the wait. Robust, smooth, flavorful and balanced, this is my new favorite this winter-- especially since I still haven't got my hands on any Widmer Snowplow. Oatis, at 7.2 ABV, is hearty but not overly so, and offers a very drinkable Stout. Make sure to give this one a try!

Speaking of fermentation, here's a bit more about Ninkasi. According to their website, their name comes from the Sumerian Goddess of fermentation. The Sumerians were apparently early adaptors, who quit being nomads and settled down to grow barley from which they made bread and beer. They also were the first civilization to write, have schools, and laws. Sound like smart people, those Sumerians.

What's In a Label -- Beer bottle labels can be a source of great amusement while sitting around having a cold one-- and I don't mean peeling it off and sticking it to your forehead. Many craft brewers seem to take great pride in creating interesting labels with beautiful art work, facts and information about the beer or the brewery, even tall tales and funny stories. Now, some of you may be thinking-- who cares about the label-- we want to hear about BEER! Well, with the economic downturn and recent nasty weather out here in Vernonia, the fact is I haven't been searching out many new microbrews recently. And I needed some material for this column. So I went looking at some old empties that hadn't been returned yet... and voila! A subject to write about.

Lagunitas Brewery has always had some of the most original and creative labels. An ongoing tale about a Russian Czar on their Imperial Stout labels makes great, if somewhat confusing reading. And their special releases in the past have honored Frank Zappa, and quoted him liberally (how else could you quote Zappa). The above-mentioned Ninkasi Brewing mentions the legend from which they get their name-- in fact, the label is probably where I actually learned about it for the first time. Deschutes Brewing offers some interesting and attractive labels, especially for their special releases and anniversary beers. New Belgium Brewing features beautiful yet simple art work, and their print advertising makes for some fun and interesting reading and viewing, especially the one for their Skinny Dip Beer, which featured a photo of about twenty employees and friends skinny dipping. But I digress-- back to labels. One of my all time favorites was the 3-D label that Bridgeport Brewing created for their Raven Mad Porter, that came with glasses to view it. Dick's Beers from Centralia has wonderful, historically themed, classic art work on their labels. And last, but not least, is Stone Brewing's Vertical Epic series-- a new vintage is released, each year-- one month, and one day after the last, leading to 12/12/2012, when they should all be aged and ready to drink. (If the world doesn't end first.) The label (it's not actually a label, but is printed directly on the bottle) explains the story, and the idea behind collecting and waiting to drink the beers. Of course, interesting names are part of the fun of enjoying craft brews, and lend themselves to interesting interpretations on the labels. Mt. Shasta Brewing in Weed, California, has some great names and very attractive labels-- including their Lemurian Lager, Mountain High IPA and Shastafarian Porter. And Hales Ales in Seattle had one of my all time favorite names-- Pikop Andropov's Rushin' Imperial Stout (go ahead, sound it out).

So what's in a label? Well, for starters there's literature, great story telling, art, culture, history, and even predictions for the future. And that's before you even start looking for the ABV. So next time, slow down a bit and enjoy the label while enjoying the beer.

Join me next month for Another Round!

Stargazer

By Esther Arce

The sun in the sign of Aquarius reminds us that we can't do it alone. And the truth is; we really don't want to. At times it can be easy to see the differences between us and use them as a barrier to connecting, but by gathering together with others we increase our chances of finding solutions to the challenges we are facing. We find comfort, safety, friendship and security in others, and when all else is gone all we have left is each other. In a very real sense the progress of the world depends on our progress as individuals and our ability to come together with others peacefully.

For the last six months Saturn, the planet ruling dense matter, government, authority, tradition, structure, and in many cases, death, has been making a difficult opposition to Uranus, the planet of revolution, change, and a new world order. A long-awaited change is at hand. Any difficulty that has oppressed you over a long period of time is now ready to be dissolved, but your effort is required. Remain patient and focused on your goal and the change will come.

You can reach Esther Arce at info@EstherArce.com, 503.703.0904, or visit www.EstherArce.com. Esther is currently running a running a reading special. The normal price for a reading is \$80, but she is offering a \$30 discount and readings are now \$50.

Aries
By sacrificing a personal aim or grievance in the interest of what is right, you will gain the allegiance of others and open the way for everyone to benefit. Growth is possible if you remain modest and alert. Arrogance will cause you to falter.

Taurus
Do not indulge in looking at those around you and trying to match them tit for tat, and do not chase others to try and influence them. It will be difficult at times to persuade others to see you point of view. Better to retreat and come back on a better day.

Gemini
There is a great desire to move, but the time is not right. Attempting to force a resolution or completion to the matter will set you back and cause misfortune. Instead, patiently let go of doubt, fear, anger and distrust and remain innocent, quiet, and detached. Tranquility on every level is advised.

Cancer
It is futile to act out of strong emotions. You cannot overcome the forces opposing you by struggling, and others will not be receptive. If you still yourself and let doors open of their own accord, a resolution will come sooner and good fortune and success will ultimately be yours.

Leo
You are meant to learn new things this year. Keep your mind and heart open as you find yourself doing things you never thought you would or could. It's a time of new beginnings. In order to achieve true power and true greatness you must be in harmony with what is right.

Virgo
A withdrawal from the affairs of the world is appropriate if you use the time not to judge and criticize, but to further your own development. When you improve yourself you improve the world. Lay aside mistrust and release the tensions of the moment.

Libra
Do not be swayed or persuaded by others, instead stick to what you know to be correct. If unexpected trouble comes, do not fight against it. Remain nonjudgmental and disengaged and it will pass quickly on its own. If you are sincere in your efforts progress will be made.

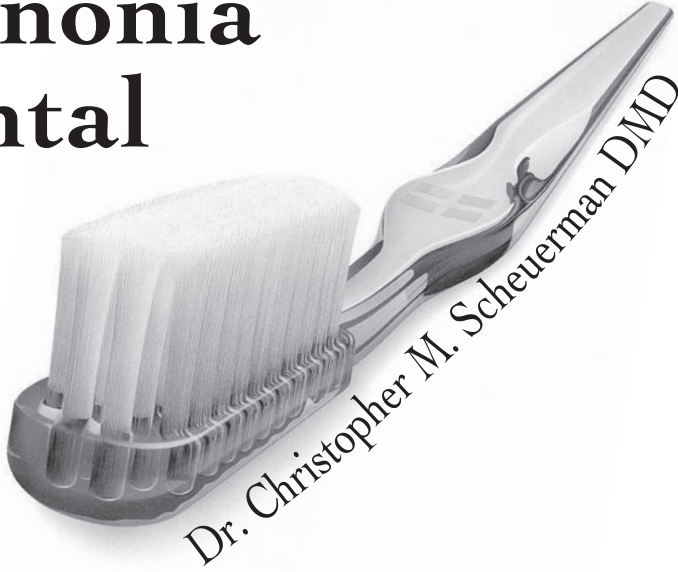
Scorpio
There is danger in indulging in pride. If you are stubborn and unyielding you will create a difficult time for yourself. Doubt and fear may propel you into action but it will not give you the result you want. Through acceptance and self correction you make a great change possible.

Sagittarius
Express your knowledge in your conduct rather than your words. Abandon ambitions, anxieties, and agendas. What is necessary comes from within and what is worthwhile is created slowly and carefully. Patiently remain focused on your goal and a way will be cleared.

Capricorn
True kindness is expressed through helping others and your own good fortune makes it possible for you to do great deeds. Through selflessness and a sense of purpose you will accomplish a lot now and nothing can prevent success from finding you.

Aquarius
If you persist in improper behavior when your heart knows what is correct, you will become hopelessly entangled in troubles. Stop striving and a solution will present itself at the proper time. You're a visionary. Use your highly creative mind and see a better way for yourself and others.

Pisces
You are not to blame for the current difficulties, neither should you blame others. Let go of judgments and simply do what is right. You may find that you need to take a step back and rethink the situation. Perhaps a trip to the beach is exactly what's needed.



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