

# GO! drink

BEER, WINE &amp; MORE

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## Saving your beer for later

BY JON ABERNATHY • For The Bulletin

I often write about new and upcoming local beers, typically to highlight particular styles, trends or events. However, with the beginning of a new year, it's a good time to reflect on the past year as we look ahead to 2021. With that in mind, I thought it would be interesting to write about past beers — specifically, several vintage beers that I've been aging in what I facetiously call my “beer cellar.”

First, a quick primer on storing beer for aging. For the casual drinker, cellaring your own beer might seem exotic or complicated. In reality, it's anything but; all that's required is a dark, cool space that doesn't experience any extremes in temperature. A spare refrigerator is optimal, but it could simply be a spare bedroom or bathroom that stays relatively cool. In my case, I use the back of a closet.

How long can you age beer? It depends on the style. Generally, stronger beers with an emphasis on malt or yeast are the best candidates for aging, as are barrel-aged beers. Lower alcohol and hop-forward beers are more susceptible to oxidation and other less-than-desirable influences. As some beer ages, it will continue to evolve in the bottle, particularly if wild yeasts are present.

I've been successfully aging many years' worth of Deschutes Brewery's The Abyss along with others in its Reserve Series, and various beers from other breweries, local and beyond. For the new year, I pulled a selection of aged bottles from four Central Oregon breweries spanning the previous decade to reflect upon, and included a new beer that just debuted from Sunriver Brewing Company.

### BLACK BUTTE XXIII FROM DESCHUTES BREWERY (2011)

Deschutes first brewed Black Butte XX for its twentieth anniversary in 1988 and has released a new version each year since. For 2011, this imperial porter was brewed with Seville orange zest, Theo Chocolate nibs, and pasilla chili peppers, and partially aged in bourbon barrels. At about nine and a half years old, the beer still has noticeable chili character along with bitter dark chocolate and sweet molasses-like notes, though there is little if any orange.



Jon Abernathy

### Aging beers for prime taste.

#### [BANISHED] DOUBLECROSS FROM CRUX FERMENTATION PROJECT (2013)

This was among the first in Crux's “Banished” series of barrel-aged beers, a dark Belgian-style ale that was aged in Pinot noir wine barrels for a year. With 12 percent alcohol by volume, this has aged well in seven years, with cherry fruitiness and oaky barrel character highlighting a sweet, malty base.

#### OUTBACK XX STRONG ALE FROM BEND BREWING COMPANY (2015)

Bend Brewing celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2015, and celebrated with the release of this special collaboration ale from past brewers Tonya Cornett and (then current) Ian Larkin. With nine percent alcohol by volume, this strong ale was brewed with wild Brettanomyces yeast and aged in Pinot noir barrels and

has mellowed nicely with age. I found pleasant funky notes from the yeast as well as tart cherry, balsamic vinegar, stone fruit, and Pinot wine character.

#### AMBRE ROCHE FROM 10 BARREL BREWING COMPANY (2019)

This creation from brewer Bryon Pyka is a Belgian-style wild sour ale, aged in Pinot noir barrels with kumquats and conditioned on vanilla beans. It's bracingly tart with a touch of funk and an herbal citrus character that mellows as it warms. There's a floral rusticity and overall it has an appetizing, culinary balsamic vinegar quality that will keep you sipping.

#### WOOD SERIES BOURBON BARREL ALE FROM SUNRIVER BREWING (2020)

This new beer was released at the end of 2020. Sunriver brewed a strong, malty ale and aged it in Kentucky bourbon bar-

### Top 5 beers to try

1. Moonless Night American Porter — Immersion Brewing
2. Hop Tour Series: Enigma IPA — Bevel Craft Brewing
3. Fa La La La Winter Ale — Double Mountain Brewery
4. Enzymatic IPA — Boneyard Beer
5. Kölsch — Chuckanut Brewery

rels for twelve months, yielding a sweet, boozy, intensely bourbon-rich brew. There are flavors of sweet, rich dark sugars, charred vanilla, honey, cookie dough, and wood notes, with some alcohol heat—though it doesn't taste as strong as it is, which is 12.8 percent alcohol by volume. This is a big and rich beer that will age quite well in years to come.

There's no mystery behind cellaring beers, as long as you have space to store them. If you've never tried it before, 2021 is a great time to start; Deschutes, Crux, and 10 Barrel currently offer various vintage bottles for online ordering, and Sunriver's Bourbon Barrel Ale is available now.

Other local bottled beers that are good candidates for aging include Don Jon Raskin English Barleywine from Porter Brewing Company, Bourbon Barrel-Aged TenPine Chocolate Porter from Three Creeks Brewing Company, and Brett Lager from GoodLife Brewing Company. Any of MonkLife Belgian Ales' strong dark beers would age well too, as would most of the beers from The Ale Apothecary.

Of course, you don't have to wait for the new year to enjoy the fruits of your labor, but it can be a treat to pull out a vintage beer for a special occasion. Happy aging!

■ Jon Abernathy is a beer writer and blogger and launched The Brew Site ([www.thebrewsite.com](http://www.thebrewsite.com)) in 2004. He can be reached at [jon@thebrewsite.com](mailto:jon@thebrewsite.com).