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## Cascade Lakes packages Midnight Drift

BY JON ABERNATHY • For The Bulletin

Over the past two years, ownership changes have revitalized Redmond's Cascade Lakes Brewing Company. The new owners of Central Oregon's second-oldest brewery have focused on innovation and experimentation, and in recent months they have rolled out major branding and packaging updates, as well.

One of the latest beers to emerge from these efforts is Midnight Drift, a barleywine aged in Oregon Spirit Distillers bourbon barrels for six months. Available in 16-ounce cans, it's the first barrel-aged beer packaged by the brewery; previous barrel brews have been draft-only.

It's the second in the company's nascent "Midnight" series, according to brewmaster Ryan Schmiede. The first was Midnight Sojourn, an imperial porter brewed with molasses that was aged in barrels for 11 months.

For Midnight Drift, the focus was on the malt and bourbon interplay.

"I targeted caramel, nutty and honey elements with the use of Weyermann Abbey and Melanoidin malts," Schmiede said via email. "For additional depth of character we included some Briess cherry smoked malt. Smoked malt is not traditional in most barley wines."

Smoked malt is unusual. However, he notes, "The impact is there, but it's not the focus. It's a layer."

Its time in the barrels was "Enough time to add delicate oak complexity and light spirit character to the barley wine without overpowering the malt character," according to Schmiede.

A quick refresher on the style. Barleywines trace their roots to English old ales, strong, aged beers that developed complexity from long-term storage in wooden casks or barrels. In the late 19th century, the Bass brewery first called its strongest ale "Barley Wine" and the name caught on as its own style in the years that followed.



Submitted photo

**Cascade Lakes Brewing has released the barleywine Midnight Drift in cans. It's the first barrel-aged beer to be packaged by Central Oregon's second-oldest brewery.**

English versions of the style tend to focus on rich malt complexity, while American examples tend to emphasize hops and bitterness to counter the malt sweetness. These are beers that start at 8 percent alcohol by volume and only go up from there; the strongest can approach or exceed 12 percent ABV, earning their "barley wine" moniker.

Midnight Drift is 9.2 percent ABV. It was a small batch brew of 15 barrels, and the brewery only canned 120 cases' worth, Schmiede said. The brewery provided me with cans of it to review.

It pours a deep amber color with a slight chill haze, with a fine layer of light tan-colored foam that clings to the side of the glass. There's a prominent oaked boozy aroma that is a bit hot, bourbon or brandy with plenty of floral esters backed by Italian plum, raisin, brown sugar, molasses and cedar.

The flavor is florid with alcohol notes that offer up roses, red berries, and burnt sugar flavors. It has an oaky character that's both vanilla-sweet and lightly resinous. There's a sweetness reminiscent of honey

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and caramel, with a deep, dark fruitiness that reminds me of brandied fruitcake.

There's still some alcohol heat in the finish with a long lingering sweetness. It would be an excellent beer to age for a year or more.

With Midnight Drift being the second in a series, I asked Schmiede about plans for other beers to follow.

"We have additional plans for the 'Midnight' family, but no current plans for repeating specific beers," he said. "We're picking up more freshly dumped bourbon barrels from our friends at Oregon Spirits, the first week of March. I'm excited to fill them with an imperial stout for a fall, holiday offering."

In the meantime, Midnight Drift is available now, with rich flavors and bourbon notes in a nicely sharable format. It marks a new direction for Cascade Lakes under the new owners, and I look forward to seeing what else is in store in the near future.

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