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Annual Three Creeks brew is a coffee lover's delight

BY JON ABERNATHY • For The Bulletin

I was at 3rd Street Beverage recently, picking up beer for an article and browsing other beers, and happened upon a bottle of Frontier Justice Coffee Stout from Three Creeks Brewing Company. It's an annual limited edition beer in the brewery's specialty Desperado Series, released each fall. I've enjoyed the beer before, so I bought the bottle to revisit it.

Stout and coffee are a natural pairing, with each offering up complementary flavors and aromas, and breweries have been crafting coffee-infused stouts for years. Brewers employ different methods of incorporating coffee into the brew, from conditioning with whole beans to adding cold brew or concentrate.

For Frontier Justice, the base beer is an imperial stout, and Three Creeks partners with Sisters Coffee Company each year for the coffee addition. According to the description, there are four pounds of Sumatra dark roast coffee per barrel. I reached out to the brewery for more information.

"Sisters Coffee Company does a special dark roast on approximately 40 pounds of Sumatra beans and then makes a double strength cold brew," said head brewer Jeff Cornett via email. "Which equates to about 12 gallons of cold brew coffee for our 10 barrel batches at the pub. We add it into the brite/conditioning stage before carbing (adding carbonation) and then serving."

Originally called Bulletproof Coffee Stout, the recipe has remained unchanged for nearly a decade, brewed with 10 different malts and Cascade hops. It has 8% alcohol by volume and 55 IBUs.

Frontier Justice looks like coffee when poured into the glass, an opaque, dark brown bordering on black with a creamy brown head of foam. The aroma is compelling, full of roasted grains and dark roast coffee with a light hit of medium-dark chocolate, a drizzle of caramel and cocoa powder. It's slightly reminiscent of instant coffee, the smell of the flakes when you open the jar.

The flavor leaves no doubt that this is a

Five brews to try

Hop-a-Wheellie IPA — Boneyard Beer
 Pass Stout — GoodLife Brewing
 Cold IPA — Ecliptic Brewing and Wayfinder Beer
 Kia Kaha Hazy Pale Ale — Crux Fermentation Project
 Guinness Draught Stout — Guinness



Three Creeks Brewing Company's Frontier Justice

beer for coffee lovers. It drinks like thick, dark coffee, espresso-like, with notes of deeply roasted grains bringing to mind puffed barley cereal, dark bread crust and

It's a beer that will pair extremely well with desserts, particularly those of the dark chocolate variety: think flourless chocolate cake, a decadent brownie, or dark chocolate truffles. A long-aged, sharp cheese such as gouda or cheddar will complement it as well.

In the past, Three Creeks has also produced a barrel-aged version of Frontier Justice, aged in rye whiskey barrels. This year, the brewery didn't create the whiskey version, "but we do have an incredible rum barrel-aged version — which has been several years in the works," said Cornett.

This rum version is named Immortal Justice, and according to the description, oak barrels that had previously contained Frontier Justice were sent to Immortal Spirits Distillery in Medford. The barrels held rum for one year, then were returned to Three Creeks to be refilled with the stout to age for an additional two years.

The resulting rum-aged stout was blended with the specialty cold brew from Sisters Coffee. Immortal Justice is 11% ABV and 23 IBUs.

Cornett provided me with a crowler to sample, and I found it to be as decadent and rich as the description would suggest; layers of molasses, dark chocolate, vanilla, and sweet rum amplify the already-considerable coffee presence.

Both Frontier Justice and Immortal Justice are currently on tap at the brewpub in Sisters, and you may still find 22-ounce bottles of Frontier Justice on retail shelves.

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Jon Abernathy

chocolate-covered espresso beans. There's a nuttiness evocative of toasted quinoa and an underlying sweet syrup quality with lingering roasty bitterness.