

BEER AND CHEESE

Actually, we have left the most difficult till last. Beer and cheese? I thought it was mostly wine and cheese. Indeed how many wine and cheese evenings are held in this country - and how many beer and cheese evenings - and yet the combination of cheese and red wine isn't so natural as people seem to believe. The powerful taste of many cheeses overshadows many red wines, never mind the high levels of salt that fight with the tannins in the wine.

More and more the French are swapping red wine for white with cheese. The sourness – 'acidity', say the oenologists, – of the white wine is a better balance for the fat and creamy character of the cheese and they are right! Cheese covers the taste buds with a creamy, greasy film. A sour drink such as white wine will free up the taste buds once more. Beer that has bitterness alongside that hint of sourness will do it even better. Since beer also has a lower alcohol content, you can take bigger gulps of it so that the mouth is rinsed and the taste buds are ready for the next mouthful.

However, each beer is different and every cheese is too. Looking for beers and cheeses that go well together is a fascinating gastronomic experience - a voyage of discovery towards new and interesting taste combinations. You must try everything; there are no recipes or standards.

Cheese pairing

Food pairing, which came across the sea from the USA, is a trend in gastronomy that wants to pair beer with food. In a country such as Belgium, the kingdom of beer which also makes over three hundred different types of cheese, it's absolutely normal that Belgian beers and Belgian cheeses make a wonderful gastronomic combination. In 2009, *Bierpassie Magazine* has dedicated a few tastings to this research.

STRAFFE HENDRIK • 9% VOL. ALC.

Origin	De Halve Maan Brewery, Bruges
Bottle	75cl with cork stopper
Description	Amber blond or old gold. Brilliantly clear with a lively fine sparkle and a fine white, wall-clinging, head. Bitterness dominates but there is also a clear presence of caramel in the aroma as well as a touch of smoky meatiness. In the mouth, there is the typical Bruges sweetness, a combination of alcohol (9% vol. alc. is not insignificant) and malt. The beer tastes somewhat like the wort in the brewery, as though it has not fully fermented. That gives it a certain creaminess. Hops, that are pertinently present in the nose, are also prominent in the taste and the aftertaste. It is therefore a very one-dimensional beer, the short aftertaste is just like the taste – it develops no new taste, except in the 75cl bottle where we find a somewhat more citrus fruitiness.
Food pairing	Accidentally or not, the taste of this beer goes very well with a Brugge Blomme cheese – both the beer and the cheese have a creamy structure.

Bruges (Brugge) cheeses

The magazine was invited to Belgomilk in West-Vlaamse Moorslede. The Bruges cheeses are made here. We only tried already successful combinations such as Straffe Hendrik (the new Straffe Hendrik from the Halve Maan brewery), an amber blond beer with bitter and caramel tastes that goes wonderfully well with the creamy Brugge Blommekaas. The Brugge Apero, a bread cheese with a soft, creamy taste to which mustard and fenugreek seeds have been added, goes very well with a Rodenbach. The intense sourishness of the beer helps to soften the sharpness of the cheese. Generally speaking, sour beers, like no

other, clean out the greasy film in the mouth that comes from cheese. We also discovered that a brown beer like Adriaen Brouwer Dark Gold, which is quite sweet with a bitter accent at the end, harmonises very well with the Brugge Prestige. That's the oldest cheese in the house with a maturing process of more than eighteen months.

Blond Trappists

On another occasion, we went to the Trappist brewery in Chimay. In Poteaupré, near the brewery, we lined up all the blond Trappists that had a cheese of the same name.

The classic Orval was tasted with the old Orval cheese, which can only be acquired in the abbey shop. Through the aging process this cheese loses its Port-du-Salut character and gets drier, more crumbly and its flavour more intense. Therefore the cheese has

