

# Ommegang Rare Vos Amber Ale

## Stoudt's Gold Lager



# 98

ABV: 6.8%  
IBUs: 20  
Serve at: 40°



Rare Vos Amber Ale

### Brewery Ommegang

Cooperstown, N.Y.

www.ommegang.com, Phone: 607-544-1800

Distribution: Throughout the United States, except in ID, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** triple-cream cheeses like Delice de Bourgogne, New York cheesecake, braised beef short ribs

**Contrast:** sheep's milk cheeses such as Manchego, Kalamata olives

### Judges' Notes

Just about as close to perfection as you'll find on Earth, Rare Vos is a singular drinking experience. A sultry amber, slightly hazy brew topped by a velvety, creamy and tawny head, this is as much a feast for the eyes as it is for the palate. Bold aromas of cinnamon, cardamom, licorice, plums, cherrystones and papaya leap from the glass. Tim commented on the hints of clove, brown sugar and caramel in the nose and noted that they all play together to entice the drinker. Pete praised the clean spiciness and lush tropical fruitiness, and Tom found some intriguing peach notes under the rum raisin in this beer's aroma. As expected

of a Belgian pale ale, the flavor evinces a distinct spicy character, suggestive of clove and Tellicherry pepper, yet maintains an elegant Continental maltiness. The flavors come in waves, each complementing the next. This beer continually evolves in the glass, with each sip revealing another layer of complexity. Tom had high praise for the integration of spicy, bready and dark-fruit flavors, and Lee commented on the refined hop bitterness and light, yeasty spiciness in this beer's flavor. A truly classic beer to be lingered over and enjoyed at one's leisure. Too good to rush through, Rare Vos is the ideal cool weather tipples.



# 96

ABV: 4.7%  
IBUs: 25  
Serve at: around 40°



Gold Lager

### Stoudt's Brewing Company

Adamstown, Pa.

www.stoudts.com, Phone: 717-484-4386

Distribution: CT, DE, FL, GA, MD, MA, MI, NJ, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, SC, VT, VA, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** weisswurst, Panang curry, mildly spicy cheeses like Mainzer

**Contrast:** aged Mimolette cheese, pesto, Carolina-style barbecue

### Judges' Notes

A pristine, delicately balanced pale lager, Stoudt's Gold is eminently drinkable, brimming with floral hops and sweet, bready malt. The judges offered unanimous praise for this beer's beautiful golden color, brilliant clarity and thick, long-lasting, creamy-white head. As befits the Munich helles style, the aroma offers teases of spicy, floral Saaz and Hallertau hops, with a delicate background of soft, luscious, lightly sweetish malt. Tim enjoyed the delicate underpinning of floral hop aromas that lurked just behind the sweet malt, while Rick commented on the hops' faint nutmeg-like spiciness. While some of the judges

found this beer slightly bitter for the style, all agreed that the flavors were exceptionally well-balanced. Tom was impressed by the interplay between this beer's firm hop bitterness and sweet, cookie-like malt, as well as its quenching crispness. Starting off sweet and malty, the flavor quickly shifts to solid hop bitterness and bright, spicy hop flavors. Pete appreciated the assertive hop presence and noted that although its level was more appropriate in a pilsner, the beer still showed a lot of finesse. Another fine effort from Carol Stoudt, this is a world-class lager that would not be out of place in any Munich Biergarten.



# Full Sail Amber Ale

## Green Flash Hop Head Red Ale



### Full Sail Brewing Company

Hood River, Ore.

www.fullsailbrewing.com, Phone: 541-386-2281

Distribution: AK, AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, LA, MN, MT, NV, NM, OH, OK, OR, TX, UT, WA, WY

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** mild-flavored fish like rainbow trout, nutty Swiss cheeses like Appenzell, macaroni and cheese

**Contrast:** Italian sausage and black olive pizza, mildly flavored white cheeses like Iberico, mole poblano

### Judges' Notes

A classic example of the style, Full Sail Amber is arguably the American amber style's archetype, garnering countless awards since it came to market more than 20 years ago. Full Sail's flagship brew pours a deep, burnished copper with flashes of chestnut highlights. Aromas of freshly baked bread, light caramel, rosemary and lemon balm leap from the glass. While Pete and Tim both liked the rich caramel and English toffee notes, Lee was especially impressed with the exceptionally clean, cinnamon-spice-tinged aroma. Malt may dominate the nose, but spicy, floral and occasionally pine forest hop aromas abound. Flavor tends more toward toastiness than

actual caramel, with teases of toffee and light cocoa. Rick praised the complex mineral, spicy bitterness and its give and take with the rich toast, caramel and toffee-like malt flavors. Tom's note that "hop bitterness makes a strong statement in the finish" resonated with the other judges, who all complimented the masterful integration of malt and hop, especially in the pleasantly drying finish. Lee summed it up perfectly, calling the beer a "robust, warming, full-bodied ale that gives the palate a bear hug of flavors." Once again, Jamie Emmerson and Full Sail deliver a truly singular drinking experience, offering up what is the quintessential American amber ale.

# 95

ABV: 5.5%  
IBUs: 31  
Serve at: 42 to 45 °



### Amber Ale

### Green Flash Brewing Company

Vista, Calif.

www.greenflashbrew.com, Phone: 760-597-9012

Distribution: AZ, CA, CO, MD, MA, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OR, PA, TX, VA, WA, as well as parts of Canada and Japan

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** spicy Indian dishes like tandoori chicken; strong, blue-veined cheeses like blue Stilton; beef Stroganoff

**Contrast:** mildly nutty cheeses like French Muenster, grilled swordfish, smoked meats

### Judges' Notes

Redolent of American hops, Hop Head Red is aptly named, with a monster aromatic assault of satsuma, pine needles, grapefruit and gooseberries. Deep copper, verging on brown, this brew throws the barest hint of a haze and is topped by a dense, off-white head. No subtle aromas here – this is in-your-face hoppiness taken to its extreme conclusion. Still, there is a bit of sweet caramel malt lurking somewhere underneath the hops. Lee called the aroma "racy, sharp and sexy," while Rick considered the resinous, oily, grapefruit notes to be almost "catty." The huge hop aroma carries through to the flavor, with brash piney, citrusy and resinous flavors all fighting for dominance. The

malt is there, as expected for the style, but it merely plays a supporting role to the aggressive bitterness and hop flavors. According to Tim, the beer is, "Hops! From beginning to end," and he calls it the perfect beer for those who really like hops. Pete, too, commented on the complex layering of pine, citrus-fruit and herb-garden hop flavors but went on to praise the toasted, English muffin-like malt that balanced the hops. This beer fairly bursts with hops, and as someone commented, "It's an IPA in amber ale's clothing." Hop Head Red is unapologetically hop-centric, and while a little over the top for style, it is, as Rick says, "enjoyably naughty."

# 94

ABV: 6.4%  
IBUs: 45  
Serve at: 38°



### Hop Head Red Ale



# Oskar Blues Mama's Little Yella Pils

## Gordon Biersch Blonde Bock

# 94

ABV: 5.3%  
IBUs: 35  
Serve at: 38 to 40°



Mama's Little Yella Pils

### Oskar Blues Brewery

Lyons, Colo.  
www.oskarblues.com, Phone: 303-485-9400  
Distribution: AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, ID, MD, MA, NV, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA, WI, WY, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** chicken piccata; wild mushroom ragout; buttery, creamy cheeses like Tilsit  
**Contrast:** semi-soft cheeses like Morbier, pork adobo, calamari

### Judges' Notes

You will never look at canned beer the same way after you experience Mama's Little Yella Pils. A deep, saturated golden beer that throws a substantial creamy white head. The noticeable haze is more appropriate to a Keller Pils but doesn't mar the exquisite aromas and flavors. The panel all picked up faint notes of sulfur, which are perfectly acceptable in the aroma. Rick was impressed by the notes of peppercorn, dried herbs and nettle, and Lee commented on the nuanced sweet corn and crackery aromas. Lots of Saaz hop aromas hold the promise of a substantially bitter and hoppy flavor. Pete liked the tangy, faintly herbal

hop flavors and complimented the delicate balancing act between hops and crackery, grainy malt flavors. Tom, on the other hand, enjoyed the spicy, slightly minty hop flavors but thought the bitterness was just a little harsh at the finish. A classic, superbly tasty pilsner-style beer, loaded with a profusion of aromas flavors like lavender, Meyer lemon, Graham cracker, honey and even a hint of clove. As Lee noted, this is a bold beer for a pilsner but with enough finesse and balance to keep it from being "brash." The folks at Oskar Blues have a winner on their hands with this one.

# 92

ABV: 7%  
IBUs: 23  
Serve at: 44°



Blonde Bock

### Gordon Biersch Brewing Company

San Jose, Calif.  
www.gordonbiersch.com, Phone: 408-278-1008  
Distribution: AZ, CA, FL, GA, HI, MD, MT, NV, NM, NC, OH, OK, TX, VA, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** pad Thai, nutty semi-hard cheeses like Tome des Bauges, apple strudel  
**Contrast:** sweet, fruity cheeses like aged Mahon; French onion soup, jaegerschnitzel

### Judges' Notes

A seductively malty brew, this is one that should be approached with due respect for its well-camouflaged strength. Pours a rich, honeyed gold with a small yet creamy white head. The low head and substantial legs clinging to the glass portend substantial alcoholic strength in this beer. From the moment it's poured, this beer's aroma pervades the room, laden with notes of sweet toffee, faint hints of fig and alfalfa honey. Rick was taken by the sweet, almost Stollen-like sweetness in the nose, with faint notes of pastry icing, cinnamon spice and rum-soaked dried fruits. Lee, however, was notably impressed by the rich honeycomb aroma that

was backed by the faintest hint of maple. In keeping with the style, this beer is bursting with intense maltiness, complemented by subtle hints of pear, white grape and creamy toffee. Pete enjoyed the progressive layering of malt flavors, from raw cereal grain to fresh-baked bread to rich Graham Cracker sweetness. The judges all commented on the pronounced yet integrated alcohol presence in this beer. Tom complimented the profusion of flavors, aromas and textures in this strong and complex yet supremely drinkable bock. Though highly drinkable and incredibly refreshing, this Maibock is deceptively strong and should be enjoyed in moderation.



# Flying Dog Tire Bite Golden Ale

## New Holland Sundog Amber Ale

### Flying Dog Brewery

Frederick, Md.

www.flyingdogales.com, Phone: 301-694-7899

Distribution: Throughout the United States and Europe; more info is available online.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** fried chicken, bold-flavored cheeses like provolone piccante, grilled hamachi

**Contrast:** ripe, soft cheeses such as an aged Camembert; Philly cheese steak sandwiches

### Judges' Notes

With Tire Bite Golden Ale, Flying Dog shows why they are a powerhouse, perennially award-winning brewery. Exceptionally well-crafted, this brew is crisp, refreshing and reminiscent of the fruitier examples of the classic Kölschbiers. Pours an inviting brilliant gold, topped by a meringue-like, stark-white head. Aromas redolent of orange-blossom honey, nectarine, Anjou pear and Muscat grape ride over creamy, Ritz Cracker-like malt and compel one to dig further. Tom complimented the clean cookie dough-like malt and hint of orange peel, and Lee offered high praise for the slightly mineral Pinot Grigio tinge to the aroma. As with any classic

golden ale, the flavor was all about finesse and subtlety, with the slightly grainy edge of the malt tamed by the lush fruit flavors of ripe papaya, Asian pear and just enough bitterness to balance. Given the beer's complex fruity flavors, Pete was pleasantly surprised by the crisp, quenching finish, commenting that this is a stellar session beer – "the stuff of liters." Tim offered that with some spicy Hallertau or Tettnang hop flavors, this beer would be a "classic." The folks at Flying Dog have a lot to be proud of, and Tire Bite Golden Ale plays a big part in that. This beer should have pride of place in any true beer connoisseur's working stock.

# 92

ABV: 5.6%

IBUs: 16.5

Serve at: 32 to 39°



Tire Bite Golden Ale

### New Holland Brewing Company

Holland, Mich.

www.newhollandbrew.com, Phone: 616-355-6422

Distribution: IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, MO, NJ, NC, OH, PA, SC, VA, WI, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** Yankee pot roast, mild cheeses like a young Port Salut, glazed carrots

**Contrast:** lamb vindaloo, sharp cheeses such as aged English cheddar

### Judges' Notes

A toasty, malt-accented interpretation of the style brewed with a very light hand on the hops. Pours lighter than expected, with a deep golden, almost iced-tea color and sparkling clarity. The cream-colored, velvety head lasts all the way to the end of the glass, evidence of the substantial maltiness in store. All of the judges were impressed by the overall finesse of the aroma, with exceptionally clean notes of caramel, freshly toasted bread, raisins and blueberries, and they all commented on the almost complete absence of hop aroma. Rick, however, did pick up some earthy hop notes in the background. In

contrast to the aroma, hops made their presence felt throughout the flavor, though the beer is still decidedly malty. Pete commented on the interesting blend of toasty malt and earthy hops, as well as the beer's impressive balance, but Tom noted an almost candy-like sweetness barely balanced by woody hop flavors. Throughout, the beer tended toward maltiness but carried enough bitterness and hop flavor to keep it from being one-dimensional. A finely wrought brew that the judges concurred would be an ideal session beer on a long evening down at the pub.

# 92

ABV: 6%

IBUs: 33

Serve at: 42 to 45°



Sundog Amber Ale



# New Belgium Blue Paddle

## Lakefront Klisch Pilsner



# 90

ABV: 4.8%  
IBUs: 32  
Serve at: 38°



Blue Paddle

### New Belgium Brewing Company

Fort Collins, Colo.

www.newbelgium.com, Phone: 970-221-0524

Distribution: AZ, AR, CA, CO, IA, ID, IL, KS, MO, MT, NE, NV, OR, SD, TN, TX, WA, WI, WY

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** pepper-crusted ahi, nutty cheeses like Gruyere, Hungarian goulash

**Contrast:** mild, sweet blue cheeses like Dolcelatte; beef chili; caramelized onion galette

### Judges' Notes

A New World interpretation of the traditional Czech pilsners, Blue Paddle is a beautifully conceived and crafted beer, displaying superb balance between sweet, luscious malt and Noble hops. A beautiful, yellow-golden beer with a dense, rocky, pure-white head, this is truly a classic pilsner. Bright, spicy and floral Saaz hops notes float over the sweet, honeyed malt. Tim picked up a hint of sulfur in the nose, and Pete noted traces of sweet-corn, both of which are appropriate for the style. All of our judges commented on the flowery, spicy hop aromas, and all agreed that the beer

would benefit from just a touch more. An assertively bitter yet eminently drinkable beer with soft, round malt flavor peeking out from behind the hops. Tom praised the clean, sweet malt and aggressively spicy hop flavors, while Rick found the hop flavors more herbal and reminiscent of thyme and rosemary. While hops definitely dominate the flavor, they do not beat the lightly biscuit, honey-sweet malt into submission. The flavors work in harmony to produce a truly memorable drinking experience. Yet another fine offering from Jeff Lebesch and the crew at New Belgium.

# 89

ABV: 5.4%  
IBUs: 25  
Serve at: 45 to 47°



Klisch Pilsner

### Lakefront Brewery

Milwaukee, Wis.

www.lakefrontbrewery.com, Phone: 414-372-8800

Distribution: AL, AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, KS, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, WA, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** bratwurst, mild Wisconsin cheddar, salmon

**Contrast:** spaghetti Bolognese, mild/sweet cheeses such as Danish fontina

### Judges' Notes

A very clean, crisp lager that deftly straddles the line between German- and Czech-style pilsners. The prodigious, creamy-white head, pale-yellow color and crystal clarity all speak of a masterfully crafted brew. Lightly spicy, perfumy hops dominate the nose, while faint cracker-like malt notes linger underneath. Pete appreciated the light peach and pear notes in the aroma, while Lee noted some hints of cereal grain. Soft, bready malt flavors were a little higher than expected for the style but were kept mostly in check by resinous, spicy Noble hop flavors. Additional layers

of hop bitterness and a light mineral backing lent to the overall complexity. Tom was especially impressed with the beer's overall creaminess, but Rick felt that creaminess was more apropos of a Munich helles than a pilsner. The judges agreed that a more generous hand with the bittering and aroma hops would lend needed character and improve this beer. Yet another well-crafted offering from Lakefront Brewing and the Klisch brothers, this beer has a deservedly large and rather dedicated regional following. This is the ideal beer for cruising Lake Michigan on a summery afternoon.



# Deschutes Green Lakes Organic Ale

## Samuel Adams Irish Red



### Deschutes Brewery

Bend, Ore.

www.deschutesbrewery.com, Phone: 541-385-8606

Distribution: AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, TX, WA, WY

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** Thai food; soft, ripened cheeses like Brie au Poivre; crème brulee

**Contrast:** beef tacos; flavorful, firm cheese like a smoked Gouda; onion rings

### Judges' Notes

A malt-driven example of what has become a uniquely American beer style, loaded with gobs of creamy, caramel malt. Typical of the style, this beer pours a deeply saturated copper and is brilliantly clear. Topped by a creamy, light-tan head, Green Lakes Organic amber throws massive caramel malt aromas complemented by hints of grapefruit and pumpkin-pie spice. Pete was pleased by the dark, lush, ripe fig and currant aromas, while Tom admired the fresh cookie dough malt character and traces of spicy black pepper. A finely balanced beer with substantial bitterness keeping the sweet, juicy caramel malt in check. Finishes surprisingly dry given

the intensely malty flavor. Tim enjoyed the deft balance between bright lemon-zest hop flavors and peanut brittle-like malt, yet Rick thought the beer could use a touch more bittering hops. The judges were split on this one, with some praising the huge maltiness and others looking for more hops all around to cut through the lingering sweetness. Overall, they thought this was a solid example of an American amber and offered unanimous praise for Deschutes's efforts toward sustainable, organic brewing. A well-crafted brew with loads of character, this is one of those rare "anytime, anywhere" beers that needs no excuse to pop one open.

# 86

ABV: 5.3%  
IBUs: 45  
Serve at: 42°



### Green Lakes Organic Ale

### The Boston Beer Company

Boston, Mass.

www.samueladams.com, Phone: 617-368-5080

Distribution: Throughout the United States

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** roasted chicken; mellow, salty cheeses like Red Cheshire; roasted corn

**Contrast:** hard cheeses like Garrotxa, Chilean sea bass; duck confit

### Judges' Notes

Another solid offering from a powerhouse brewery, Samuel Adams Irish Red ale is a smooth, seriously quaffable brew. Pouring dark bronze, almost copper, this beer is brilliantly clear with glints of burnished gold at the edges. As with the very best examples of the style, the aroma is redolent of sweet caramel and offers nutty malt hints under that caramel. There was no hop aroma to speak of, and that too is expected for this style. Lee was pleasantly surprised by the taffy and maple notes, as well as a Tuaca punch, in the aroma. Rick picked up on milk caramel and powdered sugar notes in the nose, while Pete liked the somewhat buttery, toffee aromas. Caramel malt takes

center stage in the flavor, with faint traces of other flavors like sweet butter, toffee and peanut brittle offering a bit of complexity. The judges felt this beer was a little too heavy on the caramel, and that it tended toward being one-dimensional. As Tim said, this beer had a big, dark-caramel flavor profile, and the finish and aftertaste are M-A-L-T. This is one malty beer, but there was a touch of tannic dryness toward the finish that kept the beer from being too sweet. Tom opined that the texture was "kind of juicy," and while a very sweet beer, it came up short of cloying. All in all, this is a very good example of the style and will appeal to any fan of Irish red ales.

# 84

ABV: 5.5%  
IBUs: 25  
Serve at: 38 to 42°



### Samuel Adams Irish Red



# Boulder Buffalo Gold

## Shipyard Export Ale

# 75

ABV: 4.5%  
IBUs: 22  
Serve at: 38 to 48°



Buffalo Gold

### Boulder Beer Company

Boulder, Colo.  
www.boulderbeer.com, Phone: 303-444-8448  
Distribution: CO, FL, IL, KS, KY, MD, MI, MN, NE, NY, OH, PA, WY

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** steamed mussels, dry jack cheese, avocado bacon bison burger  
**Contrast:** pungent blue-veined cheeses like Maytag Blue, vegetarian pizza

### Judges' Notes

A Rocky Mountain standard, Buffalo Gold is a pale, straw-colored ale boasting a substantial, creamy-white head that lasts and lasts. Aromas are generally subdued, as expected for the style, and are dominated by bready malt, peppery spice and a prominent buttery note. Rick observed a distinct fresh-churned, sweet and creamy butter note in the nose, and Pete commented on the subtle lemongrass hop notes. Grainy, sweet, biscuit-like malt flavors are right out front, yet the gentle hop bitterness managed to balance out the sweetness. The judges noted that this beer lacked some of the crispness expected in a

golden ale, and Tim detected some mildly off-putting tannic astringency. Tom offered praise for the faint whiff of vanilla and hints of lavender on the palate, while Lee picked up on some sulfur notes that were somewhat out of place in a golden ale. The judges unanimously commented on the complexity of this beer's flavors, while noting that that complexity was not necessarily apropos of the style. Buffalo Gold sits solidly among the profusion of excellent golden and blonde ales produced throughout the country. This is a quaffable brew, perfect to unwind with after a long trail ride.

# 75

ABV: 5.1%  
IBUs: 27  
Serve at: 35 to 40°



Export Ale

### Shipyard Brewing Company

Portland, Me.  
www.shipyard.com, Phone: 207-761-0807  
Distribution: AL, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, ME, MA, MD, MN, MI, NH, NC, NV, NY, OH, RI, SC, TX, VT, VA, WI, Washington D.C.

### Food Pairing Recommendations

**Complement:** chicken paprikash, lightly acidic cheeses like White Stilton, roasted root vegetables  
**Contrast:** soft, creamy cheeses like Teleme; lamb couscous; chorizo

### Judges' Notes

Alan Pugsley has built a well-deserved reputation as one of America's premier producers of British-style ales. Shipyard Export Ale stays true to Pugsley's vision and has built a substantial following throughout New England. Pours a brilliantly clear, deep gold, with a fine collar of creamy, ecru foam. The aroma is distinctly Shipyard, evincing all the unique toffeeish, butterscotch and mineral notes expected from a Ringwood yeast-based brew. Pete enjoyed the cherry and blueberry esters that rode underneath the butterscotch aromas, yet Tim and Lee were both struck by the appealing "saltwater taffy" notes. Underneath this mélange of aromas rides smooth toffee-caramel malt. Following through

from the aroma, the flavor explodes with Kraft butterscotch candy, a Viognier-like mineral slickness and more subdued fruity notes of melon. Lee likened the malt flavor to "Keebler crackers," and Tom felt the caramel helped moderate the overall graininess. Overall, the judges felt the diacetyl often overshadowed the beer's other flavor and aroma components, with a pronounced "movie popcorn butter" character, although it does have its adherents. Tim opined that this beer would benefit greatly served as a cask-conditioned ale, which would allow the butterscotch flavors to recede into the background. Shipyard Export is a beer to be savored at a harborfront New England pub when the first chill of autumn settles in.