



GRIZZLY DOUBLE IPA (left) and Love Ale, both from the HaDubim brothers. (Photos: Courtesy)

THE WRITER (right) raises a glass with 'superheroes' from Six Pack Brewing, at a recent craft beer festival. (Mike Horton)

Beer roundup for the new year

• DOUG GREENER

While we've been lying back over the summer, Israeli craft brewers have been busy developing a crop of new beers. The new year is a good time to catch up on some of them as we plan our toasts for the future.

Just as there are trends in fashion, food, celebrity status and Google searches, so are there trends in craft beer. One such trend now in North America and Europe is getting back to the basics; brewing a beer to achieve a clean, unadulterated taste.

This trend has reached the Beer Bazaar Brewery in Kiryat Gat (also known as Mivshelet Ha'aretz). They have brought out a basic lager beer named Gallagher. Nice touch, that: the name contains the style.

What makes a lager a lager? To explain while standing on one leg, lagers are beers fermented at lower temperatures than ales; lager yeasts tend to aggregate at the bottom of the tank, while ale yeasts prefer the surface of the liquid. I have no idea how the little fungi know to do this.

Because of the different yeasts and the cooler fermentation temperatures, lagers are generally more mellow than ales. They also tend to be crisp, smooth and light tasting. Ales are more robust tasting, fruity, aromatic and bitter. Almost all of the mass industrial beers brewed in the world today are lagers. That's what most people like. A crisp, cold brewski. Color, aroma

and taste are secondary.

The only thing Gallagher shares with these industrial giants is the name. It's simply called a lager; no adjectives, no hyphens. When we poured it from the bottle, it was a red amber color with almost no head, but with active carbonation. It has a full malt aroma, but almost nothing from the hops. The taste is what sets it apart from the industrial lagers. There's caramel and peaches, or more generally, cooked summer fruit. The finish is sweet and slightly fruity.

Gallagher is a very drinkable beer, meaning you can gulp it down to quench a mighty thirst. The moderate 5.1% alcohol by volume won't stand in your way.

Light lagers pair well with bold and spicy dishes (stir-fries, pizza and salsas, for example), which they cool off, as well as mild food (such as fruit salads, light appetizers and grain dishes), which they do not overwhelm.

ANOTHER TREND seeping into Israel from abroad is beer-grape or beer-wine hybrids. Actually, since many early beers – and I really mean ancient – were flavored with grapes, this is not such a modern idea.

It made its comeback in the US during the past five years or so. Craft brewers began experimenting with adding grape juice (sometimes including the grape must: skin, pits and stems) to the fermentation stage. The grape juice begins fermenting into wine as the wort (pre-beer liquid made from malted grain) ferments into beer. The result is a true hybrid, combining taste characteristics of wine and beer. They go well to-

gether, as our ancient ancestors also knew.

Israel's entry into this style is from the Sheeta Brewery in Arad, run by the husband-and-wife team of Jean and Noga Torgovitzky. They call this their Special Edition Beer, made with grapes from the Midbar Winery in the Negev.

As you would guess, beer-wine hybrids are strong beers, and this one is no exception, at 8% alcohol by volume. The beer's appearance is a cloudy dark amber. The aroma is redolent with malt, yeast, caramel and raisins, hinting at the fulsomeness to come. The taste is sweet with caramel, dried fruit and alcohol, reminiscent of a fruit liqueur or grandma's thick homemade wine. (They're talking about someone else's grandma, not mine.) The full body fills your mouth with bitter-sweet spice.

Sheeta Special Edition is the kind of strong, heavy beer best enjoyed during the colder months. There might be a few more bottles still available now on the shelves of beer specialty stores and bottle shops, but brewer Jean Torgovitzky told me that he plans to brew another batch that will be ready for shipment in the fall. Look for it. In Israel, it's sui generis.

YET ANOTHER trend from the US is a new beer style: New England IPA. Israel's entry



SHEETA BREWERY'S bottle of Special Edition, a beer-wine hybrid.



into this field is Holy Fruit, brewed collaboratively by Alexander Brewery in Emek Hefer and Mikkeller in Denmark. (Actually, Mikkeller is not a brick-and-mortar brewery at all. The owner, Mikkel Borg, makes collaborative beers with brewers all over the world. This is the second beer he's brewed in collaboration with Alexander.)

New England IPA is characterized by a very hazy to opaque color, massive fruit aroma and flavors from the hops (tropical fruits are favorites), juicy, a creamy mouthfeel and low bitterness. Since Holy Fruit calls itself a New England Double IPA, it can allow itself to be even more hopped than the regular style. If this sounds good to you, then Holy Fruit is a great beer.

Its color is a cloudy gray orange, and the aromas hit you as soon as it's poured: grapefruit, tropical fruit shake, mango and grass. You can't miss the peach in the taste, along with bitter citrus fruit, herbs and onion. The long bitter finish is very citrusy. Alcohol by volume is a hefty 8%. Alexander and Mikkeller deserve our thanks for introducing New England IPA into Israel – and for doing it with such a delicious version.

This is not the only collaborative beer that we got this summer from Alexander. Brewery owner Ori Sagy loves these joint ventures. At the same time that Holy Fruit was coming to market, he introduced 70, brewed in collaboration with the Faust Brewery in Miltenberg, Germany, to mark Israel's 70th anniversary. The idea was initiated and supported by the German Embassy in Israel.

70 is a German-style festbier, a lager made popular by being served at the Munich Oktoberfest, the world's loudest and glitziest beer festival. Festbiers are unapologetically malty, with very little hop flavors or bitterness. For this collaboration, says Sagy, a basic German festbier was augmented with Israeli wheat, not a usual ingredient in this style of beer.

70 is a good, solid example of the festbier style, with no surprises. The color is mid-amber under a small head. The aroma is solidly malt with some banana and vanilla. A medium and smooth body and mild bitterness complete 70's simple yet stylish profile. Alcohol by volume is 5.7%.

NEW THIS summer on the Israeli scene is Six Pack Brewing, owned by Eyal Noam, a former barman and writer on alcoholic beverages.

Around three years ago, Noam came up with the idea to combine his love of beer and superhero comics. He began home brewing with several friends and developed beer recipes and brands based on superheroes. More recently, he took the decision to go commercial by contract brewing at the Mosco Brewery on Moshav Zanoah.

"We are working now to expand our distribution to more stores and pubs," says Noam, "and to brew additional beer styles." Today, Six Pack has two beers on the market:

Ultimus is an amber ale, 5% alcohol by volume, which pours out a lovely copper amber color, semi-hazy. The dominant aroma is fruity hops, specifically pineapple, and yeast. In the taste, you get less citrus, but several sweet flavors – caramel and butterscotch candy – ending with a refreshing dry finish. Ultimus is well balanced between bitter and sweet and is just fun to drink.

The second beer from Six Pack is named Heavy Hitter Strong Beer, a 7% alcohol "Belgian trippel." Although roasty and sweet malt aromas were prevalent, and there was some malt in the taste (along with vegetables and caramel), I felt the malt presence wasn't strong enough for the Belgian trippel style. The body was also quite thin.

What was powerful was the aroma and taste of the

SIX PACK offerings: Heavy Hitter (left) and Ultimus. (Yonatan Argov)



HOLY FRUIT, Alexander Brewery's New England-style IPA, is brewed in collaboration with Denmark's Mikkeller Brewery.

yeast. Like some other Belgian tripels, there was a lot of yeast waiting at the bottom of the bottle. You're allowed to gently roll the bottle and mix in this yeast. This will add bitterness to the beer, but since it is very sweet to begin with, that's not a bad thing.

FINALLY, two new beers have been launched by HaDubim (The Bears), the brewing team of brothers Rotem and Dagan Bar Ilan. They use the facilities of the Beer Bazaar Brewery in Kiryat Gat. Rotem and Dagan brew some of the most interesting and sophisticated beers in Israel, and beer lovers eagerly await their new creations.

Introduced during the recent LGBT demonstration and parade is HaDubim's Love Ale, which began as a pilot project between a pale ale and an amber ale. "We express ourselves through making beer," Rotem told me. "That's how we talk. We wanted to make a statement in support of the LGBT community, so we dedicated this beer to them. We just made one batch. When it's gone, it's gone."

Love Ale, with its distinctive rainbow colored label, is still available in beer specialty shops and some liquor stores. It pours out a hazy red-amber color with a large white head and active carbonation. Take a sniff and you get citrus and pine from the citra and cascade hops, and some caramel and toasted malt. The first tastes are sweet fruit, mostly peach, citrus and caramel, but as you drink more, the bitterness increases. The second pour is much cloudier, and leads to a bitter, refreshing finish. Alcoholic strength is 5.5%. Leave politics and religion aside and just enjoy this tasty and satisfying beer.

Taking a walk on the much wilder side is HaDubim's Grizzly Double IPA (2018), a hop-bomb that assaults your nose and tongue with sensations from every direction. Clear yellow-gold in color, the grapefruit aroma is powerful enough to start your saliva flowing. There are also whiffs of tropical fruits and caramel. The tastes we conjured were bitter chocolate-covered grapefruit, toffee, juicy fruit, malt and some Bazooka bubble gum. The mouthfeel is full and the finish is bitter and tasty.

Although the alcoholic content is 9%, you don't really feel it. And although the International Bitterness Units are measured at a whopping 100, the tastes are not overwhelmed by the bitterness. HaDubim has brewed at least three other versions of Grizzly IPA in the past, and this one maintains and even raises the standard of their excellence. It's not a beer for everybody, but if you are a fan of India Pale Ale, don't miss this one.

The writer is the owner of MediawiSe, an agency for advertising and direct marketing in Jerusalem. He writes a blog on Israeli craft beers at www.IsraelBrewsAndViews.blogspot.co.il



A FESTBIER commemorating Israel's 70th anniversary, brewed in collaboration with the Faust Brewery in Miltenberg, Germany.



A BOTTLE of Gallagher lager from the Beer Bazaar Brewery.