

The Saaz has it!

Up in the northern reaches of N22 is Bohem's cosy taproom and there is no doubt that it is a welcome addition to an area with a shortage of pubs.

Bohem is a brewery with a vision but it has been a long road, as with most new breweries. The original concept of a brewery paying homage to Czech beer came into being early in 2015 and brewing finally followed some months later. The brewery managed to get half a dozen investors to help get the brewery off the ground.

When you talk to the people behind the Czech concept, it becomes an obvious approach. Both Zdenek Kudr and Petr Scocek (who informed me his surname is 'pronounced like scotch egg') hail from the Czech Republic. Zdenek is the CEO and looks after the sales and marketing and Petr is the brewer. Petr explained his background. He was born in Pilsen check, the home of Pils, and started as a home brewer before joining Bohem. Petr and Zdenek are clearly proud of the Czech Republic even naming the brewery after a region. Petr said 'The brewery's name, as you might guess, is shortened from Bohemia, famous for its beers'. And the love for the homeland doesn't stop there. Most of the beers use Eastern European malts and hops as their base, giving their beers a house style. The Saaz hop is a regular ingredient. Also, most of the beers have a link back to the Republic. They range from Amos, after Jan Amos, a famous educationalist, to Sparta named after Victoria Sparta, the football team.



The brewery, which is a few minutes walk away from the tap room, is tiny; just a one barrel brew length, making it one of the smallest commercial breweries in London. But with the commitment to 'lagering' (maturation) beers they have seven fermenters/storage tanks. The initial fermentation is 5-6 days at around 5-7 degrees Centigrade. It is then put into tanks to mature for at least 4 weeks, Petr adding that it depended on the strength of the beer, 'the stronger, the longer'. The tanks are sealed allowing the carbon dioxide produced during fermentation to sit on top of the beer. None of the beer is pasteurised or filtered.

Bohem is currently brewing at least 5 days a week with most of it being bottled and keg being



available on request as well as in the Tap Room, which is open 5pm-11pm weekdays and 4-11pm at weekends. They do things properly here, even employing a fully trained Czech barman, Marek Průša, who took time to show the London Tasting Panel the impact of how serving the same beer in different ways impacts on the taste of a beer. To see a video of a pouring, go to YouTube: <https://youtu.be/IXGt4Q6rGNk>.

Other outlets are few but growing outlets such as the Prince in N22 or the upmarket Langham Hotel in central London. Alternatively, come along to the forthcoming London Drinker Beer & Cider Festival

and you may be lucky to be served Bohem beer by one of the Bohem people themselves. Now there is an opportunity not to be missed!

Tasting notes

Victoria 4.2%

A golden coloured slightly hazy light drinking Pilsner with a smooth mouthfeel and a sweet butterscotch aroma. The flavour has a little fruit with a touch of caramel/honey and a building bitterness on the dry faintly spicy finish. Malts are Pils and Munich; hops are Saaz and East Kent Goldings.

Jan Amos 4.9%

This is Bohem's best seller. It is a typical Czech style Pilsner with lemon and honey in the aroma and flavour, which is balanced by a building dry bitterness that lingers in long aftertaste overlaid with a spicy hoppy character. The hops are Saaz and Kasbek (both Czech in origin).

Sparta 5.4%

More complex than the Amos, this tawny coloured beer uses Saaz and East Kent Golding hops. A bitterness and some spicy hops complement the Dundee orange marmalade and honey flavours. The aftertaste has orange peel, and a building dry spiciness that also has a touch of toffee. The colour and malty notes come from the use of Munich and Caramalt 2 malts.

Druid 5.7%

Described as an Oatmeal Stout, this is a multifaceted smooth drinking black beer with a roast and earthy hoppy nose and an oyster coloured head. The flavour has dark chocolate, sweet treacle and dark plum notes leading to a soft lingering dry finish of roast and a little sweetness. The hops are again Saaz and East Kent Goldings and the malt blend is a little more complex with Pils, Cara Munich 3, Roast Barley and Oat Flakes,

Henry 6.6%

Rich, sweet, warming golden beer with a desert wine-like character. Honey and fruit aroma and flavour with the honey remaining in the aftertaste with a little hoppiness. A good beer for cheese. Hops are Saaz and Herbrucker with Vienna and Pils Malt.

Vasco 7.4%

A one off beer described as a Double Imperial Lager but using two American hops (Mosaic & Simcoe) and British Fuggle and Admiral. It is a sweet beer with a strong hoppy fruity aroma (tropical and citrus). These flavours are also there alongside the bitterness that lingers in the finish, which remains sweet.

