

## Alphabeta

Michaela Charles is living proof that the beer industry, although still dominated by men, can welcome women as well. Starting in 2012, as a volunteer with Clarence & Fredericks Brewery, in Croydon, Michaela has forged her own path to become head brewer at Alphabeta, the five barrel plant at Pitt Cue, just a few minutes walk from Liverpool Street.

Before coming into brewing, Michaela gained industry experience by working at Wetherspoons but her big break came when Clarence & Frederick's co-owner and brewer, Duncan Woodhead, had to return to work and Michaela became the daily brewer. The brewery was eventually sold to Antic and now trades under the name of Volden. But never one to be idle, Michaela expanded her experience by cuckoo brewing at Head in A Hat before joining Alphabeta two years ago.



'The Brewery was already installed by the time I joined' said Michaela. The sparkling, well polished copper coloured kit is situated behind the bar but a number of vessels can be seen from the drinkers' side. Besides the liquor tank, mash tun and copper, there are three storage tanks. 'There is always one with a lager in it as I leave it 8 weeks to mature. It takes about three and a half weeks fermentation, then a diacetyl rest and then a further three weeks fermentation' Michaela explained.

Michaela is very much a one woman band and as well as brewing, she does the selling as well as anything else that needs to be done around the brewery. Although most of the beer goes to the pub, a quarter is sold elsewhere with some regular outlets such as Soho House and the Flavour Bastard Restaurant.



Brewing takes place around once a week. The core cask range is Cardinal IPA and Oak Ale with a selection of seasonals including Rye, wild hop and smoked beers every year. Looking for new ideas, Michaela recently went to Brussels, Prague and Bavaria and is now working on a range of Bavarian influenced beers, including a Rauch, which will be at this year's Great British Beer Festival this August. 'This is the first time our beers will be there. As well as our Rauch, we will be supplying our Oak Ale. I'm looking forward to it!' said Michaela.

But standard brewing is not the only string to her bow. Michaela worked with Tasha Marks, food historian, and Susan Boyle, from Two Sisters Brewing, to brew a 5000 year old beer recipe as part of a project with the British Museum. Said Michaela, 'The aim was to recreate Egyptian brewing techniques'. And the Oak Ale is far from an ordinary beer. Oak logs are smoked in Pitt Cue's kitchen and then added to the beer, which gives a smoky, faintly woody character and adds to the roast notes.

But whether you are into the ancient or modern, Pitt Cue provides a good opportunity to test out beer and food matching, as well as a pleasant outside drinking area for the summer. For more information see: [www.pittcue.co.uk](http://www.pittcue.co.uk) and to read about the Egyptian beer see: <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/a-sip-of-history-ancient-egyptian-beer/>



The London Tasting Panel were treated to a range of Alphabeta beers. Here are their tasting notes.

**Summer Weisse 3.4% keg** Collaboration with Two Tribes Brewing, London N7

Refreshing, easy drinking yellow beer with bubblegum, spice, citrus and a little banana. Finish is of warm pink peppercorns, lemon and butterscotch with a lingering dryness. The lemon and bubblegum is also in the aroma.

Cardinal and Summit hops; Maris Otter and dark crystal malts. Coriander and Juniper.

**Oak Ale 4.3% cask**

Smooth, dark Ruby brown best bitter. Chocolate roast throughout, which builds and lingers in the dry finish. This flavour is complemented by tangerine, a little woody character and a biscuity sweetness on the palate with a trace of hops. Aroma is of smoky oak.

WGV and Admiral hops; Maris Otter, Amber and brown malts. Smoked oak logs.



**Pilsner 4.5% keg**

Lemon and butterscotch flavour fading to a dryish finish in this yellow coloured beer. Aroma is of sweet lemons.

Hercules and Mittelfrau hops; German Pilsner Malt

**Honey and Sage 4.8% cask**

Dark Amber beer. Sage and sweet fruity nose that follow through in the flavour where the sage dominates over the fruit. Traces of honey on the back of the palate with a growing bitterness that is in the finish with sweet fruit and sage.

Fuggles hops; Mars Otter, Amber and Dark Crystal malts;, Torrified Wheat, green sage and honey.

**Vienna Lager 5.2% keg**

Collaboration with Two Tribes Brewing

Rich, well balanced, hazy, copper coloured beer with toffee, lemon and a growing spicy character and a trace of chocolate. Aroma has

hints of yeasty esters, fruit and caramel, which is also present in the dry, bitter aftertaste.

Saab hops; Vienna, Munich, Caramalt and Melanoidin malts

**Cardinal IPA 5.4% cask**

Honey, bitter citrus marmalade, hazelnut and bold piney hops, which develop in the increasingly bitter long dryish finish of this tawny coloured beer. Aroma is of malt, marmalade and piney hop.

Cardinal hops (Slovenian) and Summit; Maris Otter and Dark Crystal malt