

Bubbly Beerblefish – not a Squidling!

There is something just a little quirky about Beerblefish, and they are proud of it. Take the brewery's name to start with, inspired by the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. The book has also influenced some of the names of some of their brews such as the Pan Galactic Pale Ale and the Infinite Probability Saison, so called because the beer is brewed in winter (most Saisons are Spring beers).



Set up by husband and wife, James and Bethany Atherton, in 2015, they originally tested the market by brewing at UBrew before moving into their own brewery three years ago. It's a 4.5 barrel plant with seven fermenters in two rooms. There are another two fermenters hidden in the corner behind various casks that are awaiting parts so they can then be installed. Space is tight with a top floor for office work and a mezzanine for storing ingredients.

Unlike many other London breweries, Beerblefish is 85% cask, 10% bottles (all done by hand) and only 5% cask but this is growing. Glenn Heinzl, who does most of the brewing and sales, commented that 'It's hard to make a decent return on cask'. Glenn has his own beer brand too, Tankley, and James too has a second string to his bow, he still takes on IT contracts.

Glenn is assisted by Andrew Vaughan. This came about when James and Bethany were helping out at Crisis at Christmas in Paddington and they noticed that there were a disproportionate of ex service people there. So when the brewery was looking for some extra help, the ex service people was where they went. Andrew is going to be doing his IBD Certificate of Brewing later this year and has already started in some experimentation with new recipes on their mini kit.

In addition to the Hitchhiker inspired beers, there is Squidling, an amber ale, so called because James said 'We always joked that if we had a child we would call them Squidling' and Viking. The latter was brewed as something different for friends. It's a 5.3% Kveik, a Scandinavian beer style using heather, yarrow, juniper and Oak chips. 'No Vikings were harmed in the making of this beer' quipped James.

Beerblefish also like to delve into the British beer past, creating recipes paying homage to beers from the 1800s. The enthusiasm for these older beers came from reading Ron Pattison's blog: 'Shut up about Barclay Perkins'. The current range include 1820 Porter, 1853 ESB and 1881 Oak Aged ESB plus 1892 IPA, all 5.3% and above. Add to this an Imperial Mild at 7.1%, and James' explanation that 'We don't do weak beer' rings true.

The brewery's outlets are mainly around London but they do supply various people in Kent including the Orpington Liberal Club. If you don't come across them in pubs, then although Beerblefish do not have a taproom, they do have the occasional open day; see their Facebook page or follow them on Twitter to find out when and go and try Beerblefish's quirky beer for yourselves.



For a full list of the beers tried by the London Tasting Panel and tasting notes, see below:

Squidling 5.1%

Easy drinking amber coloured ale with banana, peach, marmalade fruit on the palate with a little roast note, which is also present in the aroma with hints of apricot and bananas. There is a spicy hoppy finish.

Maris Otter, Cara Red malts; Archer and Cascade hops

Viking Beer 5.3%

Interesting Kveik style beer with added heather, yarrow and juniper giving a spicy aromatic nose and flavour. These are overlaid with chocolate, some intriguing fruity tones and a little dark mahogany wood. The finish is dry with fading spice.

Malts are amber, brown and Maris Otter.

Infinite Improbability Saison 6.7%

A soft, smooth, gold coloured Saison with typical Saison earthy nose, some banana and tart fruit. The earthy notes are also on the palate where the fruit flavour is more orangey and pineappley, which are there in the slightly bitter aftertaste.

Maris Otter, Lager, Cara Aroma; Crystal, Golding, Citra, Hallertau, Archer hops; ale and Saison yeasts.

Imperial Mild 7.1%

Smooth, strong well balanced ruby brown mild with a sweet chocolaty character throughout. The flavour and aroma are complemented by blackcurrant and hints of dried fruits and black cherries with a little caramelised toffee. The fruit fades a little in the finish.

Maris Otter, Chocolate, Wheat, Crystal, Cara aroma; Promise, Goldings and Brambling Cross hops.

