

RAON LÛTHA  
MIRAGE – \$28

Michael Dempster the owner, brewmaster, and janitor, is the one-man show at this farmhouse focused nano-brewery near Boeing Field in Seattle. His tiny brewery is located inside a no more than 1,200 square foot space between two other “larger” breweries that all share the same building. He doesn’t have a big tasting room with a restaurant, it isn’t a fancy shrine to stainless steel, hell he doesn’t even have a front door (it’s a garage door). However, as soon as you walk into this space, you know you have just walked into something incredibly special. Hiding in every nook and cranny are old wine barrels, foeders, and the other parts and pieces to make and age wild beers! Although he makes a delightful collection of “clean” beer (his Hazy IPAs are delightful), it is his mixed fermentation collection that will truly blow your mind. This little slice of beer heaven shows Michael’s serious passion for brettanomyces, lactobacillus, and pediococcus.



MIRAGE’S NEWEST OAK FOEDER USED TO HOLD CABERNET SAUVIGNON IN NAPA VALLEY, CA

Raon Lûtha is a truly impressive mix of three distinct beers producing a tart blend that is then bottle conditioned with hibiscus and rose hips. The three beers include a saison that was aged for a year in pinot noir rosé barrels, an acid beer fermented solera-style in a foeder, and lastly, a barrel fermented wild ale. The pale pink beer has an amazing array of floral and light fruity notes that are balanced out with saison spice and bretty funk. Drink it now or hang on to this beer for a while to let it continue to get more complex. Most food will blow the complexity of this beer away, so stick to seafood or cheese if you are looking to open this for dinner.

HELSING JUNCTION  
THREE MAGNETS – \$19

It was a Saturday morning when we wandered into Three Magnets brewpub in Olympia for the first time. The food was good, the style was low key, the patio is gigantic, but the highlight of the trip was the beer... it was amazing. After meeting the two owners, pictured below, it was obvious why the beer was so incredible, because their passion for great beer is absolutely infectious. Their concept of Urban and Country beer was incredibly fun and practical all at the same time. The Urban program includes all of their clean beer for which they have taken home several GABF medals and ranges from hoppy to malty deliciousness. The Country program is their mixed fermentation beer project that absolutely knocked our socks off, which is why we are including one in this shipment. The Country project is located just across the street where foeders and barrels are aging some of the most intriguing mixed up beers in the Northwest. These beers and their complexity will continue to show off what Three Magnets can do long into the future.

The 2017 Helsing Junction is a saison that is brewed in the solera style. This essentially means that fractional parts of aged beer are mixed with fresh beer to produce a distinct style that has the benefits of both age and freshness. This particular beer was blended with 2014, 2015, and 2016 aged beer and fresh 2017 ale. The complexity of this beer is simply outstanding, not to mention it is basically drinking history. This is truly a classic saison with a bit of sour, funk, and all kinds of spices on both the nose and the palate. Enjoy this beer with funky cheese, a great dish of pasta or a roasted rack of lamb.



THREE MAGNETS BREWING OWNERS NATE AND SARA REILLY

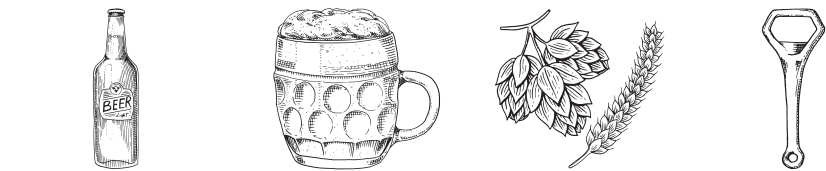
VALLEY FLORA  
CASCADE BREWING – \$20

If you ask any beer geek in the Northwest to name the top five sour beer brewers in the region, we can virtually guarantee that Cascade Brewing will show up on that list. Not only do they brew nothing but sour and wild ales, Cascade started in 2006, long before the current sour beer craze. Since then, the sour craze has taken off and Cascade has carried on their tradition of making some of the best examples of Northwest sour beer. Today, when you walk into their blending facility, you run straight into 1,600 wooden barrels and nine giant foeders all aging their next pucker-inducing, complex, award-winning beers. We raise a glass to Cascade for spurring on a revolution in the Northwest, moving away from hops into world-class sour beers.

Valley Flora is one of those great beers that makes you think about life as you take sips of the dark, rich, perfectly sour beer. The beer was born a combination of sour red ale and Willamette Valley Pinot Noir, a quintessentially Oregon beverage. With flavors of plum, cherry, and new oak, this beer creates exactly what Cascade started brewing for... a great Northwest sour beer.



A FIRKIN OF FRESH BEER IS TAPPED AT CASCADE BREWING’S TAPROOM IN PORTLAND, OR



<b>Raon Lûtha</b>  ABV: 5.3% IBU: 15 (est.)	Seattle, Washington  Mirage Beer Company	Nose: Light funk with notes of berries and wine Flavor: Red fruit with subtle tartness and rose wine	Chalice, goblet, tulip, or pinot noir glass  45° - 50° F
<b>Helsing Junction</b>  ABV: 7% IBU: 20 (est.)	Olympia, Washington  Three Magnets Brewing	Nose: Citrus fruit, barnyard funk, and spicy yeast Flavor: Sour and funky with flavors of lemon and spice	Chalice, goblet, tulip, or pinot noir glass  45° - 50° F
<b>Valley Flora</b>  ABV: 10% IBU: 15 (est.)	Portland, Oregon  Cascade Brewing	Nose: Sour red berries and wine barrels Flavor: Almost wine with bright fruit and acidity	Chalice, goblet, tulip, or pinot noir glass  45° - 50° F





WINE AND WHISKEY BARREL STORAGE AT CASCADE BREWING IN PORTLAND, OR

(think Trappist beers from the last shipment), which can be augmented by other brewer-added bacteria.

Alluded to in the previous paragraph, today's powerful souring agents consist of two different bacteria. The first is Lactobacillus, bacteria that turns sugar into lactic acid, and also makes yogurt tart.

Lactic acid is a powerfully sharp and clean acidic flavor that is evident in wine. The second is Pediococcus,

bacteria; in the same family that gives sauerkraut its "sauer," it produces lactic acid and diacetyl, a compound that can give beverages a buttery taste. The Pediococcus strains produce a more rounded and less sharp taste, similar to that in pickling.

Controlling the inclusion of these elements can be extremely difficult and time-consuming, which causes problems when trying to produce consistent flavors in different batches of beer. For this reason, sour and wild beers are usually produced in small batches, often even in single barrels, and many are one-offs created as a passion project by the brewer. Craft beer drinkers go back to a sour brewer who has found a way to create interesting layers of flavor in different brews, rather than the same great IPA time and again that he likes from another brewer.

With all of that being said about wild and sour beers, just know that there is far more to them than the tart flavor that so many are described as. In fact, at The Thief we find these styles to be a very exciting area to explore in today's beer world. It is true that sour beers tend to be a bit more expensive and complex than an IPA or a lager. However, when you consider the time and attention the brewer has taken to create these amazing beers, they are absolutely worth it.



FOEDERS AT RODENBACH IN BELGIUM. THESE FOEDERS HAVE MADE FLEMISH REDS FOR 100+ YEARS

# A WORLD OF BEER

## WILD FERMENTATIONS FROM THE NORTHWEST

"FERMENTATION AND CIVILIZATION  
ARE INSEPARABLE."  
-JOHN CIARDI



## WILD FERMENTATIONS FROM THE NORTHWEST

The original beer, sipped by some Mesopotamian dude (or dudette) many thousands of years ago, was, without question, a version of what we know today as a sour or wild ale. Before the modern processes of sterilization and pasteurization, it was difficult, if not impossible, to keep the wee beasts that sour the beer out of the brewing process. In fact, up until the invention of liquid cooling systems at breweries, beer was cooled to proper fermentation temperatures by placing the wort into a large vessel called a coolship to chill overnight. During that time, any wild yeasts, bacteria, and other bugs that were present in the air would fall into the wort and start eating the sugars.



ONE HUNDRED YEAR OLD COOLSHIP AT CANTILLON'S BREWERY IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Before the recent eruption of craft brewing around the world, these unique beers and their most notable producers all called either Belgium or Germany their home. Classic wild beers include Belgian Lambic, Flanders red, oud bruin and in Germany, Berliner Weisse. In recent years, craft brewers (mostly in America) have taken these styles, thrown out the rules, and rearranged the raw ingredients to make something entirely new.

So, what actually makes beer sour? As said before, it's some combination of wild bacteria and wild yeast interacting with and fermenting the freshly cooled wort. These bugs, which occur naturally in the air and on surfaces of fermentation vessels, make it tricky to not let them infect beer that you don't want to be soured. If you talk to any brewer, they'll tell you the vast majority of their time is spent cleaning and sterilizing, just to keep these rogue bacteria and yeast at bay.

More than likely, if you have drunk sour beers before, the most common name or term that you have heard is Brett. This term is just a shortened version of the wild yeasts known as Brettanomyces. Brett differs from Saccharomyces in that it takes longer to ferment, eats much more complex sugars, and can create fruity as well as funky flavors. I have heard beers infected with Brett be described as mousy, barnyard, horse blanket, pineapple, and mango. Believe it or not, in beer, these funky flavors are often considered desirable in moderation. In addition to these flavors and smells, Brettanomyces can also create a subtle hint of tartness