

LE SAINT-BOCK BREWPUB

MIRELLA AMATO

WWW.BEEROLOGY.CA

A few eyebrows were raised last year, when Le Saint-Bock brewpub chose to set up shop at *St. Denis* and *Ontario*, an intersection that already boasted three popular brewpubs. Le Saint-Bock's owners however, had a unique and ambitious vision: Unlike their neighbours, who only sell beer brewed on premises, they set themselves apart by offering a large and eclectic array of beers, in addition to their house brews.

This formula has proven to be quite popular. In fact, over the course of the year, Le Saint-Bock beer catalogue has expanded to meet demand. They now boast the biggest selection of draught beer (20 lines), and of bottled beers in the city. It's impossible not to be intrigued by the assortment of beers at Le Saint-Bock. Their house brews, like *La Pénitence* Cardamom Wheat Beer and *Omega-3* Flax Seed Brown Ale, are often inventive. Interestingly, the current offering, *La Bénédiction*, is a Schwarzbier brewed to style. Most of the other beers on tap are from Quebec microbreweries, with the exception of a few Unibroue products (including the hard-to-find, award-winning *Trois Pistoles*). The draught lineup always includes one or two eccentric choices, such as Rum beer, Tropical fruit beer or Mint-Blueberry beer. Manager/brewmaster Dominic Charbonneau likes to explore unusual flavours. If there is anything new or different being brewed in the province, Charbonneau will bring it in. Some of these beers are amazing, some are odd, but they are always worth tasting. Sampling is encouraged at the brewpub, and draught beer can be purchased in individual 4oz samples. This past spring, Le Saint-Bock added bottled beer to the menu. Counting over 100 brands, the beer menu includes Straight Lambics and a variety of Trappist beers, that are imported privately.

Le Saint-Bock is not just for beer enthusiasts, though. Charbonneau and the owners want customers to feel comfortable exploring beer at their own pace, and the wait-staff is trained to help novices navigate the ever-changing draught list. To accommodate individuals who don't like to drink beer, Le Saint-Bock offers an assortment of mixed drinks, as well as wines that complement the well-rounded food selection. The cheese-and-pear plates, for example, shine alongside a glass of apple ice wine. Le Saint-Bock has a lounge-bar atmosphere and deep leather chairs to encourage customers to linger and chat, no matter what they are drinking.

On October 13th, Le Saint-Bock celebrated their one-year anniversary. True to form they served some exceptional beers including a 1-year-old *Saint-Bock Scotch Ale*, a 10-year-old *Eau Bénite* (Unibroue) and *Val Dieu Triple* on draught. In the coming year, Charbonneau will expand the number of house brews available. The brewpub is also increase its bottle collection, hoping to include American craft beers, and expecting to reach 218 brands by January. Visitors are guaranteed to discover something new at Le Saint-Bock. As for the *St. Denis/Ontario* intersection: it has been dubbed "l'Axe du Malt" (the axis of malt) by the locals, and is now a necessary stop on any Montréal pubcrawl.

