

DRINK

Christmas always inspires the best in beer-makers, who turn out their most opulently spiced brews for the season. So why not a jolly Hanukkah beer, too?

The crafty folks at He'Brew (a.k.a. "the Chosen Beer"), have

answered that prayer with Jewbelation 12, a big-boy dark ale that really lit my menorah.

It's among the best efforts I've tasted yet from New York-based Shmaltz Brewing Company, which has a reputation for serious beers with schticky names like Messiah Bold, Rejewvenator, and a lager series inspired by Coney Island's freak shows.



Their twelfth-anniversary seasonal ale blends 12 different hops and 12 different

malts into a 12-percent-alcohol brew that packs real chutzpah into a bottle. It's coffee-dark with the decadent aroma of figs and spiced molasses cake, but isn't nearly as sweet on the palate as I expected — with a nicely hopped bitterness framing the flavor of black licorice snips, espresso, herbs, and an afterhint of dark cherry. After a couple of these at your latke party, the grown-ups will be spinning the dreidel late into the night.

He'Brew's Jewbelation 12 is available at local taprooms: Bishop's Collar, Sidecar Bar, and St. Stephens Green. It costs \$9.85 for a 22-ounce bottle at the Foodery Northern Liberties (2d and Poplar, 215-238-6077), or \$71.23 for a 12-bottle case at the Beer Yard (218 E. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, 610-688-3431).

— Craig LaBan