

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

San Diego, CA
Wednesday, December 12, 2007

Pint-sized Pour

Firestone Eleven, Paso Robles

Jewbelation Eleven, Saratoga Springs, N.Y

DOES ELEVEN EQUAL ELEVEN?: These beers share a name; alcohol content (11 percent by volume); general approach (strong dark ale in a 22-ounce bottle); and inspiration (marking their respective brewery's 11th anniversary). Both are excellent, as well, but each serves a different purpose.

WHERE JEWBELATION SHINES: This is a He'Brew Beer from the Shmaltz Brewing Co., so there's a gimmick: Jewbelation uses 11 hops and 11 malts. On my score card, the hops win – their bracing herbal notes cut the barley-and-booze sweetness, making this high-octane ale dangerously drinkable. Great balance and a brisk, unsticky finish make this a fine choice for holiday parties and meals.

HOW FIRESTONE ROCKS: Firestone Walker's blend of imperial ales and stouts is aged in oak barrels once used for spirits. You'd expect huge bourbon notes, then, but this sipping beer also yields molasses and licorice, plus a leafy smack of tobacco. This is a smooth and seductive late-night drink, a perfect companion for a quiet evening devoted to unwinding from the holiday madness.

WHERE TO FIND THESE ELEVENs: He'Brew is carried by numerous stores, including Bisher's Quality Meats in Poway and Pacific Liquor in North Park. Firestone Eleven is tougher to find – only 6,000 bottles exist, at a suggested price of \$16.99 each – so prowl large retailers or harass your local beer purveyor.

Note: Beers are rated from 0 to 5, with 5 being best.

BEER BIZ

AleSmith's Halloween party, delayed by October's wildfires, is set for 3 to 6 p.m. Friday at the brewery, 9368 Cabot Drive. Information: (858) 549-9888.

Oggi's Pizza and Brewing Co. 18th outlet is now open in Apple Valley, east of Victorville.

Steve Ravago is also dismayed by Pabst Blue Ribbon's resurgence (Pint-Sized Pour, Nov. 21), “but I will believe the real Armageddon has arrived when we see the return of Burgermeister and Reingold Beers.”

– PETER ROWE