

Notes from the road: Amsterdam

Amsterdam

Here as guest speaker at the annual Bokbier Festival organised by the consumerist organisation PINT (e-mail: info@pint.nl). The Dutch have a long tradition of Bok beers (they usually, but not always, spell the word without a "c") in October/November. When the worldwide beer renaissance began in the late 1970s, Bok was the only speciality style widely available in The Netherlands. Hence this festival, which began in 1977. This year, there were 50-odd beers, ranging from 6abv to eight-plus. One of the most widely praised was from a big brewer: Amstel's big, malty creamy, flavoursome, well-balanced, Bock. Among those from smaller enterprises, I enjoyed a delicate, fragrant, smoked brew, called Moenen Rookbok, from the brewpub De Hemel, in Nijmegen. This brewery was founded by Herm Hegger, formerly of Raaf and a consultant on the American wheat beer Wit. From the North Holland Alternative Brewers' Foundation (the acronym in Dutch is SNAB), I appreciated the smooth, sappy, oaky-tasting Ezelbok, produced in association with a local homebrew group in Heemskerk, North Holland. From the tiny Tesselse brewery, I was also taken with Skille Bok, full of perfumy, malty, "dry oloroso" flavors. More tasting notes - and a couple of brewery profiles from The Netherlands - soon.

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