

Cheers to unusual beers

New spots boast brews from way off the beaten path

By Sarah Freeman

A beer menu with plenty of craft options is pretty much a prerequisite in Chicago. But some of the city's newest restaurants are focusing their beer lists to pair with Belgian food, healthy Indian, spicy Vietnamese and more. That means you're likely to encounter beers you've never tasted—such as a Dutch ale brewed in a monastery or a Laotian lager with a hint of jasmine. Check out some of the most unusual finds at these new spots.

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LA TRAPPE ISID'OR

Telegraph

2601 N. Milwaukee Ave. 773-292-9463

It was quite a challenge to supply the Logan Square wine bar's eight lone taps with European brews, beer buyer Jason Baldacci said. "It's like writing a short story instead of a novel. In writing a novel you can wander a little bit, but in a short story every word counts," said Baldacci, who also manages The Bluebird's extensive beer selection.

Why you need this beer: Baldacci says La Trappe Isid'or (\$7) is one of his top-five favorite beers. This amber beer, brewed by Dutch Trappist monks to mark their 125th anniversary, features orange flavors and a dry, earthy, spicy hops profile.

BEERLAO LAGER

Saigon Sisters

567 W. Lake St. 312-496-0900

When Vietnamese dishes set your mouth on fire, a cold beer is necessary to extinguish the flames. "As we change our menu we are going to make sure we have new, interesting beers that are hot out there and hard to find," said Mary Aregoni, owner of the new

spot in the West Loop, as well as the Saigon Sisters in the French Market. "It's a small selection but it's very carefully done."

Why you need this beer: Beerlao (\$6.50), made with white jasmine rice, is the national beer of Laos.

TAJ MAHAL PREMIUM LAGER

Bombay Spice

111 W. Illinois Ave. 312-477-7657

Simplicity defines Bombay Spice, a River North restaurant that focuses on healthful Indian dishes. Its beer philosophy is simple, too: "We offer traditional imported Indian beer that people in India like to drink,"

manager Tyler Mendoza said.

Why you need this beer: Taj Mahal (\$12 for a 22-ounce bottle), named for the landmark palace, has citrus flavors that work well with tangy Indian dishes.

ROOTS HOUSE BREW

Roots Handmade Pizza

1924 W. Chicago Ave. 773-645-4949

"Nothing goes better with pizza than beer and ... we wanted a great beer list that complements our Midwestern roots and our pizzas," co-owner Greg Mohr said. Roots' beer menu is made up of more than 70

Midwestern beers.

Why you need this beer: Roots' special French-style country ale (\$6) is made by Two Brothers Brewing, of suburban Warrenville.



Lambrucha at Leopold
LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE

VANBERG & DEWULF'S LAMBROUCHA

Leopold

1450 W. Chicago Ave. 312-348-1028

The food and beer menus at this West Town restaurant are inspired by Belgium, but they're not afraid to break out of the borders. "We look for quality beers from both sides of the pond. A lot of people just throw anything that has a Belgian name on it and

claim to have a Belgian list," bar manager Chris Rulmann said. "We try to explore this in as much detail as possible."

Why you need this beer: If you like Belgian lambics, this one's infused with fermented kombucha tea (\$21 for a 750-milliliter bottle).