

# IMPERIAL POLARIS

## A BROOKLYN BREWERY/RINGNES COLLABORATION BEER CELEBRATING THE NORWEGIAN POLAR EXPLORER FRIDTJOF NANSEN

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It is not often that we get to feature articles from some of the bigger breweries in our region in the ‘Craft Beer Theme Issues’ of the SBR. So much more encouraging is it when it does happen as with this article on the collaboration between Ringnes in Norway and craft beer icon Garrett Oliver of Brooklyn Brewery – author of the three recent articles in the SBR on ‘The Oxford Companion to Beer’, which Garrett was the editor-in-chief of. Thanks to Gunnhild Tolleshaug for suggesting the article, and to Christian Ødegaard, former chairman of the Norwegian Brewmaster Guild, for writing it.

Ringnes is very proud to announce our collaboration brew between Brooklyn Brewery and Ringnes; Ringnes Imperial Polaris. Ringnes Imperial Polaris is a winter season beer, brewed by brewmaster Garrett Oliver from Brooklyn Brewery and Ringnes’ own Christian Ødegård at Ringnes. In brewing, we used Norwegian honey, Simcoe hop, dried orange peel and coffee. Inspired by Fridtjof Nansen’s first expedition to the North Pole, where bock beer from Ringnes brewery was served to the crew on board the polar ship ‘Fram’. The result is an outstanding and distinctively flavoured double bock, ideal for cold winter evenings. The beer holds 10% ABV and can withstand storage in your beer cellar for several years.

### IMPERIAL

The term ‘imperial’ was used in the 1800s for beer (usually stout) that was brewed in England and transported to Russia – especially to the imperial court of Russia. US microbreweries started, about a decade ago, to use the term more generally to indicate their top-of-the-line luxury beer. ‘Imperial’ is an indication that the beer is stronger in both taste and alcoholic strength, regardless of style. These beers are often brewed with extra large quantities of malt and hops and vary in alcohol content from 8% to 12% ABV.

### POLARIS AND THE FRIDTJOF NANSEN STORY

Polaris (α UMi, α Ursae Minori, Alpha Ursae Minori) is also called the North Star and the guiding star, being the brightest star in the constellation Ursa Minor (Little Bear). It is located



very close to the north celestial pole, making it the current pole-star. Thus, a very appropriate element in the name for a beer brewed in commemoration of a Polar explorer. It was an extensive and demanding work planning a polar expedition in 1893. Not least, building and equipping a ship that could withstand the rigors of the ice fields was very expensive. To assist Nansen in his efforts to raise funds and manage the economy, three wealthy Norwegians with strong commitments to promoting science: Brewery owner Ellef Ringnes, Consul Axel Heiberg and Merchant Thomas Fearnley established a support and organising committee. These enterprising gentlemen also acted as the polar ship Fram's shipping company and each themselves donated a solid financial contribution to Nansen's North Pole expedition project. At the same time, they stood behind the additional fund raising necessary to finance the expedition. In the archives, we find a lot of information, not just about the polar project economics, but for example also of the resources included in the construction of the polar ship Fram.

The prolonged isolation involved in such expeditions was a huge stress on the explorers, thus, the more important became the food and drink to bring and enjoy... *'Those left at home are thinking of us now, and sending us many thoughts because we must struggle so hard in the cold, arctic polar night. But if they could see to us and experience the gaiety and see our delights, I wonder whether the sympathy would subside. I have at least never before experienced this comfort in life and I have never before had more reason to fear the consequences of softness. Just see what a sumptuous dinner we had today (Christmas Eve 1893): 1. Oxtail soup. 2. Fish pudding with potatoes and stirred butter. 3. Reindeer with petits pois, beans, potatoes and cranberry jam. 4. Cloudberries with creamed milk. 5. Almond cake and marzipan (the latter was a gift from one of the expedition's bakers, we bless the man) And then - the widely famous Ringnes bock beer! Isn't that a dinner for men to be hardened and prepared for the horrors and dangers that lurk in the polar night?'* Quote from Nansen's two-volume 'Farthest North' (Fram over Polhavet) from 1897.

#### BREWING 'IMPERIAL POLARIS'

Ringnes have been importing and selling the Brooklyn beers in Norway for a number of years, which has involved a great deal →



of contact between Garrett Oliver and Ringnes, thus, enabling the fostering of the idea of a collaborative beer. After agreeing on the idea, discussions took place between Garrett, Gunnhild Tolleshaug from Ringnes NPD and the undersigned on the beer to be brewed, and we agreed to use the traditional Ringnes Christmas Beer (Ringnes Julebokk) as a solid Norwegian base for the 'Imperial Polaris'. The recipe for Julebokk was adjusted with a revised malt bill, additions of honey and orange peel, Simcoe hops and coffee – the two latter ingredients making up the American contribution to the list of ingredients.

Garrett, who is widely considered to be one of the world's

foremost authorities on beer and brewing, participated actively in the brewing of the 'Imperial Polaris' together with the entire brewteam at Ringnes. Garrett found himself amongst a team of Norwegian brewers who had made a very good deal of preparations in terms of the planning of the entire brewing process. 'This type of task is both exciting and challenging, and requires extra effort for the process to go as smoothly as possible,' says Ringnes' Master Brewer Christian Ødegård. In addition to using large amounts of malt, we also added other exciting, and for us rather unusual, taste and flavour contributors to the brew, including close to 1000 kg of

**WORT ANALYSIS**

Extract: 22.0% P  
 Colour: 70 EBC  
 pH: 5.2  
 Bitterness: 72 BU

**ANALYSIS IN BRIGHT BEER TANK**

Original Extract: 21.6% P  
 Alcohol: 10.0% ABV  
 Colour: 60 EBC  
 Bitterness: 49 BU



Norwegian honey! Both Christian and Garrett praise the team of co-brewers who helped with raw muscle power, smart ideas and solutions. In summary, the brew day was hard, tough and sweaty, but with a high spirit and very good atmosphere.

The 'Imperial Polaris' Recipe and Process

'The Imperial Polaris is probably the most unique beer brewed at Ringnes from it's founding in 1876 and until this day. Thus, it has been an extremely interesting and fun project for all the involved and Garrett has definitely given us an input of a new array of taste and flavour elements than what we are normally used to working with,' says Christian Ødegaard.

The recipe for the beer – a 310 HL batch of hot wort – can be found in the fact box on this page, and the process involved mashing in at 60 °C, saccharification at 65 °C for 60 minutes and mashing-off at 78 °C for 10 minutes.

Lautering as normal at Ringnes, followed by a 60 minute open boil. Bittering hops added at the start of the boil, the aroma hops plus the orange peel added at the transfer of the boiled wort into the whirlpool. The wort analysis is also shown in a fact box on the opposite page.

The wort was cooled to 12 °C and pitched with the Ringnes lager yeast strain. Primary fermentation at 12 °C, followed by a long maturation at cold temperature. After reaching the desired flavour

profile, the coffee was added, and the beer was coarsely filtered. In the BBT, the beer had the analytical values given in the box on the opposite page.

Half of the batch was then bottled as this years' version of 'Imperial Polaris', whereas the other half was racked into 'Heaven Hill' bourbon barrels where it still sits and will do so for a few more months. At the time of writing (late November 2012) we are getting ready for the first sampling of the barrel-aged portion, so everyone here are quite excited to find out what it will be like. The barrel-aged version will then be bottled as the 2013 version of 'Imperial Polaris' under the name 'Superior Polaris'. ☺

## RECIPE

### RINGNES/GARRETT OLIVER IMPERIAL POLARIS

Pilsner Malt: 6900 kg  
 Dark Lager Malt: 1000 kg  
 Caramel Malt: 1000 kg  
 Black Malt: 100 kg

Honey: 1000 kg  
 Orange Peel: 60 kg

#### Hop bill

Magnum: 18 kg (bittering)  
 Simcoe: 60 kg (aroma)  
 Coffee: 70 kg (Amistad)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ever since I met Christian Luxhøj and heard his lecture on specialty beer at the Scandinavian School of Brewing in 2003, life has not been the same. My interest in brewing history, beer types, techniques, equipment and raw materials keeps growing, and it does not become any less from meeting so many dedicated, charismatic and friendly brewers. Since I have been so lucky to work with beer since 2003, I feel very privileged. Unfortunately, brewing takes up less and less of my work tasks, but I practise it as home brewing with good friends.

Born at 'E.C. Dahls fødestiftelse' (E.C. Dahls delivery institution) in Trondheim 1972. 'E.C. Dahls fødestiftelse' was established by Erich Christian Dahls, founder of E.C. Dahls bryggeri.

Production Manager, Ringnes AS, 2012  
 Brewmaster, Ringnes AS, 2010-2012  
 Development Manager, Ringnes AS, 2009-2010  
 Brewmaster, Lervig Aktiebryggeri, 2008-2009  
 Brewmaster, Macks Ølbryggeri, 2004-2008  
 Production Manager, Macks Ølbryggeri, 2000-2004  
 Chairman, Norwegian Brewmaster Guild, 2008-2012