

# Micro-brewing in Italy: A success story

**EUROPEAN BEER STAR 2010** | The seventh European Beer Star (EBS) held in 2010 was a great success: An expert panel consisting of 88 jury members from 21 countries assessed 955 beers from more than 34 countries and awarded gold, silver and bronze medals in 44 different categories – from German-style Kellerbier, Bohemian-style pilsner and various Hefeweizen specialties to English ale, stout and herb and spice beer. Apparently, there had never been so many participating breweries and so many different breweries from different countries that made it into the winner lists.

**THIS TREND IS EFFECTIVELY DEMONSTRATED** by breweries from the highly innovative “beer country” Italy, which was more successful than ever with two gold medals, three silver medals and one bronze medal.

BRAUWELT International talked with **Giovanni Campari**, brewmaster at Birrificio del Ducato, Roncole Verdi di Busseto, Italy, about micro-brewing in Italy, his brewery, the awarded beers and the public response to the awards.

**BWI:** *When thinking of Italy, most people would still consider it a wine-country rather than a beer drinker’s paradise. Yet, Italy’s micro-brewing scene has been growing over the last years. What do you think about your country’s new-found love for craft brewing?*

**Giovanni Campari:** The Italian micro-brewing scene is expanding very fast: Five years ago there were about 100 micro-breweries, today there are over 350. In my opinion, this is a positive development. It means that craft beer is becoming popular, which is especially remarkable since Italy is indeed a country with a very long wine tradition. On the other hand there are many owners of micro-breweries that are not driven by passion or knowledge, and instead only looking for making a good business. That represents a threat for the movement, because if somebody who never had a craft beer in his life

has a bad experience, he will probably think that craft beer in general is not as good as a standard (industrial) beer.

**BWI:** *Birrificio del Ducato is an Italian micro-brewery. Please tell our readers a little about it.*

**G. Campari:** We founded the company in 2006, and after one year of working at the facilities and 6 months of training at a famous Italian microbrewery (Birrificio Italiano), we started the production at Birrificio del Ducato in Roncole Verdi in late

march 2007. In the first year we produced less than 400 hl. We had a bottling machine with a capacity of 100 bottles/hour and I was the only employee working in the production. Today, we produce about 1600 hl per year. We have a bottling line with a capacity of 1000 bottles/hour and last year we bought another microbrewery in a village 15 km away, with a production capacity five times higher than our first brew-house and a bottling line that can process up to 5000 bottles/hour. Currently we run two brewhouses and employ six people.

**BWI:** *You won several EBS medals. What made you join the competition in the first place?*

**G. Campari:** I have been entering my beers into Italian or international competitions from the very beginning, because I think it is very important to receive an objective opinion by renowned international experts in a blind tasting. Apart from that, getting an award is a big satisfaction for the whole brewing team and a fantastic reward for the long and hard work that went into the beers.

**BWI:** *Those of us who attended the award ceremony at Brau Beviale in Nuremberg in No-*



Creative, successful and full of passion for his craft: Giovanni Campari, brewmaster at Birrificio del Ducato

## Rassegna stampa

*vember last year already had the pleasure of sampling the winning beers. Could you give our readers an impression of your craft beers?*

**G. Campari:** Via Emilia (gold medal Kellerpils, EBS 2010) is a bottom fermented beer that draws inspiration from the best Kellerpils. It is straw yellow in colour, with floral and herbal hop aromas. It finishes with a strong bitterness with hints of acacia honey. It is balanced, elegant, simple and gratifying – everything a good beer should be.

Via Emilia was the first beer we produced, it is our flagship and it is brewed most frequently. Although it may appear a simple lager at first, it takes longest to produce, and the process is most delicate. It spends at least 6 weeks in the cellar, the first one for primary fermentation and the following four for maturation at 3°C. During lagering, a series of reactions happen allowing the young beer to age. At this point the hops is added. Every year at the beginning of September we travel to Tettwang (a small village in the south of Germany well known for the cultivation of high quality aroma hops) to directly select hops from the farmers.

Via Emilia releases such intensively floral and herbal aromas thanks to the dry-hopping process. This beer is dedicated to our land, which is covered by a blanket of fog during the winter and withered by a merciless sun during the summer afternoons. It has 5.0 percent abv and 11.5°P.

Sally Brown (silver medal sweet stout, EBS 2010) is somewhere between oatmeal stouts and English porters. Its colour is dark ebony and you can smell roasts similar to the ones of barley coffee; cacao beans and ash together with caramel aromas invite us on an olfactory journey. The use of plenty of oat flakes provides a velvety feel to its body, topped by surprising hints of smoke flavour. This beer is for those wanderers who will never reach their destination.

Sally Brown is the evolution of a kind of oatmeal stout I used to brew at home (its original recipe has been completely changed). It stands out for the use of 11 different kinds of malts. In the past two years I have carried out a research into the fascinating world of roasting in the attempt to create a smooth, complex, but also balanced and drinkable beer. Today, Sally Brown resembles a porter more than a stout. Its name comes from a song by Laurel Aitken, one of Jamaican Ska forefathers, later covered by the group Bad Manners.

When in December 2007 Bad Manners played in a venue close to Parma, I showed

Italian brewhouse



up at their sound check with a case of Sally Brown beer. They enjoyed it so much, they brought it with them on stage during the concert and while playing the song “Sally Brown” the lead singer said to the audience: “Sally Brown beer, the best!”. Those words filled me with pride and satisfaction, that night was truly memorable. The beer has 5.2 percent abv and 13°P.

Chimera (silver medal Belgian-style strong ale, EBS 2010) is a top fermented bottle-conditioned beer. Dark mahogany brown in colour, it delivers aromas of caramel, light roasts and fruit in alcohol (pear, plum and morello cherry) on the nose. In the mouth it is warm and complex with an unexpected dry finish that makes the drinking easier. Chimera represents our unreachable dream, the woman we have always been looking for and who we may never find. It is a beer for all those who are still dreaming, who will never stop searching for the happi-

ness they deserve. The history of this beer is quite troubled, in fact at its start it had been extremely different from how it is today. Although I feel I am getting closer and closer to what I want to express with it, its evolution will probably never end.

If I had to categorize it, Chimera would resemble a Belgian dark strong ale or vaguely a Dubbel. Actually, I got inspired to create such a beer after drinking both while in Belgium when I was very young. I am not exaggerating in saying that today's Chimera tastes like those beers which originally started my interest in this wonderful drink. The beer has 8.0 percent abv and 18.0°P.

New Morning (bronze medal herb and spice beer, EBS 2010) is another top fermented bottle-conditioned beer. It draws inspiration from Belgian Saisons. It delivers a hint of spices on the nose, which also lingers on the palate along with flavours of ginger, coriander, black pepper and field



Lucky winners at the European Beer Star award ceremony at Brau Beviiale 2010 in Nuremberg

flowers such as chamomile. Deep gold in colour with orange highlights, dry and thirst-quenching, with exceptionally floral and spicy aromas and an earthy bitter finish, it is an ode to spring. A journey through forests and valleys, a hymn of hope for the day to come.

This beer is dear to my heart. It was during the spring of 2006, while I was training at Birrificio Italiano (an Italian Brewpub), when an idea of this beer came to my mind. I was very happy and excited then, since the dream I had held in my heart for a long time was about to manifest. Every morning I used to wake up saying "Today is a new day" and, considering that at the same time trees were starting to bloom announcing the coming of the spring, I decided to brew a beer dedicated to this season, but also in a broader sense dedicated to the rebirth and new life. Which beer would have better served my purpose than a Saison, a beer strictly connected to the land and its gifts and directly brewed by its farmers of the Belgian Hainaut region?

The selection of herbs and spices turned out to be pretty difficult considering that I wanted to recall the scent of a blooming field and at the same time to make a fresh, intriguing, and pleasant-to-drink beer. I recall making herbal infusions every day one winter in order to find the right balance between herbs and spices. There was no doubt about the name: I called it New Morning after a *Bob Dylan* song about the joy and awe for life. New Morning was our first beer to be exported to the United States under the name Nuova Mattina.

In January 2009, U.S. Draft magazine included it in the world's 25 best beers 2008, while American magazine Wine Enthusiast included it in the world's 25 best beers 2009. It has 5.8 percent abv and 14.0 °P.

Verdi Imperial Stout (Gold Medal Imperial Stout EBS 2008) has a dense and impenetrable dark ebony colour with a cappuccino-coloured head. The nose has aromas of chocolate, liquorice, coffee grounds and tobacco with hints of liquor in the taste. It has a full body with a long lasting smooth and dry palate. This beer with an unexpected hot finish not only alters its palate fullness but also makes you crave for more. It is suitable for ageing. Since our microbrewery was established in Roncole Verdi, the birth place of Giuseppe Verdi, we felt compelled to dedicate a beer to the famous composer. After my first trip to New York I decided to create an imperial stout that would stand out for its balance, elegance and drink-

ability from the ones I tried in the U.S. It worked from the very first wort production, although the original recipe already had been refined. Its uniqueness lays in the use of chilli pepper which, through its classical pairing with beer's chocolate aroma, creates a hot finish that stimulates the palate by lightening the beer's full body and taste and making it more drinkable. Verdi Imperial Stout has been the first Italian craft beer in history to win a gold award at an international categorical contest (in 2008 it ranked first in the imperial stout category at the European Beer Star). It has 8.2 percent abv and 20.0 °P.

**BWI:** *Do you use the awards in your marketing strategy, and in which way? And what is the response in the media and from your customers?*

**G. Campari:** To be honest, we didn't create a proper marketing strategy to promote the winnings at the last EBS. Up to now, we have only communicated the facts through our salesmen and through the material we hand out to our customers.

The beer niche in Italy has recognized us as the most awarded Italian microbrewery, this is true, but the emphasis we get from the media is so ephemeral and we will need time to increase our production and distribution in order to establish our image within the Italian market.

**BWI:** *Mr. Campari, do you plan to enter the EBS competition again?*

**G. Campari:** Definitely! Entering the beers into the EBS competition is very important for me and for all my brewing team. Getting awards is stimulating to do better and it means that you are on the right way.

**BWI:** *Thank you very much for this interview. Keep up the good work and good luck for the next EBS Awards!*