



Henk Oexman, 'The Flying Dutchman', The Netherlands

Lager champion faces the ale challenge

Henk Oexman is Heineken's renowned *Innovation and Speciality Brewer* with an undisputed technical ability in the art of brewing – but brewing an ale in the UK will be one of the brewer's biggest challenges yet.

You see, Henk proudly wears a red star, respecting his status of 30 years' loyal brewing at Heineken. That's right – Henk's day job is creating premium brews of the lager variety. At the festival, as he brews Flying Dutchman Wit Bier, at Caledonian's Brewery in Edinburgh, Henk will be completing two firsts, as he explains: "It's so exciting and challenging – brewing this

wit bier is my first opportunity to brew an ale and also the first time I have seen, let alone brewed in, a traditional British brew house.

"Looking at the brewery, I was struck by some notable differences – to me, Caledonian Brewery can be described as a working museum, in the sense that it is using whole hops which are added by hand to the brew and also uses

direct-fired open coppers. As you can imagine, this is very different (in many respects) from my experience at Heineken."

Henk is no stranger to innovative brewing, however, having joined Heineken's brewing research and innovation team in 1991 to satisfy his endless curiosity for new tastes and processes, together with his passion for brewing. Indeed, Henk is someone who is glad to take his work home with him, since he has his own brewing set-up there also.

"A lot of things in life make me happy, but I am very lucky that my job is also my hobby and that my day can be spent exploring my natural curiosity for developing beers."

Henk has brewed an array of speciality beers for Heineken, many of which were brewed with different types of yeast, from Belgian recipes, resulting in high-ester beers, rich in flavours, with a little sweet note.

"My challenge and motivation in brewing are working with the recipe to try to achieve what you want from the selected ingredients, making small changes to the brewing method to achieve the desired beer profile – an exciting test of a brewer's skills.

"Brewing Flying Dutchman for Wetherspoon's customers is a very great chance to showcase a genuinely new beer, one brewed using full flower hops with influences

from some of the styles of beer which we have been creating in the innovation brewery team at Heineken. This is truly a first of its kind: although a unique experience for me, it is also such for the beer-drinker.

"Hopefully, every pint of Flying Dutchman Wit Bier will be enjoyed as much as I have enjoyed brewing this unique beer – and 'fingers crossed' I will be invited back."

We share Henk's ambition in hoping that his brewing firsts for the festival will not be his last.

Tasting notes

Brewed with pale and wheat malt to create a light-bodied spring ale, this beer's refreshing characteristic is enhanced by the addition of coriander and orange peel for that spicy bite. This style of beer exists in Belgium and The Netherlands and is called 'wit bier' or white beer. The lightness of body from the wheat and

a firm tartness from the Northdown and Fuggles hops and yeast perfectly offset the smoothness of the malt and sweetness from 'secret' ingredient liquorice – making this among the most refreshing of beer styles. Traditionally, the secret ingredient would be known to the brewer and brewer's herb merchant only.

So, what did you think of the lager champion's real ale? Register your vote: www.jdwetherspoon.co.uk

