

PALM Puts Down Roots in U.S. Market

No country has a more varied and vibrant beer culture than Belgium, and one of that country's busiest brewers is Jan Toye, head of PALM Breweries. Toye made a trip to the States recently to promote the launch of PALM ale on draft in several U.S. markets, including New York City, New Jersey, Connecticut and parts of Southern California. Bottles will follow in a few months.

A family affair, the brewery has a history dating back 260 years; the PALM brand name was introduced in 1929 as a sign of victory for traditional Belgian-style ales over increasingly popular lagers. Toye is structural engineer by profession, but he added post-graduate studies in brewing to his résumé when he assumed the reins of the family beer dynasty in 1974. Since that date, PALM's growth has been steady.

In addition to the main brewery in Steenhuffel, the company now operates a facility in the Netherlands and in 1999 built a state-of-the-art plant in Poland to help satisfy the thirst of the country that has become Europe's largest growth market for beer. Besides PALM ale, the brewery also produces the Brugge Blond and Brugge Tripel from Brouwerij De Gouden Boom.

But PALM isn't just about growth; it's also about preserving Belgium's rich beer culture. In

1998, for example, the company assumed control of the historic Rodenbach brewery in Roeselare as a cultural project in order to preserve this important piece of tradition, and they also co-own



Jan Toye (right) introduces PALM with Johnny Rivera of The Tractor Room in San Diego, CA.

the unique Brouwerij Boon, maker of naturally-fermented lambics. Since 2003, the monastic ales of the abbey of Steenbrugge in Bruges have been brewed by PALM through special authorization. PALM was also deeply involved with the creation of the Association for the Belgian Draught Horse to help promote the breed, once near extinction, that is featured on the PALM logo.

"Belgium is unique in that there are four fermentation styles—top-fermentation, bottom-fermentation, spontaneous fermentation and sour fermentation—and we're the only company that has all four," notes Toye. "Something for every taste!"

PALM Breweries is represented in the U.S. by Latis Imports. ■■