

Church on Tap: Congregation Brews Beer to Attract New Members

A Brussels church that was nearly forced to close its doors for lack of parishioners has turned to the Belgian brewing tradition and launched a new beer in order to raise more funds for a now growing congregation.

St. Catherine's Church, by the city's increasingly gentrified canalside docks, partnered with a local brewery to create Ste Kat', a strong, fruity pale ale that uses the affectionate local name for the church.

"You could say that it's an image of the church, that it's effervescent, full of life," Father Jeremie Schaub, the Roman Catholic priest who helped create the beer with a local brewery which is itself a recent start-up, the Brussels Beer Project.

"It's also a little bit the image we want to portray of St. Catherine's Church."

The beer will be sold to fund renovations to the 19th century structure, which Brussels city council considered knocking down a few years ago, thinking to build a market or housing. A parish outing to a theme park is also on the cards.

The beer will be sold through a church shop and will also be available at restaurants and cafes in the resurgent nightlife quarter around the neo-Gothic church in central Brussels.

Ste Kat' is based on the local tradition of abbey beers and Trappist breweries, a brewing process based on the type of yeast used by Trappist monks since the 1800s. The beer has more exotic flavors and hops than the traditional Belgian

style.

At 7-percent alcohol it is less potent than some of its local competitors—but still packs nearly twice the punch of a typical international lager.

The Brussels Beer Project will brew about 50,000 bottles in a first phase, to see how well it sells. {eoa}

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