

Brasserie Au Château Lausanne, Switzerland

Tim Holt

In my *Rough Guide to Switzerland* it states that the country's wine is probably its best kept secret. However, I would suggest that a beer brewed in Lausanne is even more esoteric as, to my knowledge, this I.P.A. is the only draught real ale in Switzerland. It is produced by Brasserie Au Château, housed in an early nineteenth hundreds two-storey building to the north of the city centre on the Place du Tunnel. The owner, Eric Borgeaud, was inspired to establish his own brewery after spending part of the 1990s working in Montreal under an English brewer at Au Sergent Recruteur. This was also the beginning of his fascination with I.P.A.

Returning to Europe he gained further brewing experience by undergoing a three week course run by Leuven University in Belgium. He also made a number of trips to visit microbreweries in the London area and was particularly impressed by how the Orange Brewery, Pimlico, and the Freedom Brewery, Covent Garden (both now closed), made the brewery plant an integral part of their pubs and very much on view. He came to the conclusion that to make an English style beer such as I.P.A. you need to use

English equipment. Consequently, he purchased his plant second-hand in the U.K., had any wood-cladding removed and had it shipped to Lausanne. Interestingly the storage tanks, housed in the cellar, were previously used in a dairy and converted to their present use by Advanced Bottling U.K.

In November 1997, after two months spent installing the equipment and carrying out trial brews, Eric produced his first commercial pint. In 2006 he took on his first trained headbrewer, Frenchman Olivier Thomann. Olivier gained a degree in chemical engineering from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology which included a module on the industrial applications of biotechnology. Coincidentally he also obtained first-hand experience of the trade in Montreal, this time at the R.J. Brewery, a company founded in 1998 by the merger of three microbreweries. After two years he returned to France, was eventually taken on by Eric and immediately set about improving the brewing procedures and beer recipes.

Like the equipment the majority of the ingredients are sourced from England. Cascade and Goldings hop cones are

imported from across the Channel, the malt is supplied by Thomas Fawcett and Sons Ltd. and a strain of Nottingham Ale yeast is used. Apart from an I.P.A. the Brasserie Au Château also produces a distinctive ginger beer, a seasonal and highly flavoured apricot beer, plus other more continental style beers. Olivier is keen to experiment with new brews when time allows.

Unfortunately, due to the limited space occupied by the brewery, expansion is not possible. However, both Eric and Olivier continue to express a passion for brewing real ale and are making some headway in changing the drinking culture of this part of Switzerland. If you find yourself in Lausanne do not miss the opportunity to taste a unique beer.



Figure 1. Brasserie Au Château, Lausanne. The brewery occupies the right hand side of the ground floor.



Figure 2. The cellar showing the six storage tanks. Photo: Olivier Thomann.



Figure 3. On the left, the fermenting tank with a volume of approximately 1,300 litres. On the right, a 20 litres keg fridge for private events and, above, a window with a view onto the brewery from inside the pub.



Figure 4. On the left, the cooling system and on the right a fermenting tank also approximately 1,300 litres in capacity.



Figure 5. The mash tun.



Figure 6. General view of the brewery. Photo: Olivier Thomann



Figure 7. General view of the brewery. Photo: Olivier Thomann



Figure 8. A fermenter.



Figure 9. The kettle.