

RARE BEER STYLES #1 Grisette  
by Elvis (October 2006)

To understand Grisettes it helps to understand Saisons. Saisons were originally brewed to quench the thirst of field workers after they were done working in the hot summer sun. Since brewing was difficult in the summer, these beers were usually brewed in the fall before temperatures got too hot (we can all relate, huh?) In order to make these beers stable for months of storage, they were fermented very dry and pretty hoppy. The OG of early Saisons were around 1.045 and were meant to be refreshing. Modern examples are often much stronger and the term Saison in Belgium has more of a sense of “seasonal” instead of a “summer” beer meaning. Nowadays, there could even be a dark winter Saison. Got it?

Okay, back to Grisettes. Remember how Saisons were for field workers? Well, Grisettes were for miners.

Meant to be a thirst quencher after working in the mines all day, these were similar to Saisons in profile: golden, crisp, pretty hoppy with a Belgian yeast flavor.

The difference between the two is that Saisons are a bit “wilder” and often use spices while Grisettes are cleaner and more straightforward; think of it as the Belgian’s Kolsch.

There is only one commercial brewer of Grisette today and they have gone in the direction of modern Saisons offering amber and dark versions. This is a no brainer for hot New Orleans brewing as it is crisp and refreshing yet full flavored and can be brewed at close to 90 F.

Here is a basic Grisette recipe for you to brew at home (5 gallons):

7.5# Pils malt

1# Wheat malt

7% AA boiling hops (Goldings, Hallertau, Spalt, whatever)

0.5 oz. Styrian or East Kent Goldings (last 20 min.)

0.5 oz. Goldings (last 2 min.)

Belgian Ale Yeast (this is a good recipe to do 10 gallons and split amongst multiple yeasts to decide your personal favorite)

Ferment at 75 – 85 F for 1 week, bottle or keg and age for 2 more weeks.

If bottling, prime with 180 – 190 grams of sugar per 5 gallons.

O.G. 1.044 F.G. 1.009

Cheers, -Elvis