

Gadd's Sixpack

With malt and hops as dynamically balanced as a surfer in the tube, **California pale ales** ride the crest of the American craft-brew movement

by David Gadd



Firestone Pale 31 Pale ale is the specialty of the house at the Firestone Walker Brewery, and nobody does it better. Pale 31 is the California-style version, named for the 31st state and made with a generous dose of Pacific Northwest-grown hops that give it an intense herbal-pepper nose and a definite West Coast stance on the palate. Like all the Firestone brews, beautifully made.

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale The bacon-fat and pepper nose is one of the most inviting in the business, and the stuff only gets better on the palate, where the texture manages to be both lusciously viscous and thirst-quenchingly crisp at the same time. Ripe tropical fruit tones backed with a full-on dose of IPA-level hops. One of California's benchmark beers.

Stone Brewing Pale Ale The opulent, rosin-like color is just first hint that this is going to be a special "pale" ale. Sweet, grainy malt on the nose. More assertive than aggressive on the palate, with a complex interplay among malt, alcohol and hops. Another excellent beer from Stone; buy a sixer—you're gonna want more than one.

Marin Brewing Mt. Tam Pale Ale Brewed in the shadow of brooding Mt. Tamalpais, just north of San Francisco, this sudsy, coppery quencher unleashes nicely balanced hops and malt on a medium-bodied texture that coats the throat as it glides down the gullet and turns citrusy, and bit metallic, on the finish. My pick for best brew by which to watch

the fog roll through the Golden Gate.

Mendocino Brewing Blue Heron Pale Ale

Bottle-conditioned, like all the Mendocino Brewing releases, Blue Heron is perhaps the only pale ale to qualify as a genuine meal in a bottle, a distinction usually reserved for porters and stouts. Rich, unctuous mouthfeel; ripe malt tone jazzed up with plenty of feisty hops. Pretty much a classic of the type.



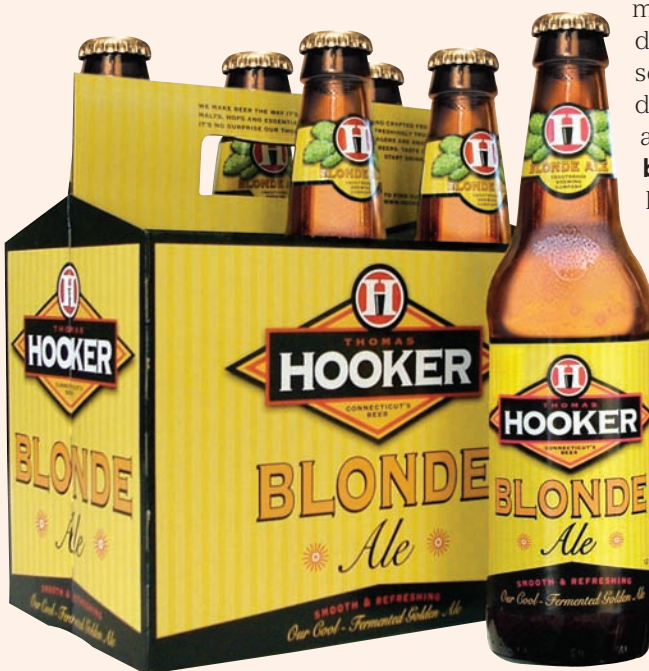
Anderson Valley Brewing Poleeko Gold Pale Ale

Nose redolent of sticky hops that explode onto the palate with a bracing, if not alarming, bitterness. Don't worry: there's plenty of suave malt richness to complement the shrill tones. A gorgeous and unique mouthful of beer that's imminently drinkable. ■■

Getting Hooked

Naming a beer after a Puritan theologian doesn't strike me as a particularly good idea—about as appropriate as naming a church after Hugh Hefner—but who am I to judge? In the case of Thomas Hooker beers, the connection is not to the Reverend

While some craft brewers tend to overextend their lines, the Hooker portfolio is diverse without being unwieldy and is evenly balanced between lager and ales, with a quad of each on the standard menu. On the lager side, there's a rich and tasty **Imperial Porter**



made with eight different malts, a serious doppelbock dubbed **Liberator**, an autumnal **OctoberFest** (which I haven't yet tasted) and a Helles-type golden beer called **Munich-Style** that's one of the best of the Hooker brood.

The ale side of the aisle includes **Hop Meadow IPA** (which shows a rather restrained hand in the hop-sack for its type),

an **American Pale**

Ale with California on its mind, a refreshingly quaffable **Blonde Ale** with mass appeal and a rufous **Irish Red Ale** that delivers a malty mouthfull. Hooker has also just released a new **Watermelon Ale**, a chillin' summery brew with real garden-fresh watermelon flavor.

There's an understated house style across the board with these beers that's appealing in a just-post-Prohibition kind of way; while sampling, I kept thinking that W. C. Fields would have loved them. Maybe Hooker isn't such a bad name for a beer after all. ■■

Hooker's religious beliefs, but to his connection with Connecticut history: Hooker, you see, was the founder of the town of Hartford and one of the creators of the state's constitution.

Established more than ten years ago as the brewing arm of local Bloomfield, CT, brewpub Trout Brook, the company revamped its marketing strategy in 2003 and re-launched its line-up nationally under the Thomas Hooker name. The company and its brands were purchased by a group of private investors two years ago.

PURVEYOR TO HM THE QUEEN OF DENMARK'S HOUSEHOLD
WARRE'S OTIMA

More than just good looks.



- 2004 GOLD MEDAL
INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE
- 2005 GOLD MEDAL
INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRIT COMPETITION
- 2005 SILVER MEDAL
INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE
- 2006 SILVER MEDAL
INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE
INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRIT COMPETITION
- 2007 SILVER MEDAL
DECANTER AWARDS
INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE
- 2008 SILVER MEDAL
INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRIT COMPETITION
INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE
DECANTER AWARDS

www.warre.com | www.vineyardbrands.com
Vineyard Brands | Birmingham, AL



European Winery of the Year 2007
Wine Enthusiast Magazine

Please Enjoy Our Wines Responsibly.