

A subterranean brewhouse

Situated near the bustle of Fleet Street, Inns of Court and Temple Inns, the Essex Street Brewery nestles beneath your feet. Hidden in the cellar of the Temple Brewhouse, this 5 barrel plant is probably not that well known to a lot of Londoners.



Vanessa de Clac is in charge; one of a handful of brewers in the Capital. What she does have in common with other brewers is that she is part of the influx of people from outside the UK who are bringing their own individual take on beer, including trad beer styles.

Vanessa's background is an interesting one for a brewer. Vanessa come from Rioja in Spain, more famous for its wine than beer. She studied chemistry and microbiology in Spain but 15 years ago she came to Britain to study garden design. When she finished, she did some bar work, loved it and her interest encouraged her to remain in the industry.

The City Pub Group bought the Temple Brew House five and a half years ago, with the brewery opening a year later. Vanessa was working for the pub group as a support manager. When she heard that there was going to be a brewery, she applied for the role and got it! While the brewery was being built, the City Pub Group allowed her to work four days a week in her normal role with one day a week training. Vanessa did her training at Brew Lab in the North East. She is Essex Street's only brewer, brewing all on her own without any assistance. 'I have muscles' she said.

Vanessa quipped that her size may have had something to do with her getting the job: 'I'm small and there isn't much room in the brewery'. Vanessa might not be the tallest of brewers but her enthusiasm for brewing is giant size with her excitement showing through as she talks about her beers. Two beers have been with her since the beginning, Tempale and Temp APA. These permanents have been added to by a gluten free Porter but, like all brewers, she likes to experiment. Take the Seaweed Gose. There can't be many brewers who did what she did. Vanessa actually went and collected all the seaweed all on her own. The beer was then brewed with 15 women as part of International Women's Day.

Most of Essex Street's beers are designed for quaffability, usually below 5%. Vanessa explained 'If someone comes in and has a beer at 6%, they are likely to have only one. Lower alcohol beers encourage people to try a couple'.

Vanessa took the London Tasting Panel through a range of her beers, both cask and keg and when asked if anyone would like a nightcap, the overwhelming request was for her Intercity Stout , a creamy 6% complex stout with creamy milk chocolate and roasty coffee . Enough said!



You can find the list of all the beers tried by the London Tasting Panel below:

Little Thunder Session 3.5%

Smooth golden ale with a sweetish nose full of fruit. The flavour is full of grapefruit and tropical notes with an underlying biscuit sweetness. There is with a building strong hoppy bitterness that lingers in the dry finish.

Maris Otter, Oats; Cascade, Amarillo and Mosaic hops

Tem Pale 3.8%

Well balanced ruby brown bitter with cocoa and caramel on the nose and flavour. Fruity flavour with some floral hops leading to a pleasant dryish bitter finish with some developing peppery hops.

Fuggles hops; pale, crystal and Munich malts

American Pale Ale 4.3%

Previously called The Gavel, this hazy light drinking golden ale has a sweetish, earthy hoppy, fruity aroma. The biscuit flavour is full of American hops (pine, sweet orange and grapefruit) that fade in the dry hoppy bitter lemon pithy finish.

Chinook, Citra and Amarillo hops with pale malt.



Citra Pale Ale 4.5%

Citrusy nose with a touch of biscuit. Lemon marmalade notes dominate the flavour over sweet biscuit notes. Aftertaste is dry with a pithy bitterness and a resinous hop flavour in the lingering dry finish.

Mermaid Seaweed Gose 4.5%

Sweet, creamy yellow beer with banana aroma and flavour. The taste is of salty lemonade with a touch of tartness that fades in the finish with a hint of bitterness. Refreshing.

Uses lactobacillus, Saison yeast with handpicked seaweed.

Gluten Free Porter 4.5%

Ruby black porter with smoky nose overlaid with chocolate, raisins and prunes. The taste is reminiscent of Terry's Dark Chocolate Orange with digestive biscuits and damsons, which continue into the aftertaste, which is dry and roasty with a hint of sweetness. Creamy mouthfeel.

Pale, Chocolate, Roast Barley, Wheat; Phoenix hops.

Dry Stout 5%

Black smooth stout where the dark roast of charcoal, espresso coffee and burnt toast notes are overlaid by faint spicy hops and some liquorice and treacle. Dark roasty nose and finish.

Contains roast barley, chocolate malt, wheat and Phoenix hops.

Intercity Stout 6%

Complex sweet, creamy stout with dark roasty chocolate notes and a hint of dark fruits. The sweetness lingers in the aftertaste which balanced by the dry, fractionally bitter roastiness.

Oats, roasted wheat, crushed barley and Maltodex