

# Canadian Beer of the Year...

....again!

Right: Canada's Beer of the Year for the second year running.

**Award-winning Halifax microbrewer, Garrison Brewing Co, was once again honoured with the prestigious 'Canadian Beer of the Year' title for its' Imperial Pale Ale at the Canadian Brewing Awards.**

by **Daniel Girard**  
and **Brian Titus**  
Garrison Brewing



A small, chic space in downtown Toronto brims with beer folk from across the country. Regional jokes and good-natured barbs are traded over samples of this country's finest brew. Brewers, owners, sales managers and press, all gathered to celebrate the successes of another year. The MC, noted beer writer Stephen Beaumont ([www.worldofbeer.com](http://www.worldofbeer.com)), works his way through 21 different styles and categories, but the big awards would not be announced until the end. Finally, with the highest rating of any entered beer, Garrison takes top honours with its extreme Imperial Pale Ale – again!

Remarkably, this is the second year in a row that this beer has garnered not only gold in the India Pale Ale style, but top honours overall. So what makes it so exceptional? Firstly, it is part of an extreme hybrid style emerging with a vengeance throughout North America – Imperial or Double India Pale Ales. These over-hopped, extra-strong versions of the classic IPA style are built to last not only an overseas trip to the Far East... but back as well! 90 Minute IPA (Dogfish Head), Stone Ruination (Stone Brewing) and Amnesiac IPA (Philips Brewing) are all great examples of both strength but more importantly balance.

In Imperial Pale Ale, we have created a robust, full-bodied Double IPA weighing in at 7.0%ABV. It is produced at the brewery by Qian Zhang (a certified IBD brewer) and myself (Daniel Girard) and has become the latest core brand to join the brewery's' growing portfolio.



Copious amounts of the scarce American Cascade and Amarillo hop add intensely exotic aromas (grapefruit, orange, lychee), citrusy grapefruit flavours and a deep lingering bitterness that makes this beer one of Canada's hoppiest brews. Yet balance is a critical element, and is achieved here through the generous use of caramel and Munich hops. Despite the overwhelming hop signature, a solid malt foundation emerges from the very first taste, providing body and mouthfeel throughout.

The remarkable thing is that this style emerged at a time when hops worldwide were in a crisis of historic proportions. Over a six-month period in 2007, uncontracted hops rose from US\$5 a pound to nearly \$20 – a 300% increase! Further, certain varieties threatened to disappear entirely, regardless of the price you were willing to pay. Brewers were forced to consider dubious new varieties more suitable perhaps for making tea, with alpha acids as low as 2%! Faced with this new reality, the biggest challenge over the last year has been in maintaining a consistent taste profile. The hop bill had to be modified constantly as we searched for substitutes that had the

strong citrus character needed. At 70 IBU, the sheer volume of hops is incredible but necessary to allow the intense floral and bitter impressions

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## Garrison's Imperial Pale Ale

**Malt Bill:** 84% 2-row pale malt, 5% Munich, 11% Caramel malt.

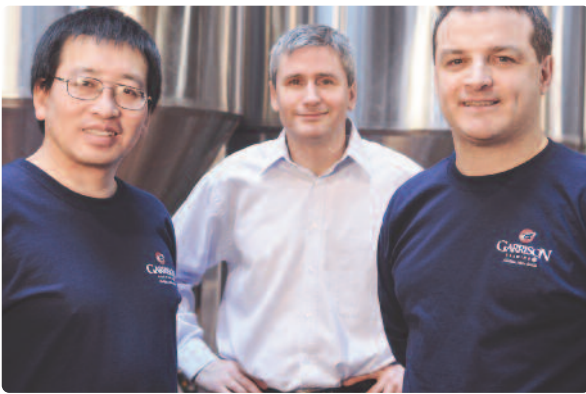
**Color:** 10.4 L (about 17°EBC).

**Mash Temperature:** 66-67°C for about 60 minutes.

**Boiling:** 120 minutes. Addition of Cascade, Amarillo and Centennial hops.

**Original Gravity:** 17.5°P.

**Estimated Bitterness:** more than 70 IBUs.



Far left: Brewer Qian Zhang, Garrison Brewing President Brian Titus and Brewmaster Daniel Giraud.

Left: Processing plant at Garrison.

to come through - our accountant was not allowed to see this particular recipe!

But through crisis comes innovation. A closer look at brewery standard practises revealed an opportunity to improve upon hop utilisation, thereby reducing the amount of hops being added. Imperial Pale Ale was being brewed in exactly the same manner as our other brands yet it required 12 times the hops! Pellets were being added at several points in the brew as determined to produce the desired level of bitterness, flavour and aroma. The difference though is that given the extreme volume of hops being added, many were at risk of overflowing out the kettle or ending up along the inside walls. A simple technique of adding the hops into the kettle in smaller amounts every few minutes, allowed us to utilise the raw material more fully while maintaining or even increasing the desired intensity.

Appearance is also a point of distinction for this brew. Imperial Pale Ale pours out with a hazy, deep-orange glow and frothy white head. Launched in August of 2007 at the

1st Annual Halifax Seaport Beerfest, Garrison trialled Imperial in both filtered and unfiltered form as a way of gauging Halifax's acceptance of a 'hazy ale'. The response was overwhelming and clear, or rather not clear with the full-flavoured version winning soundly! As a result, this brand has been produced in it's natural state ever since and has been followed by no less than seven unfiltered seasonals and specialties to date.

In reality though, this beer represents the evolution of East Coast brewing and of Garrison itself. That it was even tried represents a departure from safer 'bread and butter' ales and a move towards experimentation and risk-taking. It has also tapped into a real demand for beers which push boundaries and reintroduce traditional styles. Recent offerings from Garrison have continued in this vein with the 8.2% Black Lager (our first lager), Weisenbock with authentic Weihenstephaner yeast and Winter Warmer which is brewed with cinnamon, cloves and brown sugar. Our most recent seasonal offering at 9%ABV is Grand Baltic Porter, a



lager that incorporates dates and molasses directly in the boil and has just been rated 'exceptional' at the World Beer Championships in Chicago. Now in its twelfth year, Garrison is clearly hitting its stride as a company and managing to have fun at the same time. And given customer response, so are the beer drinkers of Nova Scotia! ■

Above left: Proof of the pudding

Above: Daniel Giraud assessing quality.

## Garrison profile

Garrison Brewing Company is an independent microbrewery founded in Halifax's industrial North-end. Brian Titus, President and General Manager, was looking to introduce full-flavoured traditional ales to a region all but dominated by mass-produced national brands. The original set up was a 20hl brewhouse and 40hl fermentation/bright storage tanks, all fabricated locally by Diversified Metals Engineering (DME). With the largest concentration per capita of bars and restaurants in Canada, downtown Halifax was a natural fit for fresh, draught ales. As business evolved and distribution increased, sales moved from 90% kegged to a 50/50 split with packaged product. Desperate for more capacity, Garrison moved to its current waterfront home in 2006, locating in Halifax's exciting new Seaport district. The 1929 brick building, now home to all brewing, packaging and retail operations, was once part of the historic Pier 21 immigration complex that served as a gateway to Canada for



decades. The area boasts a thriving artistic community, numerous cultural events and over 228,000 cruise ship passengers annually.

Over the years, Garrison Brewing has launched and established a strong family of distinctive ales for east coast drinkers craving more flavorful products. The original two brands, 'Irish Red Ale' and 'Nut Brown Ale', remain at the forefront and set a tone for body and flavour. Newer offerings such as 'Raspberry Wheat Ale' and 'Imperial Pale Ale' greatly increase our product range and allow us to reach entirely new customers. All products are distributed widely throughout Atlantic Canada and market opportunities are opening up outside the region including overseas.

Brewmaster Daniel Girard is a graduate from the Institute of Malting and Brewing in Berlin, Germany. For more information, please visit [www.garrisonbrewing.com](http://www.garrisonbrewing.com)