



Glass bottles are the exception in Lithuania, where countryside brewers favor one-liter screw cap plastic bottles.

Needless to say, there are no other pale lagers or blond ales brewed elsewhere on the continent that possess such prominent toastiness. A fine example of this unique character is a beer called Daujotų, from Davra, in the aforementioned village of Pakruojis. Low on hop presence, like nearly all Lithuanian brews, this supremely malty libation exudes a powerful honeyed toast perfume before sticking even more toastiness to the palate for an everlasting finish. Yet it always remains a drinkable brew, whether from the tap or the one-liter plastic bottle popular with these brewers.

“There’s an earthy finish which tends to branch out into wacky subplots.”

The Tamsus, or dark brews, also distinguish themselves greatly from German Dunkels, Czech Tmavés, English Porters, or any other dark beer styles to have emerged from more renowned brewing traditions. Once again, they stand out because of their hugely malty profile, one which exhibits raisin flavors like no other style in the beer world. Think Special B malts, but with a distinct Medjool date depth. When used generously, this raisiny wealth can be spectacular, like the brew called Velykinis Tamsus (“Easter Dark”) from Aukštaitijos Bravorai. Another succulent

pint in which to discover this flavor profile would be Varniuku from Davra, an extremely popular brew with the younger crowd discovering these tastes of old. Both intrinsic flavors (toasty and raisiny) are present at varying degrees in nearly all Šviesus and Tamsus brews made with local barley malt.

The countryside beers like those of Mrs. Udriene do not suggest any flavor similarities with Belgian or French farmhouses ales; they are rather dry, have high attenuation, and show earthy angles. But they possess a well-rounded first half where toffee-like flavors give the allusion of hefty residual sugars or proteins.

The beers from villages such as Pakruojis or Pasvalys and Linkuva, plus countless others from this northeastern countryside share a common trait. There’s an earthy finish which tends to branch out into wacky subplots, some of which recall off flavors and/or light funk from yeasts originally found in the wild several human generations ago and since mutated. Not all of these brewers have admitted to foregoing boiling, but one can presume that is another technique that unites them.

As for the yeast, as part of a volunteer project a sequencing center at McGill University in Montreal came up with some fascinating results. Marie-Julie Favé, a doctoral candidate in biology, found that the yeast used by Mrs. Udriene, taken from one of her Jovaru Alu brought back from Lithuania, might be a *Saccharomyces* strain which does not appear in the GenBank database. In other words