

A helluva beer

Big Rock unleashes devilish bock

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Generally speaking, I'm all about the beer. I typically don't care much about the marketing or packaging of the product. I certainly don't care what "the world's most interesting man" drinks, what "the beer out here" is, or if a beer makes specious claims of patriotism.

But there's no denying that the packaging and label design of Big Rock Brewery's new Helles Bock is striking. Helles Bock is the latest offering in Big Rock's Brewmaster's Editions.

Playing off its name, the marketing of Helles Bock relies heavily on devilish themes. The bottle label is orange — which pops from both its black background and the black foil that caps the bottle — and the logo has horns and an arrow-tipped tail. The alcohol content is a punny 6.66 per cent.

In reality, the contents have nothing

to do with fire and brimstone. "Helles" means "bright" in German, and the brew is a light-coloured version of traditional bock. Bock typically has alcohol content between 6.2 and 7.4 per cent, complex maltiness and gentle sweetness. Traditional German hops should add clean bitterness, but there should not otherwise be much hop presence. Because bocks are lagers, the flavours tend to be soft, even though they may be complex.

Helles versions of bock are lighter in colour and should be gently sweet, both from the pale malts used to brew the beer and from the alcohol content. Although they typically have less malt complexity than traditional bock, they have rich flavour and perhaps a touch of

roastiness. Big Rock's interpretation of helles bock fits squarely within the style guidelines. Helles Bock, which has a beautiful gold to copper colour, is brewed with three varieties of malt, has an appropriately light malt aroma and flavour, a touch of graininess and a soft alcoholic sweetness.

Brewed with German Hallertau hops, one of only five varieties categorized as "noble" and prized for its soft flavours and delicate character, the sweet flavours of Helles Bock are balanced against a clean, unobtrusive hop bitterness.

Bigger beers like Helles Bock pair well with hearty fair. Traditional German food such as schnitzels, wursts and hocks of pork, veal or beef will stand up to the body of the beer. Meanwhile, the sweetness

and the alcohol of the beer will help cut some of the fattiness of these foods. If you don't want to go the obvious German route, be sure your food is hearty and savoury.

Big Rock Helles Bock is available in six-pack bottles at your favourite beer retailer and on draft at select locations for a limited time. If you like the style, there are also a number of other imported bocks available for you to try around town.

