

# lambik droom

**BREWERY PREMISES**  
Hoogstraat 2A - 1650 Beersel

**LAMBIK-O-DROOM**  
Tasting room & shop  
Molenstraat 47 - 1651 Lot

## OPENING HOURS

Wednesday to Saturday from 10 AM to 5 PM

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

www.nmbs.be: station Lot - 10 minutes from Brussel-Zuid  
www.delijn.be: busses 810 & 154

## FOR ALL GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@3fonteinen.be

## FOR GUIDED TOURS

lambikodroom@3fonteinen.be

[www.3fonteinen.be](http://www.3fonteinen.be)

[lambikodroom.3fonteinen.be](http://lambikodroom.3fonteinen.be)

(only available on-site)



## 2009 Catastrophe and recovery

On the morning of Saturday, May 16th 2009, Armand opened the door of the warehouse in Halle. **A gust of hot wind literally blew him over, and as a first instinct he rushed into the warm room.** This space, filled with bottles that are refermenting and maturing, normally has a constant temperature of 18 degrees Celsius. This is ensured by a heating element controlled by a thermostat. There were roughly 80,000 bottles stocked at the time...

Because of a thermostat malfunction the temperature rose to 60-70 degrees Celsius for at least one, but likely three full days. By that time, at least 13,000 bottles had exploded due to pressure. Completely shocked, Armand only had one thing on his mind: "it's over". After all, the warm room contains a year supply of sellable stock and, hence, revenue. Armand's wife, Lydie Hulpiau, and a handful of other people however, took it on themselves to help Armand and the brewery rise from the ashes after the events.

**Brewers have helped 3 Fonteinen by allowing payments to be postponed and even donations from the sale of special charity brews.** The teacher of distillation techniques, with whom Armand had also followed a course, suggested to distil the geuze. After a few test runs, this turned out to be successful. Over the next two weekends, roughly 100 volunteers came to help pour out 65,000 bottles of beer. These became the base of the Armand'Spirit, an eau de vie with geuze characteristics, distilled by Distillerie de Biercée.

Armand also had some of his own lambik on oak barrels, that was supposed to be used for future blends. Some American friends inspired Armand to make a special blend consisting exclusively of 3 Fonteinen lambik. This way, a unique series of blends was created: the Armand'4 Lente, Zomer, Herfst, and Winter. **The Armand'4 series became a success: with its beautiful bottle design, in accordance to Lydie's sublime marketing instincts, its sales surpassed their wildest expectations.**

By 2011, Armand had also sold the brewery and put a lot of his own money into the business. Along with the support of friends, family, fans, and the sale of the Armand'4 gueuzes and Armand'Spirit, there was just enough money to allow 3 Fonteinen to survive and start blending geuze again.

**Roughly 100 volunteers came to help pour out 65,000 bottles of beer. These became the base of the Armand'Spirit, an eau de vie with geuze characteristics.**

2011



2011

## A bright future lies ahead

Having only just resurfaced, but as motivated as ever to press on, Armand starts to look for a new employee in 2010. In Michaël Blancquaert, 26 at the time, he sees a younger version of himself: driven with the artisanal process and passionate with tradition, eager to learn, and striving for absolute quality. Not before long, Armand and Michaël express their desire to start brewing again. **In September 2012, a small system with a 4,000-liter coolship was put into use at the Hoogstraat 2A.** By the end of 2012, 3 Fonteinen's activities were more spread out than ever before. With no less than four different addresses, the organisation of transporting lambik and finished bottles between the different spots became a nightmare. These logistics ran the company up to 200 man days a year.

This is why since the middle of 2013 there's been an active hunt for a new location, with as its primary goal to centralize everything about the process, except for the brewing itself. All this preferably in or around Beersel. On a summery Saturday morning in 2013, Michaël and Armand were talking to some insiders about these plans. At that time, Werner Van Obberghen walks in to buy his case of geuze. Eleven years earlier, Werner had written his thesis about the problems of the small artisanal geuze blenders and in 2012, he'd sat through the same brewing course as Michaël.

Although there were anything but strangers, Werner was honored when Armand summoned him to the back of the house to talk about their plans. Werner suggested to voluntarily make a business plan for the investments to come. After many brainstorm, calculations and conversations, Werner in early 2014 expressed his wishes to help directly coordinate these plans. **In 2015, the deal was sealed on the final location. In the Molenstraat 47 in Lot, just a few meters from the Zenne river.** This storage space of 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> is an excellent place to put the many barrels and feeders. After all, our 3 Fonteinen lambik matures and rests for an average of three years. Most of the other activities can also be done here, but the brewing will continue in Beersel. We have many more wonderful plans and ambitions. All of those we'll be most happy to indulge to the visitors of our lambik-O-droom. But one thing is for sure: lambik is alive. Alive and kicking!

**This storage space of 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> is an excellent place to put the many barrels and feeders.**



EN





1953

## The origins and popularity of the “3 Fonteinen”

In the early 1950s, Gaston Debelder and his wife Raymonde Dedoncker choose to swap farm life in Halle for a career in beer. In 1953 the couple buys a house that had been functioning as a bar and geuze blendery since 1887. This building, currently in the Hoogstraat in Beersel, used to be the property of Jean-Baptiste Vanderlinden: former mayor of Beersel and himself a fond geuze blender.

**Gaston and Raymonde christened the brasserie “3 Fonteinen” immediately after they took it over. Not before long, Gaston had mastered the noble craft of blending himself.** The Debelders were no strangers when it came to lambik and geuze: Arthur Debelder, Gaston’s uncle, had been a successful geuze blender in Lot since the end of the 19th century. Hence, the secret to lambik wasn’t just in the air, it was also in their blood.

After nine years, in 1961, the Debelder family buys a property on the Beersel church square. The building was demolished, but the warehouse underneath the current festivities center was preserved. Gaston digs his own cellar below the building as his passion for geuze blending continues to grow. These underground stocking areas lend themselves perfectly for letting bottles of blended lambik referment into geuze, and let them mature over the course of several years. The cellars from the restaurant are still adjacent to the brewery today.

**The bar experienced vast popularity in the 60s and 70s. Among others, there was the “Mijol” club, under the presidency of the legendary Flemish author Herman Teirlinck, who’d lived in Beersel since 1935.** Many a Flemish writer, artist and politician (e.g. Gerard Walschap, Ernest Claes, and Marc Galle) have spent their free time here, playing on the “mijolbak”.

Until a few years ago, it was assumed that the name “3 Fonteinen” was derived from the porcelain tap system that had always been present in the bar. Until this very day, the lambik, faro and krieckenlambik from 3 Fonteinen still abundantly flow from it. The original “fonteinen” name, however, also references the sources that surface from the small valley behind the Laarheide and the current 3 Fonteinen brewery, on top of the hill in Beersel. On top of that, “3 Fonteinen” was the prime watering hole for many people from Brussels, who flooded the village square during the weekends to enjoy bread with “plattekeis” (fresh white cheese) and a “guis” (dialect for gueuze).

**Gaston digs his own cellar below the building as his passion for geuze blending continues to grow.**

1982



1982

## Armand & Guido control the stoves and the blendery

After years of success at the restaurant and geuze blending, Gaston and Raymonde leave their business to their sons Armand and Guido. As Guido took responsibility of administration and the front of house, Armand ran the kitchen and the geuze blendery.

Armand became a chef in 1974 at age 24, but had been cooking since age 16. **Under his guidance, the menu was significantly expanded with new (versions of) regional dishes that included lambik, faro and geuze as ingredients. Some of these dishes have developed into true classics, still served to this day!** Throughout these years, Armand had inherited the nose, the skill, and the experience from his father and used his talents to continue the noble art of blending.

During the 80s and 90s, the restaurant knows a great deal of success. Armand still fondly remembers the summertimes when they would have to cut and fry over one metric ton of French fries every week, or the mussels being prepared by the dozens of kilos at a time. Meanwhile, their geuze continuously kept on flowing.

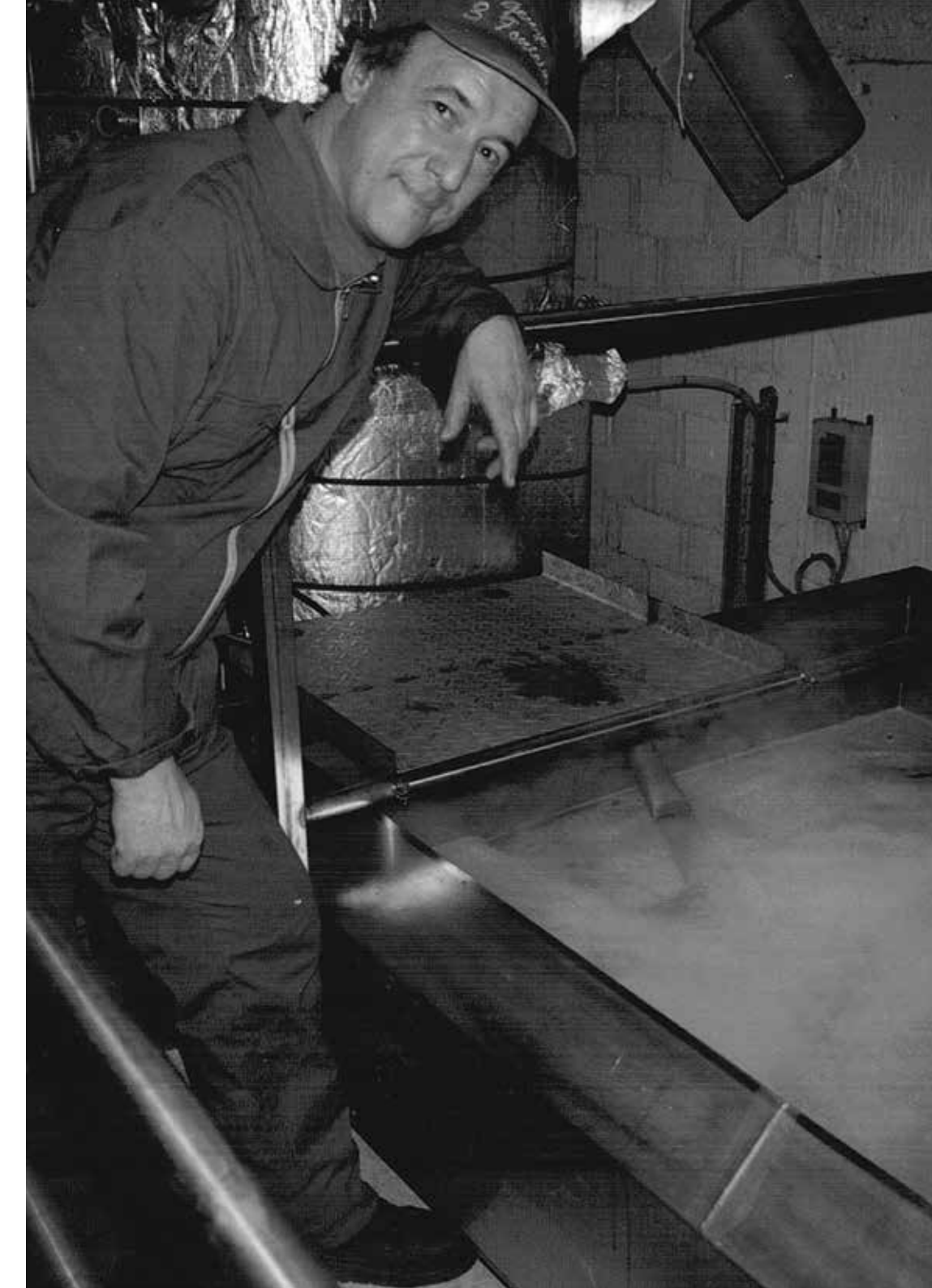
**The restaurant may have flourished, but a much more fundamental challenge started to surface: around 1990 the consumption of geuze reached its absolute lowest peak. This was due to a consumption movement towards cheap pils, sweet fruit beers, and wine.**

It was considered to stop blending geuze altogether. The authentic way with which Armand and Gaston practiced their craft doesn’t just take a lot of time and patience, but capital as well. The production and the lambik stock needs to be financed more than three years in advance: buying the barrels, the beer itself, and overhead staff costs.

In 1993, the Objectieve BierProevers trophy (given to a person of merit within the world of Belgian brewing), was given to three authentic geuze blenders: 3 Fonteinen, Hanssens Artisanal and Moriau. This was the support Armand needed to be even more convinced that “lambik and geuze have a future, because it’s local, and it’s ours”. Lambik beer has an obvious link with our “terroir”, and that heritage cannot be artificially recreated.

**Throughout these years, Armand had inherited the nose, the skill, and the experience from his father and used his talents to continue the noble art of blending.**

early 2000



1997

## Armand Debelder pushes on as a brewer and blender

Armand’s determination and belief in lambik’s future was never going to be easy. That showed when Gaston – who had seen the decline of geuze consumption happen before his very eyes – considered his own son crazy. **“Geuze is only drunk by old people now”, is what Armand remembers his father saying.**

Luckily however, Armand also inherited the hard-headedness and perseverance from his father. He chose to move into lambik and geuze exclusively, and starts his own company in 1997. Guido takes full control of the restaurant in 2002.

That same year, Armand founds HORAL (High Council for Artisanal Lambic Beer) along with some fellow brewers and blenders. **In november 1997 it finally happens: Armand starts to brew himself, and brewery 3 Fonteinen is officially in production.** Armand brews his own wort at the Hoogstraat number 2 on a small system. This location is still the brewery to this day.

In the next few years, Armand was proven right. The local, regional, national, and international attention for lambik and geuze is re-kindled. Toer De Geuze, the Open Bier Dagen and multiple tourist sector initiatives play a major part in this.

Meanwhile, 3 Fonteinen continues to grow and around 2008 the company is also financially healthy. The annual production at that time is around 800 hectoliters per year. This requires the purchase of more and more wooden barrels. At that time, the vessels are already spread across three different locations: two in Beersel (Hoogstraat and Laarheide) and one in Essenbeek, Halle (Zavelstraat).

Everything appears to be going swimmingly for 3 Fonteinen, until the night of May 15th to 16th, 2009...

**Luckily however, Armand also inherited the hard-headedness and perseverance from his father.**

2009