

## F. Sot Fitzgerald's *Spirit Review:*

### Lomza Beer

*Also known as Lomza Beer, Export Lomza*

Living in Williamsburg's Northside, one is confronted by an undeniable fact- there are Polish people everywhere. My neighbors upstairs are Polish, as is my landlord, the cashiers at Tops grocery store, the bakers down the road, and damn near everyone else. Which is a good thing. For wherever one finds concentrations of immigrants, one finds their food and drink.

On the Northside one can stuff his belly with all sorts of wonderful Polish foods. There are a couple butcher shops carrying numerous splendid varieties of kielbasa and beef and pork jerkies. Then there's the array of light and dark breads and sugary sweets of the Northside bakeries.

But when it comes to beverages- well, the choices aren't so swell. While the Polish have turned out a few good vodkas, otherwise their distilling and brewing is at best mediocre and often quite awful. They have cooked up some passable pilsners and lagers. Ockocim, for example, comes in a few versions, including a Budweiser-like lager, and a mind-rattling malt liquor. Then there's Lech, which professes to be the "Official beer of the Polish Olympic Team" and tastes much like the unremarkable Lowenbrau.

And these are the best of the bunch. Turning to the subject of this review- Lomza, one finds everything wrong in Polish brewing- filthy water, bitter grains, and no sense of the limits to the human palate's tolerance for the foul. With absolute honesty I can confess there is nothing good what so ever about Lomza beer.

Lomza is egregious- outstandingly bad. Like Schaeffer, Red, White, and Blue, or maybe Cook's or Drewery's, it is thin, watery yellow, and gritty. The taste is reminiscent of drinking from a burst, rusty city waterpipe. In fact, if memory serves, I can actually stomach multiple cans of Schaeffer (assuredly nothing to brag of), but Lomza choked me after a few ounces.

Upon opening the can one is greeted with a forbidding stench. And the taste- well, it damn near gagged me. It is gross, really gross, and no stretch of the imagination can make my mouth declare otherwise. Each sip brings a violent reaction. The mouth says, "oh, not bad," then the tongues screams, "god damn, that's fucking silty and bitter!" The face then begins to contort terribly and the torso and arms curl forward as the stomach cringes at what's to come. Had anyone been watching me as I tasted Lomza they might have thought I was having an epileptic fit.

What more need be said? Though one gets a whole 16 ounces for a mere 99 cents, it's 99 cents wasted. No matter how desperate and poor you might find yourself, stay away from this rotten concoction.

Feb 1999

Booze

## Spirits Review: Chicoutai

— F. Sot Fitzgerald

Not long ago, my darling Zelduh returned from a short journey to the Great White North. Though impressed by the clean streets and subways of Montreal and the natives elevated taste and the night life, she could only take Quebequois pretensions so long before returning to Brooklyn. Happily, she did not forget me when she went souvenir shopping. Along with a Latin version of Winnie the Pooh, she came bearing a strange liqueur named Chicoutai.

Chicoutai comes in a 15 inch tall, clear glass vessel no wider than your standard catsup bottle, and it's topped with a clear plastic knob. Though the beige label covers much of the bottle, it doesn't blot out the

translucent, dark amber liquid within. Pull the knob-top and the cork base makes a 'ploooomp' sound that almost says, 'dare ye?'

Chicoutai, Liqueur de Mures des Marais, or 'hooch made from a blackberry of the marsh' is made from cloudberry, a type of raspberry. Like schnapps, Chicoutai is to be served in 2-4 ounce servings at room temperature or warmed. Similarly, it has a colossal bouquet and a flavor that overwhelms the palate and doesn't soon leave. Unlike schnapps, it won't get you loaded. It's quite low in alcohol (only 25%), which makes it a lousy choice for the hopeless dipsomaniac. Indeed, any fool who drinks a whole bottle of this (and a bottle is but 375 milliliters) will more than likely feel the same nauseous misery he'd feel had he chugged a pint of honey. If served as an after dinner drink on a cool evening, Chicoutai will please. A sip treats you to a rush

of honey with a blackberry that steams through the sinuses. It's extraordinarily sweet, and each small nip sends a light blush over the face.

However, having served it to a few friends, it's clear that it is a one-drink drink. While each person professed to enjoy the warm feeling it gave, nobody asked for seconds. Indeed, in

### COME TO WIL



writing this review I made the mistake of taking two four-ounce glasses of Chicoutai, which left me in a light sweat and staggering golem-like to the kitchen to chug a half-pint of ice water. After that I still felt the need to fan myself with my clipboard. Proceed with caution.

### LIAMSBURG.



