

KEITH SCHLABS TALKS
RESTAURANT TRENDS

THE YEAR'S TOP-RATED BEERS
BY STYLE CATEGORY

The Beer Connoisseur

THE
**TOP
250**
BEERS
of 2018

THE
BEST
BREWERIES
OF 2018

EMERGING
BEER STYLES
IN 2019

#1
RATED
BEER
OF 2018

2019
INDUSTRY
OUTLOOK

TRENDING
HOPS
IN 2019



BEER & FOOD PAIRING

When I see you, in your magnificent glass, it makes my mouth water. This creamy foam, this "lemony" aroma, this fruity taste. Everyone loves you, who can resist you? And then add the character of the Comté cheese... A perfect food pairing, one must share and discuss with others. Drink the beer young, and taste the cheese old!

Pau Vinken

Ben Vinken
Belgian Beer Sommelier

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A connoisseur's take on the emergence of new popular beer styles, plus a look at beer's favorite flower and how brewers are using new hop varieties to experiment with and push the envelope in brewing a myriad of flavors.

WORLD'S BEST

AMERICAN-STYLE SOUR ALE



GOLD AWARD

AMERICAN-STYLE
SOUR ALE



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While the consolidation of craft brands is not a new story, the past year saw many brands consolidate product lines and distribution footprints. We analyze the numbers to report what happened in 2018 and where the industry is headed in the new year.

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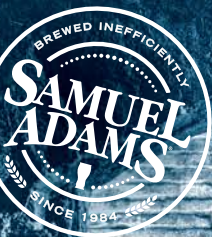
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188 THE HOP REPORT

Craft beer consumes 20 to 25 percent of the world's harvested hops. We look at rising popular varieties that brewers are experimenting with to shape the flavors of tomorrow's brews.



Slow Lager.

At Samuel Adams, we are inspired by German brewing tradition. Over 600 years ago, beer was aged in caves like the one shown here. In these natural coolers, beer was chilled over time to bring out the best flavor and aroma. While we don't age Boston Lager in caves, we brew and age the beer for over a month to create our most flavorful beer. At Samuel Adams, we believe slow is better. Brewed Inefficiently since 1984.



Drink responsibly

Taste the silence

There's a subtle smell of hops, yeast and malt in the air at the trappist abbey of Onze Lieve Vrouw van Koningshoeven. Since 1884, La Trappe Trappist ale has been brewed within the walls of this monastery with great care, under the supervision and responsibility of the trappist monks.

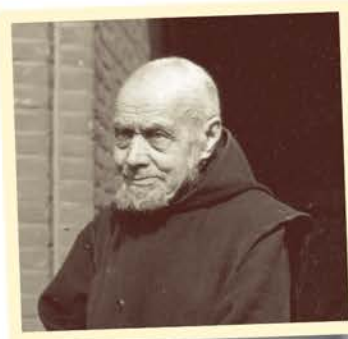
A rich history

At the end of the 19th century, a small group of trappist monks fled from France to Berkel-Enschot in The Netherlands. There, in the heart of Brabant, they found a strip of heath with farmsteads and a sheep pen. They embraced this land, the former country retreat of the Dutch King Willem II as their own new home. They founded their monastery here and decided to start brewing trappist ales. Up to today, the monks fill their lives with prayer and work. In tranquility and silence.

Brother Isidorus

Brother Isidorus was the first brew master at the monastery of Onze Lieve Vrouw van Koningshoeven. He began brewing trappist beer in 1884, laying the foundation for the beer that is still brewed today. On the occasion of the

125th anniversary of our brewery, Brother Isidorus Laaber was honored in 2009 with his own beer, La Trappe Isid'or.



“Brother Isidorus brewed the first La Trappe Trappist ale in 1884”

La Trappe Trappist

The fragrance of hops, yeast and malt is subtly present all around the monastery:

since 1884, trappist beer has been brewed at the Onze Lieve Vrouw van Koningshoeven abbey in Berkel-Enschot. The beer originated from the monks of the monastery. They are popularly called 'trappists', according to the origin of their order: the French Soligny-La-Trappe. This order is characterised by austerity, silence and the duty of charity.

Ales with a purpose

La Trappe Trappist let you consciously enjoy an honest trappist ale with a sincere story and rich taste. The motto at Bierbrouwerij de Koningshoeven is: 'Taste the silence'. You can taste it in the broad range of meaningful ales and sense it in the surroundings of the abbey. The brewery actively embrace the values of the monks and see the trappist ale as the link between monastic life and the outside world. This gives our ales a true purpose.



La Trappe Puur (4.7%)
Organic Trappist ale with a lovely, long-lasting head.



La Trappe Blond (6.5%)
Golden yellow Trappist ale with a white head and a rich flavour.



La Trappe Bockbier (7%)
The only Trappist bock ale in the world.



La Trappe Witte Trappist (5.5%)
The only Trappist white ale in the world.



La Trappe Dubbel (7%)
Classic dark-brown Trappist ale with an ivory-coloured head.



La Trappe Isid'or (7.5%)
Amber-coloured Trappist ale with a broken white head.



Authentic Trappist Product

Bierbrouwerij de Koningshoeven is one of the few trappist breweries in the world that has the honour of using the exclusive Authentic Trappist Product (ATP) label. That's because the brewery meet the three rules of the International Trappist Association:

- The beer must be brewed within the walls of a trappist abbey
- Under supervision and responsibility of the trappist monks
- Part of the profits are donated to charity

Pure and honest

The entire business model of the brewery is based on the monks honest conviction to do good for the world around us. That's why La Trappe Trappist is brewed with concern for nature, consideration

for the environment and a heart for people: the brewery use the water from their own sources, buy their ingredients from local farmers as much as they can, and prevent waste by reusing the leftovers and waste products.



“The brand new innovative ecological treatment plant enables the brewery to purify and reuse waste water locally”

The brewery also donates parts of the profits to charities and offer people with learning and/or mental disabilities a path to employment in their own brewery, Tasting Room and Abbey Gift Shop. Further from home, La Trappe Trappist supports an abbey in Uganda (Africa) where monks carry out agricultural, educational and healthcare projects for the local population.

Taste the silence

Discover La Trappe Trappist and enjoy the authentic recipe and true taste of the most important ingredient the monks have added: silence.

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*La Trappe
Tripel (8%)*
Classic and powerful
Trappist ale.



*La Trappe
Quadrupel (10%)*
Characteristically Trappist ale
and the source for the name
of this ale style.

La Trappe
TRAPPIST
Abdy O.E.V. Koningshoeven





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**Up Close
With World Class**

The year's world class-rated beers with judge's evaluations, brewer Q&As and judge's second opinions.

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**The #1 Rated
Beer of 2018**

The year's highest-rated beer is celebrated. A must-try for any connoisseur.

THE BEER IN REVIEW



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**THE TOP 250 BEERS
OF 2018**

The best of the *Official Review* in 2018. Discover all the brew that's fit to drink in this year-end beer celebration.

150

**BEST BEERS BY
STYLE CATEGORY**

The year's best beer categorized by the most populated beer styles in the 2018 *Official Review*. A one-stop shopping list of the best brews on shelves today.

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BREWERIES OF THE YEAR

The year's breweries that submitted the highest-scoring beers collectively. These brewers demonstrated mastery of their craft in 2018.

Drink responsibly



Celebrate our winners

Discover the golden classics

As an authentic trappist brewery, Bierbrouwerij de Koningshoeven operates under supervision and responsibility of trappist monks, with a broad range of meaningful ales. The brewery is proud of the golden medals for their four classics at the European Beer Star Awards 2018. A reward for the efforts of the entire team, who work with dedicated care and attention on genuine ales with – according to their own words – one secret ingredient. Silence.

Taste the silence



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WINTER 2019, ISSUE 40

THE BEER IN REVIEW

CHRIS GUEST

COVER | *PRIVAT* by BRAUHAUS RIEGELE | PHOTO BY GREGOR MIDDENDORF

FESTBIER BY KC BIER CO. | RATED 96 – WORLD CLASS

“Thanks to all of the breweries that submitted beer to our Official Review in 2018, and congratulations to the brewers of our best beers of the year!”

– Chris Guest, Managing Editor

Welcome to the 40th edition of *The Beer Connoisseur* magazine – a landmark moment in the history of this publication and an exciting step into the future.

Reaching this point has required much adaptation in the face of constant change – both within the world of journalism and the world of beer. The only constants have been you, the reader, and our desire to illuminate elements of beer and brewing culture that may bring you joy and wisdom. Whether a long-time reader or a brand new one, we’re excited to be able to share the next step in our journey: the debut of our annual *The Beer in Review* winter edition in print.

Whether you are a brewer or simply enjoy the art of drinking, we bring you up to speed on how the world of beer has turned in 2018 and where it’s going.

This edition is split into three sections. Our Industry Outlook looks forward to 2019 by providing the insider’s perspective on the industry from the viewpoint of the consumer, restaurants and the craft beer segment. All are explored at length with statistics, research and interviews from industry thought leaders regarding the future of the business.

For those wondering what to drink, the year-end celebration of the *Official Review* provides plenty of choices with our Top 250 Beers of 2018, ranging from Oud Bruins to Hazy IPAs. For the adventurous, we rank the Best Beers by Style Category. We also recognize the achievements of the brewers behind the year’s best beer with our Best Breweries of 2018 awards.

Lastly, our 2019 Trends section looks at the emergence of new popular beer styles, as well as how brewers are using new hop varieties to push the envelope in brewing a myriad of flavors.

The Beer in Review annual print edition is a tribute to the beverage that brings us all together, but most of all, it is a tribute to you. Thank you for taking the journey with us and we hope you enjoy this 40th installment of *The Beer Connoisseur*!

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2018 DIRECTORY

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4 Noses Brewing Co, CO
Alaskan Brewing Co, AK
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Bear Republic Brewing Co, CA
Belching Beaver Brewery, CA
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Breckenridge Brewery, CO
Bricktown Brewery, OK
Buffalo Bill's Brewery, CA
Bullfrog Brewery, PA
Cabarrus Brewing Co, NC
Cape May Brewing Co, NJ
Community Beer Co, TX
Coronado Brewing Co, CA
Devils Backbone Brewing Co, VA
Diebolt Brewing Co, CO
Flying Dog Brewery, MD

Fulton Beer, MN
Garage Brewing Co, CA
Grist Brewing, CO
Heathen Brewing, WA
Heavy Seas Beer, MD
Highland Brewing Co, NC
Holy City Brewing, SC
Innis & Gunn Brewing Co, UK
Mercier Orchards, GA
Mockery Brewing Co, CO
Monday Night Brewing, GA
Mother Earth Brew Co, CA
Motorworks Brewing, FL
Odell Brewing Co, CO
Pike Brewing Co, WA
Pedernales Brewing Co, TX
Peter B's Brewpub, CA
pFriem Family Brewers, OR
RavenBeer, MD
Reformation Brewery, GA
Riverwatch Brewery, GA

Short's Brewing Co, MI
Somerville Brewing Co, MA
Southbound Brewing Co, GA
Starr Hill Brewery, VA
Stone Brewing Co, CA
Sun King Brewery, IN
The Boston Beer Company, MA
The Tank Brewing Co, FL
Uinta Brewing, UT
Uncle Billy's Brewery & Smokehouse, TX
Unibroue, CANADA
Upland Brewing Co, IN
Urban Artifact, OH
Wild Leap Brew Co, GA

INDUSTRY

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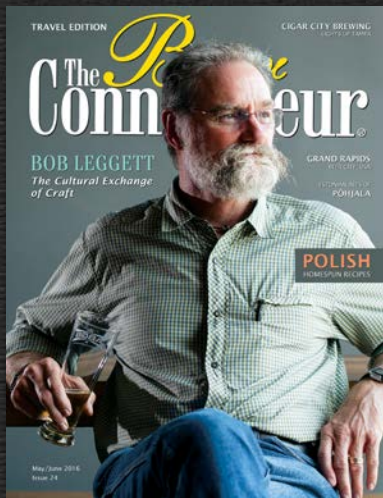
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BEER SALES IN
2018 CONTINUE
TO TELL A TALE OF
SHIFTING POWER
AND CONSUMER
PREFERENCES
WITHOUT ANY SIGN
OF CATASTROPHIC
BUBBLE-BURSTING.

2019 CONSUMER TRENDS

By *JIM DYKSTRA*

Total dollar sales over the last 52 weeks rung in at more than \$35 billion, up 1.8 percent from the previous year, while total volume sales were down 0.4 percent, again pointing to the fact that people are willing to pay more for quality beer.

The data we've examined comes from IRI Worldwide, a market research firm that tracks category-wide sales trends of beer sold in numerous retail outlets and then produces a monthly report of its findings. These findings can be used to provide real-time insight into the ever-changing beer marketplace, both Craft and Macro. They can also help industry participants adapt to the marketplace and help you make more informed choices as a consumer. To save you the spreadsheet trawling, we've pieced together the most important changes in beer sales over the year of 2018 and will compare them to the prior year.

Before we dive in to this year's data, here are a few things to keep in mind – these numbers are on an international scale and may not represent individual brewery or regional sales accurately. The numbers also do not draw a hard line between beer styles within certain categories, which could mask sales trends of smaller brewers. They track sales of packaged beer only and from a few different sources, including convenience stores (think gas stations), a general “food” category (grocery stores, etc.), and a combined multi-outlet and convenience (MULC) store category (a combination of grocery, drug, Wal-Mart/Sam's Club, dollar stores and military stores, among others). We will focus on the MULC category. While not all-encompassing, it's a great, well-rounded resource.

BIG STYLES IN CRAFT – 2018 wasn't a bad year for Craft beer sales, as the segment saw a 3.1 percent increase in dollar sales compared to the previous year.



The IPA is riding high once more, comprising roughly 35 percent of all Craft beer sales. At around \$1.5 billion of Craft's total \$4.2 billion share, it is a force to be reckoned with. Within the world of IPAs, the explosion of the "Haze Craze" is to thank, injecting new life into a style that had started to drift into an oblivion of bitterness. These milkshake-style ales have really opened the eyes of both the drinker and brewer to the versatility of the style. The once bitter booze-bombs have now shifted towards thick, fruit smoothie and mimosa-esque styles that will draw in new subsets of drinkers by pushing the conventions of what a beer's qualities can be.

Now, it's okay to drink a beer with a mouthfeel as thick as high-pulp orange juice—so, in theory, anyone who likes orange juice and alcohol now has the potential to become a craft beer fan.

Despite the standard of boundary-pushing associated with American Craft, the other real tale of the

tape has been a return to subtlety. We are finally seeing the American palate develop to appreciate more refined, historically European styles en masse.

As a result, 2018 has been a good year for lower-ABV, less malty styles. Blonde/Golden Ale has continued its meteoric rise, up another 14 percent from last year, which saw similar growth, and Pale Lagers are up an enormous 41.1 percent from the year prior.

Further, Belgian Ale dollar sales are up nearly 10 percent from the year prior, and Craft Light Beer has jumped by 21 percent.

Unsurprisingly, styles such as Amber Ale, Amber Lager, Strong Ale and Dark Beer are all down double-digits from the year prior. This certainly doesn't mean these are doomed styles, just that consumer preferences are shifting towards less focus on maltiness, alcohol and bitterness, and more focus on aroma, flavor and drinkability.

From a cultural perspective, these sales trends

Craft has played a large role in the decline in Domestic sales, but the battle for beer market share is very much a battle royale.

could also indicate the changing mindset of the average Craft drinker; it's less Wild West, frontier-style flavor exploration at the expense of health and functionality and a more natural integration into everyday life. People are opting for a mild, aromatic pale ale on a first date or an agreeable craft light lager that the whole family (of legal drinking age) can enjoy. Thus, you can have your beer and drink it too.

Look for these trends to continue in 2019 and gradually shift into other realms of liquid flavor, while maintaining a lower-ABV mindset. And a few years down the line, look for it all to come full circle once more.

BEER BY CATEGORY – Overall, beer had a good year. Total beer sales in the past 52 weeks are up nearly two percent, which translates to over \$600 million more dollars spent on beer than last year.

2018 has been a good year for lower-ABV, less malty styles. Blonde/Golden Ale is up 14 percent from this time last year and Pale Lagers are up an enormous 41.1 percent from 2017.

In fact, there were only two major categories that did not see an increase in sales, and that is Domestic Premium, which are the flagship brands of Budweiser, MillerCoors and others and Domestic Sub-Premium (Icehouse, Natural Light and associated parties). Domestic Premium dollar sales are down 3.8 percent from last year, which translates to a whopping \$500 million, while Domestic Sub-Premium is down 1.3 percent, or around \$70 million.

Obviously, Craft has played a large role in the decline in Domestic sales, but the battle for beer market share is very much a battle royale.

Imported beer has seen a hefty increase of dollar share, up nearly 8 percent to just over \$500 million, a trend that will likely continue to increase. The largest contributor to the growth of the import category is Mexican beer, boasting big names like Corona, Dos Equis and Modelo. These beers are quite similar to





Domestic Premium lagers, and thus capable of grabbing pieces of that market, but they also compete with Craft as “non-Domestic” options and boast a similar allure.

Then we have Domestic Super Premium, which are the Macro-Craft options like Blue Moon, Goose Island and so on. These guys work for Big Beer while simultaneously contributing to the declining sales of Domestic Premiums. With a dollar sales increase of 14 percent, Domestic Super Premiums are the only category to see double-digit growth this year, which is an increase of \$350 million.

Though the Supers do take bites out of Domestic Premium sales, they take bigger bites out of Craft, which is a large part of the reason the Craft category has seen relatively mild sales increases in the past few years. This year, Craft grew by 3.1 percent, or about \$124 million in sales, which we can mostly attribute to

the category’s ability to deliver fresh takes on the IPA style far more quickly than any other.

OUTLIERS – AB InBev’s Michelob Ultra remains immune to the pressures mounting around Domestic Premiums, seeing a hearty 14.6 percent increase in sales this year, bringing its sales for the year to just under \$500 million. These sales indicate the same trend we’ve seen within Craft – a move back to lower-ABV, lower-calorie options. Its reliable placement alongside Domestics wherever they are sold give it ample opportunity to be the healthier alternative.

The Flavored Malt Beverage category is always a bit of a toss-up, but usually there is a meteoric rise or equally rapid decline in sales triggered by a few key players. Not Your Father’s Root Beer took the world by



*From this swirling vortex of numbers we can deduce that the American palate and sensibility is skewing towards refined drinking choices. Less sugar, alcohol, bitterness... but we still want **more hops.***

storm a few years ago but has since petered into oblivion. This year has seen the rise of “Hard Seltzer.”

White Claw Hard Seltzer saw sales increase almost 490 percent this year and is now a top 25 brand. Similarly, Truly Spiked and Sparkling grew by 190 percent and cracked the top 50 biggest brands, selling more than Boston Lager and Fat Tire. This is partially attributed to the popularity increase of non-alcoholic cider but also, once again, points to a desire for healthier drinking alternatives.

Founders All Day IPA is now one of the most popular beers in the Craft segment after a 37 percent sales increase this year. This jump places it in the top ten Craft brands (by IRI’s classification) and second to only Lagunitas IPA in terms of IPA sales.

What do each of these outliers have in common? They’re all either low in alcohol or low in calories.

TAKEAWAYS – From this swirling vortex of numbers we can deduce that the American palate and sensibility is skewing towards refined drinking choices. Less sugar, alcohol, bitterness... but we still want more hops. This means dry hopping and other more advanced methods of imparting flavor into beer beyond artificial additives will become even more integral for breweries wishing to succeed in the current climate.

This also points to the shifting place of beer and beer-like drinks within our culture. Beer has long been the drink of community and celebration, and it is now also becoming the go-to choice for active lifestyle individuals who want a drink that enhances their experience without weighing them down physically or mentally.

To boil the year’s drinking trends down to one sentence: We value flavor, but we also value our health.

NEXT YEAR – Successful beer styles in 2019 will find novel and authentic means of imparting more flavor without cheapening the experience, because drinkers are becoming harder to fool with cheap tricks.

Exploration of flavors within stylistic subsets may lead to striking gold, and the keys to doing so will be technical brewing expertise and the use of real ingredients that minimize guilt on the drinker’s behalf.

We may see some Frankenstein creations, but the public will ultimately decide what is inherently good and will support these products with its collective coin purse.

Lastly, the increase in sales of alternative alcoholic beverages, be it cider or seltzer, point to the value in branching out beyond traditional beer. If you brew it and it has merit, it will find its place in the market.



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TRENDS IN CRAFT

STORY BY JIM DYKSTRA

Craft beer in 2018 was largely defined by consolidation. While the consolidation of craft brands is not a new story, the past year saw many brands consolidate product lines and distribution footprints. This is a more conservative tack than we've seen in years past, and it can be seen as a direct result of increased competition. Many brands were forced to scale back ambitious growth plans, lest they end up like Green Flash, which went from a Brewers Association Top 50 brewery to foreclosure in a matter of months.

Though this means less large-scale regional and national brewing operations, the general implications for the craft ecosystem are positive. For one, breweries are resorting less to clogged and monopolized retail channels in favor of taproom sales, which will encourage the community aspect at the heart of craft.

Further, reducing SKUs will allow for more focused production and, ideally, better beer. Given the surplus of brands versus shelf space, the consumer won't notice a difference in the number of brands to choose from.

Demographically, things are looking up for craft. No longer just a sanctuary for real-life versions of The Simpsons' Comic Book Guy, women now comprise 32 percent of the overall craft beer market, with the 21-34 subset representing 15 percent of total craft drinking volume, according to a Revel Systems report.

Further, the report indicates that craft beer drinking among the Hispanic demographic is projected to grow by 31 percent this year.

The coming year's potential to focus on lighter, more palatable styles should serve to bring in more new beer drinkers, as well as the growth of hard soda and seltzer categories.

With these demographic shifts come new ideas, new taste preferences and new drinking attitudes, which we may see filter back into the entirety of the craft drinking population.

– CRAFT BEER IN 2018 WAS DEFINED BY CONSOLIDATION.

– FOCUS ON LIGHTER, MORE PALATABLE STYLES SHOULD SERVE TO BRING IN MORE NEW BEER DRINKERS.

– MILLENNIALS REMAIN THE STRONGEST PROPONENTS OF CRAFT, COMPRISING 58 PERCENT OF THE CRAFT DRINKING CONSTITUENCY.

– THE COMING YEAR'S POTENTIAL TO FOCUS ON LIGHTER, MORE PALATABLE STYLES, AS WELL AS THE GROWTH OF HARD SODA AND SELTZER CATEGORIES, SHOULD SERVE TO BRING IN MORE NEW BEER DRINKERS.



BREWERIES ARE RESORTING LESS TO CLOGGED AND MONOPOLIZED RETAIL CHANNELS IN FAVOR OF TAPROOM SALES, WHICH WILL ENCOURAGE THE COMMUNITY ASPECT AT THE HEART OF CRAFT.



BEER IS NOW CONSIDERED MORE OF A “PREMIUM BEVERAGE” THAN EVER BEFORE.

Millennials remain firm as craft’s strongest proponents, comprising 58 percent of the craft drinking constituency. As the majority, this group will largely dictate what styles become popular and what methods of packaging, branding and sales are successful. So, for those in the industry, this is an important group to consider when making business decisions.

As we have seen, A-list hop brands have been on the rise as consumers clamor for juicy, tropical Hazy IPAs. Overall hop production is up slightly from last year, but the race for the big names like Ekuanot or Galaxy makes it tough for smaller breweries to acquire them at an affordable rate. So, when shelling out for these marquis bits of lupulin, be confident that the end product will justify the cost.

Given the highly competitive nature of a 7000+ brewery climate, knowing what you do and don’t do well will go a long way. Last year’s industry outlook emphasized the value in focusing on specific styles and learning to do more within their stylistic confines, if not redefining them entirely. 2019 will weed out breweries producing anything less than great, consistent product, and having a focused stylistic wheelhouse will increase the odds of standing out.

BRANDING IN 2019

Speaking of standing out, there is simply no excuse for anything less than stellar branding at this stage in the game. Beyond beer quality, the can art is probably one of the biggest deciding factors in whether or not a beer will be purchased, and there are hordes of beer-enthused millennial artists who would jump at the chance to have their finest work featured on your packaging at minimal cost.

There seem to be two dominant schools of thought for craft beer label design currently. Labels and artwork can be either eye-catchingly bold and cleanly minimalistic or strikingly colorful and intricately detailed. The increasing popularity of cans means more canvas space for artists to work with compared to bottles, and those not attuned to the importance of catching the customer’s eye from the shelf will be engulfed in an ocean of strong artistic statements.

Further – if you think of your beer as an artistic creation, don’t sell it short with tired fonts and uninspired art. Let the packaging serve as an extension of your beer and your brewery’s culture, and you will attract your ideal customer.

Premium Mentality

For many, craft beer drinking is a statement extending right down to the can they hold. If designer clothing is any indication, brands that can convey a “premium” aesthetic and back it up with consistent quality will be able to justify far higher than average margins.

National Beer Wholesalers of America Chief Economist Lester Jones cites the “premiumization” of beer brands as a defining trait of 2018, resulting in lower production and sales volume but also a dramatic increase in margins.

“After almost 10 years of trading up consumers and premiumization, the overall beer category is now 20 percent more expensive for the average consumer than it was in 2008 and 15 percent more than wine and liquor,” said Jones.

As craft becomes more deeply engrained in American culture and the people learn how to better incorporate beer-drinking into their everyday lives, the ceiling for sessionable beer production grows higher and presents a reliable avenue for brewers to pursue in 2019.

“Time is actually on the industry’s side this time,” said Jones, “as a younger generation of drinkers mature into young working adults and the largest generation ever to retire in the United States looks for the best adult beverages to match their active lifestyles.”



BREWERIES THAT OFFER EXEMPLARY TAPROOM EXPERIENCES WILL THRIVE IN 2019.

Takeaways

Numbers aside, here are some things to keep in mind for 2019: beer is considered more of a “premium” beverage than ever before. Its margins are higher than ever, and “great beer” is no longer solely equated with the amount of ingredients and flavor that can be distilled into a 12-ounce container.

As beer nears the hallowed arenas of expensive wine and liquor, the stylistic lines between these can be blended – think complex Cabernet barrel-aged beers or elegant Brut IPAs. There is a lot of crossover potential to be drawn from other kinds of alcoholic beverages, or even other traditional means of intoxication... perhaps within ten years we’ll see an all THC-beer lineup from a brewery.

Certain styles require far more resources and time than others. A good hazy IPA will sell but consider downsizing your product line if you brew “labor of love,” resource-intensive styles. Part of the reason Gose has become so popular is that it is generally quick to brew, doesn’t require a ton of hopping, and it serves as a neutral palette upon which nearly any flavor combination can be painted for drinkers’ palates.

In essence, the style allows for a high ceiling of creativity with less risk. Stay objective!

Lastly, as the taproom becomes increasingly important for the success of the average brewery, those that offer exemplary in-house experiences will outlast the rest.

Modern point of sale equipment, such as Square or other tablet-integrated software, is not infallible, but it does send a message that your establishment is forward-thinking and makes tipping a breeze, which is quite important if staff is being paid server wages.

Similar to packaging, taprooms are another extension of your brand. Some taprooms stock arcade games and retro gaming consoles, most keep plus-sized Jenga towers on hand, but what’s important is that a taproom has life, vibrancy and energy. Give people things to do or things that make conversation easy. Allow for movement – multiple “zones” within your space, especially an all-seasons outdoor space, can make the difference between having a “happening” spot or a stagnant one.

Breweries that think about the fine details will always outlast those that go straight for the home run. 2019 will be a test of who can consistently please the consumer while keeping staff happy and paid.

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RESTAURANT OUTLOOK

By JIM DYKSTRA

2018 WAS ANOTHER SOLID YEAR FOR RESTAURANTS, continuing a trend of mild yet steady growth. Using data from the National Restaurant Association (NRA), we will review the past year's trends and surprises as well as forecast trends for 2019. For further insight into craft beer-focused establishments, and the state of restaurants in general, *The Beer Connoisseur* spoke with Flying Saucer Draught Emporium co-founder Keith Schlabs. Before we hear from Schlabs, let's dive into the numbers to see what defined the past year.

At year's end, 2018 restaurant sales are expected to have hit \$825 billion, according to the NRA. This marks growth of 1.4 percent. This positive trend represents nearly a decade of growth for the restaurant industry.

"2018 is the ninth consecutive year of sales growth for the restaurant industry," said Hudson Riehle, Senior VP of Research and Knowledge at the NRA. "Not surprisingly, it's another year characterized by moderate growth."

There are many parallels that can be drawn between the restaurant industry and the craft beer landscape, including that of growth driven by the sheer volume of establishments open to the public.

While there are over 7,000 breweries open in the U.S., 2018 saw the number of restaurants rise to over 660,000, and first and foremost, that means a highly competitive environment where the difference between success and failure is razor thin.

In a survival of the fittest environment, the most surefire means of surviving is to have a robust, capable workforce. The hiring environment is incredibly competitive, with cost of training talent and retention being cited as two of the year's biggest challenges for restaurateurs.

According to Riehle, "roughly one out of every two restaurant operators reports their top challenge is labor-related."

Keith Schlabs, co-founder of the pioneering craft beer restaurant chain Flying Saucer Draught Emporium, echoed this sentiment:



\$825 Billion

ANNUAL SALES

660,000

RESTAURANTS
OPERATING

1.4%

INDUSTRY GROWTH

*2018 figures as reported by the
National Restaurant Association

“I like to see through my beer occasionally, but our customers want Hazy IPA, so we supply it.”



Keith Schlabs has seen many trends come and go in the restaurant industry at the helm of thriving beer-focused restaurant chain Flying Saucer Draught Emporium, which is set to open two new locations in 2019.

“Hiring talent is the hardest thing in the restaurant business right now. Restaurants open every day, and the hiring climate is super-competitive. Even the price for a line cook has risen dramatically over the last five years. Hiring service staff and sending them through our week-long training program, then making them practice with a human being is difficult when they could go down the street and work at a shot bar and make money tomorrow.”

Whether a taproom or restaurant, an establishment is only as good as the people running it. So how can restaurateurs ensure employees convey the image of the brand and provide excellent service in such a competitive hiring environment?

“Hiring is key, especially when managers don’t have the luxury of hiring based on specific personality traits,” Schlabs said. “Does a prospective employee seemingly have good energy, integrity, solid

work experience, and can we make them understand what we need and how to execute? The leadership we have at each location is a priority, because people are our most important element – good people give good guidance, recommending the right beer to the customer and keeping them excited and interested.”

In summation, successful restaurants, like breweries, will be the ones that build themselves up from the inside-out, ensuring quality is never sacrificed for the sake of growth.

As for restaurant-wide trends, 2018 was the year of locally sourced food and drink choices. These options lend immediate authenticity to an establishment and preserve the all-important human element that today’s consumers crave.

With the amount of artisanal food and drink being produced, it is now possible to create a menu that relies heavily on local products, even for regional and

INDULGE IN TASTY CELEBRATIONS

Brewed to celebrate our 25TH ANNIVERSARY, this limited release specialty Black Forest Cake Ale pairs sumptuously with well-aged and flavorful cheeses. The tart cherries, cocoa beans and dark chocolate flavors of the beer work in perfect harmony with the piquant, tangy, nutty and earthy nuances of this selection of fine cheeses. The beer's champagne-like effervescence lifts the rich creaminess of the cheese right off your palate and helps break it down for a wonderful and complementary blending of their varied flavor combinations. A great pairing to indulge in for your own celebrations. Enjoy!





CHEESE PLATTER

INGREDIENTS

1 pomegranate
Coffee beans
Dark and caramel sea salt chocolate
Approx. 2 oz of cheese per person
goat cheese
blue cheese
Comté cheese
1 or 2 plain fresh baguettes

PREPARATION

Arrange all ingredients on a cheese platter.
The cheeses and the beer should sit at room
temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

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CHAMBLY QUEBEC CANADA



Hiring talent is the biggest challenge for restaurants, but it's worth putting in the time to find the right people. Successful restaurants build from the inside-out, ensuring quality is never sacrificed for the sake of growth.

national chain establishments like Flying Saucer or California-based Yard House. This tailored experience can serve as a huge differentiating factor, but again, what it requires is a trustworthy, highly attuned staff that cares enough to execute.

"We let each establishment have autonomy," said Schlabs. "There are parameters that must be adhered to within, but our Charlotte location, for example, is a different experience than San Antonio, and that's fun to see."

Beer-Related Restaurant Trends

So, when it comes to beer, what's selling, and how is it selling?

You can probably guess some of the year's big winners: Hazy IPAs and single-hopped brews, neither of which should come as a surprise. In 2019, we can expect consumers to return to more palatable, sessionable ale. There are a couple obvious reasons why.

First, the craft beer honeymoon phase is past, and people are learning how to drink and still go about their days. Rather than drinking less, consumers are opting for more subtle, lower-ABV beers.

Secondly, the average American drinker is becoming

more attuned to the nuances of beer, which means that flavors that once had to be spelled out in all-caps can now be gently painted onto the palate.

"Flying Saucer is a community place, built for camaraderie," said Schlabs. "People do tend to drink more in this environment, but they don't want to get wasted, so they're gravitating towards more palatable, sessionable beers. Even within the industry, when I have drinks with our managers for instance, they're all drinking sessionable ales or lagers because they want to feel good about themselves the next day."

The past year's focus on IPA experimentation led to some exciting new stylistic subsets. If the same level of experimentation is applied to lager and other sessionable styles, 2019 should promise to be an exciting and relatively healthy year.

As American drinkers learn to incorporate healthy amounts of drinking into their lives, different glassware options like nooners take on an added value. If you only offer pint glasses, consider branching out to glassware that enhances the drinking experience or provides multiple options.

Though subtlety in beer is on the rise, Schlabs does note a few past beer trends that are becoming tough sells in a crowded market.

"It's very difficult selling real ale in any of our establishments," he said. "There's an occasional market where it will succeed, but we have more or less had to eliminate it. Sad to see it go, but more often than not we ended up pouring partial kegs down the drain. We just couldn't go through it quickly enough."

"I don't know where this evolution is taking us, but we're losing some things that are important," Schlabs continued. "Even overseas, people are pounding bizarre beers, or even Smirnoff Ice. It's not universal, but I've certainly seen the younger generation drifting from tradition."

Another tradition falling by the wayside is the mega-hype beer release, likely because there are just too many to be excited about.

"Whale hunter events are not what they used to be," said Schlabs. "If you remember Founders CBS, that beer used to have a line out the door for an event. Now it's just on the shelf in Whole Foods."

Lastly, while Schlabs pinpoints the perennial value of tastings, pairings and flights, he cites glassware giveaways as an ineffective means of promotion, simply because it has been done so much.

Finding What Works

Though it is a national chain, Yard House still tailors its menus per location, and since 2016, it has solicited feedback directly from the consumer in the form of surveys.

According to Gregory Howard, director of Beverage Strategy for Yard House, the company's annual beer review takes "three to six months to complete" and includes "beers, brands and styles they'd like to see at their local Yard House."

"We will ultimately select from 20 to 30 new beers to replace the least-popular beers at each restaurant," said Howard. "That equates to nearly 1,600 tap handles company-wide. And, of course, each Yard House will have at least a few taps that are exclusive... Each Yard House location has its own individual beer menu and no two are exactly alike."

No matter the size of your business, feedback from both the consumer and staff are crucial amidst a constantly evolving market.

Takeaways

If you are considering opening a restaurant, build from the inside out. Pay employees fairly and treat them humanely and they will breathe life into your establishment and build your customer base. They will also be your ear to the ground, liaising with the consumer and helping you stay a step ahead.

Restaurants now compete with taprooms, but they will always win on the service end. Those establishments willing to "wine and dine" the customer will keep the line of demarcation between taprooms and full-service establishments firm.

At any stage of business, stay in touch with the customer, and let them dictate what you sell as much as you can. Know them, and you will know what sells.

Not only is knowing what sells important, but knowing what environment and mindset the product is being sold in. For Schlabs and Flying Saucer, this means being willing to experiment with the standard model.

Two new Flying Saucers are slated to open in 2019. One will be a condensed model in the international terminal of the Dallas/Fort Worth airport, and the other will be a "modified Saucer, smaller, different service style, more focused on the to-go option," said Schlabs. "It's near an amphitheater and campus, with a bunch of residential housing around. It's exciting and has the potential to grow into something special."

Lastly, know when to separate personal preferences from business decisions, like Keith Schlabs with Hazy IPAs:

"I like to see through my beer occasionally, but our customers want Hazy IPA, so we supply it."



Locally sourced food and drink options lend immediate authenticity to an establishment and preserve the all-important human element that today's consumers crave.

"Whale hunter events are not what they used to be. If you remember Founders CBS, that beer used to have a line out the door for an event. Now it's just on the shelf in Whole Foods."
- Keith Schlabs

OFFICIAL REVIEW

Each year, we collect the highest-scoring beers evaluated in the *Official Review* and combine them into a list of the finest examples. In 2018, the rise of hazy American IPAs was evident, as many of the most well-brewed American IPAs and Double IPAs were unfiltered. Once again this year, we witnessed Specialty Wood-Aged Beers aged in a variety of bourbon, gin, rum, wine and other barrels featured in every style bracket. Our judges loved the complexity and wide range of flavors that aging beers in barrels provided.

Many exemplary German styles are present, such as flavorful Festbiers and easy-drinking Pilsners, and big Belgian beers are also well represented such as Tripels, Quadrupels and Saisons. Additionally, multiple varieties of sour and wild beers were reviewed such as American Wild Ales, Mixed-Fermentation Sour Beers, Wild Specialty Beers and Brettanomyces Beers. We hope you enjoy reading about the Top 250 Beers of 2018 and that you use this list to help navigate the vast expanse of beers available today.

ABOUT

The *Official Review* is conducted in a single blind tasting format that adheres to the Beer Judge Certification Program 2015 Style Guidelines. This method provides the best opportunity to rely on facts and to avoid favoritism, ensuring a level playing field for all brewers. It serves both the industry and the consumer to have unbiased and objective scores from qualified experts.

In effort to provide the most credible evaluations, The Beer Connoisseur hand-selects judges with a minimum BJCP ranking of “National” or Master Cicerone®. Judges are required to work with an assistant that handles beer prior to evaluation, and breweries are not allowed to solicit judges directly.

In the single blind tasting format, judges are presented with a chilled, properly poured beer and given its style category. Scoring is then done on the following basis using a 100-point scale: Aroma (24 points), Appearance (6 points), Flavor (40 points), Mouthfeel (10 points) and Overall Impression (20 points).

The score breakdown is as follows:

100 to 96: World Class – You need this beer in your life.

95 to 91: Exceptional – Don’t hesitate.

90 to 86: Very Good – A brew to savor.

85 to 75: Average – Somewhat unimpressive.

74 and below: Not Recommended – Just walk away.

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**TOP 250
BEERS
OF
2018**

UNFILTERED BELGIAN FARMHOUSE ALE



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Belgian Top-fermenting Wheat Beer



Imported by Artisanal Imports, Austin, TX
www.artisanalimports.com

VERY GOOD (90-87)

#250 | **RATED 87** | BELGIAN-STYLE TRIPEL | GARAGE BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Brian Eichhorn | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The nose presents very akin to classic Belgian yeast but has a Saison twist to it. Loads of pepper, faint clove and low vanilla, along with clean ethanol lead the way. Moderate sweet malt pops through as well, and the hops are missing. I get a hint of citrus and pomme as well. Very well fermented. On tasting, it has a lemony tang to it, hints of stone fruit and soft bready malt. Quite warming, though mostly clean. Though I do get a sharp bitterness from some higher alcohols as well. The Saison notes pop through in the flavor a bit (and I quite enjoy them), dragging the beer a bit from the classic Tripel realm. Finish is a bit sweet and round but dries out nicely.

#249 | **RATED 88** | CÀ PHÉ | URBAN SOUTH BREWERY (LA)

Review by Brian Eichhorn | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 16 / 20

In the aroma, this beer is definitely all about coffee. Fresh and clean with a high-quality coffee aroma. Notes of toffee and chocolate permeate, along with a milk-type note. Balanced overall. Great aroma! It's a deep brown black and opaque, with a creamy tan head. Flavor-wise, this is distinctly a sweet/milk stout at the base, though it stops short of being too sweet. Fresh and clean-tasting with the coffee still present, though more subdued than in the aroma. The beer is creamy and medium-full-bodied with moderate carbonation. Overall, this is a well-made and well-interpreted expression of this style that could use a touch more bitterness to help balance it out.

#248 | **RATED 88** | PIRANHA DEALER | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This beer adds strawberries and vanilla beans to the New England IPA base style that sports Simcoe, Citra, Ekuantot and Mosaic hops. This beer pours dark golden in color, very hazy, with a small white head. The aroma is prominently hop driven with aromas of mangoes and peaches; the strawberry and vanilla are hidden behind the hops. The flavor is prominently hoppy with tropical fruit and mangoes. The beer finishes lightly bitter with an abundance of tropical fruit flavors. This is an excellent New England IPA, but the strawberries and vanilla are a bit subtle. Enjoy this specialty IPA for the hops!

#247 | **RATED 88** | ANIVERSARIO 1 | SOUTHNORTE BEER CO. (CA)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer is a square peg. It looks like a bad Saison topped with a thin, frothy head that recedes quickly but the dance of Mexican honey, epazote and cilantro with the Belgian yeast flavors, spicy hops and pale malts kicks the beer up to a higher level. The flavors have a layered complexity that weaves in and out. They all work together with no element demanding too much attention. It comes on like a savory sweet spicy honey scone and finishes with a hint of tea that provides a friendly bitter punch and a slight, drying astringency. The above-average carbonation and crisp medium body make this a very refreshing, elegantly flavored beer.

#246 | **RATED 88** | RIEGELE DUNKEL | BRAUHAUS RIEGELE (GERMANY)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This beer's rich malt aromas and flavors remind me of Nutella on lightly toasted bread with the sweetness toned down. The rich malt is soft and complex with bread crust, hints of chocolate, nuts and a clean fermentation character. There are no burnt, bitter or harsh malt or caramel flavors. Low but noticeable hops provide a light balancing bitterness to soften the mild sweetness. The beer's medium body has a sensual creaminess and a soft mouthfeel. The carbonation is moderate and there is nothing harsh or astringent. This is a beer to serve with food. Towards the end of the glass the nuttiness gets a little intense, but this is a beer to serve with food.

#245 | **RATED 88** | HARTBEAT | HANGING HILLS BREWING CO. (CT)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

It pours a deep hazy yellow with a big, foamy white head, that has low-ish retention that tends to hang off the glass. The aroma is full of hops with tropical (pineapple, mango) and citrus (grapefruit, orange peel) fruits, as well as a bit of dank character. There is a little bit of malt with notes of grainy, toasted crackers. The flavor is similar but even more juicy tasting. This coupled with some higher alcohol notes and warmth makes it like a better version of a tiki drink (think mai tai, etc), but with a bit fuller body (med-low) and drier. This is a very tasty beer, but the alcohol is not well hidden and hurts its drinkability.

#244 | **RATED 88** | SPOT COFFEE STOUT | FLYING BISON BREWING CO. (NY)

Review by Rick Franckhauser | Aroma: 18 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Coffee and roasted malts initially dominate the aroma but are eventually accompanied by a creamy impression. Rich coffee with cream is anticipated. Dark brown color with great clarity and a creamy tan head. The flavor follows with creamy coffee and some roasted malt. The coffee flavor is very well played and reminiscent of an iced coffee. Milk chocolate midway through is joined by just a hint of earthy tones that may be from oats, hops or a combination. Low level bitterness, which seems to come more from the roast than hops. The finish is malty sweet, not cloying and again aided by the roast to help balance things out. The chocolate remains long in the aftertaste.

#243 | RATED 88 | SPELLBINDER | WREN HOUSE BREWING CO. (AZ)

Review by *Nelson Crowle* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The initial aroma is of pink grapefruit and honey-baked bread crusts – almost evenly balanced malt-to-hops. The flavor is moderately high grapefruit (both juice and zest), with a light malt backbone to hold it up. Medium carbonation, medium body, looks New England-ish, but the hop profile is of a more straightforward American IPA. The finish is dry and crisp with lingering grapefruit. The beer is well made and tasty but seems to have an identity crisis of tasting like an American IPA but looking like a New England. Still, this was a tasty and very refreshing beer.

#242 | RATED 88 | BASTOGNE ARDENNE STOUT | BRASSERIE DE BASTOGNE (BELGIUM)

Review by *Michael Heniff* | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This stout pours black in color, opaque, with a huge, finely-beaded, dark brown head. The aroma is moderately smoky with complements of black licorice, dark cherry and black pepper and a light, funky barnyard. The flavor adds moderate chocolate, treacle and a light acidity to the smoky, dark cherry, licorice and pepper characters. A light wild yeast-like barnyard and leather add a little funkiness. The body is medium with moderate-high carbonation. A light bitterness lingers in a long, dry finish with roasted malt, black licorice, and pepper. This is a very interesting, complex Belgian stout. The smokiness adds complexity and the black pepper and dark cherry complement the dark malts well.

#241 | RATED 88 | HIGH RIVER | PLATFORM BEER CO. (OH)

Review by *Rodney A. Tillinghast* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Aromas included subtle wood tones and vanilla cake with the bourbon character taking a more assertive role as the beer opened up and warmed. Although weighing in at just over 10 percent ABV, the beer from beginning to end was extremely drinkable, and not as heavy as many other stouts in this range. For its intense color and bourbon component, it wasn't extremely roasty, and offered a surprising amount of firm bitterness, which cut through some of the intense malty nature of the stout. While the overall beer was enjoyable, it seemed to me somewhat one-dimensional and low on the bourbon intensity scale. This beer would have benefited either from additional wood contact time or fresher barrels.

#240 | RATED 88 | NAUGHTY GIRL STOUT | RIGHT BRAIN BREWERY (MI)

Review by *Brian Eichhorn* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 16 / 20

The nose is rich and toasty, followed by distinct roast. Very clean beer with a low fruity ester and deep chocolate roasted quality, quite fresh. There may be a suggestion of mint, but that could be due to the influence of knowing it's a mint stout! On tasting, again, this beer is very fresh, roast-forward and malty. Medium hop bitterness is propped up by roast bitterness. The beer is never too bitter or burnt. The mint is buried in there and really only comes out with aspiration or on the late finish. It has a deep chocolate quality that could certainly support more mint. Overall, super tasty and drinkable stout.

#239 | RATED 88 | 2017 PUGACHEV'S COBRA | HANGAR 24 CRAFT BREWING (CA)

Review by *David Sapsis* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The flavor is big and lush in the beginning with roasty dark malt bitterness more prevalent than the hop character; dominant flavors of dark-roast coffee, dark bittersweet chocolate, soy sauce, black licorice, bourbon and a ketone/ caramel-butter note intermingle with a pronounced alcohol shot occurring mid-palate. The finish is mildly dry with a lingering acrid bitterness countered by a light maple syrup element. Mouthfeel is full and relatively high in astringency. Conditioning is low, as is creaminess. The forward roasty bite indicates to me a high ration of roast/black material in the grist, which, while absolutely fine in Imperial Stouts, might need a bit of cellar time to tame.

#238 | RATED 88 | ORANGE DOOR | SKETCHBOOK BREWING CO. (IL)

Review by *Jim Koebel* | Aroma: 19 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 16 / 20

This beer has moderate hop aroma that is fruity and sweet. There are classic citrus notes, specifically grapefruit. It pours an orange-yellow color with a low, wispy white head. This beer's flavor is expectedly hoppy, with more intensity and complex character than that found in the aroma. The hops are fruity and resinous with an assertive bitterness throughout. Any malt flavor is clean and neutral. It has a medium-full body with a fluffy, filling feel and is well carbonated. This beer finishes nicely and slightly prickly from a combination of ethanol and carbonic acid. Overall, this is an enjoyable IPA, but its aroma is relatively muted compared to other typical examples.

#237 | RATED 88 | SUNSHINE CHUGSUCKLE | MOTHER'S BREWING CO. (MO)

Review by *Michael Heniff* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This NEIPA has a light golden color with a big, fluffy white head and the expected hazy, opaque appearance. The aroma is exclusively hops with aromatics of lemon, pineapple, and orange with a lighter resinous and dank accent. The body is medium-light with a moderate-light carbonation, and a light astringency. The flavor is predominantly tropical fruit hops of lemons and pineapples. The finish is dry and lightly bitter but with a noticeable astringency. Tropical hops flavors of pineapple, orange and lemon lingering long in the finish. For the NEIPA style, the appearance of this beer is proper and the hops are appropriately and enjoyably tropical in character.

#236 | RATED 88 | SEEDSTOCK WEIZENBOCK | SEEDSTOCK BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by *Michael Bury* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor isn't quite as rich as one would expect for style. Nonetheless, you'll find the characteristic base of wheat tang, bread, bread crusts, and slight caramel that provides the backdrop for the fermentation character. In this regard, the spicy, peppery phenols are more prominent than the apple and pear esters and end up drying the finish of the beer a bit too much. Hop elements are nonexistent. Seedstock's Weizenbock is still sure to be a hit despite falling in between the pale and darker versions of the style. It provides plenty of character and intrigue without any significant faults. For this reviewer, it was the perfect beer on a cool autumn evening.

#235 | **RATED 88** | UPSLOPE CRAFT LAGER | UPSLOPE BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

As the beer warms, a heavier sulfur character comes through masking the hop notes that does become a bit distracting. The beer is a pale golden color with great clarity and a white small-bubble head that dissipates rather quickly, as is typical for the style. The flavor carries through a moderate hop bitterness along with a light corn character. There is a lingering bitterness that remains through the finish and aftertaste which cleanses the palate for the next drink very nicely. The finish is dry and refreshing. The fermentation seems quite clean initially, but it does muddy up a bit with the sulfur character as it warms. The body is a light medium, and the carbonation is moderate.

#234 | **RATED 88** | CHRONO 003 // STRAWBERRY EL DORADO | ABLE SEEDHOUSE AND BREWERY (MN)

Review by Nelson Crowle | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Light bread dough aroma with medium strawberries and very light floral is first apparent. The beer pours a very clear medium gold with a large poofy white head that quickly dissipates, probably from the acidity. First taste is quite tart, with a clean lactic sourness and a dry bread finish with just a hint of earthiness. Strawberries come out mid-palate and still quite tart with no residual sweetness. Medium-light body and fairly high carbonation with a clean kettle-soured type of sourness. Tasty and enjoyable, this beer would pair well with fruity meat dishes like ham/pineapple sandwiches (pineapple rings with ham chunks, baked), or Hawaiian pineapple chicken.

#233 | **RATED 88** | TEAM FIONA NE IPA | LISTERMANN BREWING CO. (OH)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

In the glass it formed an unusually thick, white, well-retained head atop a slightly hazy orange-tinted brew. The aroma led off with a prominent hop nose, consistent with style, with fresh pleasantly grassy notes followed by muted citrus, light grapefruit and pear esters. The flavor profile was also, not surprisingly, hop-forward before fading into a pale and caramel maltiness then finishing with the same mellow esters present in the aroma. The mouthfeel featured moderate carbonation, medium body, and an overall impression characterized by steady balance rather than extreme flashiness. As such, it should have a wide appeal to both IPA drinkers and those who find American IPAs too aggressive.

#232 | **RATED 88** | 22ND ANNIVERSARY IMPERIAL IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Nelson Crowle | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The initial aroma is tropical fruit (passion fruit and pineapple) and hints of tangerine, with a light fresh baked bread background note. The first sip is big and fruity - again with passion fruit, also papaya and mango notes, with a Jolly Rancher type of artificial orange (not in a bad way!), with a very light bread crust malt note that supports the moderate bitterness. The alcohol of this Imperial IPA is very clean and almost hidden behind the fruity notes - but there is some alcohol warmth as you swallow. Medium light in body with moderate carbonation, this is a relatively light beer with fruity and alcohol notes, and muted hops - not your typical in-your-face double IPA.

#231 | **RATED 88** | KEY LIME CIDER | 3 DAUGHTERS BREWING (FL)

Review by Brian Eichhorn | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

On smelling the cider, it's clearly a lime one! Reminiscent of key lime pie, there are some faint floral cider type notes behind the lime to remind you that it is, in fact, still apple based. Quite clean and well balanced in the aroma. On tasting, the acidity is in good balance with a semi-sweet cider quality, lending enough sweetness to balance the bitter notes afforded by the lime. It really does have a round lime quality that, again, reminds you of key lime pie. I would like to see a bit less bitterness and maybe a touch more body to really hit the mark, but this is a tasty and easy-drinking fruit cider that showcases fresh key lime.

#230 | **RATED 88** | LITIGATOR IMPERIAL IPA | WORTHY BREWING CO. (OR)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 15 / 20

Upon pouring this beer it had a light golden hue that was very cloudy (chill haze). However, I would not call this a hazy or New England Style, because it has been filtered. Small tiny bubbles lined the glass and there was significant head retention as well. The aroma was to be expected. I had an explosion of pure hops and tons of it. It had essences of pine needles and I can safely say that it is Cascade hops in the finish. The flavor(s) revealed something entirely different, however. Being a Double IPA and with the first reaction of the aroma of hops, hops and hops, the hop bitterness was somewhat subdued and restrained.

#229 | **RATED 88** | LUCKY SCARS | CURRAHEE BREWING CO. (GA)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The aroma is full of fruit thanks to a blend of hops and a vibrant yeast. The fruit is citrus-forward (grapefruit, lemon, tangerine) and tropical (mango, passionfruit, pineapple) along with a berry character. Behind the hops, there is lightly sweet, honey-like malt with a light toast & bread character. The flavor is similar to the aroma, packed with fruit, which at times shifts from a sweeter mango/berry character to a more pithy lemon/tangerine/grapefruit. In either case, it's always hop-forward, with a dry yet semi-sweet finish from the medium-low bitterness. Underneath is a lightly sweet honey teddy graham-like malt character.

#228 | **RATED 88** | KNOWLEDGE | RHINEGEIST BREWERY (OH)

Review by Jessica Sullivan | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The aroma had complex and strong hop presence, with lemon, grass and pineapple hitting up front. This was followed by a low crackery biscuit malt presence. There were no obvious fermentation characteristics; the aroma was clean and without off-odors. The flavor was similar to the aroma, except the hop complexity increased even further; pine and delicate floral notes came and joined the party. The bitterness was moderately high - perhaps a bit low for this style. The balance was clearly towards the hop, although the lingering bitterness was not harsh. Overall, a very drinkable beer that I would be happy to be served with many strong flavors and supreme balance!

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#227 | **RATED 89** | EIGHT POUNDS PER BBL | SEVEN STILLS BREWERY & DISTILLERY (CA)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Eight Pounds Per BBL by Seven Stills Brewery & Distillery was pleasant, easy drinking beer judged as a BJCP category 21B - Specialty IPA: New England IPA. Initial aroma was of a light citrus hop followed by bready, crackery malt and green leafy notes and orange, citrus esters. This beer was super hazy and opaque, with a huge white head, fine bubbles that were long-lasting and a murky golden color. It had nice citrusy, estery flavors and a light citrus hop flavor with very low hop bitterness in the finish blended with light sweetness from malt and lingering esters. A very nicely balanced beer between malt and hops with big estery hops upfront yet lightly bittered.

#226 | **RATED 89** | KISMET | MOTHER EARTH BREW CO. (CA)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

At first, it smells of moderately strong fresh pineapple juice and sweet bread aromas. On second smelling, the pine resin cuts through the malt and blends well with white flower petal and cracked red pepper hop aromas. This hazy, light amber-colored IPA has a frothy 1" white head that greets me and leaves lacing up and down the sides of my glass after swirling. It is surprisingly bitter, resinous, with grapefruit pith hop flavor that dominates and lingers into the crisp, mouthwateringly dry finish. As I wait, the aftertaste shows light vanilla pith and milled whole wheat flour flavors.

#225 | **RATED 89** | GATHERED #1 | WUNDERKAMMER BIER (VT)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer pours a deep straw approaching yellow character and surprisingly hazy. There is almost no head at all, but this is OK for a sour. It has a clean lacto-like lemon-y sourness that lacks complexity, but its cleanliness is very enjoyable. Post-sour is some nice complexity of barnyard, musty, floral, earthy, hay, pepper, and light fruit (apricot, peach) notes, which could be from either the yeast, aging, Brettanomyces or the extra additions. There is also an enjoyable malt character not usually found in sours, with a wheaty, doughy moderate fullness. Despite this, its light and tart character leaves a refreshing feeling on the palate.

#224 | **RATED 89** | RACER 500 | BEAR REPUBLIC BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Fragrant, fresh pithy grapefruit and tangerine hop aromas emanate from the glass at initial pour and leave little room for the slightly fruity hop character and light, grainy-sweet malt. This sample pours hazy golden straw with a medium-sized, bubbly white head, receding to a thin film shortly. Crisp, light grainy malt supports the moderate hop bitterness. The hop flavor is piney, resinous and lightly herbal. Hop bitterness dominates into the aftertaste and leaves a dry finish. Medium-bodied with moderate carbonation. Within the flavor, orange notes alongside slight fruity, hop-derived esters enter late, particularly as the palate adjusts to the hop bitterness.

#223 | **RATED 89** | RASCAL | NORTH PEAK BREWING CO. (MI)

Review by Lyn Howard | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer starts with an inviting chocolate, roasted coffee-like aroma that has hints of cherry and a slight funkiness that is accented by an earthy hop aroma. The alcohol in this 6.5 percent ABV porter becomes more apparent as the sample warms up. Roasted coffee, burnt toffee and some underlying fruitiness are the first impressions when tasted. This is followed by a very earthy hop flavor and a moderate hop bitterness that fights a bit with the dark grain flavors yet works well to mask the alcohol in the flavor. This sample was not overly cherry-forward in flavor, and the roast is what lingers on the tongue as it finishes medium-dry.

#222 | **RATED 89** | STOKER RED ALE | WORTHY BREWING CO. (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The aroma has hints of pine, wood, and cane sugar. A rich, fluffy off-white head rests on top of a slightly hazy, copper-amber colored beer. The flavor is malty (slight caramel, a touch sweet, but not cloying), and some modest fruitiness accentuates the resinous hops. The bitterness is pronounced and lingers for some time after swallowing the beer. The balance is clearly leaning to the hop qualities over the malts, but some malt fullness also carries through to the finish. The body is medium, and carbonation is moderate. Overall, this is a well-balanced Red IPA, but one that strays off the more common formula and uses hops that are more herbal and earthy rather than citrusy.

#221 | **RATED 89** | STOUTELLO | KNEE DEEP BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The aroma greets you with big bittersweet cocoa powder followed closely by dark roast coffee, roast malt and roasted cocoa beans with a hit of hazelnut syrup, a bit Nutella-like. There is no hop aroma or fermentation character noted on the nose. The flavor follows with prominent hazelnut syrup, roast cocoa beans and a bit of burnt malt in the aftertaste; not as complex as the aroma. High hop bitterness emerges and sticks around as it moves into the medium-dry finish, growing as it lingers and stealing the show. The hazelnut also increases as the beer passes through the aftertaste. As with the aroma, there is no hop flavor or fermentation character

#220 | **RATED 89** | DRAFTY KILT | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This is a beautiful beer. With a deep garnet color, great clarity, and a medium-sized, cream-colored head you'll want to hold this up to the light. Even upon the first sip you'll notice that the aroma carries through into the flavor. Rich baker's chocolate, toffee, toast, and plums dominate while the moderately low bitterness helps to balance. Solid attenuation, this beer finishes too dry for the style and would benefit with a bit of residual sweetness. Cocoa powder and biscuit linger throughout the aftertaste. Drafty Kilt is the type of malt-forward beer that even hop heads can get behind.

#219 | RATED 89 | PFRIEM PUMPKIN BIER | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The spice additions are forward in the flavor, but they are not overpowering in any way. Instead, the clove, ginger, a hint of cinnamon, and herbal hop characteristics blend with a touch of caramel sweetness and a slight nutty quality to create a well-reserved version of this style. A little alcoholic warmth and carbonic bite add to the spiciness, warming the palate and lingering in the finish. All told, the spices and clean ferment and well-balanced malt profile make for a very quaffable Autumn Seasonal Beer. If you are looking for something that celebrates the fall season without coming across as a bad caricature of pumpkin pie, this beer easily makes the cut.

#218 | RATED 89 | SOUTHERN BEL' | ARCHES BREWING (GA)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The sampled beer poured with a deep copper color and slightly cloudy into the glass where it settled with a moderate white head with only modest retention. The nose began malty sweet with toasted caramel notes and finished with just a faint trace of unidentifiable hops. The flavor profile followed the aroma's lead with toffee and toasted caramel up front backed by some generic hop bitterness to balance. With a medium-full body the mouthfeel included a pleasant toffee sweetness and mild warmth coating the palate through a surprisingly dry finish. Overall this creative rendition of a Belgian ale packed plenty of unexpected flavors and aromas.

#217 | RATED 89 | IMPRESSIONIST | SOUTHBOUND BREWING CO. (GA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer is a hazy blonde that is visually reminiscent of Lemon-Lime Gatorade. There is a tightly packed moderately sized white head that dissipates slowly but leaves ample lacing on the glass. The mouthfeel boasts a medium-light body with moderate carbonation. There is a light hop-derived astringency that is noticeable but not off-putting. This beer is a very good kettle sour with a simple lactic profile that showcases the way New World hops can mingle with a clean lemon-like sourness. The aroma is the star of the show, and while it renders the flavor a bit of a letdown, the lack of hop flavor and bitterness result in wonderful drinkability.

#216 | RATED 89 | BANDED OAK PORTER | BANDED OAK BREWING (CO)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The roast-forward nose features strong earthy coffee and bittersweet chocolate alongside moderate biscuit and hints of caramel. The faint earthy hops help to reinforce the roasted malt. No fruity esters were perceived. The flavor follows closely to the aroma with upfront coffee, chocolate, biscuit, and toffee with supportive moderate bitterness. The clean fermentation coupled with the dry finish allows the drinker to easily go back for another sip. Quite quaffable. However, the quite forward roasted malt is slightly too tannic. Overall, this American Porter is a solid offering.

#215 | RATED 89 | HOPPOPOTAMUS IPA | METAZOA BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 16 / 20

Lately I have been yearning for an IPA brewed without oats, lactose, vanilla or fruit – a medium alcohol, hoppy and bitter brew with malt that supports but still lets the hops shine through. This is the beer I have been looking for. Piney, citrusy, tropical fruit hop aromas dominate with malt aromas providing support. It pours gold with just a slight haze. Citrusy hop flavors lead with medium-low hop biscuit in the background. More hop-based tropical fruit flavors emerge as the beer warms punctuated by a medium-high to high hop bitterness. This is a straight up American IPA – no gimmicks, nothing overstated, nothing out of place. Superb balance makes this beer stand out.

#214 | RATED 89 | MOUNTAIN JAM | SOUTHBOUND BREWING CO. (GA)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Although categorized as a lager, many ale-like characteristics were evidenced here. Hop flavor was well pronounced in a citrus flowery fashion that suggested a generous amount of dry-hopping while fruity notes were omnipresent in both the flavor and aroma. Malt was lightly bready yet mostly complementary. In terms of appearance, this beer was pale straw in color, hazy with a white medium rocky head that fell away quickly. The body was more lager like, well-conditioned, crisp and refreshing with traditional alcohol levels that enhanced drinkability. No astringency or off flavors with a dry but not bitter finish.

#213 | RATED 89 | KÖLSCH STYLE ALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

A grainy and slightly sweet aroma is present in this beer. Just a touch of diethyl sulfide makes it smell a little bit like cooked corn. It is a pale yellow, and bubbles rise up in an effervescent fashion, though there is almost no head. The flavor is slightly sweeter than a Kölsch that you may get in Cologne, Germany, with some sweetness that holds into the finish. The malt expression is delicate, a little bready, and balanced by appropriate hop bitterness and only a little earthy/noble hop flavor. It also tastes like there is a mineral quality from the water. The mouthfeel is medium with moderate carbonation that provides a tiny bite.

#212 | RATED 89 | ARCHIPELAGO | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The first noticeable traits of this beer are its juicy aromas, filled to the brim with mango, tangerine, and melon. This IPA boasts a hazy dark yellow coloring, with a prevalent white head that lasted from beginning to end. Upon tasting, it exhibited a dazzling amount of grapefruit-type hop flavors, melding into something like an adult juice box. Its bitterness was smooth, and fairly firm, which carried over into its finish, which was medium with an underlying body boost derived from a lactose addition. An enjoyable beer, very drinkable, well-conceived and well-executed.

#211 | **RATED 89** | BENT HOP | BENT PADDLE BREWING CO. (MN)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

A mild earthy, citrus and dank piney hop character comes through in the nose, along with some light fruitiness from esters and a touch of melon. The flavor mirrors the aroma quite well. A piney earthy hop flavor comes through up front in this moderately carbonated offering. The body is a light medium. Hop bitterness is on the medium side and seems slightly low for the style. The middle does retain some of the flavor character, though it does recede through to the finish, replaced by a light fruitiness as the drink proceeds along with a touch of soapiness. The finish is rather dry with bitterness coming to the fore, preparing the palate well for the next sip.

#210 | **RATED 89** | BRIGHT PALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The aroma of this Pale Ale was very lightly hopped with a subtle malt sweetness. The flavor had a nice balance of both malt/hops that made it slightly sweetness (malt) with a subtle bitterness (hops). The hops had a slight citrus and pine resin flavor. The mouthfeel and body of this beer was light and the carbonation level about medium. It meets the guidelines of a Pale Ale, however, on the lower threshold for the style. It was both light on the malt and on the hop bitterness, nevertheless it was a nice beer that can be drunk with ease as it has a 5 percent ABV. Very smooth in the finish with no lingering bitterness.

#209 | **RATED 89** | CHEETAH | RHINEGEIST BREWERY (OH)

Review by Jessica Sullivan | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

There were no off-aromas, no cloying sweetness, and no skunkiness. The flavor was similar to the aroma – a low grainy presence, clean fermentation, and a low level of spicy hops with very low bitterness. The beer is balanced, with neither the hops nor the malt dominating. There was a low sweetness that is permissible for this style. The finish was decidedly crisp and refreshing. This style is meant to be refreshing, brisk and extremely easy-drinking. This beer is all three. While it doesn't have the razzle-dazzle of many more popular styles right now, it is hard to make a beer in this style with so few faults – this is a tricky style, and this brewery did it very well. I would drink another!

#208 | **RATED 90** | LIGHTNING WILL | ON TOUR BREWING CO. (IL)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Pale yellow in color and brilliantly clear with a fine bead and a big white head that poured up nicely and quickly fell off. The aroma was hop accented yet of a subtle nature much like the traditional German style dictates. A typical grainy pilsner malt bouquet influences the balance but take a lesser position to the German hops. A delicate balance of noble hops and bready malt character come together nicely in the flavor profile with hops leading the way to a long dry finish. A thin-bodied beer which delivers alcohol at only traditional levels and does not overwhelm. A clean, thirst-quenching example of the style that should please the lovers of the most successful beer style in the world.

#207 | **RATED 90** | LOOSE BOOTS | ROADHOUSE BREWING CO. (WY)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer featured a big citrus hop aroma, which was quite lemony with malt aromas hidden behind the hops. No noticeable fermentation esters. It presented itself with a lovely golden hue that was clear with a huge white head that lasted forever. The first sip gave you a blend of earthy and citrus hops upfront and throughout with a low maltiness in the background. The finish was slightly sweet with a lingering bitterness. It had a medium body and hints of alcohol coming thru. I could see drinking this beer with almost any roasted meat meal. The earthy hops leave a dry quality in the finish that slightly distracts, but overall, this was a lovely beer.

#206 | **RATED 90** | ALE GÂTEAU FORÊT-NOIRE | UNIBROU (CANADA)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This beer pours a very dark brown, clear, with a huge mousse-like brown head. The initial aroma is tart cherry fruit that melds with bready malt and a lighter nondescript spice. The flavor is prominent bready malt with a contrast of sour cherry fruit. Esters of prunes and raisins marry the malt and fruit flavors. The light tartness from the cherry juice contrasts the slightly sweet, lightly bitter dark ale. The spice becomes most prominent late in the finish along with a lingering sour cherry. The tart cherry juice is very well displayed against the style's backdrop. The tart cherry juice and spices add an intriguing contrast that works well in this deceptively strong example.

#205 | **RATED 90** | BOSBESSEN | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor starts with a big tart blast that segues into a lovely balanced blueberry note acting as dance partner to the hay, wet leather, tobacco, and aspirin yeast notes. While relatively hard and quite pronounced in its Brett character, the late character fruit is beguiling – fresh and ripe but anchored with a very clean lactic tartness – strongly fruity but still playing second fiddle to the complex sour and wild ale. The finish is just shy of bone-dry, with low mouthfeel and a shot of oak astringency. A shadow of sweet blueberry goodness last well into the aftertaste, along with the lasting acid and oaky-minerally notes.

#204 | **RATED 90** | MOTHER'S HARVEST | UPLAND BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor has a moderately sweet biscuit and wildflower honey malt character. There is a medium citrus and floral hop middle section before finishing with a moderately high hop bitterness. Balanced toward the hop flavors and bitterness, but the malt character is not at all lost. This beer finishes with a short dryness. Medium-bodied with a medium-high carbonation gives this beer a pleasant mouthfeel without being too rich or over the top as the style normally is. It does lack the creaminess and big mouthfeel that the commercial examples listed in the guidelines have. There was no alcoholic warmth perceived, which at times can impede the drinkability of the style.

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#203 | **RATED 90** | 24 BLONDE ALE | HANGAR 24 CRAFT BREWING (CA)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 6 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer puts forth a lovely nose that is so subtle it makes you pine for more, even though you know its restraint is one of its best qualities. The flavor upfront is malt-accentuated with a soft and elegant bitterness estimated somewhere around the 18-20 IBU range. Again, like the nose, the flavor is soft yet surprisingly elegant and complex without being assertive in the least. The mid-palate bitterness and faint spiciness trails off quickly into a balanced slightly dry finish that is long on breadly malt character.

#202 | **RATED 90** | 413 FARMHOUSE ALE | BIG ELM BREWING (MA)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

413 presents a solid base of grainy malt with moderate honeycomb in the nose. Restrained red delicious apple and white pepper provide intrigue, and as it warms, pear and orange characters emerge as does a delicate floral note. The biscuity, honey malt backbone continues to reinforce the beer in the flavor and not only opens the taste but lingers far into the aftertaste after a semi-dry finish. In the middle, you'll be pleasantly greeted by a restrained Belgian fermentation profile of pepper and pomme fruit.

#201 | **RATED 90** | BUSTED PROP | CRYSTAL LAKE BREWING (IL)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This brew begins with a big floral and citrus hop aroma with tropical notes tied in. Right off the bat, this is more like an American Pale Ale than an American Wheat as the hops nearly covered the pleasant wheat malt aromas. Citrus and tropical hop flavors quench that thirst along with a soft wheat presence. This beer had higher hop levels than most American Wheat beers yet didn't finish overly bitter. It was clean, smooth and very refreshing. A great beer to drink alongside almost any meal or when you're just relaxing and enjoying the company of friends.

#200 | **RATED 90** | CITRUS ZEST IPA | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The flavor profile starts with strong grapefruit flavors almost oily in their nature, and reminiscent of peel/zest. Bitterness is very firm, but not coarse in any way. The finish is dry with lingering bitterness, citrus oil, acidity and mineral tones. While the beer is both dry and quite bitter, the hop aroma/flavor components give it a bright citrus character that dominates from beginning to end. While the bitterness is strong and there are some harsh and astringent elements likely due to high hop dosage, the beer is still both drinkable and rather filling.

#199 | **RATED 90** | COLD SMOKE SCOTCH ALE | KETTLEHOUSE BREWING CO. (MT)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 19 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Cold Smoke Scotch Ale has moderate aromas of frothy chocolate milk, burnt white bread crust, campfire smokiness, and roasted walnut bread. The beer is a clear dark brown color with garnet highlights, with a low creamy light tan head. The flavors are less complex but appropriate for the style, with moderate brown whole grain bread malt at the start and clean, crisp light vanilla pith in the finish. The low alcohol warms pleasantly and melds with the low supporting hop bitterness and a slightly watery body.

#198 | **RATED 90** | DEROGATION | HIDDEN COVE BREWING CO. (ME)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor features plenty of red wine barrel character showing some rich caramel, vanilla & oak. The sourness is also higher, but still pretty mild, like that of a cherry Greek yogurt. The similarities to red wine also carry into the mouthfeel where tannins from the barrels & grapes add to the body and the carbonation is nearly still. The level of red wine character in this beer is so impressive its almost closer to a carbonated merlot than beer. The only downside is all this character overwhelms the base beer, rather than builds on it, but the outcome is so tasty it's easy to overlook this.

#197 | **RATED 90** | DOUBLE HAUL IPA | KETTLEHOUSE BREWING CO. (MT)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 7 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Flavors are surprisingly bitter. Resin sits up front but does not become heavy. Mouthwatering grapefruit and a light chalky dryness persist in the aftertaste. Second taste features a moderate malt cracker as well as pine resin, pineapple, and lemongrass bitterness with an aftertaste of coconut shavings. This results in a carbonic, mouth-prickling characteristic when drinking. Hop flavors are jangly with resin and tropical elements cutting against each other while a bitter pithy resin overtakes the aftertaste.

#196 | **RATED 90** | JUDE BELGIAN-STYLE TRIPEL | REFORMATION BREWERY (GA)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

It poured clear and straw-colored into the glass where it quickly displayed a thick and fairly long-lasting white head. Its aroma included citrusy (especially lemony) esters, and moderate pepper and wheat malt spiciness in the nose. The flavor too showcased Belgian yeast character and a wheat and pilsner malt grain bill, and hops for bittering only, as are common for a Tripel. The mouthfeel too was true to style, with noticeable but not excessive alcohol warmth. As such its drinkability was impressive for such a strong beer.

#195 | RATED 90 | PFRIEM WINTER ALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by *Susan Ruud* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer poured a wonderful copper/amber color with a huge off-white head and clear body. It had a pleasant citrus hop and grainy malt aroma that blended well with low, soft alcohol notes. The flavor followed the aroma and the finish was resplendent with a lingering bitterness. There were pleasant light pear and cherry esters throughout. This is the perfect beer to drink with holiday meals such as turkey or ham with all the fixings. It would also pair well with a hamburger and fries, or for a special occasion.

#194 | RATED 90 | QUEEN'S WEISS | ARCHES BREWING (GA)

Review by *Michael McGuire* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor profile featured heavy clove and some milder wheat malt and banana flavors plus light hop bitterness to balance. The body was fuller than expected for style producing a richness on the palate – atypical for Weissbiers. The mouthfeel also included residual and lasting pre-astringent clove notes and a dry finish. Overall this was a fuller-bodied example of a Weissbier. Drinkability was moderately high though many imbibers might limit themselves to 1-2 pints before moving on to something else. Overall, this was a refreshing, flavorful and well-brewed beer.

#193 | RATED 90 | STARBURST IPA | ECLIPTIC BREWING (OR)

Review by *Brad Darnell* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Initial fragrant aromas reveal moderate nearly overripe orange and tangerine hops with light onion and garlic hop notes and green papaya. Cracker and light toast malt emerge but reveal no fruity esters. The flavor provides the same hop character as the aroma with a spicy, medium-high hop bitterness. A dry cracker and toast malt support the hops. Mostly balanced but the hops are at the center. I notice a slight pithy citrus character lingering in the aftertaste, and perfumy alcohol becomes more apparent the longer it sits. Light apple and pear esters finally emerge with my mid-glass swirl.

#192 | RATED 90 | THAI PEANUT | RIGHT BRAIN BREWERY (MI)

Review by *Joseph Formanek* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The up-front flavor is like a liquid peanut butter with chili spiciness, very much like a spicy Thai peanut butter as advertised. There is a very subtle malt character behind it with light hop flavor and bitterness. The middle and finish maintain the strong peanut butter flavors with a heat that builds, becoming quite strong but not overwhelming to my palate. While the balance is toward the spice characters in this brew, there is enough of a malt and fermentation presence to identify this unmistakably as a beer. The body is medium-thin, and the carbonation is at a moderate level.

#191 | RATED 90 | COCO CHAOS IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by *Randy Scorby* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The prominent fresh and bright lemon and grapefruit zest hop aroma hits the drinker immediately, with a hit of pineapple as the beer opens up. A suggestion of toasted coconut aroma develops as it warms, along with a very light bready base malt. The flavor follows with prominent grapefruit combined with mixed tropical fruit hop character, with a high hop bitterness that emerges mid-palate and lingers into a dry finish. The hop bitterness remains smooth throughout. The light bready base malt makes an appearance in the aftertaste, but the coconut is quite absent in the flavor.

#190 | RATED 90 | PAUWEL KWAK | BROUWERIJ BOSTEELS (BELGIUM)

Review by *Dan Martich* | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Pauwel Kwak is well known for its unique glassware, a vessel with a long, tall flute held in a wooden framework. Kwak pours a brown color with amber highlights and is quite clear, with a finely beaded off-white head. The aroma is of moderate bready malt with hints of caramel, moderate peppery phenolic, and light plum esters. The flavor similarly displays bready malt and peppery phenolics with just a touch of sweetness, finishing with a light bitterness. This beer has a more complex malt profile than a Golden Strong, higher alcohol than a Dubbel, and better quaffability than a Dark Strong.

#189 | RATED 90 | I'M ON A BOAT | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by *Dan Martich* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma of pine with a little citrus grapefruit rind and cantaloupe salutes you, and a light herbal character develops as the citrus notes increase. The flavor is just short of sweet with the citrus rind notes in the aroma perceived in the aroma. Very clean, and decidedly bitter with a mild herbal aftertaste that's balanced toward the hops. Medium light in body with a mild, puckering mouthfeel rounds it out. This is an easy-drinking beer without the alcoholic presence to stop you from drinking too many. This beer goes down easy and can be easily paired with a variety of summer foods.

#188 | RATED 90 | FU MANBREW | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by *Michael Bury* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Prominent ginger alongside floral hops will greet your nose in the beginning. As the beer begins to open, a bit of wheat and a light apple ester will appear. Supportive, moderate wheat malt flavor with hints of honey open the flavor and balance well with the low-to-medium bitterness. Taking up the slack of the hop bitterness is the medium-plus spiciness, peppery phenols that merge well with a similar strength of ginger. Fu Manbrew is a solid offering. The base Witbier was well executed and in conjunction with the ginger makes for quite the lovely drinking experience.

#187 | **RATED 90** | BOURBON BARREL AGED SCOTCH ALE | INNIS & GUNN BREWING CO. (UK)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer's flavor displays the rich caramel maltiness with a light smoky element along with a light vanilla and toasted oak. The beer finishes lightly bittered with rich caramel malt along with toasted oak and a hint of smoke. The base Scottish export style is excellent with a rich maltiness accented by a light smokiness. The barrel-aging imparts a background of toasted oak into the beer that complements the maltiness well, but the amount of barrel character is less abundant than most wood-aged craft beers. Unfortunately, no bourbon flavors make it into this beer.

#186 | **RATED 90** | FRESH POWDER | THE VIRGINIA BEER CO. (VA)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer smells like sitting outside on a warm sunny spring day eating a cup of citrus, tropical fruit and melon with a fresh baguette nearby and aromas of finished compost and fresh cut grass far in the background. It's a hazy, murky pour looking very much like a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice blanketed by 1" of ecru-colored foam with a very fine bead. Citrus and melon flavors dominate, and a light dose of sweetness gives the malt a rich pie crust flavor that balances and highlights the hop flavors and the medium-high citrus pith bitterness.

#185 | **RATED 90** | CORROSION | CAPE MAY BREWING CO. (NJ)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

It poured brilliant gold and very slightly cloudy into the glass, where it formed a moderate white head with moderate to poor retention, which was not unexpected for the style. Its aroma featured both a sour lemon/citrus and a sweeter mango/tropical fruit hop nose. The flavor profile paralleled the aroma, which masked the underlying malt base but did feature a little non-fruity hop bitterness in the finish. The mouthfeel included a light body, modest carbonation, little or no alcohol warmth and just a bit of hop astringency with a refreshingly sour palate coating in the finish. This beer's drinkability is high and should appeal to drinkers that are tired of bitterly over-hopped IPAs.

#184 | **RATED 90** | POLYNOMIAL PALE ALE | FOUR MILE BREWING (NY)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The beer pours a golden color with slight haze. It sits beneath a moderate ivory head that's fairly persistent. Polynomial is true to the pale ales of yesteryear but with a modern spin. Dry biscuit malt gives way to intense resin, pine, guava and pithy citrus fruits. This pithiness lingers well into the aftertaste, which is the only drawback of the beer, after a dry finish. Cleanly fermented with no issues or unwanted flavors. The above-average bitterness may be a bit high for style and could push the beer into more of a session IPA category. As it warms, hints of blackberry and tannin emerge. The new age hops provide a unique tropical fruit expression with supportive bitterness.

#183 | **RATED 90** | WILD NIGHT | SWAMP HEAD BREWERY (FL)

Review by Jessica Sullivan | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The appearance was beautiful: crystal clear, very pale yellow, with miniscule bubbles. The head was bright white with moderate retention. The flavor had a rich pils malt characteristic, which was well balanced with the low spicy hop flavor and the low hop bitterness. This is a subtle beer, but the flavors were very well balanced. The finish was exceptionally clean, both in flavor and in mouthfeel, with a brisk and refreshing sensation on the tongue after the beer was done. In sum, this beer tastes like a classy version of what your dad probably drank when you were a kid. While I wish the honey aromatics had been more evident throughout, this is a very well done cream ale.

#182 | **RATED 90** | CHILLAX | BOOTSTRAP BREWING (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This beer pours straw in color with excellent clarity and a medium, finely beaded white head. The aroma is moderately light pineapple with a hint of sweetness; no hops or malt are evident. The flavor is moderately light pineapple with a touch of malt and finishes with a hint of bitterness and a light, lingering pineapple. The pineapple character is very authentic and is evenly balanced with the base style. The base beer is fairly bland though, even for a Blonde Ale. But, it is well brewed and should be enjoyed by many looking for a well-done fruit beer without anything too forward.

#181 | **RATED 90** | FLAGSHIP IPA | STEAMWORKS BREWING CO. (CANADA)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor starts off very softly malty and creamy, trailing to a rather surprisingly reserved bitterness; flavors of orange juice and apricot dominate early, with the caramel notes and more tropical guava/mango emerging more mid-palate. The body is medium, with appreciable texture and creaminess due to what the foam stand shows to be a great mix of protein-polypheols that present as creamy and lush. What is most remarkable is the low, lingering bitterness in the finish, which to me indicated the beer was likely brewed with soft water. Overall the beer is a refreshing and bright, albeit modestly bittered West Coast IPA with a great blend of hop/fruit character.

#180 | **RATED 90** | DAYCATION IPA | HIGHLAND BREWING CO. (NC)

Review by Rick Franckhauser | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 34 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Pine resin and pineapple dominate the aroma with just a hint of lemon coming through. The flavor provides a pithy lemon rind character joined by the pine resin found in the aroma. The beer drinks like a tart, unsweetened lemonade. Moderately high levels of bitterness but not harsh. This hop juice has a lingering tart dry finish. Light-bodied with a moderately high carbonation level that pricks the tongue a little but is not astringent. Quintessential summer session ale. A total thirst quencher on a hot summer day. It could use some additional hop character, maybe some tropical fruit or other citrus, to add some interest and drinkability, but overall, this is a solid example of the style.

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#179 | RATED 90 | KAWI | CURRAHEE BREWING CO. (GA)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Right off the bat you can tell it's a coffee stout, but not so much so that it's an obvious coffee beer. The aroma gives espresso, chocolate, caramel and light toast, reminiscent of a macchiato. The flavor is where the coffee character brings it home, offering a much larger presence that brings it to the forefront. Unlike some other coffee beers, it's not at all oxidized, bitter or overbearing. It's actually a pretty smooth character like that of cold brew. The flavor is almost the opposite of the aroma with the chocolate dropping to the background and the coffee flavor moves up front, followed by caramel, lactose sweetness and toast.

#178 | RATED 90 | PEARPAWSTEROUS | UPLAND BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer's aroma is tart and fruity, with a low, pleasant mustiness. As it warms slightly, it takes on more depth and the tartness becomes more distinctly lactic. It pours hazy orange in color with a tall, fizzy white head. The head flattens fairly quickly, but bubbles continue rushing to the surface. This beer has a moderate lactic tartness in the flavor with fruitiness to match. The fruitiness creates an impression of sweetness, though it finishes well attenuated and dry. It is highly carbonated with a medium-light body, making it feel refreshingly crisp. Overall, this is a solid and well-balanced example of the style.

#177 | RATED 90 | TRUTH | RHINEGEIST BREWERY (OH)

Review by Jessica Sullivan | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 35 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Once again, the hop complexity dominated this beer. Bubble gum, black pepper, pine, and resin were all featured. This was supported by a solid malt backbone, with few distinct malt-related flavors. Any slight sweetness that struck me in the aroma was not present in the flavor. The hop bitterness was moderate-to-high but was in balance with the rest of the beer. In other words, this is not a bitterness bomb. The beer itself is relatively mouth-filling, not necessarily due to malts or alcohol, but rather due to the carbonation level, which was quite high. There was no astringency, and no other off-flavors. Overall, this beer was remarkably complex, well-balanced and a pleasant drink.

#176 | RATED 90 | ASPALL IMPERIAL ENGLISH CIDER | ASPALL CIDER HOUSE (UK)

Review by Sal Mortillaro II | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This cider has a high apple aroma with high apparent sweetness. In the background is a low vinous character and touch of earthy notes. On the sip, the forward flavor is a very quick white-wine like flavor (similar to a semi-sweet Riesling) that quickly transitions into a semi-sweet sweetness and high bitter-sweet apple flavor. The cider's acidity appears to be low in intensity though it seems the sweetness of this cider overshadows a true representation of actual acidity and a low tannic quality is present which helps bring balance. The aftertaste consists of the noted wine character, apple, and sweetness though the sweetness is eventually dried out aided by the higher ABV of the cider.

#175 | RATED 90 | HEMP GOSE | GOODWOOD BREWING CO. (KY)

Review by Jason Johnson | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

There is a low floral hop aroma, some of which could be contributed to by the hemp. I do get a low fruity tone and very low salinity. In the flavor I get that low wheat-like flavor and a very mild earthy tone that has to be from the hemp. There is a definite tartness, which is quite pleasant. There is a noticeable amount of salinity that combines well with the tartness. The balance is leaning towards the tartness. This beer is light-bodied and has a medium-light carbonation. It could be a bit more carbonated, but not much more. The rest of the body is as it should be, there is no astringency or alcohol warmth, but there is the slightest hint of creaminess to the beer, which is nice.

#174 | RATED 90 | UNICORN FARM IPA | BACK EAST BREWING CO. (CT)

Review by Jessica Sullivan | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma is immediately enticing. Big tropical fruit notes (passion fruit, guava), with a light hint of white grapes, and a punch of young pine. There is a slight hint of orange in the aroma, also. The malt backbone is present, though certainly (and appropriately) overwhelmed by complex hopping. The flavor was similar to the aroma – complex tropical, citrus, grape, and pine character. The malt supported the hop flavor well, although its character was relatively indistinct. Hop bitterness was moderate to high, as appropriate for the style, and balanced the malt well. The body was medium (although it was mouth-filling in a way that many medium-bodied beers are not), with moderate carbonation.

#173 | RATED 90 | MANDARINA IPA | HIGHLAND BREWING CO. (NC)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A low papery aroma note gave way to a light vanilla and orange character that becomes sweet and slightly overripe. A vanilla note intersects and becomes sherbet-like. There's a hint of orange creamsicle aroma that seems interesting and awoke the senses. A low malty biscuit aroma became more apparent as the beer warmed up in the glass. The flavor brought forth a moderate amount of mandarin orange flavor with a balanced grainy malt character. The hops are citrusy and not aggressive. Fruity and refreshing, the finish is very dry with a citrus rind aftertaste, not juicy. Overall, Mandarin IPA is a refreshing beer with a balanced citrus note that makes it perfect for food pairings.

#172 | RATED 90 | COLLISION STOUT | HOLY CITY BREWING (SC)

Review by Dan Preston | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

It's malt and barrel forward, with moderately low bitterness and a sweet finish. There are notes of licorice, brown bread, mocha latte and plenty of dark/dried fruit n' raisins, figs, & black cherries. It's like dessert in a glass, think bourbon/Kahlua-infused hot cocoa or Irish coffee crême brulee or boozy bread pudding or Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia. It's full-bodied and smooth despite some alcohol warmth, that makes it come off a lot stronger than the listed 8.5 percent, but nothing too overpowering. It's a delicious beer that could probably use another year of aging to blend the bourbon in more, but not too much longer before the tasty sherry-like oxidation turns to soy.

#171 | RATED 90 | SPACE LETTUCE | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Featuring a stunning amount of mango and lemon zest aromas, this beer's aromatic elements were complex and underpinned by pine resin. Bright, light crackery malt came through both in the aroma and in the background flavor. Hop flavors were quite citrusy and fresh, with only a modest amount of perceived hop bitterness. The beer finished medium-light to medium with a very light lingering hop bitterness. The grainy malt notes combined very well with the hop selection. As it warmed, more alcohol became prevalent, but it played happily into the juicy architecture of this hoppy elixir, similar to a strong New England IPA.

#170 | RATED 90 | ALPHA ABSTRACTION VOL. 1 | WILD LEAP BREW CO. (GA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Hops are at the forefront throughout the aroma with elements of cantaloupe, honeysuckle, orange and lemon dominant. The hop flavors hit the palate with a nice explosion of juiciness that lingers. The bitterness is lower in the overall balance which is stylistically appropriate and aids in the overall drinkability of this beer. A light hop astringency is present but expected with the copious amounts of hops added to this beer. Overall, an enjoyable interpretation of the style that likely utilizes a lot of late-addition/whirlpool hops and a heavy-handed dry-hop. The hops used provide a nice complexity to keep the palate intrigued.



#169 - HAWK HAUS CIDER

E.Z. Orchards Salem, OR | www.ezorchards.com

Style: New World Cider | ABV: 5.7% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review by Sal Mortillaro II

This cider pours a dark gold color with a slight haze and no head is present nor any activity from carbonation. The aroma is very subtle and faint consisting of apple fruit coupled with a low vinous character reminiscent of sauvignon blanc. A very low sulfur, barnyard character, and honey notes are present adding a layer of complexity to the cider. Despite the lack of carbonic activity in the appearance, high carbonation is apparent as wisps of carbon-dioxide are notable. Overall the aroma is light but pleasant. The flavor consists of a very nice, rounded apple flavor with a touch of sulfur and barnyard that adds complexity. The sweetness is medium-dry and finishes crisp with a nice grounded apple permanence which lingers in the aftertaste.

#168 - HOLY ROLLER

Urban South Brewery New Orleans, LA | www.urbansouthbrewery.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 6.3% | IBU: 60 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Brian Eichhorn

An aggressive hop aroma that is floral and earthy is backed by a bready, slightly sweet malt aroma. The malt sweetness has a slight caramel aroma. The beer is a pale copper with a fine, off-white head that lingers. Flavor is well-balanced between hops and malts, slightly edging towards hops flavor and bitterness. Hops are earthy with a nicely balanced bitterness that lingers. Malts are bready with a touch of sweetness and light caramel. A little fruitiness from the hops is also detectable. The mouthfeel is medium-bodied with moderately high carbonation. Overall, this is a great example of an American Pale Ale that displays the qualities of the style without blurring the lines between an APA and an IPA, which is too common in many "American Pale Ales" these days.

#167 - SAUV BLANC BARREL AGED GOLDEN ALE

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 6.9% | IBUs: 9 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review *by Nelson Crowle*

The beer when poured is very expressive with billowing white foam of small bubbles that fades fairly quickly but leaves some Belgian lace on the glass. Color is yellowish deep gold and quite hazy. The initial aroma is medium grainy with moderate spicy black pepper and grains of paradise notes. The flavor echoes the grainy malt notes and white pepper, but also some fresh hay and a bit of lemon zest, low floral hops and low bittering - interesting and complex. Medium body, very high carbonation, and a fairly dry finish that has lingering grainy/lemony/black pepper. The barrel adds a hint of vanilla and a bit of an earthy character. Moderately funky - leaning toward a Saison character. Lots of complexity and character in this beer.

#166 - DRUIF (2018 VINTAGE)

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Mixed-Fermentation Sour Beer | ABV: 7.3% | IBUs: 6 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review *by Nelson Crowle*

Pours a hazy gold with a small head of tiny white bubbles that fades quickly. Initial aroma is moderate apricot and slight grainy malt, with a hint of floral hops. The flavor brings out the apricot notes more as well as a wine-like perfumy/floral character from the Riesling. Hops are a light floral, and hop bittering is relatively low, allowing the malt and yeast characters to shine. The finish is wine-like and smooth with hints of lime juice. Moderately high carbonation (but with poor head retention) and medium body. There is a bit of a Belgian character, mostly coming across as dry hay and a hint of black pepper. There's also a bit of acidity that adds to the beer's complexity. Because of the apricot and wine grape character, this beer would pair nicely with pork chops and baked apples.

#165 - CRIKEY

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Reuben's Brews Seattle, WA | www.reubensbrews.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.8% | IBUs: 52 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The flavor of this beer was well balanced. It had a nice malt grain sweetness balanced nicely with the abundance of hops that had nice pine resin and slight citrus (grapefruit/lemon) qualities. The hop bitterness was very smooth, thus indicating that hop distribution was well balanced and distributed and not thrown in all at once in the boiling process. Had a nice medium body and mouthfeel. Again, the carbonation was just perfect. It had a nice effervescent bubble in the aftertaste and palate. 6.8 percent ABV serves as the perfect amount, and I can taste it. It is a deceptively strong beer that is very smooth and has a nice drinkability taste. A nice representation of the American Style IPA.

#164 - DRIFT RACER

RATED 91

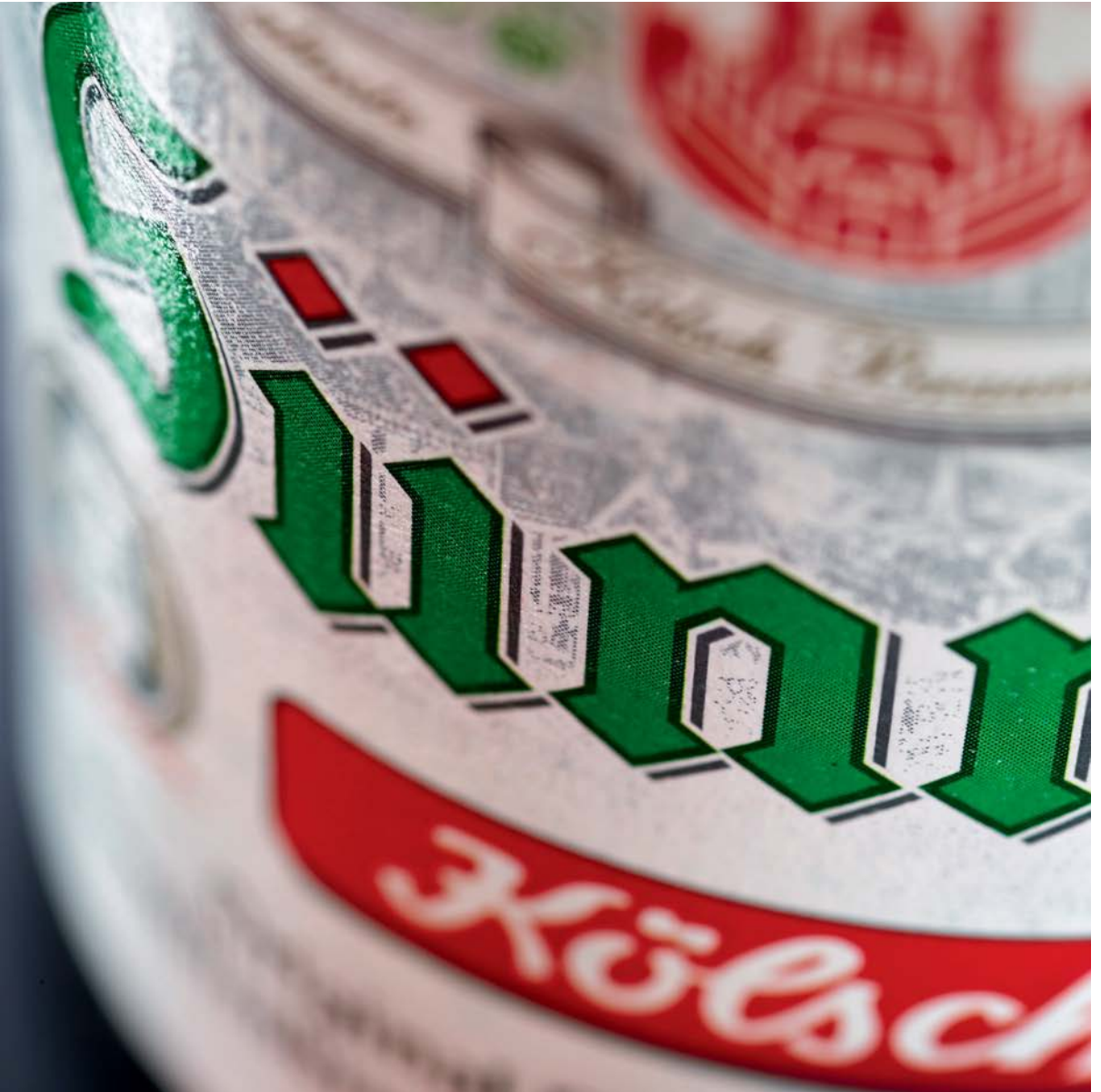
Aroma: 20 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Bear Republic Brewing Co. Cloverdale, CA | www.bearrepublic.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.0% | IBU: 70 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

Drift Racer pours dark golden in color with a large fluffy white head and a slight haze. The aroma is prominently hoppy with aromas reminiscent of grapefruit, honeydew melon and blackberries; a light trace of nutty malt exists well behind the hops. The body is appropriately medium with a light, pleasant warmth. The flavor is again hop-forward but not as delicate as the aroma; aggressive grapefruit and resinous hops dominate the flavor profile finishing with an aggressive bitterness and a light hop astringency. On an interesting note, as the beer warms, the hop profile becomes more tropical fruit, apricot and grapefruit. This beer is a very good Double IPA that is definitely crafted for the hop heads among us. Enjoy the aggressive, interesting hop profile!



Taste and Beauty



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#163 - CLAWHAMMER PILSNER

Door County Brewing Co. Baileys Harbor, MI | www.doorcountybrewingco.com
Style: German Pils | ABV: 5.1% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Susan Ruud

Clawhammer Pilsner by Door County Brewing Co. is a light and easy-drinking beer that was judged as a German Pilsner (BJCP Cat 5D). This beer was golden, and clear with a white head and fine bubbles that were long-lasting. It had a light grainy, sweet, crackery aroma with low DMS and a soft spicy, floral hop note. A crisp, clean, refreshing aroma that made me want to dive in for a sip. The flavor was clean, grainy and crackery and had a floral, citrus hop flavor and lingering hop bitterness that dominated the beer and left a dry finish. Medium-light body and high carbonation gave this beer a refreshing quality. A great summer beer to enjoy while mowing the lawn, grilling, boating or just relaxing.

#162 - CHARIOT

Urban Artifact Cincinnati, OH | www.artifactbeer.com
Style: Fruit Gose | ABV: 4.7% | IBUs: 10 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 4 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Joseph Formanek

The aroma has a moderate tart cherry character along with a touch of lactic metallic sour milky aromatic funk. There is some complexity here! There is a light wheat malt character behind this. The beer is a very cloudy/opaque pinkish-orange color with a wispy pink small bubble head that dissipates almost immediately. It is expected that a Gose would have a stronger stand of head than this. The overall appearance is reminiscent of a carbonated pink grapefruit cocktail. A moderate tart cherry flavor presents itself up front with evident wheat bite behind it. A touch of citrus and coriander follow this up. The sweetness level is low. The salt level is moderate but not excessive for the style. Tartness is also on the subtle side, but enough to balance.

#161 - UPSLOPE CITRA PALE ALE

Upslope Brewing Co. Boulder, CO | www.upslopebrewing.com
Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 5.8% | IBUs: 37 | Serve at: 38°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Joseph Formanek

Hop aromas leap from the glass upon the pour with Simcoe notes more evident than Citra. The beer is a golden color with exceptional clarity and a white, small bubble head with lacing that lingers well through the finish. The flavor is dank, pure and simple from start through finish. Again, Simcoe seems to dominate over the Citra character. There is a very subtle malt backbone that cannot withstand the onslaught of the hops. The middle and finish retain the same character. The body is a solid medium, in large part due to the mouthfeel being delivered by all the hop flavor. This is definitely one for the hop heads out there. A quibble could be that the hop character is a bit excessive for an American Pale Ale, but at the very least it is pushing the envelope in that respect.

#160 - UPSLOPE BROWN ALE

Upslope Brewing Co. Boulder, CO | www.upslopebrewing.com
Style: American Brown Ale | ABV: 6.7% | IBUs: 45 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Joseph Formanek

Deep rich toffee, caramel, coffee and roast malt notes welcome you upon the pour. Very little hop character is noted, with but a touch of English hop woodiness coming through. The flavor has a complex rich caramel and toffee character with associated roast and light coffee flavors. There is a light-medium English-type hop flavor and bitterness, but the malt component easily dominates over the hops. The middle and finish retain the malt complexity quite well. The body is a solid medium, and the carbonation is rather light as expected for the style. The overall impression of this brew comes off more as a British Brown rather than an American, but it is a quite flavorful offering that will delight malt lovers.

#159 - AVL IPA

Highland Brewing Co. Asheville, NC | www.highlandbrewing.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 65 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Dan Martich

In the flavor, there is a moderate amount of citrus pink grapefruit rind and fresh hops that jump out, leaving a long-lasting citrus aftertaste. The grainy malt character is there but low and secondary – as it should be for the style. The balance is toward the hops and ends with a crisp, dry finish, while fruity esters come through as it warms. Medium body, and a moderately high carbonation round out the mouthfeel. A slight creaminess (without astringency or alcoholic warming sensation) gives it a pleasant smoothness considering how dry it is. An outstanding example of the style, with no wild interpretations here. The greatest thing this beer has going for it is the freshness of the hops.

#158 - AGAVEMENTE

SouthNorte Beer Co. San Diego, CA | www.southnorte.com
Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 6.3% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 38 to 42°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Tracy Hensley

While the aromas and flavors do not sing in perfect harmony together, they both carry a tune that anyone can enjoy. With a nose stuck in the glass, a medium-low clean fermentation character starts followed by vanilla cream, dried twigs, dried cranberries, metallic cacao nibs and low notes of black peppercorns. Bright, not quite brilliantly clear strawberry juice color with exceptionally persistent creamy white tinged with pink head. In the flavor, low white bread (with no discernible hops) evolves into low Montmorency tart cherries. After several sips, the sourness of the cherries comes forward. Its aftertaste shows a slight tannic grip on the teeth, tongue, and lips and after a minute evolves into low mouthwatering bitterness.

#157 - ÉPHÉMÈRE STRAWBERRY & RHUBARB

Unibroue Chambly, Quebec, Canada | www.unibroue.com
Style: Fruit Beer | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 11 | Serve at: 39 to 43°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review by Joseph Formanek

The beer is a hazy golden color with a solid white small bubble head with lacing that lingers throughout the drink. The flavor carries through a moderate fresh strawberry flavor with a grainy wheat background. The strawberry remains the dominant character throughout the drink. The finish is rather sweet, though moderately refreshing, as if you were drinking a fresh fruit juice. The fermentation is very clean with subtle Belgian notes. The body is a light medium, and the carbonation is moderate. Overall, the extremely fresh fruit character is the dominant quality of this beer. Strawberry lovers will rejoice with this offering. Though the character of the strawberry seems a bit under-fermented and the overall complexity is rather lacking, this beer still delivers a refreshing summer treat.

#156 - 602 BREW

Helio Basin Brewing Co. Phoenix, AZ | www.heliobasinbrewing.com
Style: Blonde Ale | ABV: 4.7% | IBUs: 18 | Serve at: 38 to 42°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by David Sapsis

The flavor starts malty-grainy with a firm but balanced bitterness; flavors of pear and dried flowers dominate the mid-palate forming a nice counter to the lingering and herbal hop facet that lasts well into the late profile. This beer is thick, but the dryness keeps it from coming off as too filling. The beer really shines in its light malt front end, well-balanced bitterness, and subtle fruit and herbal components all packaged with a clean and dry finish. My only quibble really is the CO2 level, which could use a charge. Not really a starter beer at all, this Blonde Ale hits the mark with character – maybe a tad forward on the flavor and bitterness front for some but would squelch thirst and provide great counterpoint to some spicy tacos al pastor.

#155 - DON'T CALL IT HOTLANTA

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.5% | IBUs: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*

The beer poured a hazy dark yellow, with a limp head that doesn't stand in your way of a freakishly intense hop experience. As sampled, it released a kaleidoscope of hop aromas running the gamut from mango/pineapple all the way to pine tree/dank. Notable flavors include tangerine, resin and earth, all supported by a biscuity malt backbone. Not overly bitter, but with enough IBUs to keep hopheads satisfied. It finished fizzy and medium-dry, which enhanced the drinkability of the ale, and concluded with a peppery note, backed up with some alcohol. A very smooth beer with oodles of hop goodness to relish.

#154 - ISLAND VIBES

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com

Style: Fruit Beer | ABV: 4.5% | IBUs: 5 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Nelson Crowle*

The beer pours a slightly hazy light straw color with a small head of tiny white bubbles that quickly falls. Aroma is of tropical fruit. The initial taste is a nice clean lactic tartness like a Berliner Weisse but overlaid with tropical fruit that blends well with the tartness. Very light bready malt notes, no hop flavor, no hop bittering. It's very fruity and refreshing - but not sweet - a relatively dry finish that invites another taste. This is a great beach beer or poolside beer. Cleanly made. Smooth but crisp, the fruity notes are bright with notes of tart pie cherries and mixed tropical fruits. Pair this beer with some tasty and spicy Jamaican Jerk chicken - or some pineapple slices.

#153 - BASTOGNE ARDENNE SPIRIT

Brasserie de Bastogne Belgium | www.brasserieminne.be

Style: Saison | ABV: 9.5% | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

Ardenne Spirit is brewed with 100 percent malt and Nelson Sauvin, Citra and Mosaic hops. The aroma is prominent aromatics of Brettanomyces yeast with notes of cherries and oranges. Behind the Brett is a moderate caramel malt and dark fruit esters reminiscent of red currants. A light barnyard funkiness rounds out the aroma. The body is moderate caramel malt balanced by an equally-weighted black pepper phenolic. Light chocolate, smokiness, dark fruits, and a light acidity complement the caramel and pepper. This beer finishes with a light bitterness with a long-lingering caramel and black pepper. This is a very interesting beer, especially if you enjoy a little funkiness from Brett. Rich, complex, Old Ale inspired with a Belgian twist - just as advertised.

#152 - BIZARRE GARDENING ACCIDENT W/ KUMQUAT

Motorworks Brewing Bradenton, FL | www.motorworksbrewing.com

Style: Berliner Weisse | ABV: 3.7% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40


Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by James Link*

A big white head filled the glass and then fell quickly atop a hazy pale-yellow color. A distinct lemon aroma was immediately evident and melded with a citric tartness and other fruity esters to create a light and refreshing bouquet. The flavor was sharply sour and acidic. A lemon rind character was dominant however it was pleasantly accompanied by less aggressive fruity notes that led into a dry finish. A crisp, low-gravity beer with a champagne-like quality that will refresh your palate on a hot day.

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#151 - POLONIA PILS

Flying Bison Brewing Co. Buffalo, NY | www.flyingbisonbrewing.com

Style: German Pils | ABV: 4.8% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 20 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Rick Franckhauser

Malty sweetness at moderately high levels coalesce with floral hops for an inviting first impression. Super clean fermentation allows the grainy malt to shine through. Light golden color, clear but not bright clarity. Creamy long-lasting white head. The sweet malt is up front in the flavor with a prominent honey quality, complemented by the floral hops. Spicy hops join the party. Medium bitterness seems to elevate to higher levels as it carries through to the medium-dry finish in spite of the substantial malt presence. A little toasty malt makes itself known in the aftertaste. Medium body with moderately high levels of carbonation clearing away the malty creaminess without biting. A fine example of a Bavarian style Pils.

#150 - POWER OF LOVE IPA

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.7% | IBUs: 67 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Tracy Hensley

It starts off with strong ripe mango and freshly cut pine needle hop aroma followed by low white bread and surprisingly noticeable apple yeast character. Over time, the pine aroma evolves into a thick and dominant resin character. Clear golden amber color with an off-white creamy head. At first forms a 1/2" head on the glass that evolves into legs and a persistent foamy film. The pine resin aroma influences the flavor, which includes bracingly bitter pine resin and dried mangoes covered in clover honey with persistent bitterness until the finish, where fresh milled white wheat and low vanilla flowers appear before turning into an aftertaste of hop oil. There is enough body and creaminess for the hop flavors and bitterness to not become heavily out of balance.

#149 - GERRY DOG STOUT

Big Elm Brewing Sheffield, MA | www.bigelmbrew.com

Style: Oatmeal Stout | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 17 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Michael Bury

True to being a stout, you'll be bombarded by aromas of baker's chocolate, earthy coffee and bread. Pitch black in color, I'm quite confident this beer actually absorbs light and, in return, provides the drinker with a light brown head that doesn't seem to ever dissipate. The flavor follows the aroma with chocolate, bread and coffee but this time the nuttiness, which presumably comes from the oats, is considerably more forward. This complements the semi-sweet to semi-dry finish and lingers far into the aftertaste. Gerry Dog Stout is a man's best friend whether you're a lover of dark beers or not. Easily approachable due to well-integrated roastiness, it's a go-to stout - especially when you're tired of the cavalcade of 10 percent ABV Imperial Stouts aged in bourbon barrels.

#148 - MOSAIC SINGLE HOP PALE

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.3% | IBUs: 45 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by David Sapsis

The flavor is bright and bursting with hop fruitiness in the front: again citrus (grapefruit) apricot/mango, and very strong pineapple dominate, with bitterness in the mid-palate that is firm but in no way overbearing or dominant (and noticeably lower than common standards). Virtually no caramel/toffee flavors found. The late palate is strongly fruity and has a nice mineral character that lends a dry finish to counteract the relatively sweet pineapple/fruit flavor from late kettle and dry-hop additions. This is a nice, fruit-forward modern American IPA of relatively reserved bitterness, highlighting the classic new breeds of American aroma hops that have strong tropical fruit and modest dank profiles.

#147 - NO FUZZ

Springdale Beer Framingham, MA | www.springdalebeer.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 6.5% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 20 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Sean Coughlin

The aroma is inviting with moderately low peach and nectarine notes that seem to become riper as the beer warms. The beer is a hazy light blonde with an extremely tight-knit wheat head that falls quickly. The flavor is complex with a balance of acidity, malt sweetness, juicy nectarine, nectarine pit and earthy funk. All components are balanced, and nothing is over the top. The beer has a dry finish that adds to its drinkability factor. Body is moderately low, carbonation is moderately high and there is no astringency or puckering from abrasive acidity. This is a refined beer for a refined palate. All aspects of this beer have depth without going too far. Well thought-out, executed and blended. A slightly higher fruit presence would be welcome but overall this was a very enjoyable beer.

#146 - ORA ET LABORA

Brunswick Bierworks Toronto, Canada | www.brunswickbierworks.com
Style: Doppelbock | ABV: 7.5% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

This interpretation of the Doppelbock style is brewed with Opal, Loral, Mandarina Bavaria and Ontario Newport hops. This beer pours clearly between amber and brown in color with a medium-tan head. The aroma is of prominent rich melanoidins of bread crusts, biscuits and bread with a hint of hops and a very clean yeast profile. The body is medium-full with a moderate-light carbonation and no apparent alcohol. The flavor is very rich with melanoidins of bread crusts, intensely rich bread character and caramel hints. The esters are appropriately muted and the hops only become apparent in the flavor, though they fall well behind the malt character. This beer is a very good example of a Doppelbock and should be sought out. Cheers for this great and interesting take on a traditional German style!

#145 - SNOW GLARE HOPPY WHEAT

Breckenridge Brewery Littleton, CO | www.breckbrew.com
Style: American Wheat Beer | ABV: 6.0% | IBUs: 23 | Serve at: 42°

RATED 91

Aroma: 20 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

Snow Glare Hoppy Wheat by Breckenridge Brewery is an American Wheat Ale and is being evaluated as an American Wheat Beer, which are noted for having less yeast character and more hop focus than German wheat beers. This wheat beer showcases Mosaic, Centennial and Palisade hops. This beer starts as very cloudy (appropriate), golden in color with a big, fluffy, white head. The aroma is of prominent, aggressive hops with resinous, tropical fruit and apricot elements with a light wheat background. The flavor displays the same aggressive hop character as the aroma and adds an herbal complement. The beer finishes with tropical fruit and herbal hop flavors with a light bitterness and a hint of wheat. Be sure to seek out this aggressively hopped wheat beer.

#144 - GIN JOY ALE

Right Brain Brewery Traverse City, MI | www.rightbrainbrewery.com
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 6.2% | IBUs: 12 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review by Brian Eichhorn

In the glass, it's a very clear pale gold with a persistent white head. The nose is immediately gin botanicals. Very floral and pleasant, with a citrus edge to it. Light green apple notes as well and clean. It's interesting as it comes off almost saison-like. Minimal vanilla or malt character; this is about the barrel. Light woody notes as well. On tasting, the beer almost gets a soapy edge but is reined back in. Lavender and lemon come together. The vanilla is buried under the barrel, but that's okay by me! The underlying cream ale is very pleasant and works well to support the barrel overall. Crisp and clean with light woody notes and juniper and ginger in the finish. Light body and refreshing with medium + carbonation. Really a very fun beer and executed quite well.

#143 - ALWAYS READY

Cape May Brewing Co. Cape May, NJ | www.capemaybrewery.com

Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 4.8% | IBUs: 23 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Sean Coughlin*

The aroma showcases everything that hop lovers look for in a great pale ale: hop intensity, freshness, complexity and just a tiny hint of malt in the background that stays well out of the way. There are bright notes of honeydew melon, mango, and tangerine with floral undertones of rose and lilac. The aroma sets the bar very high and as a result, the flavor profile is a bit of a letdown. The delicious hop flavors are subdued overall compared to the aroma. The perceived bitterness is on the lower end of the spectrum and helps the beer avoid straddling the fine line between American Pale Ale & American India Pale Ale. Overall, this is a great-drinking modern interpretation of a pale ale that will delight those who have a deep appreciation for what hops can bring to a simple beer.

#142 - DOUBLE CHOCOLATE MILK STOUT

Southern Prohibition Brewing Hattiesburg, MS | www.soprobrewing.com

Style: Sweet Stout | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael McGuire*

This beer's aroma resembled that of a chocolate milkshake, i.e. intense chocolate and lactose, followed by some roasty dark grain notes. The flavor profile also began with a blast of sweetness but also bitter chocolate. The sweetness was pleasant, not cloying, and the hops served as a bittering balance together with the dark chocolate in the background rather than as a flavor contributor. The mouthfeel featured a smooth, full-ish body, moderate carbonation and creaminess, but neither alcohol warmth nor astringency were present. Overall, due to its pleasant flavor and balance, lower alcohol content, and the brewer's ability to keep all of the flavor elements working harmoniously, this beer exhibited very high drinkability for such a sweet, dessert-destined brew.

#141 - PRIMORDIAL IMPERIAL IPA

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 9.0% | IBUs: 124 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

This beer pours golden in color, slightly hazy, with a medium, fluffy, cream-colored foam stand. The aroma is of aggressive hops with pine, resins, and grapefruit characters; the malt and esters hidden behind the hops. The flavor is similarly hop aggressive adding herbal and spicy elements to the pine and grapefruit hop flavors. A lightly nutty malt with a hint of sweetness provides a basic backdrop allowing the hops to be showcased. The beer is aggressively bittered to match the aggressive hop finish of pine and grapefruit hop flavors that linger for a long time on the palate. This is a very nice Double IPA with an aggressive hop profile. But, the best examples, while aggressive, have a cleaner, less rough hop character. Regardless, hop heads will not be disappointed with this Double IPA.

#140 - EPITAPH BOURBON BARREL AGED RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STOUT

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 12.0% | IBUs: 92 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Pours opaque black with a medium, creamy brown head. Aroma of sweet and spicy floral alcohol, light oak tannins and rich dark chocolate malt. Light background earthy and woody hop notes provide depth to the aroma. Chewy sweet and dark chocolate malt, roast notes, prunes, figs, dates and a sweet yet drying finish. Sweet vanilla and caramel characters emerge with time as does powdered bitter dark cocoa. The alcohol character cuts the richness and thickness of the malt back and allows a myriad of secondary notes to emerge.

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#139 - CITRUS IPA

Garage Brewing Co. Temecula, CA | www.garagebrewco.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 7.5% | IBUs: 75 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Initial aroma is freshly squeezed, high acidity tangerines and oranges with some citrus oil character, light cracker and biscuit malt. Pours clear golden orange with a large, frothy off-white frothy head, long retention with light lacing. Flavor is moderate citric acidity, orange and tangerines with light pithy notes, light cracker and biscuit malt, clean fermentation and a dry finish. Medium body, medium-high carbonation, light astringency from the citrus pith and light alcohol warmth. Further investigation yields light floral hop aromas and a lightly fruity ester character that closely mimics the fresh citrus juice. Freshly squeezed citrus provides volatile citric oils that deliver an acidic tingle to the palate.

#138 - COLD PRESS BLACK

Bent Paddle Brewing Co. Duluth, MN | www.bentpaddlebrewing.com

Style: Coffee Beer | ABV: 6.0% | IBUs: 35 | Serve at: 42°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Joseph Formanek*

Coffee character dominates in the nose, coming through as would a cold cup of a strong black coffee. Very little hop nor base malt character is evident. The same coffee character from the aroma also dominates the flavor. From start to finish, a rather complex moderately smooth black coffee flavor makes itself very well known, with a touch of chocolate and perhaps a light caramel note complementing the coffee flavor. The middle and finish retain the same flavor characteristics, with the coffee character delivering a dry finish. Overall, this brew is as the label suggests – a can of cold pressed black coffee ale. It is actually quite refreshing! Perfect for a real coffee fan.

#137 - SNOZZBERRIES TASTE LIKE SNOZZBERRIES

Pontoon Brewing Sandy Springs, GA | www.pontoonbrewing.com

Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 5.0% | IBUs: 5 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 91

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael McGuire*

A bright purple and opaque appearance resembling carbonated grape Kool-Aid is deceptive as this beer's aroma featured both intense lactic sourness and strong mixed berry notes. The flavor began with tart fruit atop a pleasantly sour base, followed by a mildly sweet malt and fructose middle, and a calming burst of vanilla and lactose in the finish to temper any sour palate in the aftertaste. The mouthfeel featured moderate carbonation, light body, no alcohol warmth and a refreshingly fizzy berry palate at the very end.

#136 - DUST BUNNY

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.8% | IBUs: 60 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 91

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Rodney A. Tillinghast*

It surprisingly poured out crystal clear in my glass, while I left a few ounces behind in the can. When I finished the can, the hazy goodness swirled out of the bottom and the hoppy haze tasting began in earnest. Its aroma was a sublime blend of tropical fruits, lemon zest and honey, and it featured a tight, white head, sticking around until the last drops were savored. While the flavor offered a top-shelf juicy, tart experience, it was quite restrained in bitterness, however, the bitterness seemed sufficient to avoid the beer from being cloying. The body was very light, which enhanced its refreshing nature. Overall, it was a sturdy New England-style IPA, with flavors supporting one another and was quite drinkable..

#135 - OVERNIGHT CELEBRITY

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 11.5% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

This Imperial Porter was brewed with espresso beans and coconut and was aged in maple syrup bourbon barrels; this beer measures in at 11.5 percent ABV. This porter pours black in color, opaque, with a small dark brown head. The aroma is a very inviting, rich and complex blend of espresso, dark chocolate, maple syrup, bourbon, and vanilla. The flavor continues with rich dark chocolate, espresso, bourbon, toasted oak, and a lighter, sweet maple syrup. This beer finishes with strong chocolate and espresso along with a prominent sweetness. The coconut is not noticeable, but coconut and bourbon often contribute similar flavor profiles. This is a very pleasant barrel-aged strong beer; enjoy on a cold night near the fire.

#134 - RIEGELE NOCTUS 100

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Brauhaus Riegele Augsburg, Germany | www.riegele.de

Style: Sweet Stout | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 50°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

Imperial Stouts are the strongest of the stout family and are noted for their strength and complexity with a myriad of dark malt flavors. This Imperial Stout pours black in color with a very dark brown head. The aroma is moderate roasted and chocolate malt with an abundance of dark and dried fruit esters of plums, blackcurrants and prunes. The body is full and smooth with a light carbonation and a hint of alcohol warmth. The flavor is moderate chocolate and roasted malts, slightly sweet with a background of caramel malts and prune esters. This stout finishes malty and sweet with chocolate and roasted malts. This is a flavorful stout that is a bit more English in character with a somewhat less aggressive malt profile and a higher ester presence than its American counterparts.

#133 - CARDIGANS OF THE GALAXY

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 9.5% | IBU: 95 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

This Double IPA is hopped with Columbus, Mandarina Bavaria, Simcoe, Citra, Ekuanot, Mosaic, Comet and Galaxy hops and measures up at 9.5 percent ABV and 95 IBU. This Double IPA pours light golden in color, crystal clear, with a fluffy cream-colored head. The aroma is prominently hoppy with resinous, piney, and cedary hops aromas over a hint of nutty malt. The body is medium with a moderate carbonation and a light alcohol warmth. Aggressive hops continue in the flavor with resin and pine notes and a light nutty malt background. A strong bitterness greets the finish along with aggressive resin and pine hop flavors that linger long in the palate. This is a well-brewed Double IPA with the expected aggressive hop focus. Hop heads rejoice!

#132 - PAN A FLORES

RATED 92

Aroma: 24 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

SouthNorte Beer Co. San Diego, CA | www.southnorte.com

Style: Spice, Herb or Vegetable Beer | ABV: 7.0% | IBU: 20 | Serve at: 40°

Judge's Review by Joseph Formanek

The beer is a deep opaque black color, with a tan small-bubbled head that lingers well into the drink. The head retention is quite remarkable considering the level of chocolate that is evident in this brew. Even though the beer is opaque, it still does have a slight murkiness to it – probably due to the use of chocolate. From the first whiff of the aroma to the aftertaste, the same cinnamon, semi-sweet chocolate and coffee character from the aroma also dominates the flavor, which is quite impressive. Very little hop character of any type is noted, which, unfortunately, is a bit of a quibble for the overall flavor delivery. Without any real bitterness in the finish, the end of the drink is a bit flabby with all of the sweeter spice characteristics.

#131 - SPRUCE TIP IPA

Goodwood Brewing Co. Louisville, KY | www.goodwood.beer
Style: Spice, Herb, Vegetable Beer | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 61 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jason Johnson*

Off the aroma I get juicy hops, a lot of grapefruit and pine as I would expect in an American IPA. I get the spruce for sure and it's not overdone. The malt aroma is cracker-like and complements the hops nicely. The spruce aroma comes forth as it warms. The flavor is very traditional; it has a stiff bitterness that is accented by the spruce flavor. The spruce is pretty intense in the flavor and that's fine with me. The balance is solidly in the hop and bitterness camp. The same hop flavors come through in the flavor as they did in the aroma with juicy and thirst-quenching grapefruit followed by the pine, which helps the beer finish what appears on the drier side. The malt is not all that dominant and plays a solid supporting role. The appearance is quite appealing as it pours a light golden color with significant haze.

#130 - GOLD IPA

East Brother Beer Co. Richmond, CA | www.eastbrotherbeer.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 7.3% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

A huge, complex hop nose greets me, signifying candied mango, green melon, pineapple and sweet oranges. Light and supporting bready malt with a light honey character enters behind the hops providing a great backdrop. The beer pours clear dark copper with a medium, creamy off-white head, long retention with some lacing. The bready and honey malt sweetness combine with the tropical and fruity hop flavor to present a lightly sweet beer that finishes dry with lingering candied fruits (hop-derived). Medium-full body and medium carbonation. The hop bitterness is medium, partially subdued by the malt sweetness. A light alcohol presence appears but it is not hot or detracting from the underlying beer. Consider pairing this with a rich cheesecake or spicy and fruity Indian/North African dish.

#129 - AVARICE & GREED

Roadhouse Brewing Co. Jackson Hole, WY | www.roadhousebrewery.com
Style: Belgian Golden Strong Ale | ABV: 8.9% | IBU: 32 | Serve at: 45 to 55°

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

Avarice & Greed by Roadhouse Brewing Co. is a wonderful Belgian Golden Ale and is being judged as such according to BJCP Category 25C. This beer was malty and sweet with a big fruity, pear-like ester, low Belgian spicy phenolics and lots of soft, easy alcohol, which all follow thru to the flavor. It presented itself as golden with a white head, fine bubbles and lacing but was quite hazy. There is plenty of alcohol in this beer, but it is well-hidden and smooth. This would go great with most spicy foods or something like lasagna. Extremely great-drinking beer. No hop presence throughout other than to balance the malt.

#128 - PUNK ASS CAT

Door County Brewing Co. Baileys Harbor, MI | www.doorcountybrewingco.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.3% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

Punk Ass Cat by Door County Brewing Co. was judged as an American IPA (BJCP Category 21A). This beer was a pleasant balance of malt and lingering bitterness. The upfront citrus and melon hops blended nicely with a faint crackery malt behind. No noticeable esters were found. It was quite hazy but had a lovely golden hue and a white frothy head that lasted forever. The flavor was smooth, malty and crackery with citrus and floral hop flavors, which ended bitter yet malty with light pear and cherry esters. This medium-bodied, lightly warming beer was quite smooth and very easy-drinking. The perfect blend of malt and hops. The perfect beer for drinking while grilling steaks on the deck.



Robert Earl Keen

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#127 - TROPIC OF THUNDER LAGER

Stone Brewing Co. Escondido, CA | www.stonebrewing.com

Style: International Pale Lager | ABV: 5.8% | IBU: 40 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

The flavor is likewise dominated by hops, again with strong tropical fruit characteristics, but also some herbal qualities. A clean and simple malt sweetness backs the hops, and a healthy dose of bitterness adds additional complexity to the flavor profile. The mouthfeel is medium with a touch of astringency from the gas, but perhaps a little from hops as well. The finish is malty with a little sweetness and a bite from hop bitterness that lingers. Overall, this is a very interesting and good experimentation with novel hops on a lager base that should interest hopheads and lager fans alike. If you are prone to enjoy Pale Ales and IPAs that stay away from strong caramel or malt leanings, you would especially want to try this flavorful lager.

#126 - THE GADGET

Urban Artifact Cincinnati, OH | www.artifactbeer.com

Style: Fruit and Spice Beer | ABV: 8.3% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 92

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 4 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Joseph Formanek*

The aroma is a funky, tart raspberry and blackberry juice with a background of vanilla, giving the impression of a slightly sour raspberry milkshake. I get little to no malt or beer character whatsoever. The offering is a turbid opaque deep garnet color with absolutely no head. The overall appearance is of a thick, dark raspberry juice smoothie. The flavor gives no surprises after the aroma. From start to finish, berry fruit characters dominate, with an intriguing sour funkiness that adds an appreciated level of complexity. As with Fire Iron, the sweetness is quite low, which works well in this brew. The body is full bodied due to the physical thickness of the berry pulp. The 8.3 percent ABV in this brew is very well hidden and could very easily sneak up on you!

#125 - THE IMP AND THE MADHOUSE OYSTER STOUT

RavenBeer Baltimore, MD | www.ravenbeer.com

Style: Experimental Beer | ABV: 6.0% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

Some examples are meant as accompaniments to shellfish dishes, while other examples, like this beer, are actually brewed with oysters. This beer's aroma is standard for a stout, with low chocolate and nutty character. It pours a very dark brown and at first contains a moderate brown head. This beer's flavor is moderately bitter throughout and tastes nutty with a hint of roasted malts. As you might expect, there is a serious briny, brackish flavor overtone to all of this.

#124 - RASPBERRY PROVINCIAL

Funkwerks Fort Collins, CO | www.funkwerks.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 4.2% | IBUs: 16 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 40 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Pat Mulloy*

Raspberry Provincial by Funkwerks, Inc. features slight traces of funk, spice and tartness season a big raspberry aroma lifting from the glass. It's hazy pink under a short-lived pinkish cap. Three or four levels of rich raspberry flavors roll across the tongue with a very low trace of sweetness leading to a bone-dry finish aided by rich tannins from the berries. The dryness is crisp and almost puckering and is aided by a pleasant juicy citrusy tartness. Too many fruit beers come across as a malt beverage dosed with fruit extract brewed for those who do not like beer. Only real berries taste this good. The berries, yeast flavors, tartness and tannins in this beer all play very well together making this a refreshing, yet elegant beverage.

#123 - STICK'S PALE ALE

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Bootstrap Brewing Longmont, CO | www.bootstrapbrewing.com

Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 36 | Serve at: 45°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

This APA pours golden in color with good clarity and a medium off-white head. The aroma exhibits a moderate level of mango and generic citrus hop character with a light nutty malt character. The hop flavor is less distinct with generic resin, herbal and citrus flavors. A light nutty malt provides ample background without being too forward or sweet. The body is medium-light providing a refreshing quality. The beer finishes with a prominent hop flavor of piney and resinous hops with a hint of nutty malt lingering in the background. This APA is well-balanced and quite quaffable (at 5.5% ABV). The only aspect that keeps this beer from being exceptional is that the hop character is not quite as bright and clear as many of the classic commercial examples.

#122 - WREAK HAVOC

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Bootstrap Brewing Longmont, CO | www.bootstrapbrewing.com

Style: Red IPA | ABV: 8.5% | IBUs: 80 | Serve at: 45°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

Wreak Havoc pours a copper color with excellent clarity and a fluffy, off-white head. The aroma is moderately citrusy and resinous hops with an evenly balanced nutty, biscuity and caramel maltiness. The flavor is similar in character as the aroma but with the hops slightly more prominent than the malt. The body is medium (almost medium-full) but avoids having a thick and chewy mouthfeel. The bitterness is appropriate and balances the maltiness with the moderate caramel malt character at an even level with the citrusy hops. Wreak Havoc is a very nice beer that straddles the line between the Red IPA and Double IPA styles. This beer is deceptively strong, enjoyable and well brewed.

#121 - LITTLE BALLS OF BLUE

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Streetside Brewery Cincinnati, OH | www.streetsidebrewery.com

Style: Fruit Beer | ABV: 4.3% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review by Sal Mortillaro II

A light sweetness is perceivable as the beer warms being a combination of malt, wheat, a very slight "funk," and the fruit. Hop aroma is not noticeable in this beer. This beer has a moderately sweet flavor consisting of bread dough followed by low-moderate blueberry fruit. There is no hop bitterness or hop flavor, but a low clean acidity is what provides balance in this beer. As the beer warms, a wheat note is apparent as well as a slight apple fruitiness. Balance is towards the sweetness and the finish consists of the yeasty character noted in the aroma and lingering blueberry. This beer is thin-bodied with plentiful, tickling carbonation, which also helps provide balance. There is no carbonation, astringency or creaminess present. Overall, I found this beer quite pleasant.

#120 - DUBHE IMPERIAL BLACK IPA

RATED 92

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Uinta Brewing Salt Lake City, UT | www.uintabrewing.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 9.3% | IBUs: 100 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast

This enigmatic beer pushes the boundaries of hop aroma, hop flavors, alcohol, and mouthfeel, all while keeping the various elements complementary. It pours a dark brown with a cappuccino-like froth that dispersed slowly. One is immediately struck by aromatic notes of licorice, hazelnut, toast, pine-hop dank, and citrus. As the sample warmed, a tone of alcohol wafted free. The flavors were a robust barrage of herbal and pine hops, dark chocolate and vanilla. Hop bitterness was quite extreme, with the bitterness providing a longing dryness in the back of my tongue. Its finish also delivered a creamy mouthfeel, quite full for the style, but not distracting. The heaviness of the alcohol was discernable, and combined with its mouthfeel, made this a sipping IPA to be luxuriated over.

#119 - DETOUR

Uinta Brewing Salt Lake City, UT | www.uintabrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 9.5% | IBUs: 96 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The hop aroma was still there but balanced with nice malty overtones. The flavor of this beer was well balanced and wonderful. It had a real nice malty flavor balanced with the hop bitterness. Again, the hop bittering was not aggressive or “over-hopped” but rather complementary with the malt. The flavor also revealed the alcohol in this beer (9.5% ABV), which is something that can sneak up on you. The body of this beer was between medium and heavy with very good mouthfeel and carbonation. The aftertaste was just as good as the first sip. A melding of heavy malt and moderate bittering that just balanced very nicely. A well-made beer.

#118 - CHICKOW!

Listermann Brewing Co. Cincinnati, OH | www.listermannbrewing.com

Style: American Brown Ale | ABV: 10.0% | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael McGuire*

Like a true brown ale, its aroma featured brown and chocolate malt (i.e., non-roasty) notes, more alcohol than expected for the style, no noticeable hops and an intense true chocolate nose presumably from the addition of cocoa nibs at some point in the brewing process. The flavor profile too was dominated by chocolate and alcohol with no overt hop flavor, just background bitterness to balance. A subtle nuttiness balanced the sweetness of the chocolate, creating a harmonious and delicious brew. The mouthfeel featured moderate carbonation, a creamy, medium body and decided alcohol warmth. This excellent (albeit somewhat one-dimensional) beer's drinkability is high and should appeal to both chocolate lovers and imperial stout and strong after-dinner beer aficionados.

#117 - SECRET SPOT

Duck Foot Brewing Co. San Diego, CA | www.duckfootbeer.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 7.4% | IBUs: 50 | Serve at: 42°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

The flavor is light with biscuit malt in the front and the same fresh orange juice character noted in the aroma; bitterness is quite subdued. Hop and ferment flavor are well-married in the mid-palate with the clean and creamy citrus fruitiness well balanced against the distinctly toasty and grainy malt framework of the beer: fresh orange and peach fruits dominating through to the dry and delicious finish. Body is medium-light and conditioning is moderate with a distinct creaminess to the mouthfeel. Overall, the beer hits all the marks typical of a New England/hazy variant of the style – fresh and juicy sweet citrus/orange fruitiness with reserved bitterness in a very clean and sharp (and quaffable!) package.

#116 - WERNESGRÜNER DARK

Wernesgrüner Brauerei Steinberg, Germany | www.bitburger-international.com/wernesgruener

Style: Schwarzbier | ABV: 4.9% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jason Johnson*

When I look at the beer in the glass it's a dark mahogany color, with very good clarity. When it comes to the flavor, there were thankfully no surprises. The flavor was decidedly malty, with that low coffee bitterness from the roast, a little hint of dark chocolate, and what I think is a Munich malt-like grainy flavor. The hop bitterness is fairly low and the hop flavor matches. While low, you can still pick up a slight floral/earthy note. The rest of the beer is crisp, clean, and medium in body. It is very well balanced and easily drinkable, even for those who claim to not like dark beer, schwarzbier is a good place to start and this beer in particular is easy on the palate. I thoroughly enjoyed this beer and every drop in my glass. I was very satisfied.

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#115 - FOXFIRE

Fullsteam Brewery Durham, NC | www.fullsteam.ag
Style: Alternative Grain Beer | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 24 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

Foxfire is brewed with Ekuantot, Azacca, Chinook and Centennial hops and North Carolina-farmed sorghum among other typical grains. This canned beer pours golden in color, hazy (acceptable for style), with a big, fluffy, mousse-like white head. The aroma is dominantly hop-focused with aromas of mango, apricot, tropical fruit with a lighter resinous character. The body is medium with a moderate carbonation and no astringency. The flavor is moderate citrusy, orange, mango, and tropical fruit hops with a hint of maltiness. The finish is moderately bitter with a moderate mango and orange hops lingering in the finish. This is a very nice citrusy and tropical fruity hopped IPA with little malt character.

#114 - WILD GRAPE ALE

Hi-Wire Brewing Asheville, NC | www.hiwirebrewing.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 7.1% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Dan Martich

The highly juicy, non-sweet pineapple character comes through in the flavor. The pear notes and fruity red apples esters noted in the aroma are here. Hops are absent and the finish is dry as a bone with a short acidic finish. The balance is toward the fruity/sourness, with a lingering fruit in the aftertaste. This is one super juicy sour ale; the added grape must gives this beer a Kir Royale look that many people will find agreeable. The wood character note comes through mildly in the form of oaky dry, with little vanilla just before the finish. One thing to note is that the Malbec-wine character of musty, robust, and light cedar is not detected much at all in the beer. Here's a very pleasant beer to drink at celebrations and parties, and beckons to be served in a champagne flute.

#113 - HAN BROLO

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com
Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 4.7% | IBUs: 25 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Dan Martich

This golden ale poured hazy with a thick white foamy head. The haze made it hard to see bubbles rising as a sign of the carbonation. There's a big tropical fruit aroma with passion fruit and ripe mango upfront. A Citra hop character of lemon, lime and melon is prominent along with tangerine. The flavor is composed of moderately high fruit juice. Fruity for sure with a firm balance toward the hops. The finish is dry with a short floral petal aftertaste that becomes dank with ripe fruit as you sip it. The body is medium-light and a medium carbonation exhibits a slight alcoholic warmth and smooth creaminess. A pleasant mouthfeel leaves you longing for another sip. This is a beer to enjoy when you want the flavor of an IPA but not the alcoholic warmth that comes along with it.

#112 - CHRISTMAS CACTUS

Wren House Brewing Co. Phoenix, AZ | www.wrenhousebrewing.com
Style: Winter Seasonal Beer | ABV: 14.8% | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 92

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Nelson Crowle

Low floral hops can be found both in the aroma and flavor - this beer is all about the malt character. There's some black raisins, hints of sultanas, moderate creme brulee caramelized turbinado sugar and overripe plums. The finish is medium-sweet but not cloying. There are hints of hazelnut that add interesting complexity - almost an Amaretto note. There is a medium carbonation and medium high body for this example. Lots of interesting complexity as the beer warms - this is a beer to order, then let it sit while you drink another beer to let this one warm up a bit. It's definitely a dessert beer - snifter after dinner, skip the brandy - drink this. Make sure you have a good rich dinner with some Cornish pasties, maybe some Scotch eggs, and then retire to the parlor with a snifter.

#111 - L'ATTITUDE

Cape May Brewing Co. & DC Brau Cape May, NJ | www.capemaybrewery.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.0% | IBUs: 35 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jessica Sullivan*

The beer poured a delightful golden amber. The most notable characteristic of the flavor is its balance. The maltiness is well offset by the bitterness, and while, as is expected for this style, the hops and bitterness dominate, this is an exceptionally balanced beer. The pine characteristics from the aroma were present in the flavor, along with mango, passion fruit, and orange (all hop-derived, I assume). While my mouth was left with a slight resinous feeling, the overall sensation was of drinking a clean beer. The beer had a moderate body with moderate carbonation, no astringency and no acidity. In short, this was an exciting and fun beer to drink. It hit all the notes I expect of an IPA and delighted me with a fruity complexity in the flavor. I would definitely drink this again!

#110 - MO PILS

Jersey Girl Brewing Co. Hackettstown, NJ | www.jerseygirlbrewing.com

Style: German Pils | ABV: 4.5% | IBUs: 35 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by James Link*

MO PILS by Jersey Girl Brewing Co. poured a brilliantly clear very pretty golden color with a fine bead and big white head. The aroma was a clean delicate balance of noble hops and a wisp of malted grains. The flavor mirrored the aromatics in every respect. Unlike many American renditions of this style, which are over hopped and are almost pale ale-like in character, this rendition is true to its origin. Crisp, highly attenuated and refreshing with alcohol on the lighter end of the style parameters. Pilsner, easily the most popular beer style in the world, is well represented here in this easy-drinking interpretation of the style.

#109 - PREFUNK PALE ALE

Worthy Brewing Co. Bend, OR | www.worthybrewing.com

Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 50 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

An aggressive hop aroma that is floral and earthy is backed by a bready, slightly sweet malt aroma. The malt sweetness has a slight caramel aroma. The beer is a pale copper with a fine, off-white head that lingers. Flavor is well-balanced between hops and malts, slightly edging towards hops flavor and bitterness. Hops are earthy with a nicely balanced bitterness that lingers. Malts are bready with a touch of sweetness and light caramel. A little fruitiness from the hops is also detectable. The mouthfeel is medium-bodied with moderately high carbonation. Overall, this is a great example of an American Pale Ale that displays the qualities of the style without blurring the lines between an APA and an IPA, which is too common in many "American Pale Ales" these days.

#108 - BELT & SUSPENDERS

BuckleDown Brewing Lyons, IL | www.buckleardownbrewing.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 7.0% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 92

Aroma: 20 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Dan Martich*

This brew is redolent with aromas of citrus, sweetened grapefruit juice, very low ripe pineapple with an ever-so-slightly toasted malt sweetness lurking underneath. The moderately grainy malt flavor is second to the big floral, complex hops that are slightly resinous and piney. Balanced clearly toward the hops with a light nod toward a toasty/biscuit malt note that is just short of sweet. This IPA finishes very dry with a defined light alcohol flavor. A medium-bodied ale with an appropriate carbonation level to accentuate the flavor profile and mouthfeel. Low viscosity keeps this beer flowing with a light palate sensation to keep you coming back for more and more sips. Overall, this is a very easy-drinking beer that is balanced and decidedly a great example of the American IPA style.

#107 - MEXICAN STOUT

Ship Bottom Brewery Beach Haven, NJ | www.shipbottombrewery.com

Style: Spice, Herb or Vegetable Beer | ABV: 9.0% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by James Link

Mexican Stout by Ship Bottom Brewery had aromas of dark chocolate, vanilla and coffee are evident along with the distinct influence of Chile peppers which combine with alcoholic heat to warm the nostrils. Deep brown (almost black) in color, opaque with a big tan head that stood up nicely. Lots going on here. A rich bakers chocolate flavor is accompanied by spicy cinnamon and vanilla notes and supports the hot peppery quality of this beer, which does not overwhelm the base beer. A medium-bodied beer with ample carbonation, no burnt malt astringency and the firm presence of alcohol. A fine complement for Mexican fare with plenty of gusto.

#106 - MISSING PIECES

Highland Brewing Co. Asheville, NC | www.highlandbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.2% | IBUs: 53 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Dan Preston

The aroma is full of hops, mostly tropical fruit (mango, passion fruit) and citrus (orange, lemon, grapefruit) with some dank/catty & floral elements behind it. The flavor is hop-forward, yet the bitterness is medium-low, which is low for the double IPA style yet high enough to still balance as the beer has a dry finish. The low bready malt is also simple enough that it doesn't compete with the hops or add extra sweetness unlike many double IPAs, which helps the balancing act and negates the need for the high-level bitterness. The dry finish and low malt also gives a medium-low body with a soft mouthfeel that makes it very easy to drink despite its higher ABV that is pretty well hidden.

#105 - POIVE RAZ

Springdale Beer Framingham, MA | www.springdalebeer.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 6.0% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Sean Coughlin

The flavor is a lovely marriage of rich malt with notes of freshly baked bread crust, tart raspberry and oak. The oak and acidity linger long after the dry finish. The body is medium with a slightly elevated level of carbonation. The high level of attenuation gives the impression of more effervescence and aids drinkability. This beer drinks well by itself but could be a showstopper if paired with the right dish. A simple salad with tangy goat cheese and a red wine vinaigrette would pair beautifully. While no pink peppercorn presence was detected, it may have provided some intangible qualities that aided in this beer's high complexity. Poive Raz does an excellent job of showcasing the myriad flavors that can be found in a well-crafted beer.

#104 - REINDEER TEARS BOURBON BARREL AGED BARLEYWINE

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 12.0% | IBUs: 94 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 92

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Brad Darnell

The pour is a clear deep tawny with a garnet hue when held in direct light. A thick, creamy beige head sits atop for the duration and yields only a slight bit of lacing. Rich, warm sugar cookies with a sweet vanilla and oak character form the flavor. Sweet, nearly thick Bourbon joins and the beer ends with a sweet finish. Full body supports medium carbonation and a pleasant alcohol warmth. Sweet, lightly grainy malts persist in the flavor and faint candied fruit notes emerge.

#103 - DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

RATED 93

Church Street Brewing Co. Itasca, IL | www.churchstreetbrew.com

Style: Belgian Golden Strong Ale | ABV: 9.0% | IBU: 27 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

This is a wonderful Belgian Golden Strong Ale that was judged under BJCP Category 25C. This beer presented with a lovely golden color, just a slight haze and a huge white head with lacing. The aroma gave off light peppery notes, light phenolics and pleasant fruity aromas that were pear-like yet had light orange notes. The flavor followed through – being pleasant with light estery notes and faint peppery notes. The alcohol stood out in the flavor yet was quite clean with no hot notes leaving the beer slightly drying in the finish. There was a medium-full body with warmth and medium carbonation. This was a very nice-drinking beer that would be great on a cold evening and would be a perfect beer to serve with fish or chicken breast with a light cream sauce.

#102 - SLINGSHOT

RATED 93

Shmaltz Brewing Co. Clifton Park, NY | www.shmaltzbrewing.com

Style: International Pale Lager | ABV: 5.3% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Dan Martich*

Biscuit malt with a touch of graininess that left little residual sweetness on the palate. The hop flavor is balanced and secondary to the malt. The hop character is citrusy, has yellow grapefruit with light some lemon peel. A subtle balance to the Blonde Ale style. No alcohol detected in the flavor, indicating its subtle strength. Clean with a short dry finish. The bitterness increases from medium to medium-high as the beer warms up. Medium body and carbonation give this beer a pleasant mouthfeel with no sharp edges of alcoholic warmth, or astringency. A low degree of creaminess adds to the pleasantries. An excellent example of the style, hitting all the hallmarks. Fresh, and easy drinking with a malt forward complexity that is balanced by a citrus, and low spicy hop character.

#101 - SADDLEBACK

RATED 93

Uinta Brewing Co. Salt Lake City, UT | www.uintabrewing.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 4.0% | IBU: 30 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

Saddleback pours light golden in color with a slight haze and a big, fluffy white head. The aroma is hop-forward with aromatics of honeydew melon, tropical fruit, and peach with no malt or ester contribution. The body is thin and very effervescent as expected. The flavor is similar to the aroma; the beer is hop-forward with very little malt character. The hop flavors are tropical fruit, melon and generic citrus with a hint of green apple. The beer finishes very dry, carbonic and refreshing with a lingering citrus and tropical fruit hop flavor. This is a lower-alcohol, more sessionable version compared to other commercial Brut IPAs (most Brut IPAs tend to measure at typical American IPA strengths of 6 to 8% ABV). Regardless, this Brut IPA is quite enjoyable.

#100 - FIRE IRON

RATED 93

Urban Artifact Cincinnati, OH | www.artifactbeer.com

Style: Fruit Beer | ABV: 7.7% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 40°

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Judge's Review *by Joseph Formanek*

Fire Iron by Urban Artifact is a smoothie in beer form, pure and simple. The aroma is tart and absolutely loaded with fresh tropical fruit. Passion fruit, guava and banana characters dominate, and other blended fruity notes play a supporting role behind this. I get little to no malt or beer character whatsoever. The offering is a turbid opaque peach color with absolutely no head. The overall appearance is of an extremely pulpy fruit smoothie. Fresh passion fruit and guava are the stars of the flavor show, with banana as the support. From start through finish, these fruit characters simply dominate. However, the sweetness is quite low, which is appreciated. The body is extremely full, in large part due to the physical presence of the pulp in the drink.

#99 - BUFFALO BILL'S BLACK PUMPKIN STOUT

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Buffalo Bill's Brewery Hayward, CA | www.buffalobillsbrewery.com

Style: Pumpkin Beer | ABV: 7.9% | IBUs: 40 | Serve at: 45°

Judge's Review *by Tracy Hensley*

I am ecstatic about the forward aromas of low warming vanilla and creamed oats that an integrated blend of roasted cacao nibs and spices reminiscent of nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom support. The appearance is on point with a persistent creamy tan head and a clear but almost opaque dark brown color. The tannic cinnamon/nutmeg led spice blend is quickly met by pleasantly slick and creamy roasted chocolate and chunks of fresh pumpkin – like a roasted pumpkin brownie. The finish while slightly spice dominate and tannic, is clean, dry and crisp. Overall, a great smelling and tasting pumpkin oatmeal stout. It has everything going on – pumpkin, spice, roasted chocolaty malt, creamy oatmeal, and drinkability.

#98 - FOUR SEASONS - SUMMER '18

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 10.5% | IBUs: 68.9 | Serve at: 50°

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

Raspberries, roasted grains suggesting chocolate and coffee, a touch of vanilla and fruity esters leap out of the glass. One can imagine a raspberry-flavored extra dark chocolate confection and have a good idea of how this smells. The color is inky black with ruby highlights when direct light glints along the edges of the glass. A tan, thin layer of fine foam lingers mostly along the edges of the glass, but with wisps of Rorschach test formations all atop the surface. The flavor is much like the aroma with a rich, dark-chocolate quality accented with a raspberry syrup drizzle. Overall, this is a bold and rich raspberry-enhanced Imperial Stout that deserves to be sipped on a cold evening next to the hearth to match the inner warmth of this beer with the outer warmth of a great fire.

#97 - MARINE DREAM IPA

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 50 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

A touch of orange candy emerges in the aroma as the tropical hop character settles down, and the hop flavor shifts a little more toward citrus, with orange zest being most prominent, but it's backed up with a pleasant hit of pineapple. The hop bitterness is assertive but smooth, appearing mid-palate and lingering through to the dry finish. The orange zest rolls right on past into the aftertaste. The oats provide a slight nutty character to the flavor and aroma, as well as a pleasant fullness to the mouthfeel. This is a well-brewed New England-style IPA that has a fresh and bright tropical hop aroma that throws a slight curve ball, turning citrus in the flavor. The juicy hop character and hazy appearance are well done, and the hop bitterness stays smooth throughout. A very enjoyable brew.

#96 - SHARED WATERS

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com

Style: Mixed-Fermentation Sour Beer | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 4 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

This beer's flavor is intensely sour with a pronounced tart orange character. The malt flavors are subtle, likely from a very efficient breakdown of the starches by the wild yeast bugs in the fermentation. Despite the tart and puckering finish, some residual sweetness provides a nice offset to the sourness. The body is medium, and the acidity has a lingering quality and provides a little heat in the back of the throat. Despite the huge sourness in this beer, there is still an enjoyable complexity provided from the tart citrus component and the wheat malt fullness and flavor. If sour beers are your thing, you will like this one because of the degree of wild yeast development, and you should give it a try if you are lucky enough to find it.

#95 - PÊCHE

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Alesong Brewing and Blending Eugene, OR | www.alesongbrewing.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 6.9% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

Pouring light golden, this beer has a slight haze and a small, quickly fading white head. The aroma is moderate sourness with funky lactic, leather and lighter barnyard and hay; a light peach fruit and hint of vanilla complement the funkiness. The flavor is moderately sour with a moderate-light peach fruit but with just a hint of funkiness. Peach was an excellent choice of fruit for this fermentation blend as the light stone fruit complements the funkiness well. While the beer is most funky in the aroma, the flavor is primarily fruit with a clean lactic sourness. Regardless, this is a very enjoyable sour fruit beer. Seek this one out and be sure to share with your funky (and not so funky) friends. Cheers!

#94 - ANTE MERIDIEM

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 13.5% | IBUs: 45 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

Judge's Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast

The taste backed up this beer's aroma, and I appreciated that it had enough firmness in hop bitterness to counter the immense original gravity load. Although I didn't get coffee in the aroma, there was a distinct "dry" finish to suggest it, and some bourbon warmth in the final impression. There is mention of maple syrup as another special ingredient, but in a beer this complex, I can't say that it stood out as an identifiable flavor. In the size of its bottling at 500mL, this is still a great beer to bring to a group setting for sampling. It has the flavors for those who favor something sweet but does not range into the insipid area for those that are looking for more of a balanced heavyweight sipper.

#93 - LICHER WEIZEN

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Licher Privatbrauerei Lich, Germany | www.licher.de

Style: Hefeweizen/Weissbier | ABV: 5.4% | IBUs: 88 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review by Jason Johnson

I liked this beer's dominant banana ester in the aroma and the low background note of the clove phenol. It is very well done and smells quite refreshing. There is a soft wheat and low spicy noble hop presence that is just as it should be. Because we roused the yeast there is a solid yeasty background to it all. It poured a solid gold color with significant haze, typical for the style. The head was fluffy and very pillowy, which is exactly what I would expect from this beer. The flavor matches the aroma well. With a nice mildly wheaty flavor, a moderate amount of bitterness and great balance between the esters and phenols. The mouthfeel is light and crisp, thanks in large part to the high carbonation. All in all, this is an excellent traditional hefeweizen.

#92 - STARR HILL AMBER ALE

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Starr Hill Brewery Crozet, VA | www.starrhill.com

Style: Irish Red Ale | ABV: 5.1% | Serve at: 50 to 55°

Judge's Review by Rick Franckhauser

Light caramel notes with some floral and earthy hops as well as some toasty malt notes come through with a hint of toffee in the aroma. The caramel and toffee malts are offset by some grainy notes and just enough bitterness come up at the end to keep it from presenting itself as too sweet. The earthy and floral hops reappear at the end but the toffee lingers into the aftertaste. There may be some roasted malts present, aiding in the drying effect, but I don't taste them and I kind of wish I could. Clean fermentation and nothing off. Very approachable Irish Red that leans toward an American interpretation in its higher hop presence and lack of underlying roasted malt. Nevertheless, this is a solid example of the style and very quaffable, nicely balanced and overall very well made.

#91 - OAK & ROSÉ

Upland Brewing Co. Bloomington, IN | www.uplandbeer.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 8.0% | IBUs: 8 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 36 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Sean Coughlin

The beer pours an attractive light red with hues of purple and a resilient tightly packed light pink head. The flavor is grape forward but very delicate overall. Freshly picked strawberries meld with ripe raspberries and oak in a nuanced manner. There is a light acidity that is very complementary to both the dry finish and to the overall flavor. In a way, this drinks more like a carbonated rosé than a beer. It is very mild overall but has a great deal of fruit expression and complexity if you're concentrating on what is in your glass. This is a great gateway beer for the wine lover that is intrigued by the world of beer but doesn't know where to begin their journey. It will also be enjoyed by beer connoisseurs that appreciate an understated wild ale with delicate berry flavors.

#90 - WINE BARREL-AGED MAGIC TRAIT

Speciation Artisan Ales Comstock Park, MI | www.speciationartisanales.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 7.2% | IBUs: 0 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 3 / 6
Flavor: 39 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Pat Mulloy

This beer was brewed with blackberries and black currants and aged in red wine barrels. Red wine berry smells with a trace of vanilla and oak rise from the glass. Mild funk joins low hop and malt aromas. It fills the glass like a NE IPA on acid – cloudy red under a 2" pink cap with poor retention. This is a carnival of flavor. Berries and wine combined with the yeast produce a lemonade level of tartness. The berries also join with the oak to provide dimension to the tannins – astringent but not puckering. The berries roll around in your mouth and leave a lingering, slightly astringent, dry as a bone berry wine aftertaste. The beer is a sensual delight with a delightfully soft creamy texture that is reason enough to drink this beer. This beer is rustic, yet elegant and a pleasure to drink.

#89 - ZOIGL-PILS

Zoiglhaus Brewing Co. Portland, OR | www.zoiglhaus.com
Style: German Pils | ABV: 5.0% | IBUs: 42 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Brad Darnell

Warm, rich bready malt rises from the glass alongside a quick waft of mineral, sulfur notes. Following closely is bright, fresh spicy, floral and herbal Noble hops of moderate intensity. Pours lightly chill hazed pale gold with a large, frothy and tight-bubbled eggshell white head, long retention and eventually leaving a film on top and light lacing. Balanced, yet tilted to the hops, flavor has a bready malt structure that supports spicy, herbal and lightly floral hops. Medium-high hop bitterness and a clean fermentation character. Medium-light body and moderate, nearly mouth-filling carbonation. The flavor is complex and hop-balanced with a lingering hop spiciness. Alcohol is present, but definitely underneath as a mild warming agent. Crisp and refreshing. I could drink this all day.

#88 - KC BIER CO. HEFEWEIZEN

KC Bier Co. Kansas City, MO | www.kcbier.com
Style: Hefeweizen/Weissbier | ABV: 5.2% | IBUs: 13 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by James Link

A Hefeweizen by all accounts. Pale yellow in color and lightly cloudy as per style with a very fine bead that exploded into the glass on initial pour and supported a tightly knit head. The aroma was reminiscent of freshly baked wheat bread with a plethora of fruity esters and clove phenols that are typical byproducts of a beer fermented with a pure Bavarian yeast strain. The absence of hops allows the delicate wheat flavor to manifest itself and marry with the clove phenols and banana esters to create a flavorful complexity of ingredients to the drinker. Alcohol was in the medium range and the body a bit thin as is typical with beers brewed using higher levels of wheat. A refreshing full flavor example of the style that is particularly enjoyable on a hot summer night.

#87 - NIGHT GAME

Sketchbook Brewing Co. Evanston, IL | www.sketchbookbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.8% | IBUs: 88 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 36 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

This beer's aroma consists of moderately-high levels of citrus, grapefruit and resinous hops. It is a bright, slightly sweet smelling and very pleasant aroma. It pours a clear, orange color with solid white head and good retention. This beer's flavor is expectedly hoppy but limited to pine and resinous characteristics. Bitterness is elevated, yet smooth; it is not extreme by any means. It finishes bitter and hoppy with an enjoyable resinous sweetness. This example is very smooth and hides its strength exceptionally well. It's an easy drinker and beckoningly mellow.

#86 - 14° ESB

Bent Paddle Brewing Co. Duluth, MN | www.bentpaddlebrewing.com

Style: Strong Bitter | ABV: 5.6% | IBUs: 32 | Serve at: 42°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Joseph Formanek*

Evidence of a fresh citrus, earthy and woody hop character is quite apparent in the aroma, with a background of base and caramel malt sweetness along with woody and light floral and cherry ester fermentation notes. The flavor features a moderate bitterness level on top of a caramel, nutty and toasty malt backbone. The fermentation character comes through more as American than English, with lighter esters rather than heavy woodiness. The overall flavor maintains quite well as the drink progresses, retaining a great balance between malt and hop character throughout the middle, finish and into the aftertaste. 14 Degree ESB is a well-made clean and refreshing offering without any real flaws that is quite quaffable and thirst-quenching.

#85 - BIG MOTHER TRIPLE IPA

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: Triple IPA | ABV: 10.5% | IBUs: 125 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

Big Mother Triple IPA measures in at 10.5 percent ABV and is hopped with Summit, Mosaic, Citra and Nelson Sauvin hops. This canned beer pours dark golden in color with a light haze and a medium off-white head. The aroma is very hop-forward with resinous, piney and tangerine hop aromas with a light dank character. The flavor continues to be hop-focused with resinous, piney, tangerine and peach hop flavors that are well in front of a light caramel malt base. Alcohol is very apparent in the aroma and flavor (pleasant and never harsh) with warming sensations in the finish. The beer finishes with a moderate bitterness (seems much lower than 125 IBU!) with a long lingering resinous and piney hops with an alcohol warmth. This is a very good Double IPA that should be sought out by all "hop heads."

#84 - PFRIEM HELLES LAGER

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Munich Helles | ABV: 4.8% | IBUs: 25 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The lager poured revealed a very light straw color, in fact, it was almost clear with just a splash of yellow. Very nice and translucent along with very tiny, effervescent bubbles (almost champagne like) that clung on the side of the glass. The aroma revealed a malt sweetness (almost honey-like) and no hops (okay for the style). The flavor had a nice malt sweetness that was very grain like, again almost honey as well balanced with very low hop bittering. The body and mouthfeel were light to medium with a very nice carbonation that was both crisp and smooth in the palate. This beer would be a great compliment for a hot, sunny day that it is both light and thirst quenching. Well-made beer that exemplifies the style correctly.

#83 - INLINE IPA

Garage Brewing Co. Temecula, CA | www.garagebrewco.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 7.5% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 20 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brian Eichhorn*

In the glass, it's a very attractive pale golden color and quite clear, with a frothy white head – a Classic West Coast IPA appearance. There is a faint haze to it, likely from the hopping. The nose is distinctly grapefruit and other bright citrus with a faint pineapple and guava note as well. Some graham cracker malt notes reside underneath, along with a hint of clean ethanol. Very inviting nose. On tasting the beer, it has a high level of clean and smooth bitterness, along with a dry attenuated feeling to it. The hop flavor comes through as resinous and citrus rind-inflected, matching the style very well. Smooth and crisp through the finish, this is about as classic as a West Coast IPA gets. Super drinkable and bitter and dry with a clean finish.

#82 - HIGHLAND CHARGE WEE HEAVY SCOTTISH ALE

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com

Style: Wee Heavy | ABV: 10.0% | IBUs: 26 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The pour of this beer revealed a nice dark brown hue with minimal carbonation. The aroma had hints of chocolate, dried fruit and minimal hop overtones. The flavors revealed wonderful malt sweetness, chocolate, raisins, blackcurrants, light caramel, subtle roasted malts and low bittering hops. The mouthfeel and body were medium/heavy with low carbonation, which is acceptable for the style. It finishes nice and smooth with a bit of an alcohol warmth in the finish as this beer is 10 percent ABV. Nicely made beer with a lot of character.

#81 - CAPELLA PORTER

Ecliptic Brewing Portland, OR | www.eclipticbrewing.com

Style: English Porter | ABV: 5.2% | IBUs: 39 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 93

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Rich chocolate and roast malt emanate immediately from this sample and leave a faintly ashy wood character, though not unpleasant by any means. Dark malt-derived fruits of dates and figs are present yet subtle. Light woody and earthy hops round out the aroma. The pour is black as night but reveals a rich brown character when exposed to light. Very clear with a large, frothy and foamy beige head; long retention with excellent lacing. Rich, lightly sweet yet dry, chocolate and roast malt flavor steals the balance. Lightly bitter malt and lightly bitter earthy and woody hops leave a dry finish. Clean fermentation yields no fruity esters or off-flavors. Full body, moderate carbonation and light alcohol warmth.

#80 - DRY-HOPPED CENSORED

Lagunitas Brewing Co. Petaluma, CA | www.lagunitas.com

Style: American Amber Ale | ABV: 6.7% | IBUs: 35 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

The aroma greets the drinker with a moderate floral and resinous hop character, with a backbone of grainy base malt and support from light caramel and light berry esters. The overall hop character shines through nicely in the aroma as expected from a dry-hopped beer. The flavor showcases a soft, easy-drinking beer with moderate floral and slightly resinous hop flavor and a firm hop bitterness that creates a very refreshing finish. Light berry esters make an appearance mid-palate along with a light bready, grainy maltiness and a hit of caramel. The hop bitterness is lingering but smooth. This is a well-brewed American Amber Ale that is both flavorful and refreshing, with the dry-hopped character elevating the hop aroma and creating a more intriguing beer.

#79 - NORTH ISLAND IPA

RATED 93

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com
Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 7.5% | IBUs: 68 | Serve at: 45°

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Tracy Hensley

The finish turns towards moderately sweet and pithy grapefruit, pulpy orange juice, and under-ripe lemons before a mouthwatering and crisp aftertaste, where a tongue-coating, fresh milled wheat character takes over. After drinking North Island IPA for a few minutes, the pine resin astringency begins to linger and unbalances the beer. Warming alcohol coats my mouth but is cut by a high level of soft carbonation, which lightens the moderately heavy body. The flavor and mouthfeel taste more off-dry than the traditionally anticipated medium-dry to dry finish. The hop aroma, while pleasant, could be more complex. Final takeaway for me was just how darn good this beer looked. Even after a 1/2 hour, it retained its frothy 1/4" head of creamy foam.

#78 - PFRIEM EXTRA PALE ALE

RATED 93

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 45 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Susan Ruud

The color of this beer was a beautiful deep golden color with rays of amber throughout with a white head that was long-lasting and quite clear. There was a huge upfront aroma of citrus and tropical hops blended with a soft grainy malt aroma and pleasant light melon and berry esters. All of these aromas followed into the flavor and finished with a lingering bitterness that still carried some maltiness with it and a dry finish that wasn't overpowering. This was all tied together with a pleasant, soft alcohol presence. This beer would pair nicely with a simple meal of hamburger and fries or anything prepared on the grill. Perfect for kicking back to watch the Super Bowl but would still be perfect in the summer sitting on your deck grilling up brats and relaxing the day away.

#77 - SAISON DE ROSE

RATED 93

Free Will Brewing Co. Perkasio, PA | www.freewillbrewing.com
Style: Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 6.0% | IBUs: 11.5 | Serve at: 45°

Aroma: 24 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Jim Koebel

It is copper and hazy in appearance with a moderate white head. The flavor is refreshingly tart and dry throughout. Still, it's only lightly bitter, but possible tannins help create the classic dryness akin to that found in many farmhouse ales. Again, the fruitiness is lighter in character, but the spiciness is more distinctly herbal in flavor. There's a nice pucker in the finish, accentuated by the high attenuation and dryness. This beer is highly carbonated with a medium mouthfeel, both contributing to its refreshing character, though it doesn't take too long in the glass for it to lose carbonation and feel damp. The oak character is so mellow and nicely done, which allows this beer overall to possess excellent harmony. It tastes "old world," which is a genuine compliment.

#76 - ELBOW PATCHES

RATED 93

The Virginia Beer Co. Williamsburg, VA | www.virginiabeerco.com
Style: Oatmeal Stout | ABV: 6.2% | IBUs: 26 | Serve at: 45°

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Pat Mulloy

This beer smells like my last breakfast: fresh oatmeal, mild roast, traces of city roast coffee, a hint of nuts and a mild sweetness suggesting coffee and cream. It drinks silky rich with a creaminess that has you coming back for more and a slight slickness from the oats. Oats and roast balance perfectly, seasoned with mild coffee and hints of toasted bread crust, dark dried fruit ending in a lingering mild roast coffee and creamy oat finish with a mildly astringent bitterness. This straddles the line between British and American Oatmeal Stouts - not as fruity as the former nor as bitter as the latter establishing a place all its own - and a very fine place at that. You want to drink this beer for its balance of flavor and rich, luscious texture.

#75 - MAN JUICE

Knee Deep Brewing Co. Auburn, CA | www.kneedeepbrewing.com

Style: Fruit IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 50 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

Prominent and fresh mandarin orange greets the drinker and then fades down a bit to allow a mixed tropical and citrus hop character to emerge. A light swirl will kick up the orange aroma again. A light touch of bready malt makes an appearance as the beer warms and vents. The flavor follows with moderately strong orange that leads to primarily tropical fruit hop character of pineapple and mango, with a light hit of grapefruit following. Prominent hop bitterness makes a fast appearance and lingers through a light residual sweetness into a dry finish. The hop bitterness is assertive but remains smooth throughout. This is a well-brewed American IPA with the mandarin oranges enhancing the tropical fruit and citrus hop character.

#74 - LA TRAPPE WITTE

Trappist Brewery Koningshoeven Berkel-Enschot, Netherlands | www.latrappetrappist.com

Style: Witbier | ABV: 5.5% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Sean Coughlin*

This is a beautiful-looking beer. A hugely dense, creamy white head floats atop for the duration of enjoyment. The beer is a straw-yellow with a slight haze, making the purity of the white head stand out even more. The beer is low in bitterness with a mild citrus hop flavor and a breadth of cracker-like malt flavor. Like the aroma, there is an absence of coriander and/or orange peel. The beer finishes semi-dry with a lingering wheat/hay flavor. This beer has a medium-light body, moderately high carbonation and an element of creaminess, which makes it incredibly drinkable. While this Witbier isn't the most characteristic of its style with a lack of coriander, orange and other spices that may pop up in the best examples, it is incredibly refreshing and has a good bit of complexity to it.

#73 - CLOUD CATCHER MILKSHAKE IPA

Odell Brewing Co. Fort Collins, CO | www.odellbrewing.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 6.8% | IBUs: 47 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

This beer pours golden in color, very hazy, with a medium-sized, mousse-like white head. The aroma is prominent peach, mango, and tangerine hops with any malt or ester aromas buried well behind the hops. The hop flavor becomes more singularly orange in character with just a touch of malt to add a little depth to the flavor. The mouthfeel is medium-bodied and creamy. The beer finishes with a moderate bitterness and a lingering orange hop flavor reminiscent, as the brewery suggests, of a creamsicle frozen treat. This beer is an outstanding New England IPA but the hop flavor could have more complexity. Regardless, this is a very enjoyable beer that meets all facets of the relatively new style.

#72 - BETTY IPA

Hangar 24 Craft Brewing Redlands, CA | www.hangar24brewing.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 68 | Serve at: 48°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

The flavor profile starts with a modestly strong caramel note moving on to a big and firm but well-balanced bitterness, with mid-palate flavors of orange peel, pine, grapefruit, and piney/resinous hop character along with faint fruit esters of cherries and apple. The long finish lingers with smooth bitterness and faint, crackery malt that is dry but not bone-dry. The body is medium-full with some very nice thickness to the mouthfeel that lends some heft to the aftertaste despite the squeaky-clean finish provided by the ferment and firm carbonic conditioning. The beer hits all the right notes with signature hop character and great malt balance; assertive but still very drinkable. I would use this beer as a double-duty hot weather thirst-quencher or a counterpoint to a spicy and rich meal.

#71 - ALPHA ABSTRACTION VOL. 3

Wild Leap Brew Co. LaGrange, GA | www.wildleap.com
Style: Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.0% | IBU: 35 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 93

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Sal Mortillaro II*

A moderate-high malt sweetness, with a low grainy flavor, quickly transitions in to the flavor and present a bitter, candied orange flavor coupled with a low minerality which lasts into the finish. The balance is only slightly towards the hop bitterness, though the malt sweetness present provides a nice stage to even out the lingering aspect. The aftertaste consists of the bitterness, malt sweetness, citrus, and alcohol. A pleasant alcohol warmth is noticeable in this beer accompanied by a nice creaminess. Despite the increased hop schedule and use of the dry hop, there is no astringency in this beer. Overall, this an exceptional double IPA which showcases traditional American and citrus forwards hops coupled with a lovely malt base to provide an enhancement of the hop profile.

#70 - PINOT FRESA

Angel City Brewing Los Angeles, CA | www.angelcitybrewery.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 5.8% | IBUs: 5 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

The strawberries are evident in the aroma as a soft, candied strawberry and are the first element to greet the drinker. Light vanilla and earthy horse blanket Brettanomyces quickly follow like a pleasantly aromatic barnyard. A tartness is also noticeable in the aroma. Light bready malt emerges late to round out the complexity, along with a light red wine-like character. The flavor follows with a moderately high and clean lactic sourness and more candied strawberries. The complex fruit, sourness and wild yeast combine to create a complex and quite enjoyable barrel aged beer. Pinot Fresa is a well-brewed barrel-aged fruit beer. Perhaps a slight taming of the lactic sourness would create a more balanced beer, but only slightly. Quite refreshing and one that should not be passed up.

#69 - RIEGELE AUGUSTUS

Brauhaus Riegele Augsburg, Germany | www.riegele.de
Style: Weizenbock | ABV: 8.0% | IBUs: 16 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

This Weizenbock pours light amber in color, very cloudy, with a big, fluffy, tan head. The aroma is moderately bready and wheaty and is complemented by esters of banana and plum with hints of clove and vanilla. The flavor continues to showcase the rich, bready and wheaty malt with a slight sweetness; light plum and banana esters and a hint of clove provide balance to the complex malt character. The body is medium with a creamy, smooth mouthfeel and a light alcoholic warmth. The finish is just lightly bittered with rich, bready malt balanced by a lingering clove and spice finish. The rich, complex malt character is well balanced by the esters and phenolics. At 8 percent ABV, the strength is deceptive. This beer could easily be listed as a classic commercial example of the style.

#68 - CONCRETE DINOSAUR

Right Brain Brewery Traverse City, MI | www.rightbrainbrewery.com
Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 7.2% | IBUs: 60 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Joseph Formanek*

The up-front flavor features a nice blend of a subtle brown/dark malt backbone, rye, moderate hop bitterness and the moderate levels of tropical and dank hop flavors that were promised in the aroma. This is followed by a sweet brown/caramel malt character in the middle that does linger through the finish. The balance is toward the hop character in the middle, finish and aftertaste, with the hop bitterness coming more into the forefront in the finish and aftertaste. The sharpness from the rye flavor helps accentuate the late bitterness. The body is medium, and the carbonation is at a moderate level. Concrete Dinosaur is a very well-crafted and delicious IPA that is well worth your consideration if you decide to seek it out.

#67 - LAST WILL & TESTAMENT

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 12.0% | IBUs: 40 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

This beer pours black in color and clear with a finely-beaded brown head. The aroma is prominently bourbon and toasted oak with a background of rich caramel malt. The body is full and very warming. The flavor continues to display a ton of bourbon, vanilla and toasted oak over a rich, dark caramel malt base; elements of treacle, tobacco, dark chocolate and raisins complement. Strong bourbon and rich caramel malt linger long in a warming finish. From a BJCP sanctioned competition standpoint, the bourbon and barrel flavors should be more harmonious with the base Old Ale style. But, from a bourbon-barrel beer aficionado's perspective, the bourbon and barrel characteristics are very well done, resulting in a sublimely enjoyable beer.

#66 - REUBEN'S BREWS PILSNER

Reuben's Brews Seattle, WA | www.reubensbrews.com

Style: Czech Pilsner | ABV: 5.4% | IBUs: 35 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The aroma was of a light grain sweetness along with a negligible hop, which is okay for style. The flavor of this beer had a very nice malty sweet grainy backbone with medium hop bitterness. It finished off crisp and dry in the palate and had a very nice effervescent, bubbly body and mouthfeel. This was a very nicely made Czech style pilsner in true fashion to the style. It was light, refreshing and crisp. It was nicely balanced with the sweetness of the malt and complemented with moderate hops. Had a very nice mouthfeel and body that was light and again effervescent in the palate. One of the more difficult styles to replicate correctly because of its light flavor profile, but this example was truly wonderfully made!

#65 - MODERN TART

Upland Brewing Co. Bloomington, IN | www.uplandbeer.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 5.8% | IBUs: 0 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Dan Martich*

Lightly flavored with the same malt qualities mentioned in the aroma, grainy, fruity of very ripe pineapple and citrus lime peel finish. The finish is very dry without much hop character in the flavor or bitterness, yet nearly vegetal. The bitterness detected comes from the sour, lightly tart flavor. Balanced toward the sourness helps keep this beer light and flowing. The added apricots may be the cause for all the fruitiness perceive. No alcoholic warmth here presuming this beer has a low ABV, and the puckery aspect is kept low while still enhancing the dryness in the finish. The lightness in flavor and body make this beer a pleasure to drink. The moderately fruitiness gives it dimension. I believe this would be a great intro beer for the non-sour ale fans, or those looking for a gateway to sour styles.

#64 - SYRINGA PALE ALE

Boise Brewing Co. Boise, ID | www.boisebrewing.com

Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 5.5% | IBU: 55 | Serve at: 38 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jason Johnson*

In the nose I get a very nice rich hop aroma, with a dominant citrus aroma but there are some sweeter tropical mango notes in the back. The hop presence is strong and very welcome for an American pale ale. I get a little bit of crisp cracker-like malt that supports the hops nicely. Overall the aroma is clean and void of any noticeable off aromas. Very typical of the American ale yeast this is most likely brewed with. It's easily approachable and not overly heavy on the hops. The color is deep gold, and very clear. The retention is very nice and long lasting. The flavor matches the aroma perfectly, with a juicy and smooth hop flavor of citrus and mango, with a hint of pine that is accentuated by the medium bitterness. The malt is crisp and mildly sweet, with a hint of very light toast.

#63 - FOUR SEASONS - WINTER '18

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 12.5% | IBU: 60 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The beer had wonderful aromas of dark chocolate, raisins, bourbon flavors, coffee and an alcohol presence. Hop aroma was negligible, which is okay for this style. Forward flavors of roasted malts should dominate, and they do in this case. The pour revealed a silky black hue and light carbonated head. The initial taste had complexity that took a while to digest and identify, because there were so many things going on. I tasted roasted malts that conjured coffee and dark chocolate. I had a nice malt sweetness coupled by moderate hop bittering that balanced out. I also got vanilla flavors, perhaps from the bourbon barrel in which it was aged in? I was perhaps expecting big oak and a prevalent bourbon flavor to jump out, but it was a bit subtler.

#62 - HOP PEAK IPA

Breckenridge Brewery Littleton, CO | www.breckbrew.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBU: 57 | Serve at: 45 to 47°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

Upfront this beer had a huge citrus and piney (almost earthy) hop aroma that blended nicely with a pleasant grainy malt following right behind. There were no noticeable esters behind all of those lovely hops. The beer presented as deeply golden with a huge white head of fine, long-lasting foam and lacing on the glass. The flavor was a pleasant, smooth bready malt, which was immediately followed by a nice citrus, piney, earthy hop flavor and soft bitterness that lingered. This would be a perfect beer to drink with almost any pub food, but I really envision it with a large juicy burger and fries. It is also perfect for a warm fall day sitting out on the patio enjoying the changing colors of the surrounding landscape.

#61 - PFRIEM BARREL AGED SAISON II

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 7.1% | IBU: 32 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

The flavor starts with a lovely light bready/pils malt flavor that rounds into a mid-palate of modest bitterness and a fantastic fruit/spice dance. Fresh citrus of orange and orange peel, a dose of apple, pear, and grape-nectar character, and a really nicely expressed spicy-pepper note makes for a great balance of sweet going to fruity, then to spice and then lightly back to the faint honey-like malt sweetness into the long finish. The high conditioning harks to the very heart of the style and is appreciated throughout the delivery of flavors and textures. All in all, the beer is dry overall, with both the firm phenolics (but not overdone, as is such a common malady) and a fairly reserved oak character, but a magical malt sweetness lingers as well, making for a delightful drink.

#60 - FUNKWERKS SAISON

Funkwerks Fort Collins, CO | www.funkwerks.com

Style: Saison | ABV: 6.8% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Pat Mulloy*

Saison makes me nervous – too many glasses of skunky, imported, green-bottled saisons or domestic saisons that don't get the yeast right. The first sniff reveals this as a proper saison: ripe fruit, mild hops, white grapes, pepper, spice and alcohol. It drops hazy gold, permeated with streams of rapidly rising bubbles under a massive persistent rocky white cap that rises up over the glass's rim. Orange lemony fruit, pepper, spices and a pleasant moderate citrus pith bitterness lead the flavors. It finishes bone dry, almost puckeringly so, with a light juicy tartness. This highly effervescent medium-light bodied saison hits all the right buttons and is well worth seeking out.

#59 - THE LAURENTIAN SERIES, LAKE SUPERIOR

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 4 / 6
Flavor: 40 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Speciation Artisan Ales Comstock Park, MI | www.speciationartisanales.com

Style: American Wild Ale | ABV: 7.5% | IBUs: 15 | Serve at: 45°

Judge's Review *by Pat Mulloy*

The Laurentian Series, Lake Superior by Speciation Artisan Ales smells mild but rounded, weaving mild funk, light tropical fruit, citrus, light berry, and hints of oak into a delectable invitation. It drops cloudy straw blanketed by 1" of white foam with poor retention. Streams of rapidly rising bubbles fill the glass. A wide array of tropical fruit flavors, citrus and traces of berry roll over the tongue leaving a dry, tart fruit aftertaste. The funk is mild. The fruit, tart and oak tannins achieve a balance that makes you want to drink this beer all day. The body is medium-light, tartness is medium-high, and oak astringency medium low. This super refreshing, moderately dry beer makes you want to move next to the brewery. This beer and runny, funky cheese belong together.

#58 - LEMON ZEST FARMHOUSE ALE

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Saison | ABV: 6.2% | IBUs: 29 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

An off-white head of fine bubbles persists on the beer forming a healthy ring around the edge of the glass. The lemon zest comes through in the flavor as a tangy quality, and the lemon zest bitterness is also quite perceptible. The malts are moderately sweet and provide a nice balance to the zesty citrus character. Yeast flavors are subtly woody and earthy. The slightly tart quality of the lemon zest carries through to the finish. The mouthfeel is creamy with just a touch of alcoholic heat and some astringency, probably from the lemon peel. The blend of yeast character and lemon zest used in moderation balance very well with the malts and the overall strength of the beer. Overall this is a beer worth recommending with enough complexity to intrigue anyone's palate.

#57 - BASTOGNE ARDENNE SAISON

RATED 94

Aroma: 21 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Brasserie de Bastogne Belgium | www.brasserieminne.be

Style: Saison | ABV: 5.5% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

Bastogne Ardenne Saison by Brasserie de Bastogne is a Saison refermented with *Brettanomyces*. This beer has a restrained, fruity aroma consisting of peach and pear. It is complemented by an equally mild Brett aroma and spicy hop character. After it warms, the aroma takes on the unmistakable soapiness of Cascade hops. This beer is hazy gold in color and has a tall white head with excellent retention. There's a solid layer of sediment at the bottom of the bottle. This beer tastes bitter, dry, and attenuated with an even overtone of Brett and prickly hop spice. It is highly carbonated and medium bodied, finishing with a wild twinge. Overall this is a surprisingly easy-drinking ale. It's a pleasure to be able to enjoy something so characterful yet unobtrusive.

#56 - FAYUCA RIZING

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Helio Basin Brewing Co. Phoenix, AZ | www.heliobasinbrewing.com

Style: American Pale Ale | ABV: 6.3% | IBUs: 60 | Serve at: 38 to 42°

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

A very bright and forward citrus (lime) and piney resin aroma dominate the nose with a light grassy and fruity backstop; only modest malt character comes through initially. In the flavor, a light biscuity front moves into a big and firm bitterness that quickly opens up mid-palate flavors of peaches and pine: a light malty/estery backbone spiced up with classic citrus and piney/resin notes with a fresh and sweet fruit counterpoint reminiscent of slightly hard mangoes. The finish is light and dry but long on both grainy/honey malt and lingering hop flavors where an almost perfect balance forms. Overall the beer is bitter and quite hoppy, but the light graininess provides excellent structure making for a truly delicious and drinkable ale.

#55 - KC HELLES LAGER

KC Bier Co. Kansas City, MO | www.kcbier.com
Style: Munich Helles | ABV: 5.1% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by James Link*

KC Helles Lager is true and traditional example of the Munich Helles style in every respect. Light golden in color, crystal clear with a medium white head and fine bead. The aroma was honey-like with a biscuity quality that complemented the pilsner malt bouquet. The flavor was lightly malt-accented yet not cloyingly sweet with hints of grainy malt and noble hops. The hops are used in sedulous amounts in more of a supporting role while the body (as per style parameters) was medium in nature, well-conditioned and non-astringent. A very sessionable beer, Helles Lager by KC Bier Co. was clean and refreshing, exemplifying the most popular everyday lager served in Germany.

#54 - GOODWOOD BOURBON BARREL STOUT

Goodwood Brewing Co. Louisville, KY | www.goodwood.beer
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 8.0% | IBUs: 33 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jason Johnson*

The dark roasted malts contribute a coffee-like flavor with a hint of chocolate. The beer is incredibly smooth with a soft wash of bourbon and a moderate amount of spicy alcohol flavor. The vanilla tones come out in the finish and blend very well with the coffee and chocolate tones of the malt. Overall this beer is exceptional. I would recommend seeking this beer out and trying it for yourself. It will be perfect for those summer nights sitting by a lake or campfire as you unwind from the day. The chocolate and vanilla tones are satisfying as a day finisher; toss the bourbon into the mix, and you are on your way to a good night. The only gripe is the hop character, while noticeable, is a bit low for the style.

#53 - APRICOT ORCHARD BRETT GOLDEN ALE

The Virginia Beer Co. Williamsburg, VA | www.virginiabeerco.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 5.9% | IBUs: 25 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 39 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Pat Mulloy*

This is a fruity Brett strain with stone fruit – especially apricot – aromas out front supported by traces of pineapple, citrus and overripe fruit with light bread crumb and a hint of bubble gum. The pour produces a big, boisterous 3" cap perched atop a hazy gold column permeated with streams of rapidly rising bubbles. The brewer adds just enough fruit to complement and not overwhelm the yeast. Ripe to overripe Brett-produced fruit flavors (berry, citrus and pineapple) and added fruit flavors (stone fruit) play off and enhance one another giving the beer a delightful complexity. A light and very airy yet creamy texture massages the mouth and gives the flavors an added dimension. The result is an elegant, well balanced beer you can drink for both its texture and flavor.

#52 - FRONT ROW

Starr Hill Brewery Crozet, VA | www.starrhill.com
Style: Blonde Ale | ABV: 4.9% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Rick Franckhauser*

The beer has a clean fermentation character and pours a clear golden color with a big creamy off-white head that leaves a beautiful Belgian lace. The lemony hops are found in the flavor as well, joined by a hint of resin. Toasty malt is accompanied by some honey notes and balanced by a firm bitterness. A touch of candy-like sweetness entered toward the finish but is replaced by some citrus, which lingers into the aftertaste, and a medium-dry finish. A medium-light body with moderate carbonation adds a little bite but it manages to leave a creamy coating when all is said and done. It leans a little more toward hops than your standard blonde ale. What I appreciate the most is that while it is easy-drinking and approachable, it still holds some subtle complexities throughout.

#51 - LOOKING GLASS

Starr Hill Brewery Crozet, VA | www.starrhill.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 40 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Rick Franckhauser

The flavor backs up the aroma providing a nice grapefruit, a little pith and some pine resin joining the party all at moderately high levels. High level bitterness dominates the balance as one should expect in an American IPA but is never harsh or abrasive. You know more malt is present rounding off the bitterness but makes itself known more in the mouthfeel than any sweetness. Smooth with a little mouth-coating sticky hops, this is a solid example of an American IPA – this beer is all about those hops. Predominantly citrus-focused with enough resin, mango and pineapple to keep it interesting. Really nice job providing some serious hop bitterness without the harsh edge. The refreshing citrus and dry finish leaves you thirsty for more.

#50 - KING GAMBRINUS

Jersey Girl Brewing Co. Hackettstown, NJ | www.jerseygirlbrewing.com
Style: Belgian Tripel | ABV: 10.0% | IBUs: 25 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by James Link

A very clear pale-yellow rendition of the style was poured with lots of effervescence and a significant white head, which fell off quickly. The aroma is grainy sweet with a touch of phenol, which complements the pleasant almost honey-like bouquet. Pilsner malt makes a strong presence and adequately supports fruity esters and spicy yeast notes in a clean and distinctive fashion. Alcohol, although evident, is well hidden, allowing for enhanced drinkability even at this higher ABV. Originally offered by the Westmalle Trappist Monastery in Belgium some 80 years ago, this fine example of the Belgian Tripel style should be considered for consumption by any discriminating beer connoisseur. Highly recommended!

#49 - LA TRAPPE QUADRUPEL

Trappist Brewery Koningshoeven Berkel-Enschot, Netherlands | www.latrappetrappist.com
Style: Belgian Dark Strong Ale | ABV: 10.0% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 54 to 59°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Michael Heniff

The aroma is prominent, rich bready malt, abundant peppery phenolics with a hint of vanilla complimented by dark fruit reminiscent of plums. The alcohol is strong but never harsh. The flavor is malt-forward with melanoidins reminiscent of bread crusts. Moderate peppery and vanilla phenolics complement the lightly sweet malt. The body is medium-full, creamy with a moderate warmth. The beer finishes with a gentle bitterness leaving a semi-dry, rich bready malt character with lighter peppery phenolics on the palate. The complexity of the malt character is excellent in this Trappist ale. The peppery phenolics and plum-flavored esters add the expected complexity. The abundantly apparent yet soft alcohol presence is heavenly. Savor this special gift from the monks.

#48 - MEGA MINT IMPERIAL CHOCOLATE MILK STOUT

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com
Style: Spice, Herb or Vegetable Beer | ABV: 9.0% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 24 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 8 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Richard Wong

Even though the aroma only suggested a subtle mint, the flavor of mint was noticeable and bold. The mint and chocolate were center stage and complemented one another nicely. It is almost as if this was a liquid version of a Mint Patty candy. The body and the mouthfeel of this beer was very smooth and was between medium and heavy. The carbonation was low, but that didn't detract from the beer at all. Had a very nice smooth sweet finish with a minty aftertaste with a little alcohol warmth.

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#47 - DANZIG

Devils Backbone Brewing Co. Roseland, VA | www.dbbrewingcompany.com

Style: Baltic Porter | ABV: 8.0% | IBUs: 28 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by James Link*

A rich chocolate malt aroma with coffee-like undertones are immediately evident upon first pour. Lager yeast notes are also present and add a pleasant complementary touch. This beer poured a dark brown (almost black) color with a light tan head that fell off somewhat several minutes after the initial pour. The flavor, as was the case in the aroma, is reminiscent of quality dark chocolate with a light roast and a grainy malt character that is closely associated with beers that carry a multi-layered grain bill. Hops are earthy in nature and contribute in only a minimal way – as per BJCP style guidelines. A thin- to medium- bodied beer that was very smooth over the tongue with just a touch of alcoholic warmth and no astringency.

#46 - BAILEY'S TAPROOM 10TH

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 15 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

This beer is slightly hazy, light golden, with an effervescence that continues to stream up leaving a healthy off-white head. Overall, this is quite a solid Brettanomyces-fermented beer with just a hint of woodiness that simply adds a little more complexity. Perhaps the fermentation is entirely done in wood with a healthy Brett supply. What really makes this beer worth seeking out is how different it is from the more common wild fermented beers these days that tend to be exceptionally sour or tart with little else. Instead, this expresses all the great flavor that Brett can produce without taking away from the subtlety of the malt. I highly recommend trying this if you are looking for something that stands out without relying on gimmicky hops or malts.

#45 - SUPER SAISON

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Saison | ABV: 9.5% | IBUs: 38 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

Initially pouring as a beautiful pale golden color with sparkling clarity and leaving a picturesque white lacing around the glass, the visuals alone for this beer made me want to take a sip. The aroma was very pleasant – offering Belgian phenolics and citrus and pear esters along with a very faint spicy, floral hop character. It had a very smooth mouthfeel and a slightly dry finish. All of this was tied together nicely with very pleasant soft alcohol element. This beer would pair well with Salmon or Ribeye cooked on the grill but would also go wonderfully with spicy Asian dishes. A very pleasant and easy-drinking beer that just screams to be imbibed with a group of close friends, regaling each other with stories of days gone by.

#44 - BLIND PIRATE

Monday Night Brewing Atlanta, GA | www.mondaynightbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 7.4% | IBUs: 55 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Dan Martich*

The aroma was comprised of caramel, pine and dank hop notes. Stone fruity esters and bready maltiness round it up. One thing to note was that the dankness slightly overwhelms. The flavor has a high pine note, and fruitiness in the way of blueberries. There's very little malt presence, it's just enough to balance the bitterness. The malt is sweet and grainy, nearly biscuit-like. Balanced toward the hops. This beer finishes moderately-high in bitterness with a fruity aftertaste. The hop character is so prominent it makes want to exhale the essence. The body and carbonation are medium-high with a moderate amount of warmth but not hot. A big bold DIPa, with an assertive hop flavor that makes it stylistically on point.

#43 - STEAMWORKS PILSNER

Steamworks Brewing Co. Burnaby, Canada | www.steamworks.com/brewery
Style: German Pils | ABV: 5.0% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

The flavor is of a lightly toasted cracker front into a reserved bitterness and a brilliant nectar-floral angle that reminds me of elderflower. The late palate shows homage to tradition: a classic dry-herbal/lavender note (usually associated with Hallertauer hops) lends to a long dryness that lasts all the way to the dry and clean finish. Absolutely delicious! The body is medium-light, somewhat fat due to relatively low conditioning for the style. Overall the beer is a delight of balance between pilsner-style malt and floral-herbal hop tones, where the yeast mostly stays out the way. This beer would be fantastic with a spicy meal like citrus-marinated prawns pan fried with red pepper flakes. If you like golden, hop-forward lagers, this example is definitely recommended.

#42 - JOLLY RUSSIAN

Odell Brewing Co. Fort Collins, CO | www.odellbrewing.com
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 13.0% | IBUs: 45 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 94

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

The flavor starts off with notes of ripe black mission figs dosed with medium dark molasses, and a nice complementing spicy angle (cinnamon, allspice), that's evident and respectable hop bitterness; mid-palate flavors see the emergence of a soft and somewhat muted cocoa/roast character, much more chocolate-like than coffee-like. The finish is a very well-balanced off-dry, with a shot of ethanol heat and lingering herbal-spicy tones well into the late-palate. Mouthfeel is thick with appreciable creaminess, relatively low astringency, and a nice carbonic spritz. Despite the beer's big flavor profile and appreciable alcoholic strength, its pleasant balance and off-dry finish make for a very drinkable digestif/nighttime warmer.

#41 - ZWART BLACK STAR

De Proef Brouwerij Lochristi, Belgium | www.proefbrouwerij.com
Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 8.0% | IBUs: 40 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Sal Mortillaro II*

The moderate malt sweetness in this beer blends quite well with candied fruit flavors of plum and low levels of dark cherry, which also works quite nicely off the fruity and leathery notes of the Brettanomyces. There is a moderate level of hop bitterness with no hop flavor in the beer, but this takes a backseat to the malt and Brettanomyces character. There is a low-level tartness in this beer which, along with the Brettanomyces, light spice and barrel notes helps aid in a dryness in the finish. Malt flavors of cherry, leather and a light funk linger in the aftertaste. This beer is a medley of complex aromas and flavors that was well executed as a whole. I hope to acquire another can to see what time does to further develop the Brettanomyces character and its interaction with the malt.

#40 - WEEKEND VIBES IPA

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.8% | IBU: 60 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

Weekend Vibes IPA pours a light gold with near brilliant clarity, and the rocky white head leaves a thick and persistent stand on the beer. The aroma features prominent mixed tropical fruit with light pineapple and fresh mango, followed by an earthy, citrus grapefruit rind. The aroma has a light impression of sweetness. A touch of grainy malt emerges as the hops fade down along with a light floral alcohol character. The flavor follows with prominent and mixed tropical and citrus fruits, with pineapple, mango and grapefruit zest. The hop flavor lingers for a long time through mid-palate where it is joined by a moderately high and smooth hop bitterness that lasts into a medium-dry finish. As the beer continues to warm, a light grainy maltiness and floral alcohol character develops.

#39 - OAK & WHITE

Upland Brewing Co. Bloomington, IN | www.uplandbeer.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 7.5% | IBUs: 7 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 24 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 37 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

This beer has a tart aroma with layers of complexity that follow. Low spicing and oak tannins are present, as is a distinct white grape (fermented, like white wine) aroma. Together, these aromas are mellow and pleasant. It pours a clear, pale gold color with moderate white head. This beer's flavor has distinct yet light oak character—primarily tannin—and is moderately sour. It has a buttery taste and texture, again like white wine. The finish is dry but retains the buttery fullness. Carbonation is moderately high, but feels lower due to the fuller texture. Hops are nowhere to be found in this beer, but it doesn't need them. Overall, this beer's vinous quality makes it analogous to a white grape version of a Flanders Red Ale. An excellent sour ale.

#38 - NEVER BETTER DIPA

Coronado Brewing Co. Coronado, CA | www.coronadobrewing.com
Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.1% | IBU: 65 | Serve at: 40°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

Never Better presents a prominent fresh bowl of tropical fruit with mango and pineapple that is offset by a touch of resin. A hint of grainy malt fights through the hops as the beer warms, along with a light spicy alcohol. There is a light candy sugar-like impression of sweetness in the aroma as the beer continues to open up. The overall hop aroma is fresh and bright. The flavor features a moderately high and prominent tropical fruit hop flavor with background grapefruit rind and resin. The hop flavor is not quite as fresh and bright as the aroma but still pleasant. Light spicy alcohol and medium-high hop bitterness emerges in the middle and lingers into a medium-dry finish, maintaining a smooth character throughout. Light grainy malt develops late to help balance out the hop character.

#37 - NECTARINE GOLDEN ALE

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriember.com
Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 6.9% | IBUs: 9 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 4 / 6
Flavor: 39 / 40
Mouthfeel: 10 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

Nectarine flesh is notable in combination with some sweet malt and fermentation characteristics that are quite subtle in the nose. The pour is somewhat cloudy from a lot of in-bottle carbonation. The flavor has mild nectarine fruit flavor and fruit or malt sweetness backed with a refreshingly tart flavor mid-palate and finish from the yeast and wood aging. Just a little bit of oak/wood character can be tasted, and it becomes more noticeable as it warms. Acidity from the barrel aging, wild yeast contributions, residual wine or all of the above adds another enjoyable flavor angle to this beer. All told, this is a wonderful beer that expresses nectarine in subtle, but enjoyable ways, on top of a mildly sour and tart, slightly wild fermentation.

#36 - DIGITAL BATH

Belching Beaver Brewery San Diego, CA | www.belchingbeaver.com
Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.5% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 5 / 6
Flavor: 39 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Tracy Hensley*

When tasting this IPA, I was looking for tropical/citrus juicy fruits and resin/needle-like notes from the hops, frothy vanilla/wheat character from the malt, bitterness balanced by a creamy mouthfeel, and overall something easy to drink without bitterness getting in the way. Oh yeah, and it needed to be hazy. Overall, it nails my expectations. It's a bit more sessionable than anticipated and is missing the expected aroma or flavor intensity but otherwise is an enjoyable and appropriate example of the style. The real strength of this beer is just how much of it one could drink without getting tired of it. After the first taste, restrained flavors of pithy orange juice and frothy vanilla wheat create a clean-tasting experience. Arguably, it is one of the most drinkable NE IPAs I have tried.

#35 - TRANSCEND IPA

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com

Style: American IPA | ABV: 6.7% | IBU: 55 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Susan Ruud*

The beer had a huge citrus hop aroma, hints of crackery malt and no noticeable esters. There was also a pleasant alcohol aroma and low hints of diacetyl. It presented itself as a light-golden copper color, had a huge off-white head with fine bubbles and was crystal clear. The flavor that followed was a pleasant citrus hop flavor along with a low caramel and crackery malt flavor. It had a very clean fermentation character with no noticeable esters found. The finish is a lingering blend of low malt sweetness and hop bitterness. There was pleasant alcohol throughout. It had a medium-full body, medium carbonation and a low warmth. This was a very pleasant IPA, which was very nicely balanced and had soft pleasant alcohol. An absolutely wonderful beer for almost any occasion.

#34 - FOUR SEASONS - AUTUMN '18

Mother Earth Brew Co. Vista, CA | www.motherearthbrewco.com

Style: Mixed-Style Beer | ABV: 12.5% | IBUs: 55 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Initially the first mouthful displays moderately sweet rich chocolate, oats, and brown sugar sweetness with a lightly bitter roasted malt character underneath. Sweet coconut and light hop bitterness round out the flavor and leaves a medium-sweet finish. Full-bodied, medium alcohol warmth and medium carbonation. Roasted nuts and dark fruits (figs and dates) are the secondary aromatics that hang in there throughout with the coconut; the coconut is subtle but noticeable. As the beer warms the alcohol becomes a drying agent that keeps the malt sweetness mildly in check. The roasted malt character lasts through the long finish as notes of coconut, alcohol, nuts, and dark fruits come and go. This is a wonderful beer that should hold its own alongside a rich, simple brownie and vanilla ice cream.

#33 - SEEDSTOCK OKTOBERFEST

Seedstock Brewing Co. Denver, CO | www.seedstockbrewery.com

Style: Märzen | ABV: 6.1% | IBUs: 18 | Serve at: 40 to 42°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 20 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Bury*

In the flavor, bread crusts and toasted caramel malt is more intense relative to the aroma and fully dominate the flavor. Low bitterness helps to offset any residual sweetness although the fermentation was clean and well attenuated with no off-flavors. The taste starts sweet but dries out in the end, which aids in drinkability—perfect for the liter or the boot. Toast and bread crusts linger far into the aftertaste. This Märzen is exactly what you'd expect for the style. This Oktoberfest should be a staple of your fall lineup. It hits the hallmarks of the style. Additional base malt complexity would make this a world-class, not-to-be missed beer, but I'd be happy to pay for this rendition. Prost!

#32 - TEMPORARILY PERMANENT

Cape May Brewing Co. Cape May, NJ | www.capemaybrewery.com

Style: Mixed-Fermentation Sour Beer | ABV: 9.2% | IBUs: 70 | Serve at: 42 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Rick Franckhauser*

The flavor allows the apricots to make an appearance alongside the mango. Moderately low levels of malt sweetness accentuate the fruit. A bright tart citrus sourness and a low-level acidity take the place of bitterness in balancing the beer. Red wine tannin is noted in the finish. The funk raises up in the aftertaste and add another level of complexity. Higher levels of carbonation, a medium-light body and a slight mouth-coating tannin serve to clean the palate and provide an easy-drinking sour ale. Very refreshing and approachable. The fruit additions complement without overpowering each other as all the elements of the beer are identifiable and harmonious. Sourness and tannin aid the drinkability as the tropical fruits and the lingering tartness make for the perfect poolside quencher. A blissful brew!

#31 - BO PILS

East Brother Beer Co. Richmond, CA | www.eastbrotherbeer.com

Style: Czech Pilsner | ABV: 5.0% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Brad Darnell

A lovely, clean and rich medium grainy and lightly doughy Pils malt emanates from the glass. The beer is brilliantly clear straw gold and the head recedes to a thin film on top and bubbly cordon. The complex malt dominates the flavor yet leaves room for light spicy and herbal/earthy hops and soft, rounded bitterness. The malt sweetness carries into the dry finish and carries a bit of the bitterness along. This is a light-bodied, though it feels bigger based on the malt sweetness and richness. There is a soft fruitiness in the aroma and flavor though the malt often overcomes the fleeting aroma and flavor. I notice a light mineral character, particularly as the beer leaves the tongue. This is a very easy-drinking beer, quite refreshing and quaffable.

#30 - AMIRITE?!

Springdale Beer Framingham, MA | www.springdalebeer.com

Style: Specialty IPA | ABV: 7.3% | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by Sean Coughlin

This beer's aroma is almost completely dominated by the hop profile but is never pungent - very pleasing with subtle undertones of honeydew melon, papaya and grapefruit pith. A small fluffy white head sits atop the brilliantly clear beer and diminishes slowly. The flavor is surprisingly subtle overall. An appropriate level of medium-low bitterness, putting more emphasis on hop flavor and aroma. The hop flavor is a bit subdued but matches the aroma perfectly. The malt isn't highly perceptible but has a slightly toasty background that stays out of the spotlight and lets the hops do the talking. Medium body and carbonation. There is zero hop-derived astringency and a slight creaminess aids in the drinkability of this hop-laden IPA.

#29 - BLONDE DE L'ENFER

Unibroue Chambly, Quebec, Canada | www.unibroue.com

Style: Belgian Golden Strong Ale | ABV: 10.5% | IBUs: 14 | Serve at: 50 to 54°

RATED 95

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review by John C. Tull

Banana, clove-like phenolics, coriander and light metallic and musty notes are evident along with some bubblegum and spiciness. The mouthfeel is surprisingly smooth with a medium body. The finish leaves a lingering fruity and spicy character along with a touch of hop bitterness in the finish that helps clean up the palate in preparation for the next sip. Alcohol is hidden quite well for being a 10.5 percent ABV brew, but it does warm the belly on a cold winter day. Blonde de l'Enfer is an excellent take on the Belgian Golden Strong style. Definitely one to track down to enjoy immediately or to cellar for the future. This rates near the top of all of the Unibroue products that I have ever had the pleasure to try.

#28 - CLENCHER

BuckleDown Brewing Lyons, IL | www.buckledownbrewing.com

Style: Double IPA | ABV: 8.1% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by Dan Martich

The flavor is mirrored by the aroma with big, bold hop notes that are full of dank, stone fruit and blueberry jam elements. The small amount of malt sweetness balances these massive hop notes. The finish is dry with a lingering fruit character from the hops. It is hard to discern that this is a Double IPA because it doesn't have that expected overwhelming alcoholic punch. The mouthfeel has a light creaminess from the medium-low carbonation, and the medium-full body has no astringency. Overall, this is a beautifully executed beer. This highly hop-forward Double IPA has some interesting hop characteristics that slightly deviate from the usual suspects of citrus notes "du jour." The hop balance is such that it doesn't undermine the malt backbone.

#27 - EPITAPH RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STOUT

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 10.0% | IBUs: 92 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Pours opaque black with a medium, creamy and thick brown head, medium retention with some lacing. Aroma of sweet and rich dark chocolate, lactose sweetness, dates and figs. Light background earthy and woody hop notes round out the initial aroma. Chewy sweet and dark chocolate malt, roast notes, dark fruits similar to the aroma lead to a sweet finish. Full body, medium carbonation and light alcohol warmth. A warm nuttiness emerges late in the aroma as does powdered cocoa. A light malt bitterness complements the hop bitterness, but the malt and lactose sweetness keep both in check. Some warm alcohol character gives the palate a hint of dryness and keeps this from being too sweet. Bold and rich with a velvety texture, this is a highly enjoyable beer.

#26 - FRESH BONGWATER HEMP ALE

KettleHouse Brewing Co. Bonner, MT | www.kettlehouse.com

Style: Spice, Herb or Vegetable Beer | ABV: 5.0% | IBUs: 22 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Tracy Hensley*

The aroma starts out with light green grass, white cherry, and vanilla blossoms and is followed by light pleasing warm yeast, fluffy white fresh baked bread, and blanched almonds with sesame seeds. The hazy dark gold beer has a fine creamy ivory head. The flavors begin as a light dusty freshly ground millet with low supporting vanilla shortbread. The beer is crisp and mouthwatering with a pithy bitter yet complex character that coats the mouth and is slightly numbing when combined with the pleasing low alcohol. The flavors continue to evolve over time, revealing subtle grassy flavors, including sugar cane stalk. Solidly made beer. Well-balanced and lengthy but subtle. Overall, Fresh Bongwater Hemp Ale is a complex evolving sessionable ale with refreshing fresh grassy and nutty notes.

#25 - PFRIEM VIENNA LAGER

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriember.com

Style: Vienna Lager | ABV: 5.3% | IBUs: 20 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 37 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by David Sapsis*

Often, amber lagers tend toward a cloying sweetness and sometimes a pronounced cereal flavor with high levels of DMS. Not this beer. It is simple, elegant, and expertly balanced, highlighting classic ingredients of light kilned (Vienna, low color Munich) malts and wonderfully floral and spicy continental hops, all packaged up in a crisp and tight lager of modest strength that is both drinkable and complex enough to be savored. It is simply outstanding. Anton Dreher would be proud. In terms of food pairing, its softness and subdued bitterness lend itself to a wide range of pairings. I'm trying it with some good New York Style Pizza, and it shines. Like I said, simply outstanding.

#24 - SANTA'S LITTLE HELPER

Port Brewing Co. San Marcos, CA | www.portbrewing.com

Style: Imperial Stout | ABV: 9.9% | Serve at: 44 to 48°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review *by Richard Wong*

The flavor of this beer was nicely balanced between malt and hop profiles that had very distinctive roasted elements that tasted like chocolate and coffee. The beer was medium/heavy in body and mouthfeel and it was very creamy in the palate. The carbonation level was about medium and provided just enough body. The aftertaste of this beer was very smooth and had a very nice subtle warm 'burn' due to the fact that this is an Imperial Stout weighing in at a powerhouse 9.9 percent ABV. This is a wonderfully made beer that hit all the right marks for the style. It had nice roastiness and bittering that was well balanced and it certainly was big and boozy. A nice tipple of this near a hearth will certainly warm things up in the cold of this winter season.

#23 - PFRIEM FLANDERS BLONDE

pFriem Family Brewers Hood River, OR | www.pfriembeer.com

Style: Wild Specialty Beer | ABV: 7.5% | IBUs: 7 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Pat Mulloy*

Wet leather, light fruit, light cigar box, old basement, traces of balsamic and butter aromas drift from the glass. This hazy gold beer talks to you with a lively effervescence crackling as cascades of bubbles rush to the surface. The brewer coaxes an array of fruit flavors from the Brett offering up pineapple, some hard candy, hints of melon and peach, grape, tropical fruit and a hint of vegetable spread like funky marmalade over a crispy shortbread biscuit malt flavor. Sweet and tart are well balanced. The blonde ale base allows the Brett flavors to really shine. Each drink brings out a different array of fruit flavors mixed with mild funk having you yearning for a larger bottle to make sure you do not miss anything.

#22 - BREWERY LANE SERIES: IMPERIAL VANILLA PORTER AGED IN RUM BARRELS

Breckenridge Brewery Littleton, CO | www.breckbrew.com

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 10.7% | IBUs: 28 | Serve at: 42 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Michael Heniff*

This porter pours black, clear but almost opaque, with a medium light brown head. The aroma is of moderately strong chocolate and coffee with lighter smoke, vanilla and alcohol. The flavor is very rich and complex with flavors of chocolate, smoke, vanilla, toasted oak, dark rum, toffee, caramel and coffee. The beer finishes with a light bitterness leaving a rich and complex finish of sweet chocolate, caramel, vanilla and toasted oak. Rich, complex and strong, this beer is every bit as good as advertised on the label.

#21 - MAIBOCK

Devils Backbone Brewing Co. Roseland, VA | www.dbbrewingcompany.com

Style: Helles Bock | ABV: 7.4% | IBUs: 28 | Serve at: 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by John C. Tull*

The flavor mirrors with very low hop/yeast spiciness with some lighter touches of floral and fruity esters. The bitterness is moderately-high, and the dry, lager-like finish lingers for a while in the aftertaste. This beer is finely balanced towards the sweet, bready, slightly grainy malt but not too much so. A fine reminder that it is the lightest member of the Bock family. The body and carbonation are medium, and a pleasant mouthfeel that beckons another sip as you crave some more of the complex maltiness. This is one very well made and easy-drinking lager that exemplifies the Helles Bock style by hitting all the characteristics and drinkability. Clean, malty, lightly spicy and dry – this beer is hard to put down and would pair well with a grilled Bratwurst.

#20 - PINKY SWEATER

Sketchbook Brewing Co. Evanston, IL | www.sketchbookbrewing.com

Style: German Pils | ABV: 5.5% | IBUs: 30 | Serve at: 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 22 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

There beer begins with a mostly neutral aroma, but with a definite adjunct character. Still, it is very clean. It pours a pale straw color that is crystal clear with a thick, white head. The flavor is similarly neutral yet has a pleasant herbal hop flavor and low bitterness. This beer is very well attenuated and has a dry, cleansing finish that is smooth, crisp and the most refreshing thing you'll drink all summer. It has a medium-light body that possesses a unique texture, making it feel fuller. Despite this beer's clean and neutral character, there is no mistaking it for a macro lager; its subtleties are revelatory. For the style, it could use more bitterness and aroma hop character, but that's really beside the point.

#19 - BARRELJUICE, BARRELJUICE, BARRELJUICE

Angel City Brewing Los Angeles, CA | www.angelcitybrewery.com
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 7.8% | IBUs: 6 | Serve at: 40 to 45°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Randy Scorby*

This hazy, golden beer greets you with aromatic peach leather with a hint of lemon zest. A lightly rich bready maltiness develops as it warms, along with a hint of black pepper and white wine character. The chardonnay barrel character shines through more in the flavor with an equally complex hit of earthy *Brettanomyces* immediately following. The white wine character dies down a bit as it passes through mid-palate but makes a re-appearance as the beer passes through the dry finish into the aftertaste.

#18 - ASPALL GRAND CRU

Aspall Cider House Debenham, UK | www.aspall.co.uk
Style: English Cider | ABV: 6.8% | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Jim Koebel*

This cider is petillant and crystal clear. Its mellow aroma consists of apple and fruity acidity. It tastes mildly sweet with restrained fruity flavor, reminiscent of pear. The aftertaste is that of apple and is off-dry. This cider feels bubbly and crisp on the finish. Although these tasting notes are simple, this cider is excellent and well worth seeking out.

#17 - BARREL-AGED LEGION

Community Beer Co. Dallas, TX | www.communitybeer.com
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 11.6% | IBUs: 70 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Nelson Crowle*

Initial aroma is roasty sweet chocolate with moderate vanilla notes and moderate caramel and toffee notes - quite complex and interesting. The flavor echoes the aroma with roasty sweet chocolate, medium caramel, and additional cold brewed coffee notes. There are medium wood aged notes expressed as vanilla and toasted coconut. Lots of dark fruits - medium prunes, moderate overripe plums, slight notes of black cherries. There are some slight oxidation notes coming across as sherry notes rather than papery, so quite pleasant. Medium-low earthy and floral hops complement the roasty malt but are minor players. There is a moderate hop bittering that balances well. Medium-low soy sauce umami notes. This is a full-bodied beer that has enough carbonation to present all of the aromas well.

#16 - FASTBACK RACER

Bear Republic Brewing Co. Cloverdale, CA | www.bearrepublic.com
Style: Double IPA | ABV: 10.4% | IBUs: 100 | Serve at: 45 to 50°

RATED 95

Aroma: 23 / 24
Appearance: 6 / 6
Flavor: 38 / 40
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10
Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Judge's Review *by Brad Darnell*

Once the thick head breaks somewhat the moderate piney and citrus (orange, tangerine) hops show up, supported by medium-sweet bready malt. Pours hazy harvest orange with a huge, thick and creamy off-white head that lasts quite a while. Medium-light smooth alcohol greets the palate and paves the way for medium-high piney and juicy citrus (tangerine) hops. The hop bitterness is medium-high and leaves a dry finish with a slightly pithy aftertaste. Medium-full body, medium carbonation and alcohol warmth. Upon further consideration I find some fruity, hop-derived esters (pear, cherry) on the nose and even fainter esters in the flavor. The malt is straightforward and provides nice support for the bold hops. The alcohol, while prominent, remains smooth and adds complexity.

#15 - HIGHLAND CHARGE BOURBON BARREL AGED WEE HEAVY SCOTTISH ALE

Heathen Brewing Vancouver, WA | www.heathenbrewing.com
Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer | ABV: 11.6% | IBUs: 26 | Serve at: 50 to 55°

RATED 95

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 8 / 10

Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Judge's Review by *Richard Wong*

The pour of this beer featured dark brown hues with light carbonation. The bubbles were small and tight. The aroma revealed a plethora of wonderful scents, such as bourbon, oak, chocolate, dried fruit (raisins and plums) along with a nice malt sweetness. I didn't get any hops, but that is okay for this style. The first sip had the same wonderful flavors that were found in the aroma. The malt and the hops balanced very nicely with this beer; malt sweetness was found along with moderate hop bittering.



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#14

Tunnel Vision

Bearded Iris Brewing

Tennessee | United States

Brewer's Description

Focus, focus. This 6.8 percent ABV India Pale Ale with Citra, Mosaic and El Dorado showcases a hypnotic double dry hop of Citra so your focus never wavers. This zippy, citrusy IPA showcases a blurred-edge mouthfeel, multi-layered juiciness of Mosaic and Citra, and a chewy, lemon starburst zing courtesy of El Dorado oil. This variant incorporates a double dry-hop of Citra, because why not more Citra? While this beer pairs well with many foods, try pouring a half-full glass of orange juice, then filling the cup with Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra. It makes a killer Beermosa that's very, very refreshing.

Statistics

Style: American IPA

Style Family: India Pale Ale

Availability: Limited Release

ABV: 6.8%

Serve at: 45 to 50°

Hops: Citra, Mosaic, El Dorado

Contact

Bearded Iris Brewing
101 Van Buren St.
Nashville, TN 37208

Tel.: (615) 928-7988

www.beardedirisbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Sal Mortillaro II

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Tunnel Vision DDH w/Citra has been evaluated as an American IPA. (2015 BJCP Category 21A)

This beer pours a deep gold color with opaque clarity due to the use of dry hopping. A modest off-white head forms but dissipates fairly quickly. As the beer is imbibed, it leaves a lovely lacing on the glass. On the nose is a moderately high juicy mandarin orange profile with low notes of pineapple taking the forefront on this beer. A low level of malt sweetness helps support the hop aroma and makes the beer almost candy-like. Any esters in the beer are lost behind the fairly intense hop character. Light wisps of alcohol are apparent as the beer warms and gives hints of a moderately strong (6% ABV) beer. On the sip, a moderately high hop flavor of mandarin orange, lemon, and pineapple noted in the aroma come through at the beginning, followed by a low-level malt sweetness. There is a subtle pine and grassy note in the flavor that is not picked up in the aroma.

Overall, this is obviously a very fresh sample and at the peak of its prime; the spicy aspects in the flavor imparted by the dry-hopping technique should diminish a little over time and become more rounded as the beer matures. This beer reminds me of a bitter version of a New England IPA combining juicy hop flavor and aroma coupled with the firm bitterness of a West Coast IPA – offering the best of both worlds to the true American IPA lovers.

96 - WORLD CLASS



CULTIVATE VARIETY

TUNNEL VISION
DDH W/ CITRA

IPA
ZIPPY LEMON MELON

Brandon Tarr Talks DDH Tunnel Vision with Citra

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

There is a collaborative effort among our small team of brewers to create new recipes, and Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra has been honed through many batches of different IPAs and DIPAs we have brewed.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

Relative to more traditional IPAs, Hazy IPAs tend to be made up of more intense elements. These components can make it easy to misstep and make a beer that tastes overly intense. Tunnel Vision strikes a balance between its hop saturation and drinkability without sacrificing either one.

What makes this beer truly world class?

We are always aiming to make beers that both our customers and team are fond of. With Tunnel Vision, I think a lot of things come together to make a beer that I would happily drink more than one of, and it is great to see it reviewed so highly.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

With any beer it is the combination of all its aspects, which make it what it is. Any one element of a beer out of place can throw off the experience of the rest. In the case of this beer, it has a saturation of hop flavor that rivals a DIPA in a 6.8 percent package. The sheer volume of essential oils from the hops cause the beer to taste more like orange-grapefruit juice than beer. Left alone this would make it too fruity but the underlying bitterness helps to anchor this as a beer in the finish and prepare you for another sip. In a beer style that can easily go too far in any one direction this beer nails the balance of all its parts.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Tunnel Vision is a go-to for our regulars and team. They may start with whatever new beer we have just released but they often finish with a Homestyle or a Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra.

Where does this beer's name come from?

The vast majority of our beer names come from different cultivars of irises. There's an incredible amount of beautiful iris varieties, each with a unique name to choose from.

Is this your desert island beer?

While Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra has been my go-to beer at the brewery, for a more desert island-appropriate beer, see my next answer.

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

For a good "food pairing" pour a half-full glass of orange juice then fill the cup with Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra. It makes a killer Beermosa that's very, very refreshing.



Judge's Second Opinion

I have to admit, a few years ago I was not a fan of Hazy IPAs. Sure, the beers are unique, tasty, silky, soft, and tropical but they go against everything us long-time beer drinkers and style purists have known an IPA to be over the last several decades. The hallmark of the IPA *is* bitterness! Hell, it even goes against some of the hallmarks of brewing that have been ingrained the last several centuries! Not long ago hallmarks of good brewing were clarity, balance and shelf life. The Hazy IPAs have laughed at these notions and blazed their own path.

It's been an interesting thing to watch Hazy IPAs grow exponentially faster than any other style I can recall in almost 20 years of paying close attention to the craft beer scene. It seems every brewery has a Hazy IPA now and some have built their breweries on an almost exclusive lineup of Hazy IPAs.

I have become a changed Beer Judge. My thoughts have changed from a style I believed was a fad to a style I believe is here to stay. These beers are quite unique and showcase the power of and flavor profiles of hops. They have become an easily enjoyable and tasty introduction to craft beer; when I started dating my girlfriend almost two years ago, I introduced her to a local Hazy IPA which weened her off of a very well-known American Light Lager and helped to expand her willingness to explore craft beer almost overnight.

I had the chance to revisit a can of Bearded Iris's Tunnel Vision DDH with Citra that had a little bit more age on it and found some of the original harsh notes to have toned down over time (as I suspected they would in the original review). To me, this beer is an excellent example of what this style embodies, which is an easy-drinking, approachable, flavorful, juicy, soft, and never boring beer.

It has been exciting to watch brewers manipulate the ingredients of beer (water, grain, yeast, and hops) to create a style that has undoubtedly become one that will be remembered throughout history. — *Sal Mortillaro II*



BREWER Q&A

#13

Southside Lager

Arches Brewing

Georgia | United States

Brewer's Description

This American Amber Lager celebrates our grassroots beginning on the Southside. We first brewed this beer at our home brewery in 2005. It was one of our original and most cherished recipes. It was developed with a simple American grain bill to produce a profile which is light enough for summer and hearty enough for winter. This style offers a malty foundation with a distinct color and a hint of caramel from the old-world mashing techniques used in the brewing process. We add noble hops to create balance and a mild spicy bitterness. It was born on the Southside.

Statistics

Style: International Amber Lager

Style Family: International Lager

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 5.4%

IBUs: 26

Serve at: 40°

Hops: Magnum, Hallertauer, Tettnang, Saaz

Malts: American Two Row, Crystal 60

Contact

Arches Brewing
3361 Dogwood Dr.
Hapeville, GA 30354

Tel.: (678) 653-2739
www.archesbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Jim Koebel

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Southside Lager has been evaluated as an International Amber Lager. (2015 BJCP Category 2B)

The requirements for this style are simple and few: Clean lager character, well attenuated, and slight caramel or toasty maltiness. Sure, there are several optional characteristics, like noble hops and adjunct flavor, but everything must be mild enough to appeal to all types of beer drinker.

This light amber colored beer has a gentle caramel aroma and a whiff of corn. It could be perceived as fairly neutral if you aren't really paying attention. The flavor is similarly understated yet flavorful, with low caramel and sweetness and a touch of corn adjunct. This beer is balanced in the sense that nothing in particular jumps out, which is exactly what one would expect from the style. Its bitterness and malt flavor are wholly in tune with each other. It is well-attenuated, dry in the finish, crisp and well-carbonated. Especially notable is the absence of any of the mass-market flavor impressions you might expect from an International Lager, which is definitely a good thing. Overall, this easy-drinking beer straddles boundaries and nails its category. Kudos to the brewers on an excellently crafted brew.

Southside Lager is an everyday beer, one you can keep stocked and have no trouble finding a reason to enjoy. The fact that it's a craft take on mass-market style shouldn't mean it's merely something approachable for your macro-drinking friends. It's a beer we can all appreciate.

96 - WORLD CLASS



Jeff Dake Talks Southside Lager

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

I first designed the original recipe for this beer at my home in an attempt to taste/test the impact of decoction mashing versus the use of specialty grain. I used a simple grain bill, noble hops and a Bavarian lager yeast strain to create a beer where differences in the subtleties of the flavor would be easiest to discern. After brewing this beer multiple times, we all grew to love the characteristic caramel flavor and deep color created through decoction and the crisp hop finish of this classic lager style.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

The difference-maker in this beer is the decoction mashing, which brings a bit of traditional European brewing technique to a modern craft brewery. Originally done by Arches as direct fire boiling of portions of the mash, we never thought we'd be able to bring that character to a beer made on the steam-jacketed 20-barrel brewhouse. But with some clever thinking and a little flexibility, we've developed a multi-stage mash that still creates the caramelized character of the decoction process by boiling at least 50 percent of the grain bill for up to 45 minutes.

What makes this beer truly world class?

Focusing on the core elements of a simple lager style brings the world-class character to this beer. We put so much effort into the treatment of the grain, building a balanced water profile that supports both malt and hops, and we continue to use a Bavarian lager yeast that won't create flavors that mask the malt character and will flocculate out readily to allow you to appreciate the gorgeous color and clarity. The European noble hops, including Hallertauer, Tettnang and Saaz impart a delicate spicy character to temper the sweetness of the unfermentable elements. This beer isn't built on a trend, or a regional ingredient/character; it's a faithful representation of the classic lager. The character of the beer is nearly as old as professional brewing itself. This is the little black dress of beers – always in style.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

The appearance of this beer is stunning. You can't help but pause and admire it freshly poured into a pint glass. The amber hue and lacy cream head stand in sharp contrast and looking through it is like looking through a stained glass window. Its appearance stands out as the epitome of what a beer should look like, and you can almost taste the malt character by looking at it.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Southside is a consistent draw with our fans and newcomers. It is the beer that we recommend to those who know little about craft beer or to seasoned drinkers that need to be reminded of their roots. It is a beer drinker's beer that never interrupts a good conversation and simply vanishes from your glass at some point in the middle of talking. What's been most satisfying to us is the amount of love (and demand) for Southside that we've gotten from craft beer bars in Georgia. In an industry where innovation and bold flavors are expected out of your local craft beer bar, it's nice to see beer enthusiasts of all kinds appreciate Southside for what it is.



Judge's Second Opinion

International Amber Lager is not exactly the most popular style among craft beer fanatics. When you think of this style, what may come to mind is the "import" option at your nearest fast-casual chain restaurant. Can you name a classic example? I couldn't either, until drinking Southside Lager by Arches Brewing.

The requirements for this style are simple and few: Clean lager character, well attenuated and a slight caramel or toasty maltiness. Sure, there are several optional characteristics, like noble hops and adjunct flavor, but everything must be mild enough to appeal to all types of beer drinker.

An everyday beer like this doesn't have to make much of a statement in order to make a statement. It doesn't have to (and shouldn't) be the biggest, richest, sourest or bitterest beer in the world. Instead, quality and technical merit speak for themselves and make all the difference. Those things mean much more than, say, riding the latest craft beer wave that happens to be cresting (I'm looking at you, New England IPA).

In my original review of this beer, I wrote that it straddles boundaries. It does so in two ways.

The first is that it is a craft version of a mass-market beer. Southside Lager certainly isn't the first beer to be that, but its presence in 2018 signals continued maturity in the craft beer segment. "Craft" beer is no longer code for any single grouping of styles. In other words, style no longer separates craft from macro or quality beer from sudsy swill.

The second is its relation to the session beer trend. For some reason, some beers get to be called "session" (e.g., a mid-range ABV IPA) while others are called "entry-level" (e.g., a Blonde Ale). There's no longer a need for this distinction. Southside Lager is an everyday beer you can keep stocked and have no trouble finding a reason to enjoy. The fact that it's a craft take on mass-market style shouldn't mean it's something approachable for your macro-drinking friends. It's a beer we can all appreciate. – *Jim Koebel*



ARCHES
— BREWING —

BREWER Q&A

#12

Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter

pFriem Family Brewers

Oregon | United States

Brewer's Description

pFriem Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter is a rich delight for the senses. Cozy notes of pecan pie, rich toffee, and dark chocolate delight the palate before giving way to a decadent finish. Go ahead, treat yourself. Pours an elegant black walnut topped with a toasted almond crown. Opulent aromas of vanilla, candied walnuts, bourbon-spiked coffee and maple cookies entice investigation. Flavors of pecan pie baking atop a wood burning stove, rich toffee and dark chocolate delight the palate before giving way to a warming, decadent finish.

Statistics

Style: Specialty Wood-Aged Beer

Style Family: Wood Beer

Availability: Limited Release

ABV: 9.1%

IBUs: 45

Serve at: 45 - 50°

Hops: Warrior, Chinook, Cascade

Malts: Simpsons-Finest Marris Otter, Simpsons-Crystal Dark, Crystal Extra Dark, Crisp Pale Chocolate, Simpsons Chocolate Malt, Simpsons DRC, Weyermann Beechwood smoked malt, Crisp 77L

Contact

pFriem Family Brewers
707 Portway Ave.
Suite 101
Hood River, OR 97031

Tel.: (541) 321-0490
www.pfriember.com

Judge's Review

by Nelson Crowle

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter has been evaluated as a BJCP style 33B (Specialty Wood Aged Beer) with underlying style 32B (Specialty Smoked Beer) and a base style of American Porter. (style 20A)

Not too complicated, right? This beer pours an opaque very deep brown with a small head of tan tiny bubbles that fades quickly. Aroma is slightly roasty with a smoke character between smoked ham and a big campfire alongside light floral notes. The flavor is breakfast bacon in maple syrup with a backdrop of coffee and light roast, well balanced. Earthy and citrus hops round out the flavor, and there's just enough bittering to keep the malts tamed. Full body and medium carbonation, finishing with a nice balance of maple, campfire smoke, and roast - all at about even levels and all lingering. The beer is really a melange of flavors that could be a big mess, but this beer balances everything very nicely. This really is an excellent beer for a breakfast; huevos rancheros slathered with mole would pair very well, or you could pair this with smoked brisket for dinner.



Gavin Lord Talks Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

The pFriem Team!

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

I think this beer is set apart by its subtlety. While all the sought after notes are present, no one element overpowers the others. Instead, it strikes a delicate balance between maple, oak, bourbon, chocolate, toffee, smoke, vanilla and warmth. Each plays a critical yet understated role. While some barrel-aged beers aim to hit you over the head with flavors and aromas, this one instead seeks to kiss you on the cheek.

What makes this beer truly world class?

Our team. While we're always seeking the world's best raw ingredients, barrels, equipment, theory and process, none of these things make beer. Our team of world-class brewers, packagers, and lab techs do. Over the years, they've each demonstrated a relentless commitment to quality and an irrepresible pursuit of improvement. Their hard work is on display here – and in every beer we offer.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

I love the way the Rauch malt has integrated itself over the course of barrel aging. What we were looking for through its inclusion wasn't smoke necessarily, but rather a nuanced savory note to balance the big, sweet flavors and aromas of maple and dark chocolate.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans? It's been wonderfully well received. This beer offers a comforting combination of flavors that people can relate to, regardless of their familiarity with craft beer. As I write this, the temperature outside dips below freezing, the famous Gorge Winds howl, and the forecast promises snow. On a night like tonight, the comforting qualities of Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter are especially appealing.

BC: Where does this beer's name come from?

It's named for the recipe and process, as it's a lightly smoked porter aged in a maple syrup barrel.

BC: Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

This beer was inspired by a donut. I never had much of a sweet tooth, but occasionally my folks would take me to Roth's IGA for a Tiger Tail, which is a maple bar with chocolate added. I found it greatly improved by two slices of bacon. While this isn't a dessert beer by any means, we wanted to convey that balance of sweet and savory that I discovered as a kid.



Judge's Second Opinion

Picture a cold snowy winter night at the log cabin. You've just brought in enough firewood for the night and started up a fire in the fireplace. You're laying back in your chair just in front of the fireplace, and you need something decadent to sip from a snifter. Something complex yet superbly balanced. pFriem's Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter is perfect.

This is a really tough beer to make – it could be a big muddled mess if anything was out of balance. But pFriem pulled off the magic and snuck in lots of flavors that all play well together.

Did you know that barrels were used for pretty much everything 200+ years ago? If you wanted to send something (down the street, or around the world by ship), you'd load it up in a barrel. Nails, salt, oil, fish and, of course, wine and beer. Quebec, Canada has a storage facility with \$100 million worth of maple syrup stockpiled. So getting ahold of used maple syrup barrels for this beer was a stroke of genius. Typically, a lot of the maple flavor (and all of its sweetness) disappear during beer fermentation, but pFriem figured out how to preserve the maple/vanilla/wood notes perfectly.

If you are able to find this beer, buy several. Drink one and spend an hour enjoying it to check out how the flavors and aromas change as the beer warms up – the maple comes out more, and some black licorice shows up along with some slight leather notes like a freshly made belt. Save the other bottles for next week, next year, or several years from now. So here's the trick: Open and pour this pFriem beer into a snifter or tulip glass. Take a sip. Let this beer warm up, as it's amazing how much the complexity changes over that hour. Take small sips – roll it around in your mouth, feel the viscosity and body, feel the carbonation, feel the umami and the hint of soy sauce. This amazing beer is about as close to heaven as you can get. – *Nelson Crowle*



HEAD BREWER

BREWER Q&A

#11

Lupulin River

Knee Deep Brewing Co.

California | United States

Brewer's Description

Brewed with Mosaic and Simcoe hops, South American specialty malts and featuring tons of tastiness. Lupulin River looks like liquid gold, smells like a bright tropical fruit pine forest, and tastes like all that and more. This Double IPA has very fruity characteristics, and the beer is named "Lupulin River" because Lupulin is the name of the gland in a hop cone that contains the oils and acids that give off this beer's powerful fruity flavor. The fruity and lush hop balance of the Simcoe and Mosaic varieties in Lupulin River is extraordinary.

Statistics

Style: Double IPA

Style Family: India Pale Ale

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 8.0%

IBUs: 98

Serve at: 45 - 50°

Hops: Mosaic, Simcoe

Contact

Knee Deep Brewing Co.

13395 New Airport Rd.

Suite H

Auburn, CA 95602

Tel.: (530) 797-4677

www.kneedeepbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Randy Scorby

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Lupulin River has been evaluated as a Double IPA. (2015 BJCP Category 7A)

This Double IPA pours a medium-gold color and is very clear with a rocky white head that is quite persistent.

Lupulin River smacks you upside the head with a big tropical fruit hop aroma with a focus on fresh pineapple and light, ripe mango with a hint of fresh cantaloupe. A light spicy alcohol note and a hint of bready malt emerge as the hops settle down. The hop character shifts slightly in the flavor, offering a light pine and resin flavor to complement mixed tropical fruit. An assertive hop bitterness emerges mid-palate and lingers into the medium-dry finish. As with the aroma, the light spicy alcohol and bready malt make an appearance late to add balance to the hops. The alcohol is smooth, and the overall hop character is fresh and bright making this a very quaffable Double IPA.

This is an extremely well brewed, and big, American-style Double IPA with the expected hop punch in the face. If you're a hop head this is the beer for you... and if you're not a hop head, you just might become one after enjoying a can of this world-class brew.

For those of you who have not tried any offerings from Knee Deep Brewing, I strongly encourage you to do so. They've been around for a while, and with brews like Lupulin River, they're certainly here to stay.



Dean Roberts Talks Lupulin River



Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

Our brew team got together and collaborated with a brewery in SoCal. After we completed all sales with the first batch, we made some important changes to the recipe, along with a name change and released it as one of our core beers.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

When we dry hop this beer, we use many, many pounds of hops per barrel, and the beer is also crystal clear.

What makes this beer truly world class?

For an 8 percent ABV Imperial IPA, this beer is extremely easy to drink and very well balanced. There is a ton of aroma on the nose as well.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

Intense flavor and aroma from all the Mosaic and Simcoe hops used.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Lupulin River continues to fluctuate as one of the top three beers in our portfolio. We continue to win awards with this Double IPA and it is a taproom favorite among many locals.

Where does this beer's name come from?

This Double IPA has very fruity characteristics, and we picked the name "Lupulin River" because Lupulin is the name of the gland in a hop cone that contains the oils and acids that give off this beer's powerful fruity flavor.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Lupulin River is liquid gold with a fruity kick.

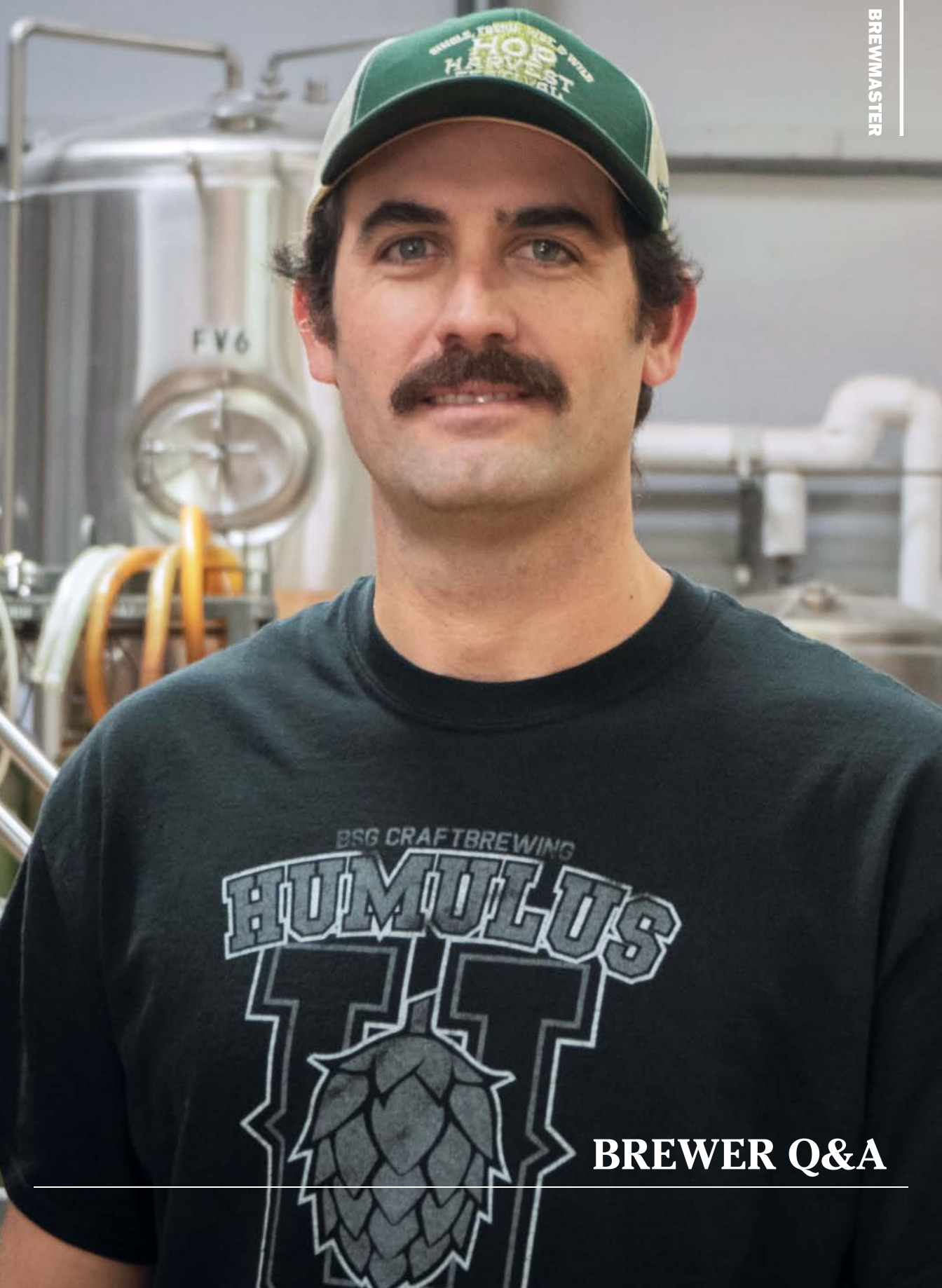
Judge's Second Opinion

Admittedly, being from the Pacific Northwest, I'm a typical hophead who is always seeking out the latest and greatest American-style IPA. Not that long ago, I was a bit frustrated in my attempts to find an example that didn't have mouth-blistering hop bitterness, completely blowing out the hop aroma and flavor, and making you want to reach into your mouth with your entire hand and scrape the back of your tongue. As time moved on, more and more breweries have forsaken the heavy early bittering additions and are relying on more late-stage hop additions to create a far more balanced and smoother hop bitterness. As most quaffers of America IPAs and Double IPAs will attest, this style of beer has come a long way since the days of the traditional English IPA.

Lupulin River delivered from the first sniff, offering what I expect most from any IPA style: fresh, bright hop aroma that pleases the nose and creates an expectation that the flavor will follow. Being a Double IPA makes it a little more challenging in that the hops are offered some competition by a larger malt bill and a usually floral or spicy alcohol character. The hop bitterness is appropriately assertive for this style but certainly not over the top. You still need high-enough hop bitterness to remind you that it is an IPA, but smooth enough to make the beer pintable. Drinkability can be tricky in the Double and Triple IPAs when trying to combine and balance the powerful characteristics.

The beauty of this style is that pretty much any variety of hops (or a complex combination) can be used; brewers are not just limited to the big citrus, pine and resin hops that were commonly used for many years. Other hop varieties are being used quite successfully, especially in combination with traditional American hop varieties.

For those of you who have not tried any offerings from Knee Deep Brewing, I strongly encourage you to do so. They've been around for a while, and with brews like Lupulin River they will certainly be around for longer still. — *Randy Scorby*



BREWER Q&A

#10

Festbier

KC Bier Co.

Missouri | United States

Brewer's Description

Festbier is a crisp, clean, malty Vienna-style lager brewed during a six-week period using 100 percent imported German malt and hops, and our Bavarian monastery brewery yeast. Festbier's biscuit, caramel and honey malt flavors come from imported Vienna and Pilsner malts, while Perle and Hallertau Mittelfrüh hops provide moderate bitterness to balance the malt as well as a smooth, brisk finish. Festbier is produced using traditional brewing techniques including decoction mashing, two-vessel fermentation, natural carbonation and a long, cold lagering period. All KC Bier Co. beer is brewed according to the Reinheitsgebot using only four ingredients.

Statistics

Style: Vienna Lager

Style Family: Amber Bitter European Lager

Availability: Seasonal

ABV: 5.5%

IBUs: 27

Serve at: 40 - 45°

Hops: Perle, Hallertauer Mittelfrüh

Malts: Vienna, Pilsner

Contact

KC Bier Co.

310 W 79th St.

Kansas City, MO 64114

Tel.: (816) 214-8691

www.kcbier.com

Judge's Review

by James Link

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

KC Bier Co's Festbier has been evaluated as a Vienna Lager. (2015 BJCP Category 7A)

A decidedly striking beer, golden in color, crystal clear with a persistent soft white head and lots of very tiny bubbles that smacked of krausening.

The aroma was malt-accented, bready and rich with only a wisp of hops to balance.

To the credit of the brewer, the intense clean malt character found here did not manifest itself via overly sweet caramel malt flavors that often accompany this style, which are avoidable through the process of time-consuming traditional German decoction mashing. As in the aroma, hops were gently expressed in only a complementary fashion.

A medium-bodied German-style beer with soft carbonation that carried smoothly over the tongue. This is a well-conceived Vienna Lager full of malt complexity that touches on the high end of the gravity scale yet is still highly drinkable.

Considering the care and effort in creating this traditional example of the Vienna Lager style it is of little wonder that the end result was a beer of high quality and one that would have made its creator Anton Dreher proud.

This is a beer style that has stood the trials of time for more than 178 years and credit should be given to the brewer in helping to preserve and present it in its original form to the twenty first century.



Karlton Graham Talks Festbier



Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

I was primarily responsible for the recipe that created this version of our Festbier. However, a very strong assist goes to our founder and managing partner, Steve Holle. Without his vision to brew German-style beer using imported ingredients and traditional brewing methods, I never would have been in the position to refine a Festbier to such a high level.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

Altogether, I think this beer has such a highly authentic flavor (and is offered to our customers so much fresher than other examples that can be found) that even people who don't know the style of beer in general very well react very positively to it. A lot of people drink it for the first time and instinctively knew that this was a high-quality beer at the peak of freshness.

What makes this beer truly world class?

100 percent German malt, hops and a yeast strain from a renowned German brewery, decoction mashing, natural carbonation, cold fermentation, and four weeks of lagering make for a classic German-style lager. To save time and money, people sometimes consider taking one shortcut because no one will notice; then they take another and another and, in the end, the beer's flavor dies a slow death from a thousand small cuts.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

The best aspect of this beer is that if you really know this style of beer and something about traditional German brewing techniques, I believe you can truly taste that our Festbier is made with German malt and hops, decocted and naturally carbonated. You just simply cannot make a German lager that tastes just right without making it the German way and with German ingredients. This seems like a self-evident statement, but for some reason, very few American craft brewers go to the effort.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

This beer went over so well upon its launch that we ended up making more of it as our fall seasonal after its launch to keep up with demand from our distributors. Initial orders for this beer were eventually doubled in the end. There were several prominent social media comments about its outstanding flavor, and reception at our annual Oktoberfest celebration was very positive. It's nice to see that if you make truly outstanding beer, people will talk about it and you really can see sales grow.

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

The most popular food at Oktoberfest, *ein halbes Hendl*, which is a rotisserie-roasted half chicken.

Judge's Second Opinion

KC Bier Co. of Kansas City, Missouri has gone to exhausting efforts to bring us their quality Vienna-style Fest Bier. Vienna Lager was the original bottom-fermenting beer first introduced by Austrian Anton Dreher in 1840/1841 after a lengthy study tour of breweries throughout Germany and England.

Traditional German Pilsner and Vienna malts utilized here create a base that marries nicely with German noble hops and a special Bavarian monastic yeast strain that rounds out the flavor profile. The labor-intensive brewing technique of decoction mashing, which is seldom used in modern brewing, is not spared here and makes a strong presence via the complex and engaging malt character.

The final steps to brewing this beer include a six-week lagering period followed by a natural conditioning process that cuts down on the beer's carbonic bite and smooths out the mouthfeel considerably. It should also be noted that this beer adheres strictly to the *Reinheitsgebot* (The German beer purity law of 1516), which further maintains the style's originality and KC Bier Co.'s credibility.

Considering the care and effort in creating this traditional example of the Vienna Lager style, it is of little wonder that the end result was a beer of high quality and one that would have made its creator Anton Dreher proud.

This is a beer style that has stood the trials of time for more than 178 years and credit should be given to the brewer in helping to preserve it and present it in its original form to the twenty-first century.

– James Link



BREWER Q&A

#9

Oatmeal Stout

East Brother Beer Co.

California | United States

Brewer's Description

The roast and chocolate malts with a smooth mouthfeel really make this a great stout. Overall, it is a light stout that doesn't fill you up and breaks that preconceived notion that stouts are heavy and filling. The Oatmeal Stout tastes great out of the fridge, out of the beer engine or at room temp, and the malt really shines. This beer would make a great breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert beer. Tastes great icy cold and at room temperature. Makes for great ice cream floats too, assuming that there is a desert island ice cream available too.

Statistics

Style: Oatmeal Stout

Style Family: Dark British Beer

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 5.4%

Serve at: 45 - 50°

Contact

East Brother Beer Co.
1001 Canal Blvd.
Richmond, CA 94804

Tel.: (510) 230-4081
www.eastbrotherbeer.com

Judge's Review

by Brad Darnell

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

East Brother's Oatmeal Stout has been evaluated as an Oatmeal Stout. (2015 BJCP Category 16B)

For this style expect a dark and full-bodied ale with roasty malt.

The initial aroma is of roasted malt, nearly chocolate in aroma, alongside fresh leather. Rich and complex, the roasted malt and oatmeal characters dominate the aroma. Dark fruits of prune and dates are evident as are earthy and herbal hops. The rich malt character carries into the flavor and the prunes provide a faint tartness for complexity. Light earthy and herbal hops persist and provide light hop bitterness to complement the oatmeal sweetness. The finish is lightly dry with roast and dark fruits lingering. A medium-full body supports moderate carbonation.

The color is jet black with a large, frothy and tight-bubbled brown head with long persistence. The malt is debittered and allows the dark fruits to present themselves and for the hops to provide character and light bitterness. The oats provide a light underlying creaminess and boosts the body a bit. This is a well-made beer that begs for a paired rich chocolate dessert.

With other Oatmeal Stouts I typically experience one good dimension, say flavor, or two harmonious dimensions, say aroma and flavor; rarely though do I experience one with three fully integrated dimensions: aroma, flavor, and mouthfeel. The harmony created by this make this beer one of the best beers I experienced this year. Well done!



Paul Liszewski Talks Oatmeal Stout

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

Our founding brewer, Chris Coomber, first created this recipe years ago when we were prototyping our 5 core beers in his garage. Since then we've tweaked it countless times as we scaled it up and brewed it commercially on our production system. Chris is the kind of brewer who always finds some new detail that can be more precise. I share a lot of Chris's brewing philosophies in perfecting classic styles, and the beers keep getting better and better.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

We strive for balance in everything we make and that means we want it to be fun to drink with a clean finish, letting the texture and flavor of the beer draw you back in for another pint. This Oatmeal Stout in particular benefits from a light but flavorful texture in the way it moves over your palate. People tell us they can't believe they want to drink more than one because they're expecting it to be heavy and sweet, but they end up right back at the bar, sooner than they expect, ordering another.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Roasty, toasty, chocolaty, yum.

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

I'd start with some BBQ ribs and baked beans or chicken with mole sauce then move onto a dessert of rich, dense chocolate cake. Maybe even throw in an Oatmeal Stout float to boot.

What makes this beer truly world class?

You said it, not us! As with all our beers, we look for precision in the flavor, aroma, and texture of the beer. I don't know that we'll ever be totally satisfied with a batch, but with each one we get a clearer idea of what we're striving towards. And our ingredients, process, and technique are the tools available to improve it each time. We've tweaked everything we can think of: from milling to packaging and every step in between. We're brewing it again soon, and Chris and I already have a couple details we want to experiment with to see if it improves the body. Brewing a world-class beer to us means always trying to make it better.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

It's been a slow and steady grower for us, and we like that. These days it's tough for a beer that's not an IPA or trendy style to lead your portfolio, so our expectations for our Oatmeal Stout have always been conservative. But we're seeing success with it as people start to drink through our beers and discover the kinds of classic beers we love making. I think they can sense how dedicated we are to those styles. Now we're seeing an increase in demand for Oatmeal Stout even in the summer months and we're creating variants and having some fun with it. We've done a cask version that people go nuts for in the taproom, and a bourbon barrel-aged version is in the works, which is tasting oaky with that bourbon aroma.



Judge's Second Opinion

Judging and writing for *The Beer Connoisseur* allows me, a homebrewer, beer geek and beer traveler, to experience Christmas joy throughout the year as brewers send boxes my way for blind tasting. Even though my wife unwraps the gifts, I get to experience the beer in my glass without any prejudice; I simply know the style and any special ingredients noted. From there I learn about new breweries or sample something new from a known brewery. With East Brother, I had not heard of this relatively new brewery, though my tasting experience certainly put this brewery squarely on my radar.

Living in Southern California, one rarely drinks thick, dark stouts given that this is the land of West Coast IPAs and the warm weather does not invite heavier beers the same way cooler weather does. Despite receiving and sampling this beer in late summer's heat I quickly forgot about the exterior temperature and instead experienced Christmas joy through this fantastic beer. As an Oatmeal Stout this beer provided a sweet, rich and creamy experience often devoid in others. I found these characteristics refreshing and found myself desiring a rich chocolate dessert to pair with it.

Looking back on the beer I found the de-bittered roasted malt aroma and flavor mixed perfectly with a semi-sweet chocolate note. Dark fruits and leather added depth. The oats provide a light underlying creaminess and rounds the edges of any roast bitterness, leaving a fairly smooth ale. I can still taste this beer as I write and I find myself longing for it on an 86-degree November day. With other Oatmeal Stouts I typically experience one good dimension, say flavor, or two harmonious dimensions, say aroma and flavor; rarely though do I experience one with three fully integrated dimensions: aroma, flavor and mouthfeel. The harmony created by this, along with it being a beautiful beer to look at, make this beer one of the best beers I have experienced in a long time. Well done East Brother!

— Brad Darnell



BREWER Q&A

#8

Highland Pilsner

Highland Brewing Co.

North Carolina | United States

Brewer's Description

Golden and crisp, Highland Pilsner is a finely nuanced Pilsner that features German Hallertau Blanc hops and three other Hallertau region varieties. Saphir, Perle and Hersbrucker hops add notes of stone fruit, pepper and lush grass to the German Pilsner malt body. Cold fermented with lager yeast for a crisp, dry finish. The white grape aroma and the flavorful Hallertau Blanc hops mingle nicely with the spicy/noble character of the Perle and Hersbrucker varieties. A classic German Pilsner that knows how to have some fun, this beer pairs well with shrimp and grits, trout and asparagus or strawberry ice cream.

Statistics

Style: German Pils

Style Family: Pale Bitter European Beer

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 5.5%

IBUs: 30

Serve at: 38 - 45°

Hops: Perle, Saphir, Hersbrucker, Hallertau Blanc

Malts: Pilsner

Contact

Highland Brewing Co.
12 Old Charlotte Hwy
Asheville, NC 28803

Tel.: (828) 299-3370
www.highlandbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Rick Franckhauser

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Highland Pilsner has been evaluated as a German Pils. (2015 BJCP Category 5D)

Medium grainy malt evenly balanced by floral hops. Additional spicy hops and just a trace of sulfur join in. The aroma leans slightly toward the hops as you drink through but the malt is always present. Clean lager fermentation. The beer pours a brilliant golden color with a creamy white foam cap that remains atop to the very last drink. Millions of tiny bubbles streaming up give a hint of the carbonation levels.

Moderately high levels of floral and spicy hops are the first to arrive on the palate. Grainy malt is joined by some cracker and a note of light toast. Firmly bitter but not at all harsh. The balance is toward the bitterness but the ever-present hop and malt flavors are never far away. Crisp with a lingering dry finish. Somewhat of an herbal hop component is accompanied by a long grainy malt aftertaste. Each aspect of the flavor is clean, distinct and bright. The body is medium-light with high levels of carbonation. The carbonation provides a little tingle. There is a mouth-drying sensation perhaps via water chemistry, grainy malt, tannins or alcohol (or some combination thereof).

If you are seeking a world-class German Pils that is brewed in America, look no further. Refreshing and subtly complex, every aspect of this beer is identifiable, clean and fresh. There is a real synergy as each element of the beer works to complement the other. I suppose if you prefer a more Bavarian interpretation of the style you would want some additional depth to the malt character but that would be purely a matter of personal preference. As for me, pour me a Maß please!



Trace Redmond Talks Highland Pilsner



What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

The Hallertau Blanc hops along with more classic varieties of Saphir, Perle, and Hersbrucker lend white grape and spice notes to the aroma. The lager yeast we use provides a nice body, smooth mouthfeel and subtle yet engaging residual sweetness.

What makes this beer truly world class?

We take a lot of pride and put a lot of effort into sourcing and testing our raw materials and monitoring the beer throughout the process to make sure every Highland Pilsner is the best pilsner it can be. We are into beer self-actualization.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

It's the number one selling beer in our taproom!

Who came up with this beer's recipe?

Our former brewmaster Hollie Stephenson (now head brewer at the Guinness Open Gate Brewery) first created the recipe for Highland Pilsner.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

I love the white grape aroma and how the flavorful Hallertau Blanc hops mingle nicely with the spicy/noble character of the Perle and Hersbrucker varieties. This is a pilsner that's truly having some fun.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Yes please, I'll have one more!

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

Shrimp and grits, trout and asparagus or strawberry ice cream.

Judge's Second Opinion

In a beer culture that exalts extremes, I believe it is important not to miss out on the satisfaction that can be found in the finely balanced classic styles. When properly executed German Pilsners can be one of the most enjoyable beers to pass over your palate. Perhaps our reaction against the fizzy yellow mass-produced American beers that have been marketed as "Pilsner style" and have dominated our society for so very long have tainted our understanding of the style.

With the rise of the craft beer culture, ales have reigned supreme and there is no limit to the amount of hops we expect to encounter. There are, of course, good reasons for these trends; after all, hops are wonderful and ales allow a quick turnaround for the brewer, freeing up valuable fermenter space. Fortunately, trends are ever-changing, and in recent years more and more craft breweries are producing lagers.

Highland Brewing Co.'s Pilsner represents all that is great about a classic German Pils. Highland has managed to do what very few American brewers have been able to accomplish, namely brew a German Pils that can stand up to the great brews of Germany. There is something spectacular about those German beers. The beer showcases an incredibly rich malt profile while remaining light-bodied and highly-attenuated. The floral hop bouquet is crisp, clean, refreshing and balanced toward a well-rounded hop bitterness.

Highland Brewing Co. has managed to brew a classic. Each aspect of the malt and hop flavors are clean distinct and bright. There is a real synergy as each element of the beer that works to complement the other with sublime balance and freshness. The rich malt supports the hop bitterness as the floral and spicy hops add complexity and drinkability that I could never get tired of. It's one of those beers that after you drink one, you are immediately ready for a second. Slap on your Lederhosen, pour yourself a liter of Highland Pilsner and settle in to some wiener schnitzel and oompah music as your mind drifts off to the Biergarten – *Rick Franckhauser*



#7

pFriem Oud Bruin

pFriem Family Brewers

Oregon | United States

Brewer's Description

This foeder-aged Oud Bruin is a deep crimson beer featuring aromas of marionberry, apple butter and Cabernet, big notes of raspberry, fig, sherry and leather with a tart, jammy finish that will make any beer lover tip their hat. This beer is inspired by the dark tart beers of Flanders, the burgundies of Belgium, which are mostly known as Oud Bruins. This beer finishes with a lovely, tart, jammy and tannic character, and it pairs well with duck confit served with Brussels sprouts and mustard sauce with a side of pommes de terre sarladaise.

Statistics

Style: Oud Bruin

Style Family: European Sour Ale

Availability: Limited Release

ABV: 8.7%

IBUs: 10

Serve at: 45 - 50°

Hops: Tettnang

Malts: Gambrinus Canadian Pilsner, Cara Munich, Cara Aroma, Carafa III, Cara Foam, Acidulated

Contact

pFriem Family Brewers

707 Portway Ave.

Suite 101

Hood River, OR 97031

Tel.: (541) 321-0490

www.pfriembeer.com

Judge's Review

by Susan Ruud

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

pFriem Oud Bruin has been evaluated as an Oud Bruin. (2015 BJCP Category 23C)

This brew poured a lovely dark brown color with striking red highlights, a clear body with a huge, light tan head leaving behind pretty white lacing around the glass. This was a gorgeous beer that had me more than ready to dive in. The upfront aroma was lactic and sour yet plenty of rich, aromatic malt elements tied it all together.

This Oud Bruin had a rich medium body, is pleasantly warming, medium carbonation and has a very smooth finish that make this a superb example. The rich malt, sour cherry and sherry-like notes in the flavor were heavenly, finishing very smooth with a sweet and tart impression. This is a very complex and wonderful beer. With every sip you just want to keep drinking more.

The sour cherry flavors and sherry-like notes were heavenly, finishing very smooth with a sweet and tart impression. I could imagine drinking this beer with some freshly steamed seafood such as lobster or shrimp dipped in butter or perhaps a rich, fatty duck dish. For those that aren't meat eaters, this would go beautifully with almost anything served with a rich cream sauce.

For those that don't need food with their beer, this is also a lovely beer to drink on its own; just kick back by the fireplace and enjoy the craftsmanship that went into making this delightful brew.



Josh Pfriem Talks Oud Bruin

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

We take a fairly traditional approach to this beer; clean fermentation in stainless steel fermentation, then racked into barrels and inoculated with a blend of microflora. The beer ages in foeders and wine barrels for 1½-3 years before blending. After carefully choosing which barrels to blend, the beer then goes through refermentation in the bottle or keg. Conditioning takes up to 3 months to finish. We try to do everything we can to give a nod to tradition, while also always letting our palate drive the beer forward.

What makes this beer truly world class?

We try to do everything we can to make this beer the best it can possibly be, from using high-quality ingredients, excellent brewing processes and taking tender care of it in our wood/cellar program.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

The rich, light mouthfeel on this beer, with a touch of tartness embraced by tannins, makes this beer so special.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Folks that are fans of Flanders and Flanders-inspired beers flock to this beer. We get a lot of positive feedback for our Oud Bruin.

Where does this beer's name come from?

For most beers at pFriem, we just call them what they are. This beer is inspired by the dark tart beers of Flanders and the Burgundies of Belgium, which are mostly known as Oud Bruins.

Is this your “desert island beer?”

This is not my desert island beer, but it does make for a good companion on cold winter nights by the fireplace.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Deep crimson, marionberry, apple butter, tobacco, jammy, tannic and lovely.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

This beer was inspired by my first trip to Belgium. Traveling the country by bike, I was able to sample many of the great Flanders Reds and Oud Bruins of Flanders. The highlight was walking the foeder halls of Rodenbach. Many years later at pFriem, we purchased our own foeders that are now home to our Belgium-inspired Oud Bruin.

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

Duck Confit served with brussels sprouts and mustard sauce with a side of *pommel de Terre a la Sarladaise*.



Judge's Second Opinion

Designed to be similar to a Flanders Oud Bruin pFriem Family Brewers in Hood River, Oregon did a wonderful job on this sour beer. This brew poured a lovely dark brown/deep copper color with striking red highlights, strikingly clear, and a huge, light tan head leaving behind beautiful white lacing around the glass. This was a gorgeous beer that had me more than ready to dive in.

The upfront aroma was sour and lightly lactic yet with plenty of rich, aromatic melanoidin malt elements along with some sour cherry and light oak and vanilla notes tying it all together. This Oud Bruin has a rich medium body, is pleasantly warming and featured medium carbonation and a very smooth finish – making it a superb example of the style.

The rich malt, sour cherry and sherry-like notes in the flavor were heavenly, finishing very smooth with a sweet and tart impression. This is a very complex and wonderful beer. With every sip you just want to keep drinking more. I could imagine drinking this beer with some freshly steamed seafood such as lobster or shrimp dipped in butter or perhaps a rich, fatty duck dish, but it would also pair well with a nicely seasoned rib steak served with a creamy vegetable sauce.

For those that aren't meat eaters, this would pair beautifully with almost anything served with a rich cream sauce, from delicate white fish to something more complex such as a creole cream sauce over chicken or pork. If you don't want anything too complicated and want to opt for comfort food instead, serve this complex and well-brewed Oud Bruin with a triple-cheese macaroni and cheese dish.

This delightful beer would also be perfect for just kicking back by the fireplace and enjoying the craftsmanship that went into making it. I could imagine a romantic evening with your significant other or sitting around playing games with a group of friends. This is such a complex and flavorful beer that it leaves so many options open. – Susan Ruud



#6

Rupture

Odell Brewing Co.

Colorado | United States

Brewer's Description

Rupture was born out of our obsession with getting the most out of each and every hop. In fact, we built a machine in our brewery to incorporate a unique fresh grind process. By grinding the whole hop we “rupture” the lupulin inside – releasing the oils that give the beer its flavor. And what we grind that day we use that day. Leaving you a beer that’s fresh, aromatic, with a bright hoppy character.

Statistics

Style: American Pale Ale

Style Family: Pale American Ale

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 6.0%

IBUs: 37

Serve at: 40 - 45°

Contact

Odell Brewing Co.
800 East Lincoln Ave
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Tel.: (970) 498-9070
www.odellbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Rick Franckhauser

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Rupture has been evaluated as an American Pale Ale. (2015 BJCP Category 18B)

Rupture does, in fact, rupture out of the glass with super fresh grassy, herbal and lemony citrus hop aromatics. Imagine sticking your face in two big handfuls of fresh hops. Once you acclimate to the hops you get hints of slightly sweet and grainy malts with a touch of light toast. Super inviting. The beer pours a light golden color with good clarity and a creamy white head. Millions of tiny bubbles stream up, assisting in sustaining the head throughout. A beautiful beer.

The flavor follows the aromatics by delivering those fresh hops to the palate. Resinous with lemon zest and a touch of grassy and herbal note. Vibrant, fresh and refreshing. Moderately high level of a rounded bitterness with low levels of malt sweetness and a touch of toast keeping it from being totally hop-driven. Some residual sweetness remains in the finish as do the hops. Medium light body with near effervescent carbonation. A slight hop astringency comes through in the end with some stickiness while also remaining quite soft in the back.

Multi-dimensional with ultra-fresh hops provide intrigue. Wonderfully hoppy with just enough malt to remain true to style, albeit decidedly toward the upper limits. This is one of the best American Pale Ales I've had in many years. I'd gladly drink this on a regular basis.



Brendan McGivney

Talks Rupture

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

All recipe development at Odell Brewing Co. is a group effort from our R&D team. We are a proudly independent, employee-owned brewery, and we truly believe we achieve the best results through collaboration.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

We did not know of any other Fresh Grind Ale styles in the market, so we wanted to share our experience with the process beyond our pilot system and taproom.

What makes this beer truly world class?

The hop farmers! It is thanks to their hard work and dedication that we have access to this incredible raw material. We just wanted to unlock the potential of the hop cone immediately – before adding it to the wort and beer. We utilize whole hop flowers as well as pelletized hops in our other beers, but we felt we could unlock maximum flavor and aroma potential with freshly ground flowers in Rupture. We did this by installing a custom hammer mill at our brewery. The whole flower hops are ‘ruptured’ in the hammer mill and are immediately thrown into the brew.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

The uniquely fresh hop aroma and flavor, which transports me back to the middle of a hop field during hop harvest!

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Rupture has become our #3 seller since its launch (behind only 90 Shilling Ale and Odell IPA), so people seem to dig it. We kept the malt bill light and the IBUs down to show off the hops while still making it more approachable to those intimidated by most IPAs.

Where does this beer's name come from?

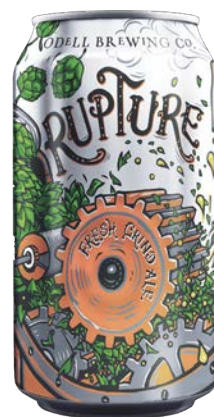
The name comes from the brewing process. We installed a custom hammer-mill at our brewery which we used to rupture the lupulin glands in the fresh whole flower hops. Rupturing those lupulin glands releases that bright hop aroma you find in the beer.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Citrus, floral and pine aromas with a clean, dry finish.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

We built a custom hammer mill at the brewery to grind the hops for this beer. We realize it might be a rather inefficient process, but we think it makes for a rather extraordinary beer. What we grind that day, we use that day. This is how Rupture gets its incredibly fresh aroma.



Judge's Second Opinion

I'm old enough to remember when American Pale Ale was “the new thing” in the world of beer. Microbrewery was the name given for the small breweries that were starting up and word was getting out about these crazy new hoppy American beer styles. Sometime in the late 80s I read about a homebrewer that started a small brewery called Sierra Nevada that was putting out a hoppy American version of a pale ale. It would be more than a year later before I would actually be able to sample a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale for the first time. I remember it vividly because the hop aroma blew me away. I had been homebrewing for a while at that point and, like all other homebrewers in those days, had used Cascade hops in my own attempts to brew an APA, but I had never experienced them like what I found in that Sierra Nevada. That fresh grapefruit and subtle malt sweetness, the firm bitterness, so well balanced and drinkable.

In the months and years to follow APAs were the number one style in the microbreweries and brewpubs that were springing up around the country. As time went by and American craft beer drinkers' cravings for ever-increasing hop levels grew, APAs served as the gateway to American IPAs, Double IPAs and a plethora of IPA variants. As our palates acclimated to the increased hop levels, some found APAs to be the craft beer equivalent to light lagers.

Fortunately, we still get to have our minds blown by a well-crafted APA sometimes. When I first brought my glass of Odell Brewing's Rupture APA to my nose, I was transported back to that first Sierra Nevada experience. Not that Rupture is similar but the wow factor struck me in the same manner. Super fresh, grassy in a pleasant fresh way, herbal and lemony aromatics are so inviting your mouth waters in expectation. The flavor does not disappoint. Well balanced with enough malt to keep it from moving into the IPA realm. While Rupture may be at the high end of the style range it is still perhaps the best example of the style I've come across in many years. – Rick Franckhauser

CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER



BREWER Q&A

#5

Nitro Irish Stout

Breckenridge Brewery

Colorado | United States

Brewer's Description

Brewed with Irish malts and roasted barley, this easy-going stout adds a welcoming Colorado spirit to a classic old-world style. Dark malty flavors evolve into a notable dry character, while the nitrogen charge creates a soft pillowy head that smooths every sip. What sets this beer apart from other nitro dry Irish Stouts is the truly notable roasted malt flavor. Breckenridge Nitro Irish Stout is smooth and incredibly drinkable, but that doesn't mean it's lacking bold character. Those dark roasted malts really embrace your taste buds and you can tell that each batch was crafted with care and expertise.

Statistics

Style: Irish Stout

Style Family: Irish Beer

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 4.8%

IBUs: 38

Serve at: 42 - 45°

Malts: Irish Malts, Roasted Barley

Contact

Breckenridge Brewery
2920 Brewery Lane
Littleton, Colorado 80120

Tel.: (303) 623-2739
www.breckbrew.com

Judge's Review

by Michael Heniff

RATING: 96

Aroma: 21 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 20 / 20

Nitro Irish Stout has been evaluated as an Irish Stout. (2015 BJCP Category 15B)

Irish stouts are known for their strong roasty flavors, creamy mouthfeel, little malt sweetness and modest alcohol content.

This stout pours an opaque pitch black with a very finely beaded creamy tan head. The aroma is prominent, rich dark malts with aromas of roasted espresso, chocolate and toasted malts. The flavor is similarly and appropriately malt-focused with a rich, flavorful blend of roasted espresso and dark chocolate malt flavors. The body is medium and very velvety smooth. The finish is lightly bittered with a rich, complex malt depth of coffee and dark chocolates lingering for a long time. This beer is rich and complex despite being lower in alcohol and is velvety smooth and quite quaffable. This Irish Stout has more malt complexity than its Irish cousins yet retains the drinkability expected for spending plenty of time at the pub.

Traditionally smooth and creamy from nitrogenation, the beer measures up at 4.8 percent ABV, which is a bit higher than the typical but still remains quite sessionable. What sets it apart from classic examples is the depth of malt flavor: roasted, espresso and dark chocolate.



Todd Usry Talks Nitro Irish Stout

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

This recipe actually originated in 2017 as a collaboration with Boundary Brewing, a really great brewery out in Ireland. We loved the overseas partnership and the beer it resulted in, but this year we decided to really make it our own. Still inspired by the Irish origins of the style, we took the recipe in-house and added what we like to call a little Colorado spirit.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

I think what sets this beer apart from other nitro dry Irish stouts is the truly notable roasted malt flavor. Our Nitro Irish Stout is smooth and incredibly drinkable, but that doesn't mean it's lacking bold character. Those dark roasted malts really embrace your taste buds and you can tell that each batch was crafted with care and expertise. That's what we were going for, at least.

What makes this beer truly world class?

A few things. One, it's trueness to style. We feel our Nitro Irish Stout exemplifies exactly what a dry Irish stout was made to taste like. Two, the quality of ingredients. We never skimp on the perfect malt, and with this recipe in particular we labored to source the ideal Irish barley. Three is the Nitro innovation. We spent a lot of time really nailing the widget in our nitro-on-the-go cans to make that smooth draft experience available in cans you can easily pick up at the store. That was important to us. We've also taken measures to make sure bar and restaurant owners were educated on the best way to install, manage and pour a great nitro stout. This beer is so perfect for having a few (or more) in your favorite neighborhood bar, and we love providing that for folks.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

That is a tough one. I'd have to say my favorite aspect is how all the elements come together in such a great harmony. The silky mouthfeel from the nitro and the dark roasted flavors from the malts are seriously – excuse my cheesiness – a match made in beer heaven. So, overall, it's that balance of powerful flavor and easy drinkability that we go for with every beer at Breckenridge Brewery, and this one really nails it.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

We've been so happy with the feedback we're getting on Nitro Irish Stout, especially with the loyal fans. Again, this beer really hits home what Breckenridge beers are all about – something that's really good to drink, no matter who you are or what you're doing. It seems like most people agree and we're excited about that. We're also hoping the flavor quality and the cool, visual factor of the nitro cascade will introduce this beer, and Breckenridge Brewery, to some new people and make some new loyal fans. That's what it's all about, surprising people with good beer and introducing them to more.



Judge's Second Opinion

This beer is different from other examples within its style due to the way it is served. Carbon dioxide is the most abundant dissolved gas that is found in almost all beer styles. Carbon dioxide is a by-product of fermentation of which some remains soluble in the finished beer. In the kegging, bottling, and canning process, additional carbon dioxide may be added to achieve the desired carbonation level. When the beer is poured, some of the carbon dioxide vaporizes from the beer. As the carbon dioxide vaporizes, the head forms on the beer and other aromatics are scrubbed from the beer to the headspace of the glass, which becomes the aroma. The remaining carbon dioxide in the beer is the carbonation that provides the prickly mouthfeel and adds a slight acidity (carbonic acid) to the flavor.

"Nitro" beers use nitrogen or a combination of nitrogen and carbon dioxide (also called "beer gas") for serving the beer. Nitrogen is much less soluble in beer than carbon dioxide. When properly poured, the nitrogen vaporizes with very little gas remaining in the beer. In "nitro" beers, the head of the beer is formed, and aromatics are scrubbed into the aroma but the "nitro" leaves little or no "carbonation" in the beer. The result of "nitro" poured beers is a smoother (less bubbly and less acidic) mouthfeel than a similar beer that is conditioned or poured with only carbon dioxide.

Breckenridge Nitro Irish Stout is traditionally smooth and creamy from the lower-than-typical beer carbonation level of "nitro" beers. The beer measures up at 4.8 percent ABV, which is a bit higher than the typical alcohol content for the style but still remains quite sessionable. What sets Breckenridge Nitro Irish Stout apart from the classic Irish examples is the depth of malt flavor. This stout displays a complex malt profile of roasted, espresso, and dark chocolate over a background of toasted elements, displaying layers of rich malt flavors that are more typical of stronger stouts. Be sure to seek out this flavorful, sessionable stout.

– Michael Heniff

PRESIDENT AND
BREWMASTER



BREWER Q&A

#4

Jewbelation 22

Shmaltz Brewing Co.

New York | United States

Brewer's Description

Mazel Tov – it's a big beautiful bouncing brown ale! Shmaltz's 15th version of its acclaimed seasonal Anniversary offering Jewbelation® is quite the work of art. Playing off of surrealist Belgian painter René Magritte's famous This Is Not A Pipe painting, Shmaltz's new packaging allows the consumers to contemplate the notion that "This is NOT a 22 oz. Bottle." Jewbelation 22® eloquently balances 11 malts and 11 hops for a beer that's perfect to drink now, cellar for future holiday festivities or bring to your next bottle share. Rising to a hefty 11 percent ABV, the alcohol feels more warming and welcoming than its percentage might suggest. A very complex anniversary ale worthy of being part of the Jewbelation® family.

Statistics

Style: American Strong Ale

Style Family: Strong American Ale

Availability: Limited Release

ABV: 11.0%

Serve at: 45 - 50°

Hops: Warrior, Summit, Columbus, Liberty, Chinook, Crystal, Cascade, Simcoe, Amarillo, Centennial, Sterling

Malts: Premium Two-Row, Munich, Vienna, Kiln Amber, Chocolate Malt, Crystal 120, Rye, Honey Malt, Special B, Wheat, Flaked Oats

Contact

Shmaltz Brewing Co.

6 Fairchild Square

Clifton Park, NY 12065

Tel.: (518) 406-5430

www.shmaltzbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Dan Martich

RATING: 96

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 38 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 20 / 20

*Jewbelation 22 has been evaluated
as an American Strong Ale.
(2015 BJCP Category 22B)*

This beer poured a nice mahogany with deep orange highlights in color and exhibited brilliant clarity.

Rich malt, notes of caramel, toffee, nutty elements with dried fruit esters were all found in the aroma. Moderate dark raisins with very little earthy hops were also detected. Very light oxidation present, which is okay given the high 11 percent ABV.

Rich malt is carried throughout the flavor with a caramel, nutty and medium roasted malt character. The earthy hop flavor was very low and nearly imperceptible. A medium-high bitterness complements the high malt sweetness. Esters developed from the fermentation stage assist this big-flavored beer beautifully. A semi-dry finish has a medium malty aftertaste that lingers. A high alcohol level is masked by the malt richness incredibly well.

This beer is medium-full-bodied and has medium-high carbonation that keeps the alcoholic warmth smooth. Pleasantly creamy with no astringency detected.

A near-textbook example of the style. Well within the parameters and then some. A delicious and well-brewed beer to complement the winter season, and one to pair with many holiday foods and treats. It narrowly resembles an English Barleywine, yet keeps its distance by not having that chewy mouthfeel. I particularly enjoy how the alcohol flavor is balanced by all the malty goodness.

96 - WORLD CLASS



Jeremy Cowan Talks Jewbelation 22



Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

As has happened for 22 years, I love playing the role of art director to talented and motivated brewers who bring their professional focus to the nitty-gritty recipe development. This year, our head brewer Chris "Duffy" DuFrain and my longtime friend and new on-call brewmaster Micah Krichinsky (graduate of Master Brewers program in Davis, CA and half a decade brewing with Dogfish Head) finalized the recipe with a nod to Jewbelation recipes of the past from our 11th Anniversary, 16th Anniversary and 20th Anniversary. This year, 11 malts, 11 hops, 11 percent ABV to celebrate 22 years; it looks like we nailed it and we're super happy about the outcome!

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

A perfect question because Jewbelation has never been a style! Not a porter, not a stout, not a barleywine... the Jewbelation series is essentially a triple brown ale riffing off the base of our Messiah Nut Brown Ale. Everything jacked up in equal parts malts, hops, and ABV for a truly unique flavor profile.

What makes this beer truly world class?

Anybody who has worked with me knows that I'm so proud of the recipes, uniqueness and execution of our brewing tribe. I'm so excited about the amazing complexity that this Jewbelation series has resulted in year after year. I am proud to serve these beers alongside so many world-class beers, so many of my favorites both locally, nationally and internationally.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

Every year my favorite element is the adventure - what a unique way to structure a massive American Strong Ale! I think I'm probably most attracted to the malt bill with complex caramel, toasted and roasty notes, but every year the big blast of repeated hop additions brings together very compelling layers of curiosity.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Year after year since our eighth anniversary introducing the Jewbelation series, so many enthusiastic friends and customers come back to us with stories of enjoying, sharing, saving and savoring this wonderful beer lineup. This series was crucial in the development of our line of extreme beers both in technical expertise and outrageous flavors - a huge part of our evolution getting us to where we are now.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

"He knows changes aren't permanent, but change is."

Judge's Second Opinion

This beer reminds me of a similar beer I brewed many years ago. In anticipation of moving I wanted to use up most of my residual brewing ingredients. All kinds of malts were added, and the result was a deeply malt-layered beer with an ABV at around 10 percent ABV. My dad and brother came over one night, and we proceeded to drink the beer and chat into the wee hours of the morning. I had to work the next day, and I must admit it was a painful morning and rest of the day after imbibing such a hefty brew!

The malt richness of Shmaltz's Jewbelation 22 makes it ideal for winter sipping. It is complex with notes of caramel, nuttiness and toffee. The fruity esters complement the malt notes incredibly well with dark raisins and dark sugar depth. There's a low degree of hops just for balance without adding too much in the way of flavor or bitterness. Some other commercial examples may focus on the hops coming forward, but here it's all about the layered flavors of the malts.

A stick-to-your-ribs kind of brew that would pair well with just about anything on your dinner table. Although not a spiced traditional Christmas beer, this beer's immense malt quotient speaks to the holidays in the same way. - Dan Martich



BREWER Q&A

#3

Dusseldorf Alt

Seedstock Brewing Co.

Colorado | United States

Brewer's Description

Altbiers have a growing cult following in the U.S., mostly led by German-style breweries. From a taste standpoint, we love how the malty mouthfeel is balanced with the bitterness. Our favorite thing about this beer is that it reminds us of classic German Dusseldorf-style Altbiers. We 'tip our cap' to those great beers in Dusseldorf and hope that we show them respect by crafting a good altbier as well. We brew our altbier in the Dusseldorf style, meaning it's much more bitter and darker than the North German style, while still maintaining the quintessential altbier malty flavor.

Statistics

Style: Altbier

Style Family: Amber Bitter European Beer

Availability: Seasonal

ABV: 5.0%

IBUs: 45

Serve at: 40 - 44°

Hops: Magnum, Saaz

Malts: Pilsner, Steffi

Contact

Seedstock Brewing Co.
3610 W Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80204

Tel.: (720) 476-7831
www.seedstockbrewery.com

Judge's Review

by Michael Bury

RATING: 97

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 5 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 20 / 20

Dusseldorf Alt has been evaluated as an Altbier. (2015 BJCP Category 7B)

Upon pouring, it presents itself as a solid brown beer with garnet highlights that sits beneath a fleeting, tan head comprised of small bubbles.

The nose is quite malt-forward with toast, brown bread and a bit of baker's chocolate. Restrained prunes and light floral hop presence provides intrigue.

The flavor of this beer is similar to the aroma but, again, with a bit more intensity. Above average brown bread, hints of nuts and dark fruit are balanced by the moderately high bitterness, which ultimately tilts the balance in its favor. It's cleanly fermented with no off-flavors and is well attenuated leading to a dry finish. The aftertaste features toast and nuts with earthy, floral hops.

You don't see too many Altbiers in the United States and many are sickly sweet versions of what they should be. But Seedstock's Dusseldorf Alt hits the mark. Malty yet bitter with a hint of fermentation character makes this Altbier unforgettable.

Seedstock's Dusseldorf Alt should appeal to a wide range of individuals. Like malt? No problem. The biscuit, bready, brown bread crust, light caramel malt will appeal to malt heads. How about hops? The moderate hop bitterness, clean, crisp finish, and light spicy hop profile should appeal to hop lovers. What's great about the style and especially Seedstock's version of it is the quaffability factor.

97 - WORLD CLASS



Jason Abbott Talks Dusseldorf Alt

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

Our roots are in embedded in our old-world, family recipes, and the new recipes are still the result of family collaboration. This recipe was the brainchild of the three Seedstock partners: head brewer and co-owner Jason Abbott, co-owner Ron Abbott and co-owner Frank Thomas.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

Altbiers have a growing cult following in the U.S., mostly led by German-style breweries. However, many of these are brewed as a Northern German style alt, which are sweeter and lighter in terms of taste and color compared to the "Dusseldorf" style. We brew our Altbier in the Dusseldorf style, meaning it's much more bitter and darker than the North German style, while still maintaining the quintessential altbier malty flavor.

What makes this beer truly world class?

In recent years, here in the U.S., altbiers – alt meaning old – are old-world beers that have taken on new life in America. With our Altbier, we're paying homage to our Eastern European family roots while giving our customers something they rarely see – a beer that is truly malty and bitter at the same time. These flavors are rarely experienced together in a balanced manner, but the altbier makes it possible.

What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

From a taste standpoint, we love how the malty mouthfeel is balanced with the bitterness. Ron's favorite thing about this beer is that it reminds him of a trip he took to Germany several years ago where he first tried a Dusseldorf-style Alt. We 'tip our cap' to those great beers in Dusseldorf and hope that we show them respect by crafting a good altbier as well.

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

Among our most faithful customers, it is very popular. Many people who are familiar with the style say that our Altbier is their favorite on the market, and that it reminds them of altbiers they had in Germany – and we are very humbled by those compliments.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

We could drink any beer on a desert island!

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

Malty with a slightly fruity aroma, clean and assertive hop bitterness.

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

Anything with gravy!



Judge's Second Opinion

Asking your server at your local watering hole if they have any Altbiers available for consumption should result in an eyebrow-raised, confused look. But they're a class of hybrid beers (ales fermented cooler than normal or lagers fermented warmer) that are nothing more than bitter brown beers. American Browns come close to the style, but the type and amount of late hopping really sets these two styles apart from one another.

Thankfully, I was introduced to the style by a friend of mine who just so happens to be of German descent. And has been to Germany. And has won multiple Gold medals in the category at several homebrew competitions. I can't thank him enough for breaking that barrier for me and exposing me to this approachable beer style.

Seedstock's Dusseldorf Alt should appeal to a wide range of individuals. Like malt? No problem. The biscuit, bready, brown bread crust and light caramel malt will appeal to malt heads. How about hops? The moderate hop bitterness, clean, crisp finish and lightly spicy hop profile should appeal to hop lovers.

What's great about the style, and especially Seedstock's version, is its drinkability. There's an abundance of character from both the malt and hops to provide plenty of intrigue to the drinker, but because of its clean, dry finish, the drinker can easily go back for another sip time and time again. One aspect of the beer that really rounds out the flavor is the presence of Maillard products, which includes melanoidins. These bread crust-like flavors help to round out the sweeter aspects of the beer and provide a bridge to the hop bitterness.

Finally, I was quite impressed, after I judged the beer, when I found out that it traveled in a crowler from Colorado to Pennsylvania without any degradation. It's a shame that currently you can only get the beer in the immediate Colorado area. However, this supports the notion of patronizing your local brewery, and anyone in the Denver area would be more than satisfied by a visit. – *Michael Bury*



OWNER

Seedstock
BREWERY

BREWER Q&A

#2

Mexican Empire

Arches Brewing

Georgia | United States

Brewer's Description

The aroma and flavor that comes from using Vienna malt as the base, the balance of malt and bitterness that is only obtainable by using the clean profile of noble hops, and finally the drinkability of this slightly darker-than-amber beer, which surprises most first-time drinkers, makes this beer special. Deep amber with nutty and bready malt specificity along noble hop subtlety, this beer serves as a bread replacement with any dish when pairing with food, and it is especially good with spicy foods such as Mexican, Middle Eastern, Indian and, of course, boiled crawfish.

Statistics

Style: Vienna Lager

Style Family: Amber Bitter European Beer

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 5.2%

IBUs: 22

Serve at: 40°

Hops: Magnum, Hallertauer, Hersbrucker

Malts: Vienna, Carafa

Contact

Arches Brewing
3361 Dogwood Dr.
Hapeville, GA 30354

Tel.: (678) 653-2739
www.archesbrewing.com

Judge's Review

by Sean Coughlin

RATING: 97

Aroma: 23 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 10 / 10

Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Mexican Empire has been evaluated as a Vienna Lager. (2015 BJCP Category 7A)

The initial aroma of this beer is all malt – toasted bread and bread crust are prominent. The malt aroma is straightforward and does a great job of displaying a rich breadiness and interesting nuttiness without adding anything superficial. There are no hops or other aromatics present and the fermentation profile is exceptionally clean without any hint of sulfur or fruitiness.

The beer is an attractive amber with a strong, tightly packed light-khaki head. The clarity on this beer is exceptional and highlights an appearance that truly whets the appetite. The flavor follows the aroma with a rich, bread crust-laden malt showcase that appropriately lacks any caramel character. The bitterness is moderately low but balances the malt well. There is a light floral/herbal hop flavor that is pleasant and adds just a little touch of something special to this offering to makes it flawlessly well-rounded. The beer is moderately dry with a lingering aftertaste of rich malt. The mouthfeel consists of a medium-low body, moderate carbonation and a light creaminess that makes it even easier to drink.

A truly remarkable example of the style that showcases high-quality malt and doesn't seem to sacrifice flavor by using adjuncts like many modern interpretations. If European Lager styles are truly making a comeback, this beer should stand out as one of the reasons why. A world-class Vienna Lager that should be sought out wherever possible.

97 - WORLD CLASS

mm
ARCHES

**MEXICAN
EMPIRE**

VIENNA LAGER



**5.2%
ABV**



Jamey Adams Talks Mexican Empire

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

The Mexican Empire recipe was developed by chemists Jeff Dake and Jamey Adams as homebrewers well over 8 years ago. Jeff is now Arches' director of quality and has focused heavily on the specific lager yeast strain used to ferment this beer while Jamey, the brewmaster, has been obsessed with the chemistry of the water that builds the foundation for the flavor of this beer.

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

Simply stated, Arches' philosophy of brewing and the water. We brew each beer as if we were in the host country of origin. For Mexican Empire, this requires us to build the water profile to match that of the region surrounding Vienna. Our water is sourced from an underground river system 450 feet beneath the brewery. This water is extremely soft and devoid of any minerals or chemicals that could affect the subtle flavors of the Vienna style. The mineral profile of the brewing water sets the stage for the complex interactions between malt and hop flavors. The nearly 98 percent Vienna malt grain bill dominates the initial aroma and taste while the German noble hops finish the beer without stealing the show.

What makes this beer truly world class?

Above all, it's the attention to detail by the brewhouse staff. When we planned to create the most authentic Vienna Lager in the U.S., we treated it like a scientific experiment. We asked ourselves what does a brewery in Austria have access to that we in the States do not and the answer was Viennese water, German grains and noble hops. We then created a plan to source or create those things and then meticulously logged our batches over the last 6 years – changing one thing at a time and comparing those to the BJCP style guidelines and to exemplary beers from this style.

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The aroma and flavor that comes from using Vienna malt as the base, the balance of malt and bitterness that is only obtainable by using the clean profile of noble hops and finally the drinkability of this slightly darker-than-amber beer that surprises most first-time drinkers.

Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

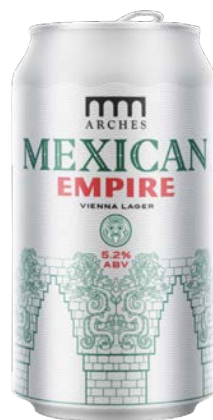
Deep amber, nutty and bready malt specificity, noble hops subtlety.

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

My wife was following a strict Paleo diet for 6+ years that excluded all beer. She slipped up one afternoon and it took a week to wean her off the power of the “Mexican Empire!”

Is this your “desert island beer?”

No, but it is great on the beach!



Judge's Second Opinion

Vienna lagers are sadly in short supply throughout the United States, but what Arches Brewing has delivered via their Mexican Empire will hopefully help to change that. Their newest year-round offering is undoubtedly a world-class example of a classic style and a beer that is accessible to palates of both craft connoisseurs and beer newbies alike.

The most striking element of this beer is the expression of malt. There is incredible richness for such a simple beer. White bread, bread crust, toasted bread and a touch of nuttiness result in a beer that exemplifies the word “malty.” It is balanced by enough hop bitterness to keep it from seeming sweet but restrained enough to showcase the malt profile – this balance is easier said than done. The exceptionally clean lager fermentation results in a well-attenuated beer that also allows the malt to shine.

Mexican Empire offers a more robust malt character and a little more hop bitterness than most other Viennas. Many Vienna lagers are either brewed with adjuncts such as corn or rice, which will lighten the malt character, or may be brewed with caramel malts to help achieve an amber color that can result in too much residual sweetness for the style.

Mexican Empire can be utilized in a variety of settings – a beer for the casual drinker, a beer for the discerning palate, or a great offering to pair with food. This Vienna Lager has such a profound breadiness that it can essentially work as a carbohydrate/starch substitute at your next meal. The rich malt profile will also help to temper any level of spice – appropriately making it a great choice for pairing with Mexican or Tex-Mex cuisine.

If you have not had the pleasure of discovering this underappreciated classic style, seek this beer out. If you are a Vienna lager aficionado, seek this beer out. If you have never had a craft beer in your life but are curious as to what the excitement is all about, seek this beer out. Mexican Empire is truly world-class and I personally hope it inspires a Vienna lager revival. –Sean Coughlin

FOUNDER AND
BREWMASTER



BREWER Q&A

#1

Privat

Brauhaus Riegele

Augsburg | Germany

Brewer's Description

This beer is brewed in honor of the Commerzienrat Riegele, a brewing legend in our small city. It is a very old recipe, but, of course, every brew is a puzzle out of thousands of parts, and we take care of each single kernel of malt! The secret is the perfect balance. Privat is rich in body but not heavy. It is malty in flavor but with a nice light, hoppy aroma. It is easy-drinking and refreshing yet extremely complex all at once, and it pairs well with Bavarian Pretzels, which taste good and make you thirsty for more Privat!

Statistics

Style: Festbier

Style Family: Pale Malty European Lager

Availability: Year-Round

ABV: 5.2%

IBUs: 19

Serve at: 38 - 44°

Hops: Opal, Hallertauer Mittelfruh

Malts: Pilsner, Steffi

Contact

Brauerei S.Riegele
Frölichstraße 26
86150 Augsburg
Germany

Tel.: 0821-3209-0
www.riegele.de

Judge's Review

by Michael Bury

RATING: 98

Aroma: 24 / 24

Appearance: 6 / 6

Flavor: 39 / 40

Mouthfeel: 9 / 10

Overall Impression: 20 / 20

*Privat has been evaluated as a Festbier.
(2015 BJCP Category 4B)*

At first glance, the effervescent bubbles rapidly climb through this brilliantly clear, light golden beer and help to support a stand of white foam. The appearance of this beer is just the tip of the near-perfect iceberg however. The clean lager fermentation allows the hops, but especially the malt, to shine through. Moderately low light toasted malt with a soft doughiness mingles with the characteristic qualities of noble hops: floral and spice.

Sip after sip, you'll be greeted with lightly toasted malt, notes of graham cracker, honey and a subtle doughiness. Medium-low floral hops with a restrained spiciness and a similar level of bitterness perfectly balances the malt. You'll find no faults in the fermentation, which includes proper attenuation and no off-flavors. Like all great beers, the flavor continues well into the aftertaste where toast, bread crusts and floral hops with a hint of grassiness will welcome you with open arms.

You won't be disappointed in the very least with Brauhaus Riegele's Privat. It's a nigh-perfect interpretation of a Festbier that demands to be imbibed by the boot or the liter. The clean fermentation allows both the malt and hops to shine. Slight grassiness from hops and a very low carbonic bite appear in the end, but these are only minor quibbles in what is a beer masterpiece. You'll be disappointed if you only picked up a 6-pack, since you'll want many, many more. This highly flavorful yet easy-to-drink beer can be appreciated by the beer connoisseur and the less devoted beer drinker alike. Prost!

98 - WORLD CLASS



Sebastian Priller-Riegele Talks Privat

Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

This beer is brewed in honor of my great-grandfather, the Commerzienrat Riegele, who was a brewing legend in our small city. It is a very old recipe, but, of course, every brew is a puzzle out of thousands of parts, and we take care of each single kernel of malt!

What's your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, etc.)?

The secret is the perfect balance. Privat is rich in body, but not heavy. It is malty in flavor, but with a nice light, hoppy aroma. It is easy-drinking and refreshing yet extremely complex all at once.

Where does this beer's name come from?

Sebastian Riegele was a very famous brewer and patron of the city of Augsburg. To honor him, we received the title 'Commerzienrat' which was only given to the most outstanding citizens of that time period. In his honor, we brew the Commerzienrat Riegele Privat.

Is this your "desert island beer?"

Yes! In fact, I'll be sure to pack some Commerzienrat yeast with me so that I'll be able to have an unlimited supply on the island!

Do you know a story – or have a personal story – that revolves around this beer?

My Dad and I love to celebrate special moments with the Commerzienrat. I will never forget seeing the eyes of my friends when I pulled out four bottles of Privat from my backpack after a long and exhausting hike in the Alps. Sure they were heavy, but it was worth it!

What's a good food pairing for this beer?

A Bavarian Pretzel! Tastes good and makes you even more thirsty for Privat!

What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

A perfect beer is always a puzzle out of thousands of parts, so you always need to go the extra mile. In our case, we do yeast counting with select yeast strains out of our own yeast collection, we use only original mineral water out of our 214-meter fountain, our method of husk separation makes the beer's finish smooth and our storage at exactly 0° Celsius gives the beer the final touch. .

What makes this beer truly World-Class?

Three main ingredients: Passion, dedication and knowledge! They make all the difference!

How popular is this beer among your faithful fans?

It's our number one beer without any doubt!



Judge's Second Opinion

German Pilsners seem to be the IPAs of the lager world nowadays. Many American breweries seem to take the hop-forward nature of the style to the extreme with massive amounts of late hop additions. What results is essentially an IPL, not a Pilsner.

Thankfully, the correction is an easy one and a brewer needs to look no further than the name of the style. Pilsner, or Pils malt, should form the backbone of the beer upon which the hops have a landscape to express themselves. In reality though, this is more difficult than it sounds. As one of the lightest kilned base malts, Pilsner malt lacks the immediate, colorful character that Munich malt demonstrates; it takes a skilled brewer's hands to coax its character out of the kernel. Also, the specific type of barley that's used in a maltster's Pilsner product also makes a major difference.

So why did I spend so much time on Pilsner malt? Because Brauhaus Riegele's Privat showcases that malt varietal expertly with an appropriate amount of German noble hops. Privat featured a near-perfect balance of malt and hops that I can only imagine would be perfect coming straight off the tap from the brewery. It wasn't just the typical grainy flavor and aroma you'd expect but rather the honey-like, graham crackery character that was so pronounced even a non-beer drinker would've picked it up. All the while, the delicate floral, spicy hops provided a perfect counterpoint to the malt. It's also worthwhile mentioning what wasn't there. The exquisitely clean lager fermentation afforded no sulfur, no diacetyl and no esters while providing a properly crisp, well-attenuated beer. That's no easy task by itself.

There are very few beers out there that can provide a transformative experience and Privat was one of those. I could easily envision myself wearing lederhosen and drinking a boot or a liter of it in a German beer hall with my close friends (or soon to be friends) around me. Personally, I'm looking forward to the next time I can order a pull of it. Prost! – *Michael Bury*

OWNER & WORLD
CHAMPION BEER
SOMMELIER



BREWER Q&A

BEST BY STYLE CATEGORY

Craft beer is replete with fascinating styles to explore. This year, brewers around the globe continued to create rich tapestries of aromas, flavors and colors that intrigued our panel of judges in the *Official Review*. Each year, we acknowledge the highest-rated beers of the year in the most well-represented style categories.

In 2018, many popular styles are represented, such as American IPAs, Double IPAs, Hazy IPAs, a variety of sours and a wide range of dark beers, including Porters, Stouts, Strong Belgian and European Beers and Amber and Brown American Beers.

Specialty categories include Vienna Lagers, Wild Specialty Beers, Oatmeal Stouts, Saisons, Wheat Beers and more.

Specialty Wood-Aged Beers, such as beers aged in bourbon, rum, whiskey, gin and wine barrels, were among the highest-rated by our judges.

Beers with added ingredients are also present, including a wide range of Fruit Beers and Spice, Herb & Vegetable beers – including beers brewed with mint leaves, spruce tips, coffee beans and cocoa nibs.

Not unexpectedly, our best breweries of the year are well-represented in this list, as they produced some of the finest examples of different style categories.

We hope you enjoy reading about these delicious brews, as each of these beers are the among the best examples of their respective styles.

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THE BEER IN REVIEW

**Top-Rated Beers
By Style Category**

FLANDERS SOUR ALE



BREWED IN BELGIUM

HISTORY

In 1892 in the village of Bellegem located in the Flanders region of Belgium, Omer Vander Ghinste began brewing and distributing its beers via horse-drawn carriages in the brewery's immediate vicinity, such as the region of Kortrijk. To promote his "Beers Omer Vander Ghinste," Omer commissioned beautifully ornate stained glass for the front windows of his pubs. Thinking ahead, he thriftily named his first-born child (and heir to the brewery) after himself so these expensive and time-consuming windows would not need to be replaced. 126 years later, the custom continues and the first-born children of the Vander Ghinste family, now in their fourth generation of family ownership of the brewery, are still named "Omer!" Local pubs still proudly display their vintage signs today, and a visit to the brewery will find many originals casting multicolored light over patrons.



SPONTANEOUS FERMENTATION

To ferment spontaneously, hot wort is pumped into the coolship (pictured) on top of the brewery to cool overnight. Wild yeast, such as *Brettanomyces*, inoculate the wort. The morning after brewing, it is pumped into large oak barrels, or foeders, where it ferments and ripens for 18 months. During aging, deep sour flavors and complex aromas develop, giving Omer VanderGhinste's beers their trademark flavors and aromas. This richly flavored mature and subtly sour foederbier is the base for VanderGhinste Oud Bruin and Cuvée des Jacobins, two of the brewery's most well-known beers.

JACOBINS?

The name refers to the Hospice Saint Jacques in Paris, a famous Dominican monastery located in the Rue des Jacobins. Omer Rémi Vander Ghinste (the first Omer in the brewery's history) was given refuge there during World War I. In gratitude to his kind and caring hosts, he named his beer after them, putting their friendly likeness on brewery signs. Omer VanderGhinste's famed line of Jacobins beers includes Cuvée des Jacobins Rouge and Cuvée des Jacobins Prestige, which both feature a subtle sourness and rich and delicate flavors and aromas.



VanderGhinste Oud Bruin

This was the first beer that Omer Vander Ghinste created in 1892. A top-fermented ale is blended with the perfectly aged foederbier to create something new: Flemish Red Ale. It is a balanced, slightly sweet and sour beer with a refreshing, thirst-quenching character.



WORLD'S BEST DARK BEER
World Beer Awards (2015)

Cuvée des Jacobins

This ale is not blended, it is 100% foederbier that's matured in oak for 18 months or more. Robust and sophisticated, Cuvée des Jacobins features notes of vanilla, dried cherry and cocoa. Beautifully sour, rich and complex, this elegant beer represents the historic expertise of Omer VanderGhinste's brewers.



GOLD MEDAL
World Beer Awards (2014)



Brewed by Omer Vander Ghinste Brewery – Belgium
www.omerbanderghinste.be

Imported by Artisanal Imports – Austin, TX
www.artisanalimports.com

TOP 10 IPAs (all styles)

RATED 96 | LUPULIN RIVER | KNEE DEEP BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Lupulin River smacks you upside the head with a big tropical fruit hop aroma with a focus on fresh pineapple and light, ripe mango with a hint of fresh cantaloupe. A light spicy alcohol note and a hint of bready malt emerge as the hops settle down. The hop character shifts slightly in the flavor, offering a light pine and resin flavor to complement mixed tropical fruit. An assertive hop bitterness emerges mid-palate and lingers into the medium-dry finish. As with the aroma, the light spicy alcohol and bready malt make an appearance late to add balance to the hops. The alcohol is smooth, and the overall hop character is fresh and bright making this a very quaffable Double IPA.

RATED 96 | TUNNEL VISION DDH W/CITRA | BEARDED IRIS BREWING (TN)

Review by Sal Mortillaro II | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The sweetness of the beer is quickly balanced out by a moderate bitterness, spicy notes and very light mouth-drying character and typical flavor from the use of dry hopping. A very pleasant bitterness lingers in the aftertaste along with the noted spice and ethyl alcohol character. Moderate alcohol warmth, though not hot, is perceived a little higher than actuality due to lightly spicy and drying note from use of the dry hopping; these things combined tend to tickle the back of the throat after the swallow. Overall, this is obviously a very fresh sample at the peak of its prime; spicy aspects in the flavor imparted by dry-hopping technique should become more rounded as the beer matures.

RATED 95 | FASTBACK RACER | BEAR REPUBLIC BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Once the thick head breaks somewhat the moderate piney and citrus (orange, tangerine) hops show up, supported by medium-sweet bready malt. Pours hazy harvest orange with a huge, thick and creamy off-white head that lasts quite a while. Medium-light smooth alcohol greets the palate and paves the way for medium-high piney and juicy citrus (tangerine) hops. The hop bitterness is medium-high and leaves a dry finish with a slightly pithy aftertaste. Medium-full body, medium carbonation and alcohol warmth. Upon further consideration I find some fruity, hop-derived esters (pear, cherry) on the nose and even fainter esters in the flavor.

RATED 95 | CLENCHER | BUCKLEDOWN BREWING (IL)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor is mirrored by the aroma with big, bold hop notes that are full of dank, stone fruit and blueberry jam elements. The small amount of malt sweetness balances these massive hop notes. The finish is dry with a lingering fruit character from the hops. It is hard to discern that this is a Double IPA because it doesn't have that expected overwhelming alcoholic punch. The mouthfeel has a light creaminess from the medium-low carbonation, and the medium-full body has no astringency. Overall, this is a beautifully executed beer. This highly hop-forward Double IPA has some interesting hop characteristics that slightly deviate from the usual suspects of citrus notes "du jour."

RATED 95 | DIGITAL BATH | BELCHING BEAVER BREWERY (CA)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

When tasting this IPA, I was looking for tropical/citrus juicy fruits and resin/needle-like notes from the hops, frothy vanilla/wheat character from the malt, bitterness balanced by a creamy mouthfeel, and overall something easy to drink without bitterness getting in the way. Oh yeah, and it needed to be hazy. Overall, it nails my expectations. It's a bit more sessionable than anticipated and is missing the expected aroma or flavor intensity but otherwise is an enjoyable and appropriate example of the style. The real strength of this beer is just how much of it one could drink without getting tired of it.

RATED 95 | AMIRITE?! | SPRINGDALE BEER (MA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer's aroma is almost completely dominated by the hop profile but is never pungent - very pleasing with subtle undertones of honeydew melon, papaya and grapefruit pith. A small fluffy white head sits atop the brilliantly clear beer and diminishes slowly. The flavor is surprisingly subtle overall. An appropriate level of medium-low bitterness puts more emphasis on hop flavor and aroma. The hop flavor is a bit subdued but matches the aroma perfectly. The malt isn't highly perceptible but has a slightly toasty background that stays out of the spotlight and lets the hops do the talking. This beer has a medium body and moderate carbonation.

RATED 95 | NEVER BETTER DIPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Never Better DIPA presents a prominent fresh bowl of tropical fruit with mango and pineapple that is offset by a touch of resin. A hint of grainy malt fights through the hops as the beer warms, along with a light spicy alcohol. There is a light candy sugar-like impression of sweetness in the aroma as the beer continues to open up. The overall hop aroma is fresh and bright. The flavor features a moderately high and prominent tropical fruit hop flavor with background grapefruit rind and resin. The hop flavor is not quite as fresh and bright as the aroma but still very pleasant. Light spicy alcohol and medium-high hop bitterness emerges in the middle and lingers into a medium-dry finish.

RATED 95 | WEEKEND VIBES IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Weekend Vibes IPA pours a light gold with near-brilliant clarity, and the rocky white head leaves a thick and persistent stand on the beer. The aroma features prominent mixed tropical fruit with light pineapple and fresh mango, followed by an earthy, citrus grapefruit rind. The aroma has a light impression of sweetness. A touch of grainy malt emerges as the hops fade down along with a light floral alcohol character. The flavor follows with prominent and mixed tropical and citrus fruits, with pineapple, mango and grapefruit zest. The hop flavor lingers for a long time through mid-palate where it is joined by a moderately high and smooth hop bitterness that lasts into a medium-dry finish.

RATED 95 | TRANSCEND IPA | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The beer had a huge citrus hop aroma, hints of crackery malt and no noticeable esters. There was also a pleasant alcohol aroma and low hints of diacetyl. It presented itself as a light-golden copper color, had a huge off-white head with fine bubbles and was crystal clear. The flavor that followed was a pleasant citrus hop flavor along with a low caramel and crackery malt flavor. The finish is a lingering blend of low malt sweetness and hop bitterness. It had a medium-full body, medium carbonation and a low warmth. This was a very pleasant IPA, which was very nicely balanced and had soft pleasant alcohol. An absolutely wonderful beer for almost any occasion.

RATED 94 | CROWD CONTROL IMPERIAL IPA | SOUTHERN PROHIBITION BREWING (MS)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

It poured light orange and clear into the glass, where it formed a thick and lasting white head. Its aroma featured a huge, predominantly citrus hop nose and tropical esters and mild alcohol upon warming. The flavor included the same hop and ester notes harmoniously balancing ample pale malt ones. The mouthfeel was smoother than found in many double IPAs, and the alcohol, while present, was restrained suggesting an ABV on the lower end of the range for a double. This combination of attributes produced high drinkability for the style, though with a warning to go slow in case the felt strength is higher than perceived in this evaluation.

TOP 10 AMERICAN IPAs

RATED 95 | DIGITAL BATH | BELCHING BEAVER BREWERY (CA)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

When tasting this IPA, I was looking for tropical/citrus juicy fruits and resin/needle-like notes from the hops, frothy vanilla/wheat character from the malt, bitterness balanced by a creamy mouthfeel, and overall something easy to drink without bitterness getting in the way. Oh yeah, and it needed to be hazy. Overall, it nails my expectations. It's a bit more sessionable than anticipated and is missing the expected aroma or flavor intensity but otherwise is an enjoyable and appropriate example of the style. The real strength of this beer is just how much of it one could drink without getting tired of it.

RATED 95 | AMIRITE?! | SPRINGDALE BEER (MA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer's aroma is almost completely dominated by the hop profile but is never pungent – very pleasing with subtle undertones of honeydew melon, papaya and grapefruit pith. A small fluffy white head sits atop the brilliantly clear beer and diminishes slowly. The flavor is surprisingly subtle overall. An appropriate level of medium-low bitterness, putting more emphasis on hop flavor and aroma. The hop flavor is a bit subdued but matches the aroma perfectly. The malt isn't highly perceptible but has a slightly toasty background that stays out of the spotlight and lets the hops do the talking. Medium body and carbonation.

RATED 95 | TRANSCEND IPA | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The beer had a huge citrus hop aroma, hints of crackery malt and no noticeable esters. There was also a pleasant alcohol aroma and low hints of diacetyl. It presented itself as a light-golden copper color, had a huge off-white head with fine bubbles and was crystal clear. The flavor that followed was a pleasant citrus hop flavor along with a low caramel and crackery malt flavor. The finish is –a lingering blend of low malt sweetness and hop bitterness. It had a medium-full body, medium carbonation and a low warmth. This was a very pleasant IPA, which was very nicely balanced and had soft pleasant alcohol. An absolutely wonderful beer for almost any occasion.

RATED 95 | WEEKEND VIBES IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Weekend Vibes IPA pours a light gold with near-brilliant clarity, and the rocky white head leaves a thick and persistent stand on the beer. The aroma features prominent mixed tropical fruit with light pineapple and fresh mango, followed by an earthy, citrus grapefruit rind. The aroma has a light impression of sweetness. A touch of grainy malt emerges as the hops fade down along with a light floral alcohol character. The flavor follows with prominent and mixed tropical and citrus fruits, with pineapple, mango and grapefruit zest. The hop flavor lingers for a long time through mid-palate where it is joined by a moderately high and smooth hop bitterness that lasts into a medium-dry finish.

RATED 94 | LOOKING GLASS | STARR HILL BREWERY (VA)

Review by Rick Franckhauser | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor backs up the aroma providing a nice grapefruit, a little pith and some pine resin joining the party all at moderately high levels. High level bitterness dominates the balance as one should expect in an American IPA but is never harsh or abrasive. You know more malt is present rounding off the bitterness but makes itself known more in the mouthfeel than any sweetness. Smooth with a little mouth-coating sticky hops, this is a solid example of an American IPA – this beer is all about those hops. Predominantly citrus-focused with enough resin, mango and pineapple to keep it interesting. Really nice job providing some serious hop bitterness without the harsh edge.

RATED 94 | HOP PEAK IPA | BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY (CO)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Upfront it had a huge citrus and piney (almost earthy) hop aroma that blended nicely with a pleasant grainy malt following right behind. There were no noticeable esters behind those lovely hops. The beer presented as deeply golden with a huge white head of fine, long-lasting foam and lacing on the glass. The flavor was a pleasant, smooth bready malt, which was immediately followed by a nice citrus, piney, earthy hop flavor and soft bitterness that lingered. This would be a perfect beer to drink with almost any pub food, but I really envision it with a large juicy burger and fries. It is also perfect for a warm fall day, enjoying the changing colors of the surrounding landscape.

RATED 93 | INLINE IPA | GARAGE BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Brian Eichhorn | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

In the glass, it's a very attractive pale golden color and quite clear, with a frothy white head – a Classic West Coast IPA appearance. There is a faint haze to it, likely from the hopping. The nose is distinctly grapefruit and other bright citrus with a faint pineapple and guava note as well. Some graham cracker malt notes reside underneath, along with a hint of clean ethanol. Very inviting nose. On tasting the beer, it has a high level of clean and smooth bitterness, along with a dry attenuated feeling to it. The hop flavor comes through as resinous and citrus rind-inflected, matching the style very well. Smooth and crisp through the finish, this is a classic West Coast IPA.

RATED 93 | BETTY IPA | HANGAR 24 CRAFT BREWING (CA)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor profile starts with a modestly strong caramel note moving on to a big and firm but well-balanced bitterness, with mid-palate flavors of orange peel, pine, grapefruit, and piney/resinous hop character along with faint fruit esters of cherries and apple. The long finish lingers with smooth bitterness and faint, crackery malt that is dry but not bone-dry. The body is medium-full with some very nice thickness to the mouthfeel that lends some heft to the aftertaste despite the squeaky-clean finish provided by the ferment and firm carbonic conditioning. The beer hits all the right notes with signature hop character and great malt balance; assertive but still very drinkable.

RATED 93 | MAN JUICE | KNEE DEEP BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Prominent and fresh mandarin orange greets the drinker and then fades down a bit to allow a mixed tropical and citrus hop character to emerge. A light swirl will kick up the orange aroma again. A light touch of bready malt makes an appearance as the beer warms and vents. The flavor follows with moderately strong orange that leads to primarily tropical fruit hop character of pineapple and mango, with a light hit of grapefruit following. Prominent hop bitterness makes a fast appearance and lingers through a light residual sweetness into a dry finish. The hop bitterness is assertive but remains smooth throughout. This is a well-brewed American IPA.

RATED 92 | FOXFIRE | FULLSTEAM BREWERY (NC)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Foxfire is brewed with Ekuanot, Azacca, Chinook and Centennial hops and sorghum among other more typical grains. This canned beer pours golden in color, hazy (acceptable for style), with a big, fluffy, mousse-like white head. The aroma is dominantly hop-focused with aromas of mango, apricot, tropical fruit with a lighter resinous character. The body is medium with a moderate carbonation and no astringency. The flavor is moderate citrusy, orange, mango, and tropical fruit hops with a hint of maltiness. The finish is moderately bitter with a moderate mango and orange hops lingering in the finish. This is a very nice citrusy and tropical fruity hopped IPA with little malt character.

TOP 5 HAZY IPAs

RATED 96 | TUNNEL VISION DDH W/CITRA | BEARDED IRIS BREWING (TN)

Review by Sal Mortillaro II | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The sweetness of the beer is quickly balanced out by a moderate bitterness, spicy notes and very light mouth-drying character and typical flavor from the use of dry hopping. A very pleasant bitterness lingers in the aftertaste along with the noted spice and ethyl alcohol character. Moderate alcohol warmth, though not hot, is perceived a little higher than actuality due to lightly spicy and drying note from use of the dry hopping; these things combined tend to tickle the back of the throat after the swallow. Overall, this is obviously a very fresh sample at the peak of its prime; spicy aspects in the flavor imparted by dry-hopping technique should become more rounded as the beer matures.

RATED 93 | CLOUD CATCHER MILKSHAKE IPA | ODELL BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer pours golden in color, very hazy, with a medium-sized, mousse-like white head. The aroma is prominent peach, mango, and tangerine hops with any malt or ester aromas buried well behind the hops. The hop flavor becomes more singularly orange in character with just a touch of malt to add a little depth to the flavor. The mouthfeel is medium-bodied and creamy. The beer finishes with a moderate bitterness and a lingering orange hop flavor reminiscent, as the brewery suggests, of a creamsicle frozen treat. This beer is an outstanding New England IPA but the hop flavor could have more complexity. Regardless, this is a very enjoyable beer that meets all facets of the relatively new style.

RATED 93 | NORTH ISLAND IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The finish turns towards moderately sweet and pithy grapefruit, pulpy orange juice, and under-ripe lemons before a mouthwatering and crisp aftertaste, where a tongue-coating, fresh milled wheat character takes over. After drinking North Island IPA for a few minutes, the pine resin astringency begins to linger and unbalances the beer. Warming alcohol coats my mouth but is cut by a high level of soft carbonation, which lightens the moderately heavy body. The flavor and mouthfeel taste more off-dry than the traditionally anticipated medium-dry to dry finish. The hop aroma, while pleasant, could be more complex. Final takeaway for me was just how darn good this beer looked.

RATED 93 | MARINE DREAM IPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A touch of orange candy emerges in the aroma as the tropical hop character settles down, and the hop flavor shifts a little more toward citrus, with orange zest being most prominent, but it's backed up with a pleasant hit of pineapple. The hop bitterness is assertive but smooth, appearing mid-palate and lingering through to the dry finish. The orange zest rolls right on past into the aftertaste. The oats provide a slight nutty character to the flavor and aroma, as well as a pleasant fullness to the mouthfeel. This is a well-brewed New England-style IPA that has a fresh and bright tropical hop aroma that throws a slight curve ball, turning citrus in the flavor.

RATED 91 | DUST BUNNY | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

It surprisingly poured out crystal clear in my glass, while I left a few ounces behind in the can. When I finished the can, the hazy goodness swirled out of the bottom and the hoppy haze tasting began in earnest. Its aroma was a sublime blend of tropical fruits, lemon zest and honey, and it featured a tight, white head, sticking around until the last drops were savored. While the flavor offered a top-shelf juicy, tart experience, it was quite restrained in bitterness, however, the bitterness seemed sufficient to avoid the beer from being cloying. The body was very light, which enhanced its refreshing nature.

TOP 10 DOUBLE IPAs

RATED 96 | LUPULIN RIVER | KNEE DEEP BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Lupulin River smacks you upside the head with a big tropical fruit hop aroma with a focus on fresh pineapple and light, ripe mango with a hint of fresh cantaloupe. A light spicy alcohol note and a hint of bready malt emerge as the hops settle down. The hop character shifts slightly in the flavor, offering a light pine and resin flavor to complement mixed tropical fruit. An assertive hop bitterness emerges mid-palate and lingers into the medium-dry finish. As with the aroma, the light spicy alcohol and bready malt make an appearance late to add balance to the hops. The alcohol is smooth, and the overall hop character is fresh and bright making this a very quaffable Double IPA

RATED 95 | FASTBACK RACER | BEAR REPUBLIC BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Once the thick head breaks somewhat the moderate piney and citrus (orange, tangerine) hops show up, supported by medium-sweet bready malt. Pours hazy harvest orange with a huge, thick and creamy off-white head that lasts quite a while. Medium-light smooth alcohol greets the palate and paves the way for medium-high piney and juicy citrus (tangerine) hops. The hop bitterness is medium-high and leaves a dry finish with a slightly pithy aftertaste. Medium-full body, medium carbonation and alcohol warmth. Upon further consideration I find some fruity, hop-derived esters (pear, cherry) on the nose and even fainter esters in the flavor.

RATED 95 | CLENCHER | BUCKLEDOWN BREWING (IL)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor is mirrored by the aroma with big, bold hop notes that are full of dank, stone fruit and blueberry jam elements. The small amount of malt sweetness balances these massive hop notes. The finish is dry with a lingering fruit character from the hops. It is hard to discern that this is a Double IPA because it doesn't have that expected overwhelming alcoholic punch. The mouthfeel has a light creaminess from the medium-low carbonation, and the medium-full body has no astringency. Overall, this is a beautifully executed beer. This highly hop-forward Double IPA has some interesting hop characteristics that slightly deviate from the usual suspects of citrus notes "du jour."

RATED 95 | NEVER BETTER DIPA | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Never Better DIPA presents a prominent fresh bowl of tropical fruit with mango and pineapple that is offset by a touch of resin. A hint of grainy malt fights through the hops as the beer warms, along with a light spicy alcohol. There is a light candy sugar-like impression of sweetness in the aroma as the beer continues to open up. The overall hop aroma is fresh and bright. The flavor features a moderately high and prominent tropical fruit hop flavor with background grapefruit rind and resin. The hop flavor is not quite as fresh and bright as the aroma but still very pleasant. Light spicy alcohol and medium-high hop bitterness emerges in the middle and lingers into a medium-dry finish.

RATED 94 | CROWD CONTROL IMPERIAL IPA | SOUTHERN PROHIBITION BREWING (MS)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

It poured light orange and clear into the glass, where it formed a thick and lasting white head. Its aroma featured a huge, predominantly citrus hop nose and tropical esters and mild alcohol upon warming. The flavor included the same hop and ester notes harmoniously balancing ample pale malt ones. The mouthfeel was smoother than found in many double IPAs, and the alcohol, while present, was restrained suggesting an ABV on the lower end of the range for a double. This combination of attributes produced high drinkability for the style, though with a warning to go slow in case the felt strength is higher than perceived in this evaluation.

RATED 94 | BLIND PIRATE | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma was comprised of caramel, pine and dank hop notes. Stone fruity esters and breadly maltiness round it up. One thing to note was that the dankness slightly overwhelms. The flavor has a high pine note, and fruitiness in the way of blueberries. There's very little malt presence, it's just enough to balance the bitterness. The malt is sweet and grainy, nearly biscuit-like. Balanced toward the hops. This beer finishes moderately-high in bitterness with a fruity aftertaste. The hop character is so prominent it makes want to exhale the essence. The body and carbonation are medium-high with a moderate amount of warmth but not hot. A big bold DIPA with an assertive hop flavor.

RATED 93 | BIG MOTHER TRIPLE IPA | MOTHER EARTH BREW CO. (CA)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Big Mother Triple IPA measures in at 10.5 percent ABV and is hopped with Summit, Mosaic, Citra and Nelson Sauvin hops. This canned beer pours dark golden in color with a light haze and a medium off-white head. The aroma is very hop-forward with resinous, piney and tangerine hop aromas with a light dank character. The flavor continues to be hop-focused with resinous, piney, tangerine and peach hop flavors that are well in front of a light caramel malt base. Alcohol is very apparent in the aroma and flavor (pleasant and never harsh) with warming sensations in the finish. The beer finishes with a moderate bitterness with a long lingering resinous and piney hops with an alcohol warmth.

RATED 93 | NIGHT GAME | SKETCHBOOK BREWING CO. (IL)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer's aroma consists of moderately high levels of citrus, grapefruit and resinous hops. It is a bright, slightly sweet smelling and very pleasant aroma. It pours a clear, orange color with solid white head and good retention. This beer's flavor is expectedly hoppy but limited to pine and resinous characteristics. Bitterness is elevated, yet smooth; it is not extreme by any means. It finishes bitter and hoppy with an enjoyable resinous sweetness. This example is very smooth and hides its strength exceptionally well. It's an easy drinker and beckoningly mellow.

RATED 93 | ALPHA ABSTRACTION VOL. 3 | WILD LEAP BREW CO. (GA)

Review by Sal Mortillaro II | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A moderate-high malt sweetness, with a low grainy flavor quickly transitions in to the flavor and present a bitter, candied orange flavor coupled with a low minerality that lasts into the finish. The balance is only slightly towards the hop bitterness, though the malt sweetness present provides a nice stage to even out the lingering aspect. The aftertaste consists of the bitterness, malt sweetness, citrus and alcohol. A pleasant alcohol warmth is noticeable in this beer accompanied by a nice creaminess. Overall, this an exceptional Double IPA which showcases traditional American and citrus-forward hops coupled with a lovely malt base to provide an enhancement of the hop profile.

RATED 92 | DETOUR | UINTA BREWING (UT)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The hop aroma was still there but balanced with nice malty overtones. The flavor of this beer was well balanced and wonderful. It had a real nice malty flavor balanced with the hop bitterness. Again, the hop bittering was not aggressive or "over-hopped" but rather complementary with the malt. The flavor also revealed the alcohol in this beer (9.5% ABV), which is something that can sneak up on you. The body of this beer was between medium and heavy with very good mouthfeel and carbonation. The aftertaste was just as good as the first sip. A melding of heavy malt and moderate bittering that balanced very nicely. A well-made beer.

TOP 3 SPECIALTY IPAs

RATED 94 | CONCRETE DINOSAUR | RIGHT BRAIN BREWERY (MI)

Review by *Joseph Formanek* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The up-front flavor features a nice blend of a subtle brown/dark malt backbone, rye, moderate hop bitterness and the moderate levels of tropical and dank hop flavors that were promised in the aroma. This is followed by a sweet brown/caramel malt character in the middle that does linger through the finish. The balance is toward the hop character in the middle, finish and aftertaste, with the hop bitterness coming more into the forefront in the finish and aftertaste. The sharpness from the rye flavor helps accentuate the late bitterness. The body is medium, and the carbonation is at a moderate level.

RATED 93 | SADDLEBACK | UINTA BREWING (UT)

Review by *Michael Heniff* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

Saddleback pours light golden in color with a slight haze and a big, fluffy white head. The aroma is hop-forward with aromatics of honeydew melon, tropical fruit, and peach with no malt or ester contribution. The body is thin and very effervescent as expected. The flavor is similar to the aroma; the beer is hop-forward with very little malt character. The hop flavors are tropical fruit, melon and generic citrus with a hint of green apple. The beer finishes very dry, carbonic and refreshing with a lingering citrus and tropical fruit hop flavor. This is a lower-alcohol, more sessionable version compared to other commercial Brut IPAs (which tend to measure in at 6-8% ABV).

RATED 92 | WREAK HAVOC | BOOTSTRAP BREWING (CO)

Review by *Michael Heniff* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Wreak Havoc pours a copper color with excellent clarity and a fluffy, off-white head. The aroma is moderately citrusy and resinous hops with an evenly balanced nutty, biscuity and caramel maltiness. The flavor is similar in character as the aroma but with the hops slightly more prominent than the malt. The body is medium (almost medium-full) but avoids having a thick and chewy mouthfeel. The bitterness is appropriate and balances the maltiness with the moderate caramel malt character at an even level with the citrusy hops. Wreak Havoc is a very nice beer that straddles the line between the Red IPA and Double IPA styles. This beer is deceptively strong, enjoyable and well brewed.

TOP 10 AMERICAN PALE ALES

RATED 96 | RUPTURE | ODELL BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by *Rick Franckhauser* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor follows the aromatics by delivering those fresh hops to the palate. Resinous with lemon zest and a touch of grassy and herbal note. Vibrant, fresh and refreshing. Moderately high level of a rounded bitterness with low levels of malt sweetness and a touch of toast keeping it from being totally hop-driven. Some residual sweetness remains in the finish as do the hops. Medium light body with near effervescent carbonation. A slight hop astringency comes through in the end with some stickiness while also remaining quite soft in the back. Multi-dimensional with ultra-fresh hops provide intrigue. This is one of the best American Pale Ales I've had in many years.

RATED 95 | FRESH BONGWATER HEMP ALE | KETTLEHOUSE BREWING CO. (MT)

Review by *Tracy Hensley* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma starts out with light green grass, white cherry, and vanilla blossoms and is followed by light pleasing warm yeast, fluffy white fresh baked bread, and blanched almonds with sesame seeds. The hazy dark gold beer has a fine creamy ivory head. The flavors begin as a light dusty freshly ground millet with low supporting vanilla shortbread. The beer is crisp and mouthwatering with a pithy bitter yet complex character that coats the mouth and is slightly numbing when combined with the pleasing low alcohol. The flavors continue to evolve over time, revealing subtle grassy flavors, including sugar cane stalk. Solidly made beer. Well-balanced and lengthy but subtle.

RATED 94 | FAYUCA RIZING | HELIO BASIN BREWING CO. (AZ)

Review by *David Sapsis* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

A very bright and forward citrus (lime) and piney resin aroma dominate the nose with a light grassy and fruity backstop; only modest malt character comes through initially. In the flavor, a light biscuity front moves into a big and firm bitterness that quickly opens up mid-palate flavors of peaches and pine: a light malty/estery backbone spiced up with classic citrus and piney/resin notes with a fresh and sweet fruit counterpoint reminiscent of slightly hard mangoes. The finish is light and dry but long on both grainy/honey malt and lingering hop flavors where an almost perfect balance forms. Overall the beer is bitter and quite hoppy, and the light graininess provides excellent structure.

RATED 94 | SYRINGA PALE ALE | BOISE BREWING CO. (ID)

Review by *Jason Johnson* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

In the nose I get a very nice rich hop aroma, with a dominant citrus aroma but there are some sweeter tropical mango notes in the back. The hop presence is strong and very welcome for an American Pale Ale. I get a little bit of crisp cracker-like malt that supports the hops nicely. Overall the aroma is clean and devoid of any noticeable off-aromas. Very typical of the American ale yeast this is most likely brewed with. The beer poured a very well-formed and long-lasting ivory head. The retention is very nice and long lasting. The flavor matches the aroma perfectly, with a juicy and smooth hop flavor of citrus and mango, with a hint of pine that is accentuated by the medium bitterness.

RATED 93 | PFRIEM EXTRA PALE ALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The color of this beer was a beautiful deep golden color with rays of amber throughout with a white head that was long-lasting and quite clear. There was a huge upfront aroma of citrus and tropical hops blended with a soft grainy malt aroma and pleasant light melon and berry esters. All of these aromas followed into the flavor and finished with a lingering bitterness that still carried some maltiness with it and a dry finish that wasn't overpowering. This was all tied together with a pleasant, soft alcohol presence. This beer would pair nicely with a simple meal of hamburger and fries or anything prepared on the grill.

RATED 92 | STICK'S PALE ALE | BOOTSTRAP BREWING (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This APA pours golden in color with good clarity and a medium off-white head. The aroma exhibits a moderate level of mango and generic citrus hop character with a light nutty malt character. The hop flavor is less distinct with generic resin, herbal and citrus flavors. A light nutty malt provides ample background without being too forward or sweet. The body is medium-light providing a refreshing quality. The beer finishes with a prominent hop flavor of piney and resinous hops with a hint of nutty malt lingering in the background. This APA is well-balanced and quite quaffable (at 5.5% ABV).

RATED 92 | HAN BROLO | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This golden ale poured hazy with a thick white foamy head. The haze made it hard to see bubbles rising as a sign of the carbonation. There's a big tropical fruit aroma with passion fruit and ripe mango upfront. A Citra hop character of lemon, lime and melon is prominent along with tangerine. The flavor is composed of moderately high fruit juice. Fruity for sure with a firm balance toward the hops. The finish is dry with a short floral petal aftertaste that becomes dank with ripe fruit as you sip it. The body is medium-light and a medium carbonation exhibits a slight alcoholic warmth and smooth creaminess. A pleasant mouthfeel leaves you longing for another sip.

RATED 92 | PREFUNK PALE ALE | WORTHY BREWING CO. (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

An aggressive hop aroma that is floral and earthy is backed by a bready, slightly sweet malt aroma. The malt sweetness has a slight caramel aroma. The beer is a pale copper with a fine, off-white head that lingers. flavor is well-balanced between hops and malts, slightly edging towards hops flavor and bitterness. Hops are earthy with a nicely balanced bitterness that lingers. Malts are bready with a touch of sweetness and light caramel. Fruitness from the hops is also there. The mouthfeel is medium-bodied with moderately high carbonation. Overall, this is a great example of an American Pale Ale that displays the qualities of the style without blurring the lines between an APA and an IPA.

RATED 91 | ALWAYS READY | CAPE MAY BREWING CO. (NJ)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma showcases everything that hop lovers look for in a great pale ale: hop intensity, freshness, complexity and just a tiny hint of malt in the background that stays well out of the way. There are bright notes of honeydew melon, mango, and tangerine with floral undertones of rose and lilac. The aroma sets the bar very high and as a result, the flavor profile is a bit of a letdown. The delicious hop flavors are subdued overall compared to the aroma. The perceived bitterness is on the lower end of the spectrum and helps the beer avoid straddling the fine line between American Pale Ale & American India Pale Ale.

RATED 91 | MOSAIC SINGLE HOP PALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor is bright and bursting with hop fruitiness: citrus (grapefruit) apricot/mango, and very strong pineapple dominate, with bitterness in the mid-palate that is firm but in no way overbearing or dominant (and noticeably lower than common standards). Virtually no caramel/toffee flavors found. The late palate is strongly fruity and has a nice mineral character that lends a dry finish to counteract the relatively sweet pineapple/fruit flavor from late kettle and dry-hop additions. This is a nice, fruit-forward modern American IPA of relatively reserved bitterness, highlighting the classic new breeds of American aroma hops that have strong tropical fruit and modest dank profiles

TOP 5 PILSNEERS

RATED 96 | HIGHLAND PILSNER | HIGHLAND BREWING CO. (NC)

Review by Rick Franckhauser | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Moderately high levels of floral and spicy hops are the first to arrive on the palate. Grainy malt is joined by some cracker and a light toast note. Firmly bitter but not at all harsh. Somewhat of an herbal hop component is accompanied by a long grainy malt aftertaste. Each aspect of the flavor is clean, distinct and bright. The body is medium-light with high levels of carbonation. The carbonation provides a little tingle. There is a mouth-drying sensation perhaps via water chemistry, grainy malt, tannins or alcohol (or some combination thereof). If you are seeking a world-class German Pils brewed in America, look no further.

RATED 95 | BO PILS | EAST BROTHER BEER CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

A lovely, clean and rich medium grainy and lightly doughy Pils malt emanates from the glass. The beer is brilliantly clear straw gold and the head recedes to a thin film on top and bubbly cordon. The complex malt dominates the flavor yet leaves room for light spicy and herbal/earthy hops and soft, rounded bitterness. The malt sweetness carries into the dry finish and carries a bit of the bitterness along. This is a light-bodied, though it feels bigger based on the malt sweetness and richness. There is a soft fruitiness in the aroma and flavor though the malt often overcomes the fleeting aroma and flavor. I notice a light mineral character, particularly as the beer leaves the tongue.

RATED 94 | STEAMWORKS PILSNER | STEAMWORKS BREWING CO. (CANADA)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 23 / 24 Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor is of a lightly toasted cracker front into a reserved bitterness and a brilliant nectar-floral angle that reminds me of elderflower. The late palate shows homage to tradition: a classic dry-herbal/lavender note (usually associated with Hallertauer hops) lends to a long dryness that lasts all the way to the dry and clean finish. Absolutely delicious! The body is medium-light, somewhat fat due to relatively low conditioning for the style. Overall the beer is a delight of balance between pilsner-style malt and floral-herbal hop tones, where the yeast mostly stays out of the way. This beer would be fantastic with a spicy meal like citrus-marinated prawns pan fried with red pepper flakes.

RATED 94 | REUBEN'S BREWS PILSNER | REUBEN'S BREWS (WA)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma was of a light grain sweetness along with negligible hops, which is okay for style. The flavor of this beer had a very nice malty sweet grainy backbone with medium hop bitterness. It finished off crisp and dry in the palate and had a very nice effervescent body and mouthfeel. This was a very nicely made pilsner in true fashion to the style. It was light, refreshing and crisp. It was nicely balanced with the sweetness of the malt and complemented by moderate hops. Had a very nice mouthfeel and body that was light and effervescent on the palate. One of the more difficult styles to replicate correctly because of its light flavor profile, this example was truly wonderfully made!

RATED 93 | ZOIGL-PILS | ZOIGLHAUS BREWING CO. (OR)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Warm, rich bready malt rises from the glass alongside a quick waft of mineral, sulfur notes. Following closely is bright, fresh spicy, floral and herbal Noble hops of moderate intensity. Pours lightly chill hazed pale gold with a large, frothy and tight-bubbled eggshell white head, long retention and eventually leaving a film on top and light lacing. Balanced, yet tilted to the hops, flavor has a bready malt structure that supports spicy, herbal and lightly floral hops. Medium-high hop bitterness and a clean fermentation character. Medium-light body and moderate, nearly mouth-filling carbonation. The flavor is complex and hop-balanced with a lingering hop spiciness.

TOP 5 WHEAT BEERS

RATED 94 | RIEGELE AUGUSTUS | BRAUHAUS RIEGELE (GERMANY)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This Weizenbock pours light amber in color, very cloudy, with a big, fluffy, tan head. The aroma is moderately bready and wheaty and is complemented by esters of banana and plum with hints of clove and vanilla. The flavor continues to showcase the rich, bready and wheaty malt with a slight sweetness; light plum and banana esters and a hint of clove provide balance to the complex malt character. The body is medium with a creamy, smooth mouthfeel and a light alcoholic warmth. The finish is just lightly bittered with rich, bready malt balanced by a lingering clove and spice finish. The rich, complex malt character is well balanced by the esters and phenolics.

RATED 93 | KC BIER CO. HEFEWEIZEN | KC BIER CO. (MO)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A Hefeweizen by all accounts. Pale yellow in color and lightly cloudy as per style with a very fine bead that exploded into the glass on initial pour and supported a tightly knit head. The aroma was reminiscent of freshly baked wheat bread with a plethora of fruity esters and clove phenols that are typical byproducts of a beer fermented with a pure Bavarian yeast strain. The absence of hops allows the delicate wheat flavor to manifest itself and marry with the clove phenols and banana esters to create a flavorful complexity of ingredients to the drinker. Alcohol was in the medium range and the body a bit thin as is typical with beers brewed using higher levels of wheat.

RATED 93 | LICHER WEIZEN | LICHER PRIVATBRAUEREI (GERMANY)

Review by Jason Johnson | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

I liked this beer's dominant banana ester in the aroma and the low background note of the clove phenol. It is very well done and smells quite refreshing. There is a soft wheat and low spicy noble hop presence that is just as it should be. Because we roused the yeast there is a solid yeasty background to it all. It poured a solid gold color with significant haze, typical for the style. The head was fluffy and very pillowy, which is exactly what I would expect from this beer. The flavor matches the aroma well. With a nice mildly wheaty flavor, a moderate amount of bitterness and great balance between the esters and phenols.

RATED 93 | LA TRAPPE WITTE | TRAPPIST BREWERY KONINGSHOEVEN (NETHERLANDS)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This is a beautiful-looking beer. A hugely dense, creamy white head floats atop for the duration of enjoyment. The beer is a straw-yellow with a slight haze, making the purity of the white head stand out even more. The beer is low in bitterness with a mild citrus hop flavor and a breadth of cracker-like malt flavor. Like the aroma, there is an absence of coriander and/or orange peel. The beer finishes semi-dry with a lingering wheat/hay flavor. This beer has a medium-light body, moderately high carbonation and an element of creaminess, which makes it incredibly drinkable.

RATED 91 | SNOW GLARE HOPPY WHEAT | BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

American Wheat Beers are noted for having less yeast character and more hop focus than German wheat beers. This wheat beer showcases Mosaic, Centennial and Pilsade hops. This beer starts as very cloudy (appropriate), golden in color with a big, fluffy, white head. The aroma is of prominent, aggressive hops with resinous, tropical fruit and apricot elements with a light wheat background. The flavor displays the same aggressive hop character as the aroma and adds an herbal complement. The beer finishes with tropical fruit and herbal hop flavors with a light bitterness and a hint of wheat. Be sure to seek out this aggressively hopped wheat beer.

TOP 5 SAISONS

RATED 94 | BASTOGNE ARDENNE SAISON | BRASSERIE DE BASTOGNE (BELGIUM)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Bastogne Ardenne Saison by Brasserie de Bastogne is a Saison refermented with Brettanomyces. This beer has a restrained, fruity aroma consisting of peach and pear. It is complemented by an equally mild Brett aroma and spicy hop character. After it warms, the aroma takes on the unmistakable soapiness of Cascade hops. This beer is hazy gold in color and has a tall white head with excellent retention. There's a solid layer of sediment at the bottom of the bottle. This beer tastes bitter, dry, and attenuated with an even overtone of Brett and prickly hop spice. It is highly carbonated and medium bodied, finishing with a wild twinge. Overall this is a surprisingly easy-drinking ale.

RATED 94 | LEMON ZEST FARMHOUSE ALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Flavors are surprisingly bitter. Resin sits up front but does not become heavy. Mouthwatering grapefruit and a light chalky dryness persist in the aftertaste. Second taste features a moderate malt cracker as well as pine resin, pineapple, and lemongrass bitterness with an aftertaste of coconut shavings. This results in a carbonic, mouth-prickling characteristic when drinking. Hop flavors are jangly with resin and tropical elements cutting against each other while a bitter pithy resin overtakes the aftertaste.

RATED 94 | FUNKWERKS SAISON | FUNKWERKS (CO)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Saison makes me nervous – too many glasses of skunky, imported, green-bottled saisons or domestic saisons that don't get the yeast right. The first sniff reveals this as a proper saison: ripe fruit, mild hops, white grapes, pepper, spice and alcohol. It drops hazy gold, permeated with streams of rapidly rising bubbles under a massive persistent rocky white cap that rises up over the glass's rim. Orange lemony fruit, pepper, spices and a pleasant moderate citrus pith bitterness lead the flavors. It finishes bone dry, almost puckeringly so, with a light juicy tartness. This highly effervescent medium-light bodied saison hits all the right buttons and is well worth seeking out.

RATED 94 | SUPER SAISON | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Initially pouring as a beautiful pale golden color with sparkling clarity and leaving a picturesque white lacing around the glass, the visuals alone for this beer made me want to take a sip. The aroma was very pleasant – offering Belgian phenolics and citrus and pear esters along with a very faint spicy, floral hop character. It had a very smooth mouthfeel and a slightly dry finish. All of this was tied together nicely with very pleasant soft alcohol element. This beer would pair well with Salmon or Ribeye cooked on the grill. A very pleasant and easy-drinking beer that just screams to be imbibed with a group of close friends, regaling each other with stories of days gone by.

RATED 93 | SAISON DE ROSE | FREE WILL BREWING CO. (PA)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

It is copper and hazy in appearance with a moderate white head. The flavor is refreshingly tart and dry throughout. Still, it's only lightly bitter, but possible tannins help create the classic dryness akin to that found in many farmhouse ales. Again, the fruitiness is lighter in character, but the spiciness is more distinctly herbal in flavor. There's a nice pucker in the finish, accentuated by the high attenuation and dryness. This beer is highly carbonated with a medium mouthfeel, both contributing to its refreshing character, though it doesn't take too long in the glass for it to lose carbonation and feel damp. The oak character is mellow and nicely done.

TOP 10 FRUIT BEERS

RATED 95 | NECTARINE GOLDEN ALE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Nectarine flesh is notable in combination with some sweet malt and fermentation characteristics that are quite subtle in the nose. The pour is somewhat cloudy from a lot of in-bottle carbonation. The flavor has mild nectarine fruit flavor and fruit or malt sweetness backed with a refreshingly tart flavor mid-palate and finish from the yeast and wood aging. Just a little bit of oak/wood character can be tasted, and it becomes more noticeable as it warms. Acidity from the barrel aging, wild yeast contributions, residual wine or all of the above adds another enjoyable flavor angle to this beer. All told, this is a wonderful beer that expresses nectarine in subtle, but enjoyable, ways.

RATED 93 | FIRE IRON | URBAN ARTIFACT (OH)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Fire Iron by Urban Artifact is a smoothie in beer form, pure and simple. The aroma is tart and absolutely loaded with fresh tropical fruit. Passion fruit, guava and banana characters dominate and other blended fruity notes play a supporting role behind this. I get little to no malt or beer character whatsoever. The offering is a turbid opaque peach color with absolutely no head. The overall appearance is of an extremely pulpy fruit smoothie. Fresh passion fruit and guava are the stars of the flavor show, with banana as the support. From start through finish, these fruit characters simply dominate. However, the sweetness is quite low, which is appreciated.

RATED 92 | THE GADGET | URBAN ARTIFACT (OH)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma is a funky, tart raspberry and blackberry juice with a background of vanilla, giving the impression of a slightly sour raspberry milkshake. I get little to no malt or beer character whatsoever. The offering is a turbid opaque deep garnet color with absolutely no head. The overall appearance is of a thick, dark raspberry juice smoothie. The flavor gives no surprises after the aroma. From start to finish, berry fruit characters dominate, with an intriguing sour funkiness that adds an appreciated level of complexity. As with Fire Iron, the sweetness is quite low, which works well in this brew. The body is full bodied due to the physical thickness of the berry pulp.

RATED 92 | LITTLE BALLS OF BLUE | STREETSIDE BREWERY (OH)

Review by Sal Mortillaro II | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A light sweetness is perceivable as the beer warms being a combination of malt, wheat, a very slight "funk," and the fruit. Hop aroma is not noticeable in this beer. This beer has a moderately sweet flavor consisting of bread dough followed by low-moderate blueberry fruit. There is no hop bitterness or hop flavor, but a low clean acidity is what provides balance in this beer. As the beer warms, a wheat note is apparent as well as a slight apple fruitiness. Balance is towards the sweetness and the finish consists of the yeasty character noted in the aroma and lingering blueberry. This beer is thin-bodied with plentiful, tickling carbonation, which also helps provide balance.

RATED 91 | ÉPHEMÈRE STRAWBERRY & RHUBARB | UNIBROU (CANADA)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

The beer is a hazy golden color with a solid white small bubble head with lacing that lingers throughout the drink. The flavor carries through a moderate fresh strawberry flavor with a grainy wheat background. The strawberry remains the dominant character throughout the drink. The finish is rather sweet, though moderately refreshing, as if you were drinking a fresh fruit juice. The fermentation is very clean with subtle Belgian notes. The body is a light medium, and the carbonation is moderate. Overall, the extremely fresh fruit character is the dominant quality of this beer. Strawberry lovers will rejoice with this offering.

RATED 91 | ISLAND VIBES | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Nelson Crowle | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The beer pours a slightly hazy light straw color with a small head of tiny white bubbles that quickly falls. Aroma is of tropical fruit. The initial taste is a nice clean lactic tartness like a Berliner Weiss but overlaid with tropical fruit that blends well with the tartness. Very light bready malt notes, no hop flavor, no hop bittering. It's very fruity and refreshing - but not sweet - a relatively dry finish that invites another taste. This is a great beach beer or poolside beer. Cleanly made. Smooth but crisp, the fruity notes are bright with notes of tart pie cherries and mixed tropical fruits. Pair this beer with some tasty and spicy Jamaican Jerk chicken - or some pineapple slices.

RATED 91 | BIZARRE GARDENING ACCIDENT W/ KUMQUAT | MOTORWORKS BREWING (FL)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A big white head filled the glass and then fell off quickly. Lots of tiny bubbles were manifest throughout its hazy pale yellow color. A distinct lemon aroma was immediately evident and melded with a citric tartness and other fruity esters to create a light and refreshing bouquet. The flavor was sharply sour and acidic. A lemon rind character was dominant however it was pleasantly accompanied by less aggressive fruity notes that led into a dry finish. The body was thin, non-astringent and highly carbonated with alcohol barely perceptible. A crisp, low-gravity beer with a champagne-like quality that will refresh your palate on a hot summer day.

RATED 91 | SNOZZBERRIES TASTE LIKE SNOZZBERRIES | PONTOON BREWING (GA)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A bright purple and opaque appearance resembling carbonated grape Kool-Aid is deceptive, however, as this beer's aroma featured both intense lactic sourness and strong mixed berry (i.e., not distinctively from a single fruit) notes. The flavor began with tart fruit atop a pleasantly sour Berliner Weisse base, followed by a mildly sweet malt and fructose middle, and a calming burst of vanilla and lactose in the finish to temper any sour palate in the aftertaste. The mouthfeel featured moderate carbonation, light body, no alcohol warmth and a refreshingly fizzy berry palate at the very end. This beer's drinkability is high due to the brewer's skill.

RATED 91 | CHARIOT | URBAN ARTIFACT (OH)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma has a moderate tart cherry character along with a touch of lactic metallic sour milky aromatic funk. There is some complexity here! There is a light wheat character behind this. The beer is a very cloudy/opaque pinkish-orange color with a wispy pink small bubble head that dissipates almost immediately. It is expected that a Gose would have a stronger stand of head than this. The overall appearance is reminiscent of a carbonated pink grapefruit cocktail. A moderate tart cherry flavor presents itself up front with evident wheat bite behind it. A touch of citrus and coriander follow this up. The sweetness level is low. The salt level is moderate but not excessive for the style.

RATED 90 | CHILLAX | BOOTSTRAP BREWING (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 17 / 20

This beer pours straw in color with excellent clarity and a medium, finely beaded white head. The aroma is moderately light pineapple with a hint of sweetness; no hops or malt are evident. The flavor is moderately light pineapple with a touch of malt and finishes with a hint of bitterness and a light, lingering pineapple. The pineapple character is very authentic and is evenly balanced with the base style. The base beer is fairly bland though, even for a Blonde Ale. But, it is well brewed and should be enjoyed by many looking for a well-done fruit beer without anything too forward.

TOP 5 SPICE, HERB & VEGETABLE BEERS

RATED 94 | MEGA MINT IMPERIAL CHOCOLATE MILK STOUT | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Even though the aroma only suggested a subtle mint, the flavor of mint was noticeable and bold. All these flavors of chocolate and mint melded very nicely together along with the malt sweetness and moderate hoppiness. The flavor of mint and chocolate were center stage and complemented one another nicely. It is almost as if this was a liquid and alcoholic version of a Mint Patty candy. The body and the mouthfeel of this beer was very smooth and was between medium and heavy. The carbonation was low, but that didn't detract from the beer at all. Had a very nice smooth sweet finish with a minty aftertaste with a little alcohol warmth.

RATED 92 | SPRUCE TIP IPA | GOODWOOD BREWING CO. (KY)

Review by Jason Johnson | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Off the aroma I get juicy hops, a lot of grapefruit and pine as I would expect in an American IPA. I get the spruce for sure and it's not overdone. The malt aroma is cracker-like and complements the hops nicely. The spruce aroma comes forth as it warms. The flavor is very traditional; it has a stiff bitterness that is accented by the spruce flavor. The spruce is pretty intense in the flavor and that's fine with me. The balance is solidly in the hop and bitterness camp. The same hop flavors come through in the flavor as they did in the aroma with juicy and thirst-quenching grapefruit followed by the pine, which helps the beer finish what appears on the drier side.

RATED 92 | MEXICAN STOUT | SHIP BOTTOM BREWERY (NJ)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Mexican Stout by Ship Bottom Brewery had aromas of dark chocolate, vanilla and coffee are evident along with the distinct influence of Chile peppers which combine with alcoholic heat to warm the nostrils. Deep brown (almost black) in color, opaque with a big tan head that stood up nicely. Lots going on here. A rich bakers chocolate flavor is accompanied by spicy cinnamon and vanilla notes and supports the hot peppery quality of this beer, which does not overwhelm the base beer. A medium-bodied beer with ample carbonation, no burnt malt astringency and the firm presence of alcohol. A fine complement for Mexican fare with plenty of gusto.

RATED 92 | PAN A FLORES | SOUTHNORTE BEER CO. (CA)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Cinnamon, chocolate and coffee character dominates in the nose, leaving the impression of a spiced cappuccino or even a cinnamon brownie. This aroma is very rich and inviting, practically begging you to indulge! The beer is an opaque black color, with a tan, small-bubbled head that lingers well into the drink. The head retention is quite remarkable considering the level of chocolate that is evident in this brew. Even though the beer is opaque, it still does have a slight murkiness to it – probably due to the use of chocolate. From the first whiff of the aroma to the aftertaste, the same cinnamon, semi-sweet chocolate and coffee character from the aroma also dominates the flavor.

RATED 91 | COLD PRESS BLACK | BENT PADDLE BREWING CO. (MN)

Review by *Joseph Formanek* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Coffee character dominates in the nose, coming through as would a cold cup of a strong black coffee. Very little hop nor base malt character is evident. The same coffee character from the aroma also dominates the flavor. From start to finish, a rather complex moderately smooth black coffee flavor makes itself very well known, with a touch of chocolate and perhaps a light caramel note complementing the coffee flavor. The middle and finish retain the same flavor characteristics, with the coffee character delivering a dry finish. Overall, this brew is as the label suggests – a can of cold pressed black coffee ale. It is actually quite refreshing! Perfect for a real coffee fan.

TOP 5 PORTERS & STOUTS

RATED 96 | NITRO IRISH STOUT | BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY (CO)

Review by *Michael Heniff* | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 20 / 20

This Irish Stout pours an opaque pitch black with a very finely beaded creamy tan head. The aroma is prominent, rich dark malts with aromas of roasted espresso, chocolate and toasted malts. The flavor is similarly and appropriately malt-focused with a rich, flavorful blend of roasted espresso and dark chocolate malt flavors. The body is medium and very velvety smooth. The finish is lightly bittered with a rich, complex malt depth of coffee and dark chocolates lingering for a long time. This beer is rich and complex despite being lower in alcohol and is velvety smooth and quite quaffable. This Irish Stout has more malt complexity than its Irish cousins yet retains drinkability.

RATED 95 | EPITAPH RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STOUT | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by *Brad Darnell* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Pours opaque black with a medium, creamy and thick brown head, medium retention with some lacing. Aroma of sweet and rich dark chocolate, lactose sweetness, dates and figs. Light background earthy and woody hop notes round out the initial aroma. Chewy sweet and dark chocolate malt, roast notes, dark fruits similar to the aroma lead to a sweet finish. Full body, medium carbonation and light alcohol warmth. A warm nuttiness emerges late in the aroma as does powdered cocoa. A light malt bitterness complements the hop bitterness, but the malt and lactose sweetness keep both in check. Some warm alcohol character gives the palate a hint of dryness and keeps this from being too sweet.

RATED 95 | SANTA'S LITTLE HELPER | PORT BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by *Richard Wong* | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor of this beer was nicely balanced between malt and hop profiles that had very distinctive roasted elements that tasted like chocolate and coffee. The beer was medium/heavy in body and mouthfeel and it was very creamy in the palate. The carbonation level was about medium and provided just enough body. The aftertaste of this beer was very smooth and had a very nice subtle warm 'burn' due to the fact that this is an Imperial Stout weighing in at a powerhouse 9.9 percent ABV. This is a wonderfully made beer that hit all the right marks for the style. It had nice roastiness and bittering that was well balanced and it certainly was big and boozy.

RATED 94 | DANZIG | DEVILS BACKBONE BREWING CO. (VA)

Review by *James Link* | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

A rich chocolate malt aroma with coffee-like undertones are immediately evident upon first pour. Lager yeast notes are also present and add a pleasant complementary touch. This beer poured a dark brown (almost black) color with a light tan head that fell off somewhat several minutes after the initial pour. The flavor, as was the case in the aroma, is reminiscent of quality dark chocolate with a light roast and a grainy malt character that is closely associated with beers that carry a multi-layered grain bill. Hops are earthy in nature and contribute in only a minimal way. A medium-bodied beer that was very smooth over the tongue with just a touch of alcoholic warmth and no astringency.

RATED 94 | FOUR SEASONS - WINTER '18 | MOTHER EARTH BREW CO. (CA)

Review by *Richard Wong* | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The beer had wonderful aromas of dark chocolate, raisins, bourbon flavors, coffee and an alcohol presence. Hop aroma was negligible, which is okay for this style. Forward flavors of roasted malts should dominate, and they do in this case. The pour revealed a silky black hue and light carbonated head. The initial taste had complexity that took a while to digest and identify, because there were so many things going on. I tasted roasted malts that conjured coffee and dark chocolate. I detected a nice malt sweetness coupled by moderate hop bittering that balanced everything out extremely elegantly.

TOP 5 OATMEAL STOUTS

RATED 96 | EAST BROTHER OATMEAL STOUT | EAST BROTHER BEER CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The initial aroma is of roasted malt, nearly chocolate in aroma, alongside fresh leather. Rich and complex, the roasted malt and oatmeal characters dominate the aroma. Dark fruits of prune and dates are evident as are earthy and herbal hops. The rich malt character carries into the flavor and the prunes provide a faint tartness for complexity. Light earthy and herbal hops persist and provide light hop bitterness to complement the oatmeal sweetness. A full body supports moderate carbonation. The color is jet black with a large, frothy and tight-bubbled brown head with long persistence. The malt is debittered and allows the dark fruits to present themselves well.

RATED 95 | FOUR SEASONS - AUTUMN '18 | MOTHER EARTH BREW CO. (CA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Initially the first mouthful displays moderately sweet rich chocolate, oats, and brown sugar sweetness with a lightly bitter roasted malt character underneath. Sweet coconut and light hop bitterness round out the flavor and leaves a medium-sweet finish. Full-bodied, medium alcohol warmth and medium carbonation. Roasted nuts and dark fruits (figs and dates) are the secondary aromatics that hang in there throughout with the coconut; the coconut is subtle but noticeable. As the beer warms the alcohol becomes a drying agent that keeps the malt sweetness mildly in check. The roasted malt character lasts through the long finish as notes of coconut, alcohol, nuts, and dark fruits come and go.

RATED 93 | ELBOW PATCHES | THE VIRGINIA BEER CO. (VA)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer smells like my last breakfast: fresh oatmeal, mild roast, traces of city roast coffee, a hint of nuts and a mild sweetness suggesting coffee and cream. It drinks silky rich with a creaminess that has you coming back for more and a slight slickness from the oats. Oats and roast balance perfectly, seasoned with mild coffee and hints of toasted bread crust, dark dried fruit ending in a lingering mild roast coffee and creamy oat finish with a mildly astringent bitterness. This straddles the line between British and American Oatmeal stouts – not as fruity as the former nor as bitter as the latter establishing a place all its own - and a very fine place at that.

RATED 93 | BUFFALO BILL'S BLACK PUMPKIN STOUT | BUFFALO BILL'S BREWERY (CA)

Review by Tracy Hensley | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Ecstatic about the forward aromas of low warming vanilla and creamed oats, that an integrated blend of roasted cacao nibs and spices reminiscent of nutmeg, cinnamon, cardamom support. The appearance is on point with a persistent creamy tan head and a clear but almost opaque dark brown color. The tannic cinnamon/nutmeg led spice blend is quickly met by pleasantly slick and creamy roasted chocolate and chunks of fresh pumpkin – like a roasted pumpkin brownie. The finish while slightly spice dominate and tannic, is clean, dry and crisp. Overall, a great-tasting pumpkin oatmeal stout. It has everything going on – pumpkin, spice, roasted chocolaty malt, creamy oatmeal, and drinkability.

RATED 91 | GERRY DOG STOUT | BIG ELM BREWING (MA)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

True to being a stout, you'll be bombarded by aromas of baker's chocolate, earthy coffee and bread. Pitch black in color, I'm quite confident this beer actually absorbs light and, in return, provides the drinker with a light brown head that doesn't seem to ever dissipate. The flavor follows the aroma with chocolate, bread and coffee but this time the nuttiness, which presumably comes from the oats, is considerably more forward. This complements the semi-sweet to semi-dry finish and lingers far into the aftertaste. Gerry Dog Stout is a man's best friend whether you're a lover of dark beers or not. Easily approachable due to well-integrated roastiness, it's a go-to stout.

TOP 3 AMBER & BROWN AMERICAN BEERS

RATED 93 | DRY-HOPPED CENSORED | LAGUNITAS BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma greets the drinker with a moderate floral and resinous hop character, with a backbone of grainy base malt and support from light caramel and light berry esters. The overall hop character shines through nicely in the aroma as expected from a dry-hopped beer. The flavor showcases a soft, easy-drinking beer with moderate floral and slightly resinous hop flavor and a firm hop bitterness that creates a very refreshing finish. Light berry esters make an appearance mid-palate along with a light bready, grainy maltiness and a hit of caramel. The hop bitterness is lingering but smooth.

RATED 92 | CHICKOW! | LISTERMANN BREWING CO. (OH)

Review by Michael McGuire | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Like a true brown ale, its aroma featured brown and chocolate malt (i.e., non-roasty) notes, more alcohol than expected for the style, no noticeable hops and an intense true chocolate nose presumably from the addition of cocoa nibs at some point in the brewing process. The flavor profile too was dominated by chocolate and alcohol with no overt hop flavor, just background bitterness to balance. A subtle nuttiness balanced the sweetness of the chocolate, creating a harmonious and delicious brew. The mouthfeel featured moderate carbonation, a creamy, medium body and decided alcohol warmth.

RATED 91 | UPSLOPE BROWN ALE | UPSLOPE BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Deep rich toffee, caramel, coffee and roast malt notes welcome you upon the pour. Very little hop character is noted, with but a touch of English hop woodiness coming through. The flavor has a complex rich caramel and toffee character with associated roast and light coffee flavors. There is a light-medium English-type hop flavor and bitterness, but the malt component easily dominates over the hops. The middle and finish retain the malt complexity quite well. The body is a solid medium, and the carbonation is rather light as expected for the style. The overall impression of this brew comes off more as a British Brown rather than an American, but it is a quite flavorful offering that will delight malt lovers.

TOP 3 VIENNA LAGERS

RATED 97 | MEXICAN EMPIRE | ARCHES BREWING (GA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor follows the aroma with a rich, bread crust-laden malt showcase. The bitterness is moderately low but balances the malt well. There is a light floral/herbal hop flavor that is pleasant and adds just a little touch of something special to this offering to makes it flawlessly well-rounded. The mouthfeel consists of a medium-low body, moderate carbonation and a light creaminess that makes it even easier to drink. A truly remarkable example of the style that showcases high-quality malt and doesn't seem to sacrifice flavor by using adjuncts like other interpretations. If European Lager styles are truly making a comeback, this world-class beer should stand out as one of the reasons why.

RATED 96 | KC BIER CO. FESTBIER | KC BIER CO. (MO)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

A decidedly striking beer, golden in color, crystal clear with a persistent soft white head and lots of very tiny bubbles that smacked of krausening. The aroma was malt-accented, bready and rich with only a wisp of hops to balance. To the credit of the brewer, the intense clean malt character found here did not manifest itself via overly sweet caramel malt flavors that often accompany this style, which are avoidable through the process of time-consuming traditional German decoction mashing. As in the aroma, hops were gently expressed in only a complementary fashion. A medium-bodied beer with soft carbonation that carried smoothly over the tongue.

RATED 95 | PFRIEM VIENNA LAGER | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Often, amber lagers tend toward a cloying sweetness and sometimes a pronounced cereal flavor with high levels of DMS. Not this beer. It is simple, elegant, and expertly balanced, highlighting classic ingredients of light kilned (Vienna, low color Munich) malts and wonderfully floral and spicy continental hops, all packaged up in a crisp and tight lager of modest strength that is both drinkable and complex enough to be savored. It is simply outstanding. Anton Dreher would be proud. In terms of food pairing, its softness and subdued bitterness lend itself to a wide range of pairings. I'm trying it with some good New York Style Pizza, and it shines. Like I said, simply outstanding.

TOP 5 PALE MALTY EUROPEAN LAGERS

RATED 98 | PRIVAT | BRAUHAUS RIEGELE (GERMANY)

Review by Michael Bury | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 20 / 20

You'll find no faults in the fermentation, which includes proper attenuation and no off-flavors. Like all great beers, the flavor continues well into the aftertaste where toast, bread crusts and floral hops with a hint of grassiness will welcome you with open arms. You won't be disappointed in the very least with Brauhaus Riegele's Privat. It's a nigh-perfect interpretation of a Festbier that demands to be imbibed by the boot or the liter. The clean fermentation allows both the malt and hops to shine. Slight grassiness from hops and a very low carbonic bite appear in the end, but these are only minor quibbles in what is a beer masterpiece.

RATED 95 | MAIBOCK | DEVILS BACKBONE BREWING CO. (VA)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor mirrors with very low hop/yeast spiciness with some lighter touches of floral and fruity esters. The bitterness is moderately-high, and the dry, lager-like finish lingers for a while in the aftertaste. This beer is finely balanced towards the sweet, bready, slightly grainy malt but not too much so. A fine reminder that it is the lightest member of the Bock family. The body and carbonation are medium, and a pleasant mouthfeel that beckons another sip as you crave some more of the complex maltiness. This is one very well made and easy-drinking lager that exemplifies the Helles Bock style by hitting all the characteristics and drinkability. Clean, malty, lightly spicy and dry.

RATED 95 | PINKY SWEATER | SKETCHBOOK BREWING CO. (IL)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer begins with a mostly neutral aroma, but with a definite adjunct character. Still, it is very clean. It pours a pale straw color that is crystal clear with a thick, white head. The flavor is similarly neutral yet has a pleasant herbal hop flavor and low bitterness. This beer is very well attenuated and has a dry, cleansing finish that is smooth, crisp and the most refreshing thing you'll drink all summer. It has a medium-light body that possesses a unique texture, making it feel fuller. Despite this beer's clean and neutral character, there is no mistaking it for a macro lager; its subtleties are revelatory.

RATED 94 | KC HELLES LAGER | KC BIER CO. (MO)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

KC Helles Lager is true and traditional example of the Munich Helles Style in every respect. Light Golden in color, crystal clear with a medium white head and fine bead. The aroma was honey-like with a biscuity quality that complemented the pilsner malt bouquet. The flavor was lightly malt-accented yet not cloyingly sweet with hints of grainy malt and noble hops. The hops are used in sedulous amounts in more of a supporting role while the body (as per style parameters) was medium in nature, well-conditioned and non-astringent. A very sessionable beer, Helles Lager by KC Bier Co. was clean and refreshing, exemplifying the most popular everyday lager served in Germany.

RATED 93 | PFRIEM HELLES LAGER | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The lager poured revealed a very light straw color, in fact, it was almost clear with just a splash of yellow. Very nice and translucent along with very tiny, effervescent bubbles (almost champagne like) that clung on the side of the glass. The aroma revealed a malt sweetness (almost honey-like) and no hops (okay for the style). The flavor had a nice malt sweetness that was very grain like, again almost honey as well balanced with very low hop bittering. The body and mouthfeel were light to medium with a very nice carbonation that was both crisp and smooth in the palate. This beer would be a great compliment for a hot, sunny day that it is both light and thirst-quenching.

TOP 5 STRONG BELGIAN & EUROPEAN BEERS

RATED 95 | BLONDE DE L'ENFER | UNIBROU (CANADA)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Banana, clove-like phenolics, coriander and light metallic and musty notes are evident along with some bubblegum and spiciness. The mouthfeel is surprisingly smooth with a medium body. The finish leaves a lingering fruity and spicy character along with a touch of hop bitterness in the finish that helps clean up the palate in preparation for the next sip. Alcohol is hidden quite well for being a 10.5 percent ABV brew, but it does warm the belly on a cold winter day. Blonde de l'Enfer is an excellent take on the Belgian Golden Strong style. Definitely one to track down to enjoy immediately or to cellar for the future. This rates near the top of all of the Unibroue I have ever had the pleasure to try.

RATED 94 | LA TRAPPE QUADRUPEL | TRAPPIST BREWERY KONINGSHOEVEN (NETHERLANDS)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma is prominent, rich bready malt, abundant peppery phenolics with a hint of vanilla complimented by dark fruit reminiscent of plums. The alcohol is strong but never harsh. The flavor is malt-forward with melanoidins reminiscent of bread crusts. Moderate peppery and vanilla phenolics complement the lightly sweet malt. The body is medium-full, creamy with a moderate warmth. The beer finishes with a gentle bitterness leaving a semi-dry, rich bready malt character with lighter peppery phenolics on the palate. The complexity of the malt character is excellent in this Trappist ale. The peppery phenolics and plum-flavored esters add the expected complexity.

RATED 94 | KING GAMBRINUS | JERSEY GIRL BREWING CO. (NJ)

Review by James Link | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

A very clear pale yellow rendition of the style was poured with lots of effervescence and a significant white head, which fell off quickly. The aroma is grainy sweet with a touch of phenol, which complements the pleasant almost honey-like bouquet. Pilsner malt makes a strong presence and adequately supports fruity esters and spicy yeast notes in a clean and distinctive fashion. Alcohol, although evident, is well hidden, allowing for enhanced drinkability even at this higher ABV. Originally offered by the Westmalle Trappist Monastery in Belgium some 80 years ago, this fine example of the Belgian Tripel style should be considered for consumption by any discriminating beer connoisseur.

RATED 93 | DEVIL'S ADVOCATE | CHURCH STREET BREWING CO. (IL)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer presented with a lovely golden color, just a slight haze and a huge white head with lacing. The aroma gave off light peppery notes, light phenolics and pleasant fruity aromas that were pear-like yet had light orange notes. The flavor followed through – being pleasant with light estery notes and faint peppery notes. The alcohol stood out in the flavor yet was quite clean with no hot notes leaving the beer slightly drying in the finish. There was a medium-full body with warmth and medium carbonation. This was a very nice-drinking beer that would be great on a cold evening and would be a perfect beer to serve with fish or chicken breast with a light cream sauce.

RATED 92 | AVARICE & GREED | ROADHOUSE BREWING CO. (WY)

Review by Susan Ruud | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Avarice & Greed by Roadhouse Brewing Co. is a wonderful Belgian Golden Ale and is being judged as such according to BJCP Category 25C. This beer was malty and sweet with a big fruity, pear-like ester, low Belgian spicy phenolics and lots of soft, easy alcohol, which all follow thru to the flavor. It presented itself as golden with a white head, fine bubbles and lacing but was quite hazy. There is plenty of alcohol in this beer, but it is well-hidden and smooth. This would go great with most spicy foods or something like lasagna. Extremely great-drinking beer. No hop presence throughout other than to balance the malt.

TOP 15 SPECIALTY WOOD-AGED BEERS

RATED 96 | MAPLE BARREL AGED SMOKED PORTER | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Nelson Crowle | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer pours an opaque very deep brown with a small head of tan tiny bubbles that fades quickly. Aroma is slightly roasty with a smoke character between smoked ham and a big campfire alongside light floral notes. The flavor is breakfast bacon in maple syrup with a backdrop of coffee and light roast, well balanced. Earthy and citrus hops round out the flavor, and there's just enough bittering to keep the malts tamed. Full body and medium carbonation, finishing with a nice balance of maple, campfire smoke, and roast - all at about even levels and all lingering. The beer is really a mélange of flavors that could be a big mess, but this beer balances everything very nicely.

RATED 95 | BARREL-AGED LEGION | COMMUNITY BEER CO. (TX)

Review by Nelson Crowle | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Initial aroma is roasty sweet chocolate with moderate vanilla notes and moderate caramel and toffee notes - quite complex and interesting. The flavor echoes the aroma with roasty sweet chocolate, medium caramel, and additional cold brewed coffee notes. There are medium wood aged notes expressed as vanilla and toasted coconut. Lots of dark fruits - medium prunes, moderate overripe plums, slight notes of black cherries. There are some slight oxidation notes coming across as sherry notes rather than papery, so quite pleasant. Medium-low earthy and floral hops complement the roasty malt but are minor players. There is a moderate hop bittering that balances well.

RATED 95 | BREWERY LANE SERIES: IMPERIAL VANILLA PORTER AGED IN RUM BARRELS | BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY (CO)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer is a higher gravity version of Breckenridge Brewery's Vanilla Porter and was aged in rum barrels for 55 days. This porter pours black, clear but almost opaque, with a medium light brown head. The aroma is of moderately strong chocolate and coffee with lighter smoke, vanilla and alcohol. The body is medium-full with a smooth and creamy mouthfeel and a light warmth. The flavor is very rich and complex with flavors of chocolate, smoke, vanilla, toasted oak, dark rum, toffee, caramel and coffee. The beer finishes with a light bitterness leaving a rich and complex finish of sweet chocolate, caramel, vanilla and toasted oak. Rich, complex and strong, this beer is great.

RATED 95 | HIGHLAND CHARGE BOURBON BARREL AGED WEE HEAVY SCOTTISH ALE | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by Richard Wong | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The pour of this beer revealed a dark brown hue with light carbonation. The bubbles were small and tight. The aroma revealed a plethora of wonderful scents, such as bourbon, oak, chocolate, dried fruit (raisins and plums) along with a nice malt sweetness. I didn't get any hops, but that is okay for this style. The first sip had the same wonderful flavors that were found in the aroma. The malt and the hops balanced very nicely with this beer. I found malt sweetness along with a moderate hop bittering. The flavors that I tasted had roasted malts (chocolate), dried fruit

RATED 95 | BARRELJUICE, BARRELJUICE, BARRELJUICE | ANGEL CITY BREWING (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This Saison is aged in chardonnay barrels with Brettanomyces. This hazy, golden beer greets you with aromatic peach leather with a hint of lemon zest, and a complex aroma of earthy and fresh hay Brettanomyces. A lightly rich bready maltiness develops as it warms, along with a hint of black pepper and white wine character. The chardonnay barrel character shines through more in the flavor with an equally complex hit of earthy Brettanomyces immediately following. The moderate lactic sourness adds even more complexity to the beer. The white wine character dies down a bit as it passes through mid-palate, but makes a re-appearance as the beer passes through the dry finish into the aftertaste.

RATED 94 | JOLLY RUSSIAN | ODELL BREWING CO. (CO)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor starts off with notes of ripe black mission figs dosed with medium dark molasses and a nice complementing spicy angle (cinnamon, allspice) that's evident and respectable hop bitterness; mid-palate flavors see the emergence of a soft and somewhat muted cocoa/roast character, much more chocolate-like than coffee-like. The finish is very well-balanced, with a shot of ethanol heat and lingering herbal-spicy tones well into the late-palate. Mouthfeel is thick with appreciable creaminess, relatively low astringency, and a nice carbonic spritz. Despite the beers big flavor profile and appreciable alcoholic strength, its pleasant balance and off-dry finish make it very drinkable.

RATED 94 | GOODWOOD BOURBON BARREL STOUT | GOODWOOD BREWING CO. (KY)

Review by Jason Johnson | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The dark roasted malts contribute a coffee-like flavor with a hint of chocolate. The beer is incredibly smooth with a soft wash of bourbon and a moderate amount of spicy alcohol flavor. The vanilla tones come out in the finish and blend very well with the coffee and chocolate tones of the malt. Overall this beer is exceptional. I would recommend seeking this beer out and trying it for yourself. It will be perfect for those summer nights sitting by a lake or campfire as you unwind from the day. The chocolate and vanilla tones are satisfying as a day finisher; toss the bourbon into the mix, and you are on your way to a good night.

RATED 94 | PFRIEM BARREL AGED SAISON II | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by David Sapsis | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Fresh citrus of orange and orange peel, a dose of apple, pear, and grape-nectar character and a really nice spicy pepper note makes for a great balance of sweet going to fruity, then to spice, then back to the faint honey-like malt sweetness into the finish. A tad of lingering oak and astringency is there, but it's very minor and works well in the finish. The high conditioning harks to the very heart of the style and is appreciated throughout the delivery of flavors and textures. All in all, the beer is dry, with both firm phenolics (but not overdone, as is such a common malady) and a fairly reserved oak character, but a magical malt sweetness lingers as well, making for a delightful drink.

RATED 94 | LAST WILL & TESTAMENT | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma is prominently bourbon and toasted oak with a background of rich caramel malt. The body is full and very warming. The flavor continues to display a ton of bourbon, vanilla, and toasted oak over a rich, dark caramel malt base; elements of treacle, tobacco, dark chocolate and raisins complement. Strong bourbon and rich caramel malt linger long in a warming finish. From a BJCP-sanctioned competition standpoint, the bourbon and barrel flavors should be more harmonious with the base Old Ale style. But, from a bourbon-barrel beer aficionado's perspective, the bourbon and barrel characteristics are very well done resulting in a sublimely enjoyable beer.

RATED 94 | BAILEY'S TAPROOM 10TH | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer is slightly hazy, light golden, with an effervescence that continues to stream up leaving a healthy off-white head. Overall, this is quite a solid Brettanomyces-fermented beer with just a hint of woodiness that simply adds a little more complexity. Perhaps the fermentation is entirely done in wood with a healthy Brett supply. What really makes this beer worth seeking out is how different it is from the more common wild fermented beers these days that tend to be exceptionally sour or tart with little else. Instead, this expresses all the great flavor that Brett can produce without taking away from the subtlety of the malt.

RATED 94 | PINOT FRESA | ANGEL CITY BREWING (CA)

Review by Randy Scorby | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The strawberries are evident in the aroma as a soft, candied strawberry and are the first element to greet the drinker. Light vanilla and earthy horse blanket Brettanomyces quickly follow like a pleasantly aromatic barnyard. A tartness is also noticeable in the aroma. Light bready malt emerges late to round out the complexity, along with a light red wine-like character. The flavor follows with a moderately high and clean lactic sourness and more candied strawberries. The complex fruit, sourness and wild yeast combine to create a complex and quite enjoyable barrel aged beer. Pinot Fresa is a well-brewed barrel-aged fruit beer.

RATED 93 | ANTE MERIDIEM | MONDAY NIGHT BREWING (GA)

Review by Rodney A. Tillinghast | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The taste backed up this beer's aroma, and I appreciated that it had enough firmness in hop bitterness to counter the immense original gravity load. Although I didn't get coffee in the aroma, there was a distinct "dry" finish to suggest it, and some bourbon warmth in the final impression. There is mention of maple syrup as another special ingredient, but in a beer this complex, I can't say that it stood out. In the size of its bottling at 500mL, this is still a great beer to bring to a group setting for sampling. It has the flavors for those who favor something sweet but does not range into the insipid area for those that are looking for a more balanced heavyweight sipper.

RATED 93 | WINE BARREL-AGED MAGIC TRAIT | SPECIATION ARTISAN ALES (MI)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 3 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer was brewed with blackberries and black currants and aged in red wine barrels. Red wine berry smells with a trace of vanilla and oak rise from the glass. Mild funk joins low hop and malt aromas. It fills the glass like a NE IPA on acid – cloudy red under a 2" pink cap with poor retention. This is a carnival of flavor. Berries and wine combined with the yeast produce a lemonade level of tartness. The berries also join with the oak to provide dimension to the tannins – astringent but not puckering. The berries roll around in your mouth and leave a lingering, slightly astringent, dry as a bone berry wine aftertaste. The beer is a sensual delight with a delightfully soft creamy texture.

RATED 93 | FOUR SEASONS - SUMMER '18 | MOTHER EARTH BREW CO. (CA)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Raspberries, roasted grains suggesting chocolate and coffee, a touch of vanilla and fruity esters leap out of the glass. One can imagine a raspberry-flavored extra dark chocolate confection and have a good idea of how this smells. The color is inky black with ruby highlights when direct light glints along the edges of the glass. A tan, thin layer of fine foam lingers mostly along the edges of the glass, but with wisps of Rorschach test formations all atop the surface. The flavor is much like the aroma with a rich, dark-chocolate quality accented with a raspberry syrup drizzle. Overall, this is a bold and rich raspberry-enhanced Imperial Stout.

RATED 92 | REINDEER TEARS BOURBON BARREL AGED BARLEYWINE | HEATHEN BREWING (WA)

Review by Brad Darnell | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The pour is a deep tawny with a garnet hue when held in direct light. A thick, creamy beige head sits atop for the duration and yields only a slight bit of lacing. Rich, warm sugar cookies with a sweet vanilla and oak character form the flavor. Sweet, nearly thick Bourbon joins and the beer ends with a sweet finish. Full body supports medium carbonation and a pleasant alcohol warmth. Sweet, lightly grainy malts persist in the flavor and a faint candied fruit note emerges. As the beer warms the alcohol becomes a little harsh, though stays clear of fusels and any unwanted harshness. Late floral and earthy hops finally show up and present only a slight bitterness, balanced well to the malt.

TOP 3 MIXED-FERMENTATION SOUR BEERS

RATED 95 | TEMPORARILY PERMANENT | CAPE MAY BREWING CO. (NJ)

Review by Rick Franckhauser | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The flavor allows the apricots to make an appearance alongside the mango. Moderately low levels of malt sweetness accentuate the fruit. A bright tart citrus sourness and a low-level acidity take the place of bitterness in balancing the beer. Red wine tannin is noted in the finish. The funk raises up in the aftertaste and add another level of complexity. Higher levels of carbonation, a medium-light body and a slight mouth-coating tannin serve to clean the palate and provide an easy-drinking sour ale. Very refreshing and approachable. The fruit additions complement without overpowering each other as all the elements of the beer are identifiable and harmonious.

RATED 95 | PFRIEM FLANDERS BLONDE | PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS (OR)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Wet leather, light fruit, light cigar box, old basement, traces of balsamic, and a hint of butter aromas drift from the glass. This hazy gold beer talks to you with a lively effervescence crackling as cascades of bubbles rush to the surface. The brewer coaxes an array of fruit flavors from the Brett offering up pineapple, some hard candy, hints of melon and peach, grape, tropical fruit and a hint of vegetable spread like funky marmalade over a crispy shortbread biscuit malt flavor. Sweet and tart are well balanced. The blonde ale base allows the Brett flavors to really shine. Each drink brings out a different array of fruit flavors mixed with mild funk.

RATED 93 | SHARED WATERS | CORONADO BREWING CO. (CA)

Review by John C. Tull | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This beer's flavor is intensely sour with a pronounced tart orange character. The malt flavors are subtle, likely from a very efficient breakdown of the starches by the wild yeast bugs in the fermentation. Despite the tart and puckering finish, some residual sweetness provides a nice offset to the sourness. The body is medium, and the acidity has a lingering quality and provides a little heat in the back of the throat. Despite the huge sourness in this beer, there is still an enjoyable complexity provided from the tart citrus component and the wheat malt fullness and flavor. If sour beers are your thing, you will like this one because of the degree of wild yeast development.

TOP 10 WILD SPECIALTY BEERS

RATED 95 | OAK & WHITE | UPLAND BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Jim Koebel | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

This beer has a tart aroma with layers of complexity that follow. Low spicing and oak tannins are present, as is a distinct white grape (fermented, like white wine) aroma. Together, these aromas are mellow and pleasant. It pours a clear, pale gold color with moderate white head. This beer's flavor has distinct yet light oak character—primarily tannin—and is moderately sour. It has a buttery taste and texture, again like white wine. The finish is dry but retains the buttery fullness. Carbonation is moderately high, but feels lower due to the fuller texture. Hops are nowhere to be found in this beer, but it doesn't need them.

RATED 94 | APRICOT ORCHARD BRETT GOLDEN ALE | THE VIRGINIA BEER CO. (VA)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 39 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

This is a fruity Brett strain with stone fruit – especially apricot – aromas out front supported by traces of pineapple, citrus and overripe fruit with light bread crumb and a hint of bubble gum. The pour produces a big, boisterous 3" cap perched atop a hazy gold column permeated with streams of rapidly rising bubbles. The brewer adds just enough fruit to complement and not overwhelm the yeast. Ripe to overripe Brett-produced fruit flavors (berry, citrus and pineapple) and added fruit flavors (stone fruit) play off and enhance one another giving the beer a delightful complexity. A light and very airy yet creamy texture massages the mouth and gives the flavors an added dimension.

RATED 94 | MODERN TART | UPLAND BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 24 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

Lightly flavored with the same malt qualities mentioned in the aroma, grainy, fruity of very ripe pineapple and citrus lime peel finish. The finish is very dry without much hop character in the flavor or bitterness. The bitterness detected comes from the sour, lightly tart flavor. Balanced toward the sourness helps keep this beer light and flowing. The added apricots may be the cause for all the fruitiness perceived. I was expecting a bigger body and mouthfeel from the added lactose. No alcoholic warmth here presuming this beer has a low ABV, and the puckering aspect is kept low while still enhancing the dryness in the finish. The lightness in flavor and body make this a pleasure to drink.

RATED 93 | FIRE IRON | URBAN ARTIFACT (OH)

Review by Joseph Formanek | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 4 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The aroma is tart and absolutely loaded with fresh tropical fruit. Passion fruit, guava and banana characters dominate; other blended fruity notes play a supporting role behind this. The offering is a turbid opaque peach color with absolutely no head. The appearance is of an extremely pulpy fruit smoothie. Fresh passion fruit and guava are the stars of the flavor show, with banana as the support. From start through finish, these fruit characters simply dominate. However, the sweetness is quite low, which is appreciated. The body is extremely full, in large part due to the physical presence of the pulp in the drink. The carbonation is moderate and helps give a little "zip" to the flavor.

RATED 93 | OAK & ROSÉ | UPLAND BREWING CO. (IN)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 19 / 20

The beer pours an attractive light red with hues of purple and a resilient tightly packed light pink head. The flavor is grape forward but very delicate overall. Freshly picked strawberries meld with ripe raspberries and oak in a nuanced manner. There is a light acidity that is very complementary to both the dry finish and to the overall flavor. In a way, this drinks more like a carbonated rosé than a beer. It is very mild overall but has a great deal of fruit expression and complexity if you're concentrating on what is in your glass. This is a great gateway beer for the wine lover that is intrigued by the world of beer but doesn't know where to begin their journey.

RATED 93 | PÊCHE | ALESONG BREWING AND BLENDING (OR)

Review by Michael Heniff | Aroma: 23 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 36 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Pouring light golden, this beer has a slight haze and a small, quickly fading white head. The aroma is moderate sourness with funky lactic, leather and lighter barnyard and hay; a light peach fruit and hint of vanilla complement the funkiness. The flavor is moderately sour with a moderate-light peach fruit but with just a hint of funkiness. Peach was an excellent choice of fruit for this fermentation blend as the light stone fruit complements the funkiness well. While the beer is most funky in the aroma, the flavor is primarily fruit with a clean lactic sourness. Regardless, this is a very enjoyable sour fruit beer. Seek this one out and be sure to share with your funky friends

RATED 92 | WILD GRAPE ALE | HI-WIRE BREWING (NC)

Review by Dan Martich | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 6 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 9 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The highly juicy, non-sweet pineapple character comes through in the flavor. The pear notes and fruity red apples esters noted in the aroma are here. Hops are absent and the finish is dry as a bone with a short acidic finish. The balance is toward the fruity/sourness, with a lingering fruit in the aftertaste. This is one super juicy sour ale; the added grape must gives this beer a Kir Royale look that many people will find agreeable. The wood character note comes through mildly in the form of oaky dry, with little vanilla just before the finish. One thing to note is that the Malbec-wine character of musty, robust, and light cedar is not detected much at all in the beer

RATED 92 | RASPBERRY PROVINCIAL | FUNKWERKS (CO)

Review by Pat Mulloy | Aroma: 21 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 40 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 8 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

Raspberry Provincial by Funkwerks, Inc. features slight traces of funk, spice and tartness season a big raspberry aroma lifting from the glass. It's hazy pink under a short-lived pinkish cap. Three or four levels of rich raspberry flavors roll across the tongue with a very low trace of sweetness leading to a bone-dry finish aided by rich tannins from the berries. The dryness is crisp and almost puckering and is aided by a pleasant juicy citrusy tartness. Too many fruit beers come across as a malt beverage dosed with fruit extract brewed for those who do not like beer. Only real berries taste this good.

RATED 92 | POIVE RAZ | SPRINGDALE BEER (MA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 22 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 37 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The flavor is a lovely marriage of rich malt with notes of freshly baked bread crust, tart raspberry and oak. The oak and acidity linger long after the dry finish. The body is medium with a slightly elevated level of carbonation. The high level of attenuation gives the impression of more effervescence and aids drinkability. This beer drinks well by itself but could be a showstopper if paired with the right dish. A simple salad with tangy goat cheese and a red wine vinaigrette would pair beautifully. While no pink peppercorn presence was detected, it may have provided some intangible qualities that aided in this beer's complexity. It does an excellent job of showcasing its myriad flavors.

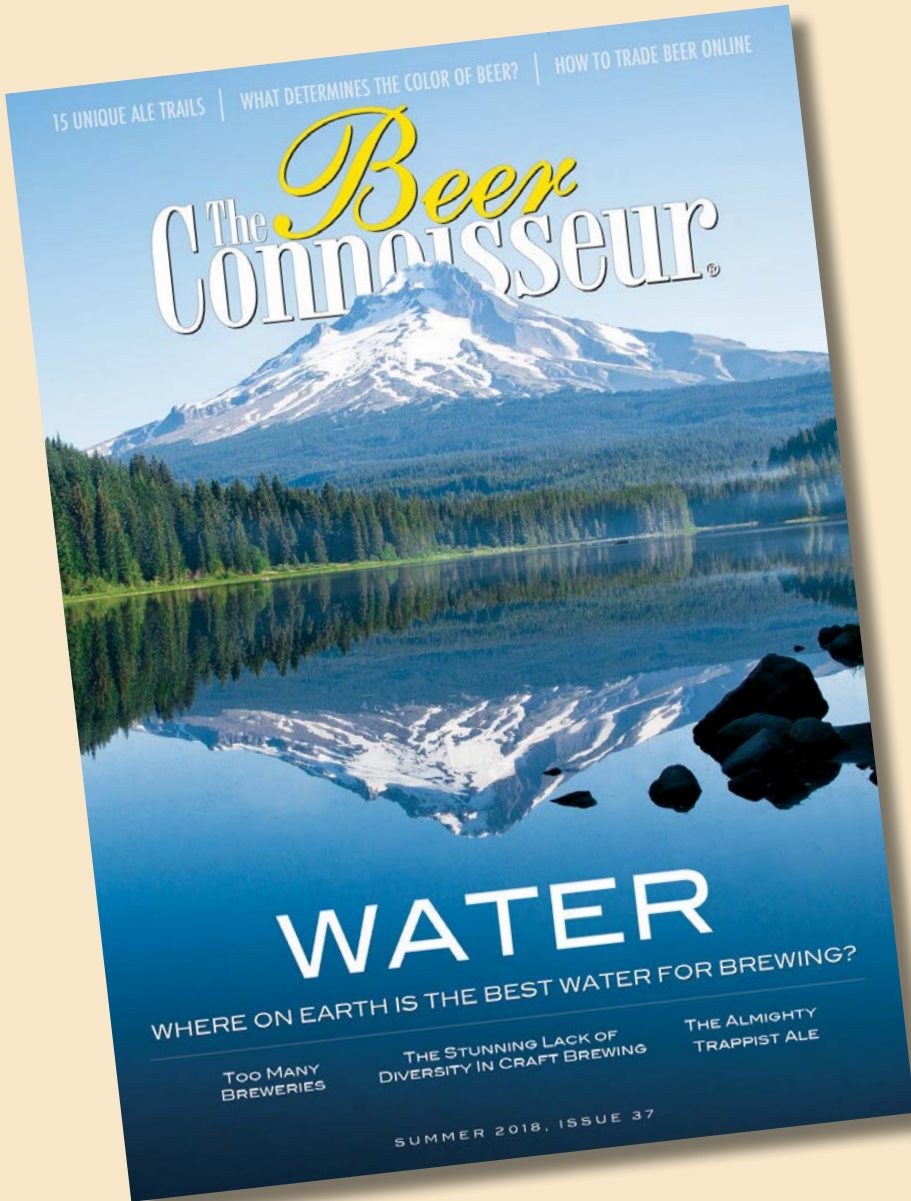
RATED 91 | NO FUZZ | SPRINGDALE BEER (MA)

Review by Sean Coughlin | Aroma: 20 / 24 | Appearance: 5 / 6 | Flavor: 38 / 40 | Mouthfeel: 10 / 10 | Overall Impression: 18 / 20

The aroma is inviting with moderately low peach and nectarine notes that seem to become riper as the beer warms. The beer is a hazy light blonde with an extremely tight-knit wheat head that falls quickly. The flavor is complex with a balance of acidity, malt sweetness, juicy nectarine and earthy funk. All components are balanced, and nothing is over the top. The beer has a dry finish that adds to its drinkability factor. Body is moderately low, carbonation is moderately high and there is no astringency or puckering from abrasive acidity. This is a refined beer for a refined palate. All aspects of this beer have depth without going too far. Well thought-out, executed and blended.

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BREWERY AWARDS

Each year, we award the breweries that collectively produce the highest-rated beer of the year as evaluated in the *Official Review*. In 2018, breweries worldwide demonstrated impressive brewing expertise through a myriad of styles. With the rise of new and interesting Specialty IPAs, such as Brut IPAs and hazy examples, as well as a continued focus on fruit adjuncts, pastry stouts and sours, our breweries of the year represent the cutting edge of craft beer.

How We Award

We look at the **top three highest-scoring beers** (as rated by our judging panel) for each brewery in the calendar year.

We then consider **how many of the three** place into the **100 to 96: World Class** category and the **95 to 91: Exceptional** category. For example, a brewery with two world-class beers and one exceptional would rate higher than a brewery with a single higher-scoring world-class beer and two exceptional beers.

The brewery with the **most world-class beers** followed by the **most exceptional beers** is awarded the Brewery of the Year.

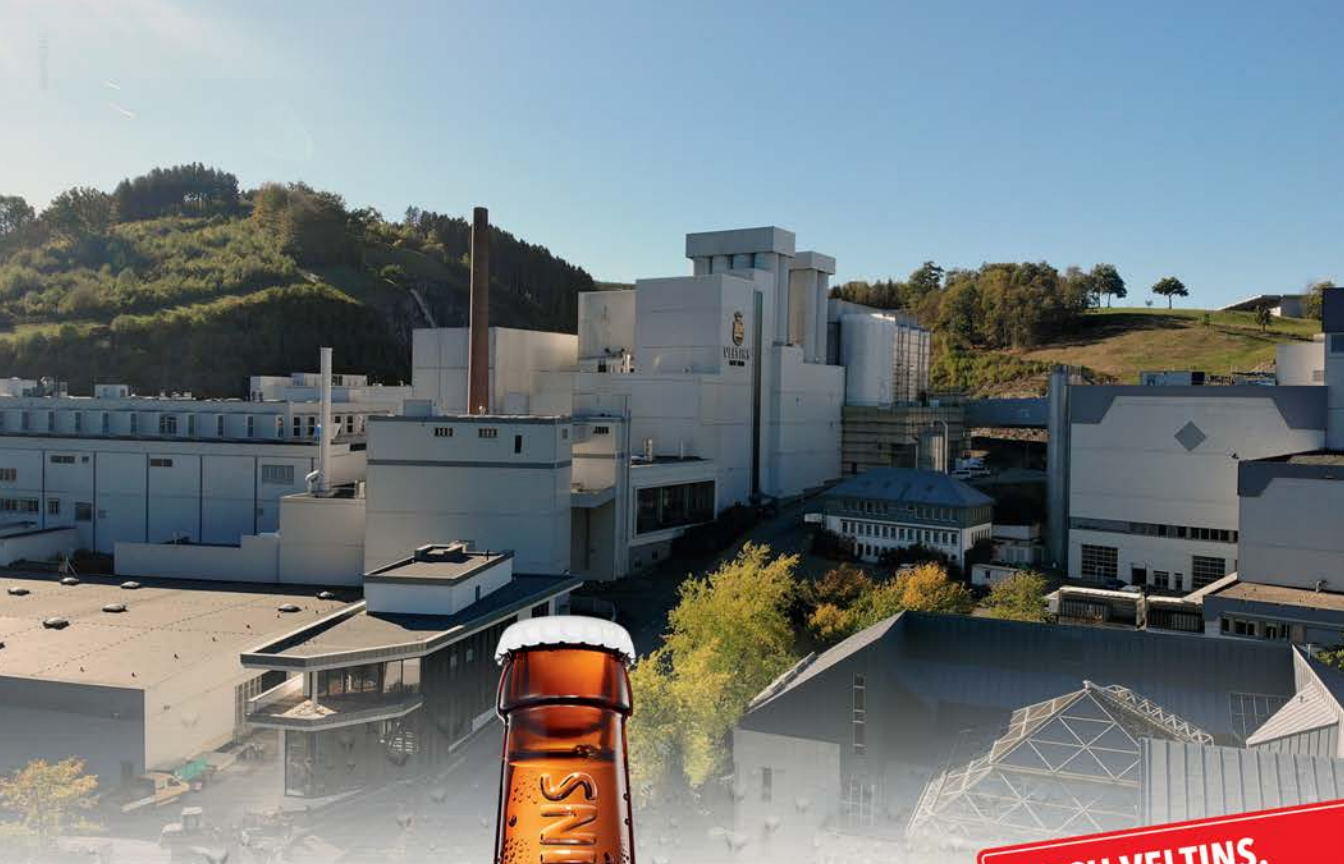
If two or more breweries have the same number of world-class and exceptional beers, then the brewery with the **highest point total** wins.

In the event of a tie, a **fourth reviewed beer** is counted as a tiebreaker.

If a fourth beer was not reviewed, we look at the highest score total among the brewery's **two top-scoring beers**.

Read on and raise a glass to this year's winners!

**THE BEST
BREWERIES
OF 2018**



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BEER MADE
WITH PASSION**



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The brewery's success depends on its passion for the art of brewing, its willingness to innovate and its investment power. In spite of this, the brewery C. & A. Veltins has never lost its down-to-earth roots in the beautiful region of the Sauerland between mountains, green meadows and forests.



REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT. FRESH **VELTINS**



CARL VELTINS



ANTON VELTINS



NATURALLY CLOUDY BEER
• mild and easy-drinking



In the 19th century, the brothers Carl and Anton Veltins brewed an exquisite beer in their brewery in Grevenstein; a beer which gained popularity far beyond the borders of their homeland.

With Grevensteiner, Brauerei C. & A. Veltins has now continued the story where the brothers left off. Our naturally cloudy Grevensteiner Original is a smooth rural-style beer, brewed using spring water and freshly harvested hops.

Traditional malt gives our beer its amber-coloured splendour and full-bodied aroma. Brewed in accordance with the German beer purity law.

Imported by Artisanal Imports, Austin, TX
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BRAUHAUS RIEGELE

One World Class Beer
Two Exceptional Beers
Total Score: 284

Highest-scoring beers:

Privat – 98
Riegele Augustus – 94
Riegele Noctus 100 – 92



Brauhaus Riegele of Augsburg, Germany rounds out our top three candidates for Brewery of the Year in 2018.

The headlining beer in this year's *Official Review* was Riegele's **Privat**, an incredible Festbier that typifies the style in every facet. As one of only 10 scores of 98 that have ever been registered by our judges, Privat uses only the finest natural ingredients to produce elegant, subtle flavors that form a unique harmony exemplified by the balance of floral hops and freshly milled malt varieties.

Riegele Augustus is the “emperor of Weizenbocks,” according to the brewery, and it's easy to see why. A strong alcohol content (8.0% ABV) combines with a robust malt bill of Steffi, Wheat and Munich to produce a strong, smooth beer with notes of banana, plum and clove.

Clocking in with a score of 92, **Riegele Noctus 100** rounds out the brewery's world-class and exceptional selections. An Imperial Stout at 10 percent ABV, this strong dark beer makes for a filling treat with a deep, rich flavor profile that offers complexity and balance.

98



Festbier

Privat features elegant, subtle flavors that form a unique harmony exemplified by the balance of floral hops and malt varieties.

94



Weizenbock

A strong alcohol content combines with a robust malt bill to produce a smooth beer with notes of banana and clove.

92



Imperial Stout

An engaging Imperial Stout, this dark beer makes for a filling treat with a rich flavor profile that offers complexity and balance.

96



Irish Stout

An easy-going stout, this roasty brew features coffee, dark chocolate and espresso elements and a pillowy mouthfeel due to nitrogenation.

95



Specialty Wood-Aged Beer

A lush and filling brew, this sweet treat spent 55 days aging in rum barrels with vanilla beans to provide excellent complexity.

94



American IPA

Brewed with whole-cone Simcoe and Citra hops as well as Citra lupulin powder, this beer gushes out piney, citrusy and earthy aromas.



BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY

One World Class Beer
Two Exceptional Beers
Total Score: 285 points



Highest-scoring beers:

- Nitro Irish Stout – 96
- Brewery Lane Series:
 - Imperial Vanilla Porter Aged in Rum Barrels – 95
 - Hop Peak IPA – 94

Breckenridge Brewery of Littleton, Colorado had a strong year in this year's *Official Review*.

Leading off Breckenridge's slate of world-class and exceptional beers was the beautiful, cascading pour of **Nitro Irish Stout**, which scored a 96. An easy-going stout that adds a welcoming Colorado spirit to an old-world style, this roasty, chocolaty brew features a pillowy mouthfeel due to the nitrogenation and coffee, dark chocolate and espresso elements.

Breckenridge delivered another exceptional dark brew with **Brewery Lane Series: Imperial Vanilla Porter aged in Rum Barrels**. The series is named after the street upon which the brewery is located in Littleton, Colorado. A lush and filling brew, this sweet and boozy creation spent 55 days aging in rum barrels with vanilla beans to provide excellent complexity in an elegant and luxurious dark beer.

Showcasing Breckenridge's depth and ability to craft various styles, **Hop Peak IPA** was a sterling representation of the American IPA style. Brewed with whole-cone Simcoe and Citra hops as well as Citra lupulin powder, this beer gushes out piney, citrusy and earthy aromas.



pFriem Family Brewers

707 Portway Ave.
Suite 101
Hood River, OR 97031

Tel.: (541) 321-0490
www.pfriembeer.com

Congratulations to pFriem Family Brewers of Hood River, Oregon for being named *The Beer Connoisseur's* 2018 Brewery of the Year!

It's been an accomplished year for pFriem Family Brewers, which is now BC's Brewery of the Year for the second time in three years. This year they submitted two beers that were rated as world class, *pFriem Oud Bruin* and *Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter*. Beyond that, the brewery submitted an impressive thirteen beers that were rated as exceptional – a record for the most highly rated beer in a single year for a brewery in the history of the *Official Review*.

To top off its 2018 accolades, pFriem also had an excellent showing at the 2018 Great American Beer Festival where it won a Gold Medal in the Mixed-Culture Brett Beer category for Druif and a Silver Medal for pFriem Pilsner in the German-Style Pilsner category. The brewery was also named the Brewers Association's 2018 Mid-Sized Brewing Company of the Year.

Additionally, it was awarded a World Beer Cup Gold Medal in the Belgian Style Fruit Beer category for Nectarine Golden Ale and four awards at the Oregon Beer Awards (including Large Brewery of the Year).

2018'S WORLD CLASS & EXCEPTIONAL REVIEWS

Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter – 96

pFriem Oud Bruin – 96

Nectarine Golden Ale – 95

pFriem Vienna Lager – 95

pFriem Flanders Blonde – 95

Super Saison – 94

Lemon Zest Farmhouse Ale – 94

Bailey's Taproom 10th – 94

pFriem Barrel Aged Saison II – 94

pFriem Flanders-Style Red Ale – 94

pFriem Helles Lager – 93

pFriem Extra Pale Ale – 93

Sauv Blanc Barrel Aged Golden Ale – 91

Druif (2018 Vintage) – 91

Mosaic Single Hop Pale – 91

Since opening its doors in 2012, pFriem Family Brewers has produced some of the most interesting and well-brewed examples of styles they choose to explore, and the brewery has been highly acclaimed throughout its six years of operation. According to Josh Pfriem, Brewmaster and Co-Founder, "Our goals for the brewery are modest ones – to build a business that was tightly integrated with our family lives, to honor the place we call home and love so dearly, and to create a warm, friendly space where others could experience our creations. Our goals for the creations themselves are anything but modest."

pFriem has long attempted to follow its motto of "Proudly Crafted, Humbly Offered" when creating the Belgian and German-inspired brews upon which the brewery can hang its hat. By employing high-quality natural ingredients and taking painstaking efforts to ensure they produce only the finest brews, pFriem has well earned its 2018 Brewery of the Year title. pFriem is truly a beer connoisseur's paradise and we encourage you, the reader, to visit the brewery and experience world class for yourself.



PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS

Two World Class Beers & One Exceptional Beer

Total Score: 287

Highest-scoring beers

Oud Bruin – 96

Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter – 96

Nectarine Golden Ale – 95



96

Oud Bruin

A deep crimson beer featuring aromas of marionberry, apple butter, raspberry, fig, sherry and leather with a tart, jammy finish.



96

Specialty Wood-Aged Beer

A delight for the senses. Pecan pie, toffee and dark chocolate notes appear before giving way to a decadent finish.



95

Wild Specialty Beer

Wine barrel-aged with local nectarines and featuring marmalade, citrus zest, peach nectar and cantaloupe aromas.

PFRIEM FAMILY BREWERS submitted an outstanding thirteen beers in the 2018 *Official Review* that scored in the exceptional category. The two top-scoring world class beers the brewery submitted were pFriem Oud Bruin and Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter.

The brewery's take on the fabled **Oud Bruin** style was an expertly crafted brew aged in an authentic foeder with notes of sherry, leather, marionberry, apple butter and Cabernet wine all finished off with a tart and jammy aftertaste that lingers. Our judge imagined pairing this beer with steamed

seafood such as buttered lobster or shrimp.

In contrast, **Maple Barrel Aged Smoked Porter** featured a complex array of eight different specialty malts – creating a rich feast for a drinker's palate to enjoy. Our judge compared the flavor to a bacon breakfast that was well balanced with a backdrop of smooth, light roast coffee.

Nectarine Golden Ale was aged six months in Sauvignon Blanc barrels then finished with nectarines to produce an elegant brew that's redolent of marmalade, citrus zest, peach nectar and cantaloupe.

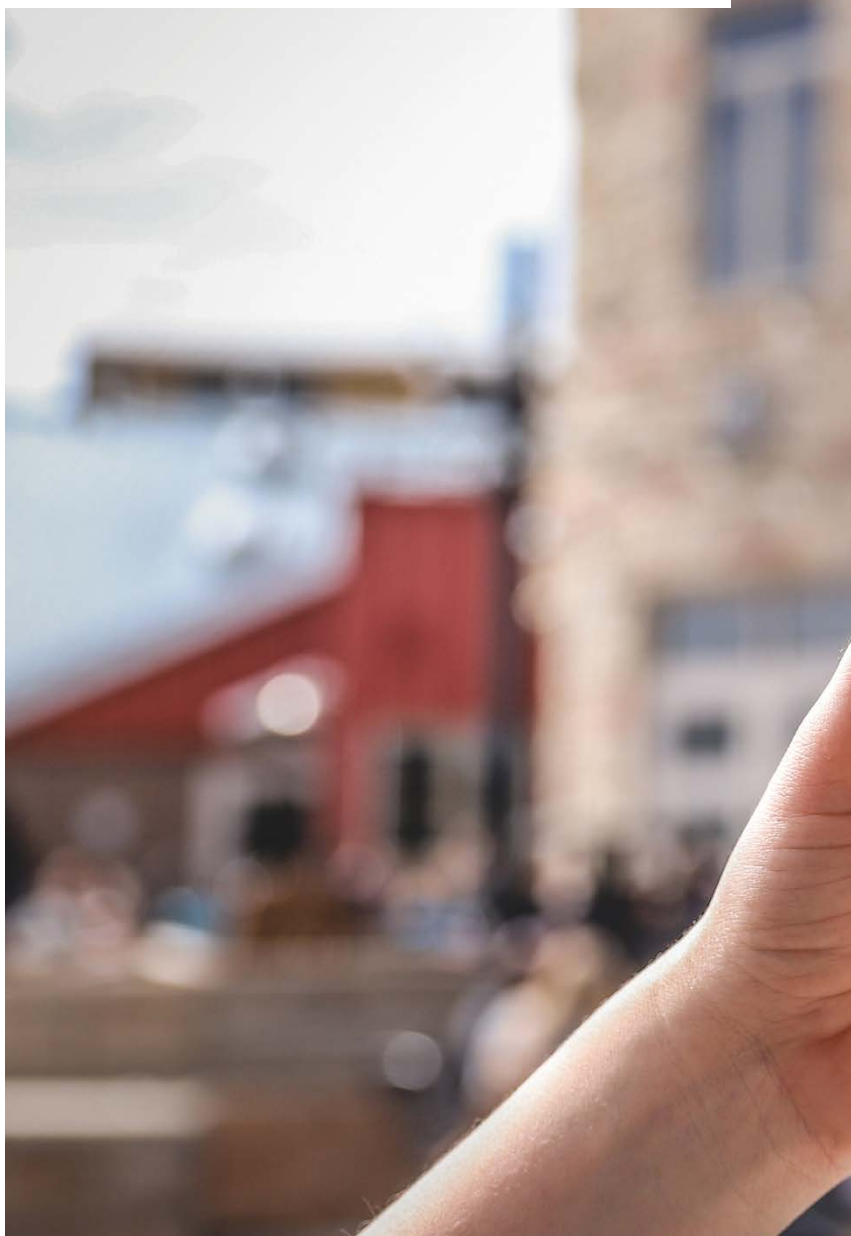
Emerging Beer Styles

by JOSH WEIKERT

So much beer, so little time.

It almost makes one nostalgic for the days when there were only a handful of craft breweries and even fewer that engaged in wide distribution. “Keeping up” with the beer scene was pathetically simple, but nowadays we face the challenge of not only keeping up with an exponentially larger number of breweries but also a growing number of categories, styles, and renditions of beers. It’s in that spirit that we take a moment to think about the top emerging beer styles to seek out in 2019.

Some are already firmly established in the minds of craft beer lovers even if they aren’t yet widely available in the marketplace, while others are lurking quietly in the shadows and sporting alien-sounding names. They represent new styles, rediscovered styles, augmented and enhanced styles – and even a return to the most basic styles. Craft beer is anything but static, and keeping up can be exhausting, but it is definitely worth the effort.



Pilsners and Light Lagers

Another style newly recognized in the 2018 BA Style Guidelines would be Contemporary American-Style Pilsner. Now, this isn’t your granddad’s “Fine Pilsner Beer” macro lager, but the kind of Pilsner characterized by Victory Brewing Company’s Prima Pils: bright, grainy, firmly bitter and hop-forward, utilizing either classic American or



PILSNERS & LIGHT LAGERS

Examples include: [Colorado Lager](#) (shown) by Odell Brewing Co., [Southside Lager](#) by Arches Brewing, [Steamworks Brewing Co. Pilsner](#), [Reuben's Brews Pilsner](#) and [Hoponius Union](#) by Jack's Abby.

noble hops. For all of this “newness,” though, we have to reckon with the reality that what’s old will, almost inevitably, become new again. We should expect the trend of craft session lagers – designed to compete with macro lagers – to continue. Whether breweries can sustain steady business with them or not, they may be worth the time and investment to attract new and converted craft beer drinkers – a bet that many production breweries and brewpubs will likely make.



Juicy & Hazy Beers

Among “new” styles, it’s hard not to look at NEIPA and its assorted relatives and expect to see their continued expansion. I know, they’re not really new, but they were just officially recognized as part of the 2018 Brewers Association Style Guidelines (within the “Juicy or Hazy” pale ales, IPAs and Double/Imperial IPA style categories). This finally



JUICY & HAZY BEER

Examples include:

The Substance (shown) by Bissell Brothers Brewing Co., Tunnel Vision DDH w/ Citra by Bearded Iris Brewing, Alpha Abstraction by Wild Leap Brew Co., Juice Machine by Tree House Brewing Co. and Hypnotizer by Night Shift Brewing.



distinguishes them from more conventional clear, bitter hoppy beers.

These cloudy, less-bitter and prominently hoppy beers have been as out-of-place in the guidelines as they have been popular among craft brewers, but that tension has now been relieved, and there's no reason to think that they won't continue their march through the beer world in 2019 – what remains to be seen is if they cement a place in that world, or fizzle out as many others have before them.

American Wild Ale

American Wild Ales are also continuing to define themselves (and stretch those definitions), as American breweries are shifting away from traditional sour styles and expectations, a trend that should continue in 2019. These new-world sours are being fueled by continuing interest in kettle-souring, expanding Solera and barrel-aging programs and more. Solera beers (beers that are fractionally blended over a lengthy period) are probably the most intriguing, with no two being the same thanks to a process that adds fresh wort to recently partially-emptied barrels. The result is a constantly evolving beer that can develop exotic, vibrant and unique flavors over time.

Examples: Serene, Kiwi and Sour Reserve by Up-land Brewing Co. (shown right), Touch of Brett Mandarin by Alesong Brewing & Blending, The Laurentian Series, Lake Michigan by Speciation Artisan Ales, Shared Waters by Coronado Brewing Co., Nectarine Golden Ale by pFriem Family Brewers.

Brut IPA

No piece about emerging styles for the new year would be complete without a discussion of Brut IPA. It has already made waves and sparked interest where available, and as it trickles down through the brewing ecosystem it has many looking for details. Brut IPA is dry, and I mean bone dry. This is accomplished by taking a conventional modern IPA (lots of late hops, some adjunct grains) and adding, at the end of fermentation, an enzyme called amyloglucosidase. Pronunciation is hard, but understanding is easy: it converts nearly all of the starches and sugars in a beer into fermentable glucose. The result is a beer that has a stark, light body and lots of hops, deriving all of its sweetness from alcohols. Expect it – and more enzyme-augmented beers – on taps near you soon.

Examples: Extra Brut by Drake's Brewing Co. (shown right), Saddleback by Uinta Brewing, Rinse/Repeat by Westbrook Brewing Co., Champaderade by Barrel Brothers Brewing Co., Brut Squad IPA by Bear Republic Brewing Co.

Kveik Beers

Another “already there” fermentation addition is beers brewed with kveik yeasts (“What is that?” some of you are already saying). Kveik is a non-purified form of yeast common to breweries in Norway. Not content to let the Norwegians keep this yeast to themselves, commercial breweries can purchase cultured strains of it – and they will. Kveik yeasts are fast-starting, fast-finishing fermenters that seem to

produce a clean and stable citrus-heavy ester profile at almost any temperature (even up to 100°F). In a world of New England IPAs and hop-forward Pilsners, what brewer will be able to resist?

Examples: Powell's Wildberry Kveik by 2050 State Brewing Co. (shown right), Norwegian Wood by Four Winds Brewing Co., New Lands by Hop Hooligans Brewery and Wicked Barrel Brewery, Logical Step by Alvarado Street Brewery, Golem Naftali by Bro-war Golem.

Historical Styles

Rediscovered styles – including many rescued from the trash heap of history – are making solid comebacks. In addition to the freshly engineered styles above, Gose, Kentucky Common, Lichtenhainer, smoked wheat beers and more are earning new attention from breweries in a perpetual quest for something different (even if it isn't exactly “new”).

Examples: Leipziger Gose by Bayerischer Bahnhof (shown right), Colonel Plug by Listermann Brewing Co., Maize by Urban Artifact, Midnight Zone by Bodriggy Brewing Co.

Color Variations on Traditional Styles

Brewers also seem enamored of color-specific beers. I don't mean glitter IPAs (at least I hope I don't). I mean White Stout, Red IPA, Black IPL, Brown Saison and more. Taking a traditional style and upending expectations by moving it around the SRM scale is a great way to avoid brewing ruts. While some are undoubtedly gimmicky novelties, many, like those noted above, are genuinely new and interesting takes on older styles.

Adjunct Beers

More and new fermentables and unfermentables alike are popping up in beers. Lactose isn't just for Milk Stouts and Milkshake IPAs anymore, honey isn't just for meads and braggots, and candi syrups aren't just for Belgians – brewers are applying ingredients with flavors in mind more than a focus on style-specific ingredients. Expect more coffee in beers next year, as nitro-fueled cold brew continues to create a flavor bridge between coffee-drinkers and beer-swiggers. Some are even optimistic that a brewery will find a way to make cannabis beer work, though to date the legal challenge is secondary to the flavor challenge.

Examples: 79 Series: Cranberry Cinnamon Ale by Wild Leap Brew Co. (shown right), Key Lime Pie by Short's Brewing Co., Spruce Tip IPA by Goodwood Brewing Co., Drink This or the Bees Die by Duck Foot Brewing Co.



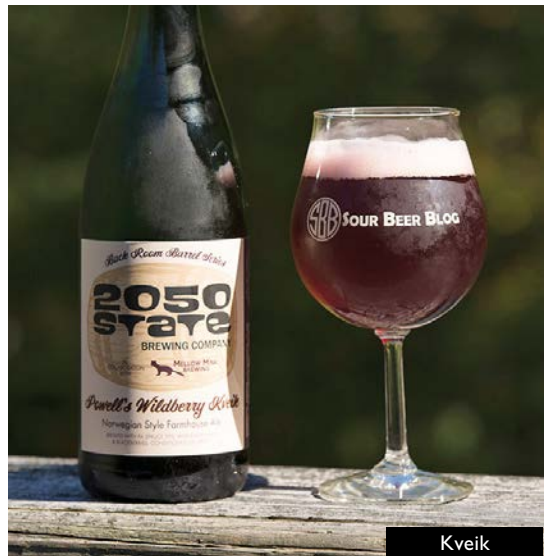
Adjunct



American Wild Ale



Brut IPA



Kveik

SEEING THE FUTURE

Predicting trends is not only difficult; it may be a fool's errand. To the extent that we can adequately predict what beers will be on the shelves in the next year, we're mostly noting those that have the potential to make the leap from "already here" to "always there." If it's hard to predict trends, predicting persistence is harder (where'd all the Black IPA go?). We'll know how well we did only when we no longer need to guess – but the speculation is still fun. Enjoy your beer exploration in 2019!



Historical

2019

by JIM DYKSTRA

TRENDING HOPS



You can make beer without hops.
*However, the odds of making good beer
without hops are not incredibly high.*

WONDROUS HUMULUS LUPULUS

Hops are inextricably entwined with the story of beer, just as they bind to the trellises upon which they ascend every year. They are mysterious, seemingly able to take on elements of nature's most enticing offerings, such as the lush flavors of mangoes, kiwis, lemons or grapefruit or the spicy profile of sage or mint. Of course, being related to the "forbidden fruit" of cannabis only adds to their appeal among beer enthusiasts.

As humans are hardwired to do, we are constantly seeking out the newest and best; the shiniest and ripest of these fascinating flowers, or even the most aromatic and flavorful. If a craft beer drinker wants the newest, best or "hottest" beer, much of what will determine their experience stems from the hops contained within.

If the experience is pleasurable, these hops will be cultivated, selectively bred and produced in exponentially larger quantities, just as recent hop phenoms like Mosaic and Citra have been. In fact, despite having only gained traction in the past few years, these two varieties comprised an estimated 15 percent of hops produced and harvested in 2018, according to a Reuters report.

HOP HARVEST 2018

On the note of hop harvests, overall estimated numbers from Reuters were down just a touch from 2017 – from 118,000 tons to 117,000 – with more U.S. hops headed overseas as worldwide craft beer interest grows and domestic interest wanes ever so slightly.

Interestingly, despite comprising roughly 2.5 percent of world beer sales, craft beer consumes 20 to 25 percent of the world's harvested hops every year, meaning that the relatively small craft segment is full of extremely flavorful, hop-focused brews.

Following is a list of some of the rising stars in the world of hops – some of which were made to suit the public's taste and some of which the public's palate has evolved to crave.

Each of these hops represent the culmination of years, if not decades, of research and testing. They have been found ideal not only in flavor, but in growth rate, yield capacity, cone size, disease and weather resistance, ease of harvest and storage life. Now they're ready for their time in the brewer's spotlight, each vying for the chance to change the tastes of the beer-drinking public. Success would allow these hops to sit securely alongside the most influential hops of all time by pushing the boundaries of what craft beer can be.



HOPSTEINER

Calypso - Origin: United States

Often used as a dual-purpose aroma and bittering hop, Calypso has expanded the “grassier” side of the hop palate, which has garnered it both praise and criticism.

Brewers have noted a subtle, pleasant blend of fruit and citrus elements including apple, pear, tropical and stone fruit followed by delicate hints of lemon-lime, earthy black tea, zesty pepper and mint.



Loral - Origin: United States

Another HBC creation (which is also responsible for Mosaic and Citra), Loral has been described as “super-noble,” referring to its range of characteristics, both noble in nature (peppery, herbal and floral) and the juicy, lemon-citrus notes of newer American varieties.

Described as a great blending hop, with a Goldilocks balance of earthy, citrus and stone fruit notes, it is the result of crossing Glacier hops with a Nugget sub-type.

Lemondrop - Origin: United States

True to the name, Lemondrop offers a pleasant, piquant lemon-citrus character with a similar aroma to boot. Clean citrus and juicy fruit flavors are where this varietal is most comfortable, with spicy herbal notes and the slightest hint of sweetness. As such,

this is a more refined hop, not designed to blow the doors down in super high-alpha fashion and will function beautifully in both ales and lagers.

Those looking for similar options will find this to be a fresh take on the old guard of Cascade and Centennial, and unsurprisingly, Lemondrop is the offspring of a female Cascade and an unnamed male, known as USDA 19058.

Cashmere - Origin: United States

Cashmere is a Cascade and Northern Brewer hop cross developed by Washington State University that has garnered recent attention for its tropical mélange of coconut, peach and tangerine aroma and flavor, with added notes of melon and lemongrass upon first sip. Essentially, this hop is perfect for tropical IPAs and hazy IPAs, two of the hippest styles currently available.

Willamette Valley



HOPS

2019

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2019 TRENDING HOPS

Hallertau Blanc - Origin: Germany

Along with Nelson Sauvin, Hallertau Blanc is paving the way for beers with wine-like characteristics. In doing so, it is helping to shift the public perception towards thinking of beer as a luxury beverage akin to its vinous sister liquid. This style of hop is also behind the rising star of the Brut IPA, which features champagne and white wine-like qualities.

Born from a Cascade breed in 2012 on the Hüll farm in the German Hallertau region, this beer was made with American ales in mind. Its vino-esque qualities of gooseberry and grass resemble flavors found in Sauvignon Blanc, hence the name, but is primarily used for its aroma, which features notes of lemongrass, grapefruit, black currant, pineapple and elderflower.

Jarrylo - Origin: United States

Named for the Slavic god of fertility and vegetation (Jarilo), this hop comes from the American Dwarf Hop Association (ADHA), which was originally founded to develop hops suited for low-trellis growing.

Flavor-wise, Jarrylo is subtle, with mild fruity aromas and flavors of banana, orange and pear, with a hint of peppery, citric bitterness.

A “love it or hate it” hop, the brewing consensus is that this hop is meant to be blended rather than showcased in American-style beer, and it shines with refined styles like lager, pilsner or Weizen. Think American hop qualities, but with a European sensibility.

Dr. Rudi - Origin: New Zealand

The only hop on the list which has earned its doctorate degree, The Dr. has been around since 1976, though it originally was called “Super Alpha,” – although its alpha acid percentage isn’t particularly high in today’s alpha-obsessed beer-escape.

Like any good doctor, Dr. Rudi isn’t a one-trick pony. It exhibits both floral, herbal and spicy flavor and aroma traits similar to Noble variants along

with a touch of fruity, peachy notes found in Galaxy and Citra, good for both bittering and aroma.

Often used in single-hopped beers, the end result is a spicy, grassy and not overly bitter brew that will appeal to both American and European tastes.

Ekuanot - Origin: United States

One more HBC creation circa 2014, the formerly known as Equinox has been gaining ground due to its multifaceted usage, functioning well in IPAs, sours, witbiers and any other style that requires significant hop presence. A high oil content makes it well-suited for whirlpooling and dry hop additions and allows it to stand on its own in a single-hopped format.

What has got more brewers talking is its mouthwateringly complex bouquet of flavors and aromas, featuring “lime, apple, melon, berry, cedar, papaya, bay leaves, eucalyptus, clove, sage and tobacco,” according to BSG Supply Group.

Sabro - Origin: United States

A creation by The Hop Breeding Company (HBC), a venture between John I. Haas, Inc. and Select Botanicals Group LLC, Sabro boasts complex citrus and fruity flavors including tangerine, coconut, tropical fruit and peach with hints of cedar, mint and cream.

Beyond its distinct flavor, this hop breed is exciting due to its neomexicanus heritage, meaning it is born of hops indigenous to the American Southwest. These “wild hops” can be hard to breed, with Sabro representing the culmination of two decades of research, but the end result is more genetic diversity, and a hardier, more robust plant.

“If part of your heritage includes the desert and mountain environments of the Southwestern U.S., you have a strong survival spirit in your genes – the essence of sustainability,” said Alex Barth, CEO of John I. Haas in a release.

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