

STYLE DESCRIPTION

ABBAY ALES (DUBBEL, TRIPPEL, SINGEL)

Monastic, or abbey, ales are an ancient tradition in Belgium, in much the same manner as wine production was once closely associated with monastic life in ancient France. Currently very few working monasteries brew beer within the order, but many have licensed the production of beers bearing their abbey name to large commercial brewers. These “abbey ales” can vary enormously in specific character, but most are quite strong in alcohol content, ranging from 6 percent alcohol by volume (ABV) to as high as 10 percent. Generally, abbey ales are labeled as either “dubbel” or “trippel,” though this is not a convention that is slavishly adhered to. The former typically denotes a relatively less alcoholic and often darker beer, while the latter can often be lighter or blond in color and have a syrupy, alcoholic mouthfeel that invites sipping, not rapid drinking. The lowest gravity abbey ale in a Belgian brewer’s range is usually referred to as a “singel,” though it is rarely labeled as such.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

ALT

Put simply, an altbier has the smoothness of a classic lager with the flavors of ale. A more rigorous definition must take history into account. Ale brewing in Germany predates the now predominant lager production. As the lager process spread from Bohemia, some brewers retained the top-fermenting ale process but adopted the cold maturation associated with lager hence the name “old beer” (alt means old in German).

Altbier is associated with Dusseldorf, Munster and Hanover. This style of ale is light compared to traditional English ale. In the United States, some amber ales are actually in the alt style.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

AMBER ALES

Many North American brewers are now producing ales that are identified by the term “Amber Ale.” This is a more modern, non-traditional style, and many of these beers borrow heavily from the characteristics associated with more classical styles such as “Pale Ales” or “Bitters.” Amber ales are light to medium bodied and can be anywhere from light copper to light brown in hue. Flavorwise, they can vary from generic and quaffable to serious craft brewed styles with extravagant hoppy aromas and full malt character. Typically, amber ales are quite malty but not heavily caramelized in flavor. For our purposes, amber ales will also include ales commonly identified as “Red Ales,” and “American Ales.”



STYLE DESCRIPTION

AMERICAN PALE ALE

These brews are golden to light copper in color with a more subtle overall character and lighter body than typical Pale Ales. English ale fruitiness will probably not be observed. However, the most important qualification is that they are brewed domestically and will have less body, malt and hop character than a pale ale from the same brewery.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BELGIAN-STYLE AMBER ALE

This is not a classic style, but nonetheless encapsulates various beers of a similar Belgian theme that does not fit into the more classic mold. Expect amber hued, fruity and moderately strong ales (6 percent ABV) with a yeasty character.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BELGIAN-STYLE BLONDE ALE

This is not a classic style of Belgian ale, but covers the more commercially minded Belgian ales that are lighter in color and moderate in body and alcoholic strength. Fruity Belgian yeast character and mild hopping should be expected.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BELGIAN-STYLE GOLDEN ALE

Belgian golden ales are pale to golden in color with the lightest possible body for their deceptively alcoholic punch, as much as 9 percent alcohol by volume. Typically, such brews undergo three fermentations, the final one being in the bottle, resulting in fine champagne-like carbonation, and a huge rocky white head when they are poured.

Often such beers can be cellared for six months to a year to gain roundness.

These beers are probably best served chilled to minimize the alcoholic mouthfeel.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BELGIAN-STYLE RED ALE

These are also known as “soured beers,” their defining character classically coming from having been aged for some years in well-used large wooden tuns, to allow bacterial action in the beer and thus impart the sharp “sour” character. Hops do not play much role in the flavor profile of these beers, but whole cherries can be macerated with the young beer to produce a cherry flavored Belgian Red Ale. These styles are almost exclusively linked to one producer in northern Belgium, Rodenbach. These ales are among the most distinctive and refreshing to be found anywhere.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BELGIAN-STYLE STRONG ALE

Beers listed in this category will generally pack a considerably alcoholic punch and should be approached much like one would a barleywine. Indeed, some of them could be considered Belgian-style barleywines, such as those from Brasserie Dubuisson. Expect a fruity Belgian yeast character and a degree of sweetness coupled with a viscous mouthfeel.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BIERE DE GARDE

Biere de garde is a Flemish and northern French specialty ale generally packaged distinctively in 750-mL bottles with a cork.

Historically, the style was brewed as a farmhouse specialty in February and March, to be consumed in the summer months when the warmer weather didn't permit brewing.

Typically produced with a malt accent, this is a strong (often over 6 percent), yet delicate bottle-conditioned beer.

These brews tend to be profoundly aromatic and are an excellent companion to hearty foods.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BROWN ALE

The precise definition of English Brown Ale would depend on where you are in England. It is nowadays much more closely associated with Northern England, specifically Tadcaster and Newcastle, home to Newcastle Brown Ale. These medium-bodied reddish-brown beers are malt accented with a nutty character, a gentle fruitiness, and low bitterness. Alcohol is moderate, a maximum of 5% ABV. The much less prevalent Southern English style, not seen abroad, is much darker in color, sweeter on the palate, and made in a lighter style. English style brown ales of the former type have become very popular with US brewers, no doubt for the same reason as they took hold in England, namely their great drinkability.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

IRISH DRY STOUT

Dry stout is closely associated with Ireland in general. These brews tend to be rich and dark with a definitive bitter note and a drying palate feel. They are classically paired with oysters, although any Irish Stout drinker will tell you that a pint it is a meal in itself. Draught (draft) Irish Stout is nitrogen-flushed to give it that tell-tale white creamy head. This process is also effected in cans and bottles with a nitrogen “widget.”



STYLE DESCRIPTION

DUNKEL/DARK WEIZEN

These dark wheat beers derive their character from the use of darker malts in the non-wheat ingredients, so that a richer, darker-colored beer can be achieved, along with fuller malt flavors. Dunkel weizens still display the floral, estery qualities of a pale wiezen. Dark weizens can be produced with or without a secondary fermentation in the bottle, with the corollary that these styles can be yeast sedimented or unsedimented depending upon the preference of the brewer.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

ESB

Bitter is an English specialty, and very much an English term, generally denoting the standard ale – the “session” beer – in an English brewer’s range. They are characterized by a fruity, light to medium body and an accent on hop aromas more than hop bitters.

Colors range from golden to copper.

Despite the name they are not particularly bitter. Indeed, British brewed “bitters” will often be less bitter than US craft brewed amber ales. A fuller-bodied bitter is labeled as “Extra Special Bitter” (ESB). These weightier versions of bitter often stand up better to the rigors of travel overseas than the lower gravity standard versions. An important element of faithful bitters are English yeast cultures used in fermentation. These impart a fruity, mild estery character that should be noted in examples of the style. Bitters are now widely emulated in North America, sometimes with domestically grown hops imparting a slightly more assertive character than seen in traditional English bitters.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

FLAVORED PORTER

Flavoring traditional beer styles is a particular feature of the ever creative US craft brewing scene. Flavorings used in porters are typically dark berry fruits and coffee, and when skillfully done the effect can be greater than the sum of its parts.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

FLAVORED STOUT

Flavored stouts are still stouts, be they sweeter or drier. Dark fruits, coffee and chocolate are particularly popular, and the marriage of flavors should at best be greater than the sum of its parts.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

FLEMISH STYLE BROWN ALE

These are complex dark beers, most closely associated with the town of Oudenaarde in Flanders. The most authentic examples are medium to full-bodied beers that are influenced by a number of factors: high bicarbonate in the brewing water to give a frothy texture; a complex mix of yeasts and malts; blending of aged beers; and aging in bottles before release. In the best examples, the flavor profile is reminiscent of olives, raisins, and brown spices and could be described as “sweet and sour.” These beers are not hop-accented and are of low bitterness.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

HEFEWEIZEN

Weizen bier is a top fermenting beer style that originates from southern Germany, particularly Bavaria, and is brewed with at least 50% wheat in the mash. Hefeweizens are refreshing, highly carbonated beers ideal for quenching summer thirsts. They undergo secondary fermentation, often in the bottle, and the yeast strains used for this purpose impart a spicy, clove-like flavor.

Hefe (the German word for Yeast) denotes that the bottle contains yeast sediment.

Alcohol content is typically 5-5.5% ABV, giving these beers a medium to medium-full body. Hop flavors, however, play a very insignificant role in the flavor profile.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

IMPERIAL STOUT

Imperial stout is an extra strong version of stout, which was originally brewed by the British to withstand the rigors of export to Russia and the Baltic states. This style is dense, opaque black and strong in alcohol (6-7%), with a note of sweetness. Burnt cocoa and dried fruit flavors are typical. Russian Imperial stouts originate from recipes that British brewers tailored to the tastes of the Imperial Russian court. The style has now been embraced by US craft brewers as a winter specialty.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

INDIA PALE ALE (IPA)

India Pale Ales are deep gold to amber in color, and are usually characterized by floral hop aromas and a distinctive hop bitterness on the finish. India Pale Ales were originally brewed by British brewers in the 19th Century, when British troops and colonizers depended on supplies of beer shipped from England. Standard ales did not survive the journey, hence brewers developed high gravity, highly hopped ales that survived shipment in casks to their largest market, India. This style, probably not anywhere near as bitter as it was when destined for India, continues to be brewed in a toned down manner in the UK and is currently undergoing a mini-revival. However, US craft brewers have claimed the style as their own, and often brew them with assertive Pacific Northwestern hop varieties with a hugely aromatic hop accent.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

IRISH ALE

Irish ales are characterized by their reddish color, malt accents, slightly sweet palate, and low hopping. They are not generally bitter, if true to style, reflecting the historical fact that the Irish have never taken to using huge amounts of hops in their traditional beers. Back home, Irish ales have long played second fiddle to stouts, and prior to that, porters. Lacking a truly indigenous character, many versions being revived in the USA owe more to Celtic marketing than to a distinct character, although the color and high drinkability are the usual reference point.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

KÖLSCH

Kölsch is an ale emanating from Cologne, Germany. In Germany (and the European Community), the term is strictly legally limited to the beers from within the city environs of Cologne. Simply put, Kölsch has the color of a pilsner with some of the fruity character of an ale. This is achieved with the use of top fermenting yeasts and pale pilsner malts. The hops are accented on the finish, which is classically dry and herbal. It is a medium to light-bodied beer and delicate in style.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

KRISTALL WEIZEN

A kristall weizen is a nonhazy weizen ale. “Kristall” on the label of a weizen specifically denotes that a weizen has been filtered prior to bottling, to remove the protein haze and yeast often suspended in such beers.

Kristall weizens lack the yeasty and spicy complexity often associated with hefeweizen beers, and have a cleaner and more delicate flavor. Floral, fruity aromas are often noted in classic examples of this style, though healthy alcohol content of 5-5.5% will give a medium-full bodied character.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

LAMBICS

Geeze, Fruit Lambic, Faro. Lambic beers are perhaps the most individualistic style of beer in the world. Lambics are produced in tiny quantities immediately south of the Belgian capital of Brussels. Lambic brewers use native wild yeasts in the open-air fermentation process to produce these specialties. This unusual method, in conjunction with extended aging in ancient oak barrels, imparts a unique vinous character with a refreshing sourness and astonishing complexity. Lambics labeled as Geeze are a blend of young and old beers. Such blending results in a sharp, champagne-like effervescence and tart, toasty flavors. Those labeled as Faro have had sugar, caramel, or molasses added in order to impart a note of sweetness. Lambic beers, however, are more often seen in the US when they have been flavored with fruits. Kriek (cherry) and Framboise (raspberry) are the most popular and traditional fruits employed. Other exotic fruits are widely used in juice form in the more commercial examples of lambic beer, much to the consternation of

purist connoisseurs.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

MILD ALE

Mild ale is a traditional style of English ale that is characterized by darker colors, sweetish malt flavors, and subtle hopping levels, all within a lower alcohol frame (typically 3.5%). Their purpose is to allow the drinker to get a full quotient of flavor in a “session” beer – a trick to which English ale brewing lends itself readily. In the 1940’s, Mild was more popular than bitter in English pubs, though it is less common now. US craft brewers occasionally pay homage to this style.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

OATMEAL STOUT

This brew is a variation of sweet stout, with a small proportion of oats used in place of roasted malt, which has the effect of enhancing body and mouthfeel. They were originally brewed by the British in the earlier part of this century, when stouts were thought of as a nutritious part of an everyday diet.

They tend to be highly flavorful with a velvety texture and sometimes a hint of sweetness. Oatmeal stouts are now a very popular staple of the US craft brewing scene.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

PALE ALE

Pale ales tend to be fuller-bodied, with a more assertive character on the palate.

They're the standard bitter in an English brewer's portfolio. In England, it is generally bottled, as opposed to being sold on draft. Despite the name, pale ales are not pale but, in fact, more of an amber hue. The original designation was in reference to this style of beer being paler than the brown and black beers which were more popular at the time of the style's inception. In the US, pale ale styles have become one of the benchmarks by which craft brewers are judged. The US version of pale ale is crisper and generally much more hoppy. Indeed, this style is well suited to assertive domestic Pacific Northwestern hop varieties that give the US examples inimitable character. A good US example should be available on tap in any bar worth frequenting for its beer selection.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

PORTER

Porters are reddish-brown to black in color, medium to medium-full bodied, and characterized by a flavor profile that can vary from a very subtle dark malt to a fully roasted, smoky flavor. Being a centuries-old style, there are differences of opinion with regard to what a true porter was actually like and there can be wide variations from one brewer's interpretation to the next. Roasted malt should provide the flavoring character, rather than roasted barley as is used with stouts. Stronger, darker versions and lighter more delicate versions are equally valid manifestations of the style. The influence of hops can often be notable in the richer craft brewed examples of the style. Although porter was the drink of the masses in 1700s London, it is not a significant factor in the British market today, despite the production of a few outstanding English examples. In the United States, it is enjoying newfound popularity among US craft brewers and many fine US examples are produced.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

SAISON

Saison beers are distinctive specialty beers from the Belgian province of Hainuat. These beers were originally brewed in the early spring for summer consumption, though contemporary Belgian saisons are brewed all year round with pale malts and well dosed with English and Belgian hop varieties. Lively carbonation ensues from a secondary fermentation in the bottle. The color is classically golden orange and the flavors are refreshing with citrus and fruity hop notes. Sadly, these beers are under appreciated in their home country and their production is limited to a small number of artisanal producers who keep this style alive. With a typically hoppy character, Saisons are an extremely esoteric style of beer that should appeal to any devotees of US craft beers, if you can track them down.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

SCOTTISH ALE

Scottish ales are typically full-bodied and malty, with some of the classic examples being dark brown in color. They are more lowly hopped than the English counterparts and often have a slightly viscous and sweet caramel malt character due to incomplete fermentation. Scottish style ales can be found in far flung corners of the world where faithful versions are brewed, this being a legacy of its popularity in the British Empire. In the US, many craft brewers produce a Scottish style ale. The “export” versions produced by Scottish brewers, the type mostly encountered in the US, are considerably stronger and more malty than the standard versions made available to Scottish beer drinkers.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

STRONG ALE

Strong Ales are sometimes referred to as old ales, stock ales or winter warmers.

These beers are higher alcohol versions (typically between 5.5-7% ABV) of pale ales, though not as robust or alcoholic as barley wines. Usually a deep amber color, these brews generally have a sweet malty palate and a degree of fruitiness.

If “bottle conditioned,” strong ales can improve for some years, in some cases eventually obtaining Sherry-like notes.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

SWEET STOUT

Sweet stouts are largely a British specialty. These stouts have a distinctive sweetness to the palate and often show chocolate and caramel flavors. They are sometimes known as milk or cream stouts. These beers obtain their characters by using chocolate malts and lactic (milk) sugars in the brewing process.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

TRAPPIST ALE

According to EC law, trappist ale may only come from six abbeys of the trappist order that still brew beer on their premises.

Five are in Belgium and one, La Trappe, comes from Holland. Although the styles may differ widely between them, they all share a common trait of being top fermented, strong, bottle conditioned, complex, and fully flavored brews. At most, each abbey produces three different varieties of increasing gravity. These can often improve with some years of cellaring. In all, there are 15 different trappist beers from the six monasteries. Trappist ales are among the most complex and old fashioned of beers that one can find – little wonder that many connoisseurs treat them as the holy grail of beer drinking.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

WEIZEN BOCK

Weizen bocks are essentially winter wheat beers, originally brewed in Bavaria.

The color can be pale gold to brown. They are of higher alcoholic strength, as high as 7% ABV, showing a warming personality, though they should still have a significant “rocky” head when poured. These beers combine the character of hefeweizens and doppelbocks and as such are rich and malty with estery, yeasty qualities and show a note of wheaty crispness through the finish.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

WHEAT ALE

As the name would suggest, these are ales that use a proportion of wheat in the mash to add a protein haze. Wheat ales, inspired by the German weizen tradition, were popular before Prohibition in the United States and are enjoying resurgence in popularity. This generic category encapsulates the diverse interpretation of the classic German weizen styles brewed in America and elsewhere. A host of variables, ranging from the wheat/malt ration hopping and filtration/nonfiltration, all contribute to wide variations on the theme. Generally, US examples feature a more marked hop accent than classic German weizen styles and are often dryer.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

WHITE/WIT BEER

Wit beer is a style of flavored wheat. It is distinctly Belgian in origin and is still very closely associated with their lowland country. Wits employ a proportion of unmalted wheat in the mash but also have flavor added in the form of Curacao orange peel and coriander, among other ingredients. Their appearance is marked by a hazy white precipitate and these beers generally have some sedimentation. Typically these are very refreshing summer thirst quenchers.

They are not widely produced in the United States, but some notable examples can be found.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

WINTER ALES

Spiced winter ales are popular hybrids among US craft brewers. Typically they are strong ales that have had some spice added during the brewing process. True to their name, they make ideal sipping beers with which to ward off winter's chill and get a dose of seasonal spices. This style is usually brewed before Christmas and brewers frequently make annual adjustments to their often secret recipes in an effort to obtain that perfect symbiosis between spices, hops and malt.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

AMBER LAGERS

Amber lagers are a vaguely defined style of lager much favored by US lager brewers. They are darker in color, anywhere from amber to copper hued, and generally more fully flavored than a standard pale lager. Caramel malt flavors are typical and hopping levels vary considerably from one brewery to the next, though they are frequently hoppier than the true vienna lager styles on which they are loosely based. Alcohol levels are generally a maximum of 5% ABV.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BLACK/SCHWARZ BEER

Originally brewed in Thuringia, a state in eastern Germany, these lager style brews were known to be darker in color than their Munich counterparts. Often relatively full-bodied, and rarely under 5% ABV, these beers classically feature a bitter chocolate, and/or roasted malt note and a rounded character. Hop accents are generally low. This obscure style was picked up by Japanese brewers and is made in small quantities by all of Japan's major brewers. Schwarz beers are not often attempted by US craft brewers.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BOCK

Bocks are a type of strong lager historically associated with Germany and specifically the town of Einbeck. These beers range in color from pale to deep amber tones, and feature a decided sweetness on the palate.

Bock styles are an exposition of malty sweetness that is classically associated with the character and flavor of Bavarian malt. Alcohol levels are quite potent, typically 5-6% ABV. Hop aromas are generally low though hop bitterness can serve as a balancing factor against the malt sweetness. Many of these beers' names or labels feature some reference to a goat. This is a play on words in that the word "bock" also refers to a male goat in the German language. Many brewers choose to craft these beers for consumption in the spring (often called Maibock) or winter, when their warmth can be fully appreciated.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

DOPPELBOCK

This is a sub-category of the bock style. Doppelbocks are extra strong, rich and weighty lagers characterized by an intense malty sweetness with a note of hop bitterness for balance. Color can vary from full amber to dark brown and alcohol levels are potentially high, typically 7-8% ABV. Doppelbocks were first brewed by the Paulaner monks in Munich. At the time, it was intended to be consumed as “liquid bread” during Lent. Most Bavarian examples end in the suffix -ator, in deference to the first commercial example which was named Salvator (savior) by the Paulaner brewers.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

EISBOCK

This is the strongest type of bock. It is made by chilling a doppelbock until ice is formed. At this point, the ice is removed, leaving behind a brew with a higher concentration of alcohol. This also serves to concentrate the flavors, and the resultant beer is rich and powerful, with a pronounced malt sweetness and a warm alcoholic finish. Alcohol levels run to at least 8% ABV.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

GERMAN DARK LAGER/DUNKEL

Dunkel is the original style of lager, serving as the forerunner to the pale lagers of today. They originated in and around Bavaria, and are widely brewed both there and around the world. This is often what the average consumer is referring to when they think of dark beer. At their best, these beers combine the dryish chocolate or licorice notes associated with the use of dark roasted malts and the roundness and crisp character of a lager. Examples brewed in and around Munich tend to be slightly fuller-bodied and sometimes have a hint of bready sweetness to the palate, a characteristic of the typical Bavarian malts used.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

“LIGHT” AND REDUCED CALORIE LAGERS

These are the recently popular brews which are popular in a figure-conscious society. Essentially, these are pale lager styled beers with fewer calories. Like all other “diet products,” the objective is to maintain flavor while minimizing calories. This is achieved quite successfully by some brands, despite the implausibility of the proposition.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

MAIBOCK/PALE BOCK

Maibocks are medium to full-bodied lagers whose alcohol content can vary widely, though is typically between 5-6% ABV. The color of pale bocks can vary from light bronze to deep amber and they are characterized by a sweet malty palate and subtle hop character. As its name would suggest, this is a bock style that traditionally makes a spring appearance in May as a celebration of a new brewing season.

In a Germanic brewers portfolio, it should conventionally have a less assertive character than other bock offerings later in the year.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

MUNICH HELLES

Originating from Munich, this style of lager is very soft and round on the palate, and usually comes in a pale to golden hue.

These beers traditionally tend to be malt accented with subtle hop character. They are generally weightier than standard pale lagers though less substantial than Dortmunder Export styles. All the finest examples still come from the brewing center of Munich and are relatively easy to find in major US markets.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

PALE LAGERS

Pale lagers are the standard international beer style as personified by products from Miller to Heineken. This style is the generic spin-off of the pilsner style. Pale lagers are generally light to medium-bodied, with a light to medium hop impression and a clean, crisp malt character. Quality, from a flavor point of view, is very variable within this style and many cheaper examples use a proportion of non-malt additives such as rice or corn to reduce the production costs. Alcohol content is typically between 3.5-5% ABV, with the upper end of the range being preferable if one is to get a true lager mouthfeel.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

PILSNER

Pilsner styles of beer originate from Bohemia in the Czech Republic. They are medium to medium-full bodied and are characterized by high carbonation and tangy Czech varieties of hops that impart floral aromas and a crisp, bitter finish. The hallmark of a fresh pilsner is the dense, white head. The alcohol levels must be such as to give a rounded mouthfeel, typically around 5% ABV. Classic pilsners are thoroughly refreshing, but they are delicate and must be fresh to show their best. Few beers are as disappointing to the beer lover as a stale pilsner. German pilsner styles are similar, though often slightly lighter in body and color. Great pilsners are technically difficult to make and relatively expensive to produce.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

RAUCHBIER

The origins of Rauchbier lies with breweries in the region of Franconia in northern Bavaria which traditionally dried the barley over fires fueled by beech trees from local forests. The resulting pungent malt imparted an assertively smoky aroma and flavor to the beer from which it was made.

These smoked lagers generally feature a very malty framework on which the intensely smoky character will not become overbearing. Rauchbiers are still brewed in the traditional manner by many of the breweries centered around the town of Bamberg, though enterprising brewers in other parts of the world have begun to make similarly styled beers.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

VIENNA STYLE LAGERS AND MARZEN/FEST BEERS

The classic amber to red lager which was originally brewed in Austria in the 19th century has come to be known as the Vienna style. These are reddish-amber with a very malty toasted character and a hint of sweetness. This style of beer was adapted by the Munich brewers and in their hands has a noted malty sweetness, as well as a toasted flavor with a touch more richness. The use of the term Marzen, which is German for March, implies that the beer was brewed in March and lagered for many months. On a label, the words “fest marzen,” or “Oktoberfest,” generally imply the Vienna style. Oktoberfest beers have become popular as September seasonal brews among US craft brewers, though they are not always classic examples of the German or Austrian style.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

DORTMUNDER EXPORT

Well balanced, smooth, and refreshing, Dortmunders tend to be stronger and fuller than other pale lagers or Munich Helles styles.

They may also be a shade darker and a touch hoppier. The style originates from the city of Dortmund in northern Germany.

Dortmunder Export came about during the industrial revolution, when Dortmund was the center of the coal and steel industries, and the swelling population needed a hearty and sustaining brew. The “export” appendage refers to the fact that Dortmunder beers were “exported” to surrounding regions. Today the term Dortmunder now widely refers to stronger lagers brewed for export, though not necessarily from Dortmund.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BARLEY WINE

“Barley wine” is the evocative name coined by British brewers to describe an extremely potent ale that can range from golden copper to dark brown in color. They are characterized by extravagant caramel malt flavors and bittering hops that prevent the malt sweetness from cloying. Rich and viscous, they can have in their most complex manifestations winey flavor profiles, with a hint of sweetness.

Some examples are vintage dated and can improve with extended bottle age.

These powerful brews are classically sold in small “nip” bottles and can be consumed after dinner or with dessert. The style has become popular among US craft brewers who often produce them as winter specialties.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

BLACK & TAN

Black & Tan was originally conceived as a British pub concoction of Stout and IPA mixed in a pint pot. Variations are still blended in some English pubs, but in the US the term is used by a small number of brands to loosely refer to a dark amber to brown colored beer with a malt accent, relatively light in alcohol and low in hop character.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

CREAM ALE

Cream Ale is a North American specialty that is somewhat of a hybrid in style. Despite the name, many brewers use both ale and lager yeasts for fermentation, or more often just lager yeasts. This style of beer is fermented like an ale at warm temperatures, but then stored at cold temperatures for a period of time, much as a lager would be. The resultant brew has the unchallenging crisp characteristics of a light pale lager, but is endowed with a hint of the aromatic complexities that ales provide. Pale in color, they are generally more heavily carbonated and more heavily hopped than light lagers.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

HERB-SPICED AND FRUIT BEERS

These are lagers or ales to which herbs, fruits, or spices have been added in order to impart flavor or color. Depending on whether or not the seasonings have been used in the fermentation or as an addition of juice or extract, the beer will have more or less of the desired character. These beers are highly individualistic, and allow the brewers great creativity in their formulations. They will range from mild aromatic overtones to intense and pungently flavored concoctions.



STYLE DESCRIPTION

MALT LIQUOR

This category is BATF-mandated insofar as any lager stronger than 5% alcohol by volume cannot call itself a lager beer. There are a number commercial brands that have been created to fill this category, many of which do not have great merit from the connoisseur's perspective. Some strong European lagers adopt this labeling moniker for the US market.

