

# Beer Basics

A guide to more drinking joy through knowledge.

As a social beverage, beer is convivial, it is celebratory. **Beer is fun.** Like with many things, beer can be better enjoyed when one possesses a deeper understanding of it. In that respect, beer can also be cerebral. That's where LykeBeer's goal of Elevating enters the picture. In the Beer Judge Certification Program's 2015 style guidelines, more than 100 beer styles were defined by density (or specific gravities stated before and after fermentation), strength, color, and bitterness. Each of those styles is presented here. As beer drinkers, the densities or gravities don't mean much to us, but the other statistics are key information points that communicate what we can expect from a beer. **Strength** is stated as Alcohol By Volume or **ABV**, today's standard method of measurement. **Color** range to be expected in each style of beer is shown with the gradation of color in each of the style boxes. There are two common ways of quantifying color: Standard Reference Method or **SRM** and European Brewing Convention or **EBC**. EBC numbers are roughly double the SRM numbers. SRM is roughly equal to another color scale, Lovibond, which is used to designate colors of malt. **Bitterness** is most commonly communicated as a statement of International Bitterness Units or **IBUs**. An IBU is one part per million of alpha acids—a class of acids found in hops that contribute bitterness to beer when exposed to heat in the brewing process. It is believed the human thresholds for detecting bitterness range from approximately 5-100 IBUs or parts per million. It should be noted that IBUs are a purely quantitative measurement alpha acids added to a beer and depending on the amount of malt and adjunct sugars used in a beer, a given beer may seem more or less bitter than another beer with the same IBU rating.

## American Styles of Beer

<b>American Light Lager</b> IBUs: 8 - 12 ABV: 2.8 - 4.2%	Highly carbonated, light mouthfeel, neutral taste & aromas. Refreshing; served cold.	<b>American IPA</b> IBUs: 40 - 70 ABV: 5.5 - 7.5%	Medium-high bitterness featuring piney, citrus, resinous, or fruity American hops.
<b>American Lager</b> IBUs: 8 - 18 ABV: 4.2 - 5.3%	Pilsner-inspired, first brewed mid-1800s; dominant U.S. style for most of the 1900s.	<b>White IPA</b> IBUs: 40 - 70 ABV: 5.5 - 7.0%	American IPA that includes the coriander, pepper & fruit character of a Belgian witbier.
<b>Pre-Prohibition Lager</b> IBUs: 25 - 40 ABV: 4.5 - 6.0%	Grainy-sweet corn or rice malt flavor; North American hops of types from the period.	<b>Rye IPA</b> IBUs: 50 - 75 ABV: 5.5 - 8.0%	American IPA featuring up to 20% rye malt with light spicy, caramel, or toasty flavors.
<b>Cream Ale</b> IBUs: 8 - 20 ABV: 4.2 - 5.6%	U.S. ale aimed at lager drinkers; good malt/hop balance, generally brilliant clarity.	<b>Red IPA</b> IBUs: 40 - 70 ABV: 5.5 - 7.5%	American IPA featuring some toffee, caramel, or dark fruit malt flavor.
<b>American Wheat Beer</b> IBUs: 15 - 30 ABV: 4.0 - 5.5%	U.S. adaptation of German Weissbier using cleaner, more neutral, yeast and more hops.	<b>Brown IPA</b> IBUs: 40 - 70 ABV: 5.5 - 7.5%	American IPA variant with some chocolate and dark fruit malt flavors.
<b>Blonde Ale</b> IBUs: 15 - 28 ABV: 3.8 - 5.5%	Developed by brewpubs as an entry-level craft beer. Light fruit, hop, and malt notes.	<b>Black IPA</b> IBUs: 50 - 90 ABV: 5.5 - 9.0%	American IPA w/dark malt for color; also called Cascadian Dark or American Black Ale.
<b>American Pale Ale</b> IBUs: 30 - 50 ABV: 4.5 - 6.2%	Hoppy, yet balanced version of English Pale Ales featuring American or New World hops.	<b>New England IPA</b> IBUs: 45 - 80 ABV: 6.0 - 9.0%	American IPA marked by hazy appearance and juicy flavors created by late hopping.
<b>California Common</b> IBUs: 30 - 45 ABV: 4.5 - 5.5%	"Steam beer" of 1800s US. Pale malts, non-citrus hops, lager yeast used at ale temps.	<b>Double or Imperial IPA</b> IBUs: 60-120 ABV: 7.5 -10.0%	Heavily hopped, but clean, dry, strong pale ale. Some malt or alcohol flavors acceptable.
<b>Kentucky Common</b> IBUs: 15 - 30 ABV: 4.0 - 5.5%	Grainy-sweet malt with bread, toast, or biscuit flavors; floral or spicy hop notes.	<b>American Strong Ale</b> IBUs: 50-100 ABV: 6.3 -10.0%	Strong beer with substantial hop and full, Maillard reaction driven malt flavors.
<b>American Amber Ale</b> IBUs: 25 - 40 ABV: 4.5 - 6.2%	Similar to American Pale Ale with a toasty, toffee, or caramel malt notes.	<b>American Barleywine</b> IBUs: 50-100 ABV: 8.0 -12.0%	Well-hopped variation of the English style. Rich malt & intense aromas usually present.
<b>American Brown Ale</b> IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.3 - 6.2%	Similar to American Pale Ale, but with nutty, caramel, or chocolate malt notes.	<b>Wheatwine</b> IBUs: 30 - 60 ABV: 8.0 -12.0%	American Wheat Beer brewed to Barleywine strength. Commonly uses 50%+ wheat malt.
<b>American Porter</b> IBUs: 25 - 50 ABV: 4.8 - 6.5%	Strong dark malt aromas and flavors such as toffee, caramel, chocolate, and/or coffee.	<b>American Stout</b> IBUs: 35 - 75 ABV: 5.0 - 7.0%	Strong dark malt aromas and flavors with more hop character than many other stouts.
<b>Pre-Prohibition Porter</b> IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.5 - 6.0%	Grainy malt character with some chocolate, low to moderate hop flavors and bitterness.	<b>Imperial Stout</b> IBUs: 50 - 90 ABV: 8.0 -12.0%	Roasted/burnt flavor w/ dark fruit character; warming alcohol and a bittersweet finish.

## German Styles of Beer

<b>Munich Helles</b> IBUs: 16 - 22 ABV: 4.7 - 5.4%	Smooth malt flavor with floral or herbal hop notes, dry finish. Subtlety is key in this style.	<b>Märzen</b> IBUs: 18 - 24 ABV: 5.8 - 6.3%	Rich bread and toast flavors drive this malty, amber lager; the original Oktoberfest beer.
<b>German Helles Exportbier</b> IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.8 - 6.0%	A smooth, balanced, stronger than average lager sometimes known as Dortmunder.	<b>Kellerbier (Pale)</b> IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 4.7 - 5.4%	A young, fresh beer with more yeast notes than Helles or Pils due to shorter lagering.
<b>German Pils</b> IBUs: 22 - 40 ABV: 4.4 - 5.2%	Developed from Czech Pilsner with more noticeable bitterness than Munich Helles.	<b>Kellerbier (Amber)</b> IBUs: 25-40 ABV: 4.8 - 5.4%	A young, fresh beer between a Helles and a Märzen. The original, Franconian Kellerbier.
<b>German Leichtbier</b> IBUs: 15 - 28 ABV: 2.4 - 3.6%	Light-bodied lager that is based on German Pils, but lower in alcohol and calories.	<b>Munich Dunkel</b> IBUs: 18 - 28 ABV: 4.5 - 5.6%	Malt-forward with flavors of toasted bread. Any German hop notes will be very subtle.
<b>Festbier</b> IBUs: 18 - 25 ABV: 5.8 - 6.3%	Strong malt with light hop flavors. Bready notes with floral, herbal, or spicy hops.	<b>Schwarzbier</b> IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.4 - 5.4%	Dark lager with smooth, roasted malt character. Usually less bitterness than Pils.

## German Styles of Beer

**Weissbier**  
IBUs: 8 - 15 ABV: 4.3 - 5.6%  
Refreshing wheat beer with banana esters and clove phenols from the yeast.

**Dunkles Weissbier**  
IBUs: 10 - 18 ABV: 4.3 - 5.6%  
Dark wheat beer with toast or caramel notes and yeast-driven banana and clove flavors.

**Helles Bock**  
IBUs: 23 - 35 ABV: 6.3 - 7.4%  
A stronger version of Munich Helles. Often called Maibock & served at spring festivals.

**Dunkles Bock**  
IBUs: 20 - 27 ABV: 6.3 - 7.2%  
Similar to Helles Bock, but with richer, toasty malt and less noticeable bitterness.

**Doppelbock**  
IBUs: 16 - 26 ABV: 7.0-10.0%  
Stronger variation of either Helles Bock or Dunkles Bock; pleasant alcohol warmth.

**Weizenbock**  
IBUs: 20 - 40 ABV: 6.5 - 9.0%  
Rich, malty Weissbier or Dunkles Weissbier brewed to Bock or Doppelbock strength.

**Eisbock**  
IBUs: 25 - 35 ABV: 9.0-14.0%  
Doppelbock is frozen after fermentation and ice is removed to concentrate the beer.

**Rauchbier**  
IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.8 - 6.0%  
Märzen-like w/ smoked malt giving it smoky character. Historic specialty of Bamberg.

**Lichtenhainer**  
IBUs: 5 - 12 ABV: 3.5 - 4.7%  
Tart, smoked, wheat beer. Fresh smoke with lemon/green apple notes and a dry finish

**Kölsch**  
IBUs: 18 - 30 ABV: 4.4 - 5.2%  
Crisp, balanced, top-fermented, lagered beer of Cologne. True Kölsch must be made there.

**Altbier**  
IBUs: 25 - 50 ABV: 4.3 - 5.5%  
Smooth, balanced, top-fermented, lagered beer. The traditional style of Düsseldorf.

**Berliner Weisse**  
IBUs: 3 - 8 ABV: 2.8 - 3.8%  
Lemony sour or tart apple flavor from mixed fermentation that includes Lactobacillus.

**Gose**  
IBUs: 8 - 20 ABV: 4.5 - 5.5%  
Tart wheat ale w/ coriander & salt. Leipzig is seen as its home, but it originated in Goslar.

**Roggenbier**  
IBUs: 10 - 20 ABV: 4.5 - 6.0%  
Similar to Dunkles Weissbier, but using rye malt not wheat; banana & clove yeast notes.

## Beer Styles of the British Isles

**Ordinary Bitter**  
IBUs: 25 - 35 ABV: 3.2 - 3.8%  
Floral, earthy, or fruity hop notes w/ bready or toasty malt flavors. Often served on cask.

**Best Bitter**  
IBUs: 25 - 40 ABV: 3.8 - 4.6%  
Similar flavors to Ordinary Bitter; still session strength. Drinkability is key with this style.

**Strong Bitter**  
IBUs: 30 - 50 ABV: 4.6 - 6.2%  
Like the other Bitters, but moderate strength w/more hop character than Ordinary & Best.

**British Golden Ale**  
IBUs: 20 - 45 ABV: 3.8 - 5.0%  
Floral, herbal, or earthy hop notes w/ bready or biscuity malt. Style originated in 1980s.

**English IPA**  
IBUs: 40 - 60 ABV: 5.0 - 7.5%  
Floral, peppery, or citrus hop notes shine. Style dates to late 1700s, IPA name to 1830s.

**Dark Mild**  
IBUs: 10 - 25 ABV: 3.0 - 3.8%  
Many malt and yeast flavors may be present including: caramel, toffee, nutty, & fruity.

**British Brown Ale**  
IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.2 - 5.4%  
Caramel-like malt is the star. Nutty, toasty, toffee, & light chocolate flavors often join in.

**London Brown Ale**  
IBUs: 15 - 20 ABV: 2.8 - 3.6%  
Toffee and caramel flavors with dark fruit esters. Low hop notes; smooth sweet finish.

**English Porter**  
IBUs: 18 - 35 ABV: 4.0 - 5.4%  
Toasty or roasted malt flavor often w/toffee of caramel; earthy hops & fruity esters.

**British Strong Ale**  
IBUs: 30 - 60 ABV: 5.5 - 8.0%  
Malty, with toffee, caramel or nutty flavors. Some fruity esters. Alcohol can be evident.

**Old Ale**  
IBUs: 30 - 60 ABV: 5.5 - 9.0%  
Nutty or caramel flavors with fruity esters. Oxidation in aging may add flavors of sherry.

**English Barleywine**  
IBUs: 35 - 70 ABV: 8.0-12.0%  
Intense, flavors that can range from bready to molasses; fruitiness & alcohol present.

**Scottish Light**  
IBUs: 10 - 20 ABV: 2.5 - 3.2%  
Malty with flavors ranging from bready to caramel to toasty; low levels of English hops.

**Scottish Heavy**  
IBUs: 10 - 20 ABV: 3.2 - 3.9%  
Malty with flavors of toasted breadcrumbs or biscuits; some caramel, low English hops.

**Scottish Export**  
IBUs: 15 - 30 ABV: 3.9 - 6.0%  
Malty, generally caramel and toast. Low hops w/ earthy, floral, citrus, or spicy notes.

**Wee Heavy**  
IBUs: 17 - 35 ABV: 6.5-10.0%  
Rich, malty complex beer w/ caramel flavor out front. Esters & alcohol often present.

**Irish Red Ale**  
IBUs: 18 - 28 ABV: 3.8 - 5.0%  
Subtle, easy-drinking beer w/ notes of grain, biscuits, or toffee light earthy or floral hops.

**Irish Stout**  
IBUs: 25 - 45 ABV: 4.0 - 4.5%  
Coffee and sometimes chocolate-like flavor. Some balancing earthy hop notes. Dry finish.

**Irish Extra Stout**  
IBUs: 35 - 50 ABV: 5.5 - 6.5%  
Full-bodied roasted flavor with coffee notes, can be bittersweet. Low hop. Very dry finish.

**Sweet Stout**  
IBUs: 20 - 40 ABV: 4.0 - 6.0%  
Coffee/chocolate flavors, moderate hops & creamy mouthfeel from the use of lactose.

**Oatmeal Stout**  
IBUs: 25 - 40 ABV: 4.2 - 5.9%  
Mild roasted malt with a nutty oatmeal flavor. Low earthy or floral hop, full bodied.

**Tropical Stout**  
IBUs: 30 - 50 ABV: 5.5 - 8.0%  
Smooth coffee/chocolate flavor with fruity esters. Refreshing despite alcohol level.

**Foreign Extra Stout**  
IBUs: 50 - 70 ABV: 6.3 - 8.0%  
Coffee, chocolate, or slightly burnt grain flavors. Can have licorice/molasses aromas.

### A Few Words about Glassware

In the United States over the past thirty or so years, most bars and restaurants have taken to serving beer in the Shaker Pint glass. A glass that was never designed for beer, rather as half of a cocktail shaker. It turns out that every style of beer has a glass that helps to highlight its attributes, but the Shaker Pint is not that glass for any style. The Shaker Pint is inexpensive and stacks nicely behind a bar. Do right by beer and serve it in appropriate glassware.



## Belgian Styles of Beer

**Witbier**  
IBUs: 8 - #20 ABV: 4.5 - 5.5%  
Refreshing wheat ale which includes spices & citrus fruitiness. Earthy or spicy hop notes.

**Belgian Pale Ale**  
IBUs: 20 - 30 ABV: 4.8 - 5.5%  
Toasty, nutty malt with spicy, herbal, or floral hops. Some phenols and a dry finish.

**Belgian IPA**  
IBUs: 50-100 ABV: 6.2 - 9.5%  
Inspired by American IPA, spiciness from Belgian yeast, hop flavors depend on origin.

**Bière de Garde**  
IBUs: 18 - 28 ABV: 6.0 - 8.5%  
Rich biscuit or toffee malt with low hops and esters. Smooth character with a dry finish.

**Belgian Blond Ale**  
IBUs: 15 - 30 ABV: 6.0 - 7.5%  
Smooth sweet-grain malt with earthy or spicy hops. Soft yeast character, dry finish.

**Saison**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 3.5 - 9.5%  
Quite aromatic with high esters, gentle malt flavors. Earthy or spicy hop notes, dry finish.

**Belgian Golden Strong Ale**  
IBUs: 22 - 35 ABV: 7.5-10.5%  
Effervescent and complex. Cracker-like malt with fruit and spice notes. Floral hop aroma.

**Trappist Single**  
IBUs: 25 - 45 ABV: 4.8 - 6.0%  
Grainy-sweet malt, spicy or floral hop flavors with esters of citrus or stone fruits. Smooth.

**Belgian Dubbel**  
IBUs: 15 - 25 ABV: 6.0 - 7.6%  
Smooth rich, malty flavors with some dark fruit esters and possible spicy phenols.

**Belgian Tripel**  
IBUs: 20 - 40 ABV: 7.5 - 9.5%  
Soft malt with low phenol spice, citrus-like esters, and medium bitterness. Effervescent.

**Belgian Dark Strong Ale**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 8.0-12.0%  
Complex mix of malt, fruity esters, and spicy phenols. Medium body with smooth alcohol.

**Flanders Red Ale**  
IBUs: 10 - 25 ABV: 4.6 - 6.5%  
Sour, fruity, red wine-like beer style of West Flanders. Aged up to 2 years, often in oak.

**Oud Bruin**  
IBUs: 20 - 25 ABV: 4.0 - 8.0%  
Complex malt with dark fruit esters. Some sourness. Young & aged beer often blended.

**Lambic**  
IBUs: 0 - 10 ABV: 5.0 - 6.5%  
Sour, wild wheat beer of the Senne Valley. Flavors can vary; served after some aging.

**Gueuze**  
IBUs: 0 - 10 ABV: 5.0 - 8.0%  
Complex blend of Lambics of varied, often a mix of 1, 2, & 3 year old vintages. Tart & dry.

**Fruited Lambic**  
IBUs: 0 - 10 ABV: 5.0 - 7.0%  
Sweetness of specified fruit eases Lambic's sour & acetic qualities. Color varies w/fruit.

## Other European Styles of Beer

**Czech Pale Lager**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 3.0 - 4.1%  
Refreshing beer with bready malt and spicy or herbal hop flavors. Medium-light body.

**Czech Premium Pale Lager**  
IBUs: 30 - 45 ABV: 4.2 - 5.8%  
Complex bready malt with spicy, floral, or herbal hop notes. Balanced w/medium body.

**Czech Amber Lager**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 4.4 - 5.8%  
Toast to graham-cracker malt character. Low spicy hop flavor. Balanced w/medium body.

**Czech Dark Lager**  
IBUs: 18 - 34 ABV: 4.4 - 5.8%  
Rich Maillard-product malt character. Low spicy hop flavor. Smooth, medium-full body.

**Vienna Lager**  
IBUs: 18 - 30 ABV: 4.7 - 5.5%  
Rich toasty malt flavor with some floral or spicy hop & a dry finish. Smooth & balanced.

**Baltic Porter**  
IBUs: 20 - 40 ABV: 6.5 - 9.5%  
Rich malt notes w/ dark fruit esters. Smooth & full bodied. Native to Baltic Sea region.

**Piwo Grodziskie**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 2.5 - 3.3%  
Light-bodied, low hop beer w/oak-smoked wheat malt. Style native to Grodzisk, Poland.

**Sahti**  
IBUs: 7 - 15 ABV: 7.0 - 11.0%  
Traditional Finnish beer using rye, juniper, & juniper berries. Banana-clove yeast notes.

## Other Beer Styles of the World

**Australian Sparkling Ale**  
IBUs: 20 - 35 ABV: 4.5 - 6.0%  
Bready malt flavor with medium earthy hop notes & a dry, carbonic finish. Medium body.

**International Pale Lager**  
IBUs: 18 - 25 ABV: 4.6 - 6.0%  
Grainy malt, light floral or spicy hops. Light-medium body. Refreshing; best served cold.

**International Amber Lager**  
IBUs: 8 - 25 ABV: 4.6 - 6.0%  
Malty, with caramel or toast notes in aroma & flavor. Medium body & carbonation.

**International Dark Lager**  
IBUs: 8 - 20 ABV: 4.2 - 6.0%  
Low caramel or roast malt, low floral, herbal, or spicy hops, light to medium-light body.