

Comparisons of BJCP Beer Substyles

Light Lager (Category 1)

Lite American Lager (1A): 2.8-4.2% ABV. Lowest alcohol, thinnest body, higher levels of adjuncts possible, sometimes enzymes used to thin body.

Standard American Lager (1B): 4.2-5.3% ABV. Thin body, fewer adjuncts or better ingredients (e.g., rice vs. corn) possible.

Premium American Lager (1C): 4.6-6% ABV. Fuller body than SAL, fewer adjuncts or better ingredients likely.

Munich Helles (1D): All malt, showcase for German Pils malt, low levels of noble hops, malty aftertaste.

Dortmunder Export (1E): “Malt profile of a helles, hops of a Pils, stronger than either.” Hop bitterness in finish due to higher sulfate levels in water.

Pilsner (Category 2)

German Pilsner (2A): Drier and crisper, lighter in body and color and higher in carbonation than Bohemian Pilsner.

Bohemian Pilsner (2B): Sweeter, maltier, fuller bodied, slightly darker, lower in carbonation, and with less aggressive hop character than German Pilsner. Slight diacetyl notes acceptable.

Classic American Pilsner (2C): Can be thinner in body than continental pilsners (from adjunct grains), can have corn aroma and flavor.

European Amber Lager (Category 3)

Vienna Lager (3A): Lighter and less intense malt character than Oktoberfest, slightly less sweet, can be slightly hoppier and darker, with some malt, and some hop bitterness in finish.

Oktoberfest/Märzen (3B): Fuller malt flavor than Vienna, often lighter color. No bitterness in finish.

Dark Lager (Category 4)

Dark American Lager (4A): A slightly sweeter, much darker version of Standard or Premium American Lager, sometimes with caramel and/or roast notes, can be stronger than German styles (6% ABV), thinner body.

Munich Dunkel (4B): Can taste like “liquid bread,” hints of chocolate, nuts, caramel and/or toffee, sweet and malt-focused but not cloying.

Schwarzbier (4C): Darker in color, drier palate, more roasted malt. Darker than a dunkel but not truly black.

Bock (Category 5)

Mai/Helles Bock (5A): Lighter colored (amber- lt. copper), hoppier, more balanced, less toasty than Traditional Bock. Some versions can have low to medium low hop aroma and flavor. Lower ABV than Doppelbock or Eisbock.

Traditional Bock (5B): Copper to brown color. Malt focused, hops only to support malt, bready, biscuity, toasty malt notes. Some caramel notes OK. No hop flavor.

Doppelbock (5C): Higher in ABV than Maibock or Traditional Bock, but not as strong as Eisbock. Can be based on Helles Bock or Traditional Bock. Slight hop flavor and aroma OK in lighter versions.

Eisbock (5D): Freeze distilled doppelbock with extended lagering. Highest ABV of bocks. No hop aroma or flavor. Alcohol quite evident.

Light Hybrids (Category 6)

Cream Ale (6A): Up to 20% corn, up to 20% adjunct sugars, lighter flavor and body than other light hybrids, low - medium low bitterness, no - low hop flavor and aroma. Brewed with ale or lager yeast.

Blonde Ale (6B): No corn, limited adjunct sugars, up to 25% wheat OK, low - medium hop flavor, bitterness & aroma. Medium light - med. body.

Kölsch (6C): Distinctive, delicate fruity aroma & flavor, low - medium hop aroma, flavor & bitterness, finishes slightly dry and puckering. More delicate than a blonde & clearer. Usually made without adjuncts (but up to 20% wheat in non-German versions). Special Kölsch yeast used for fermentation. Fermented at ale temperatures and then cold-conditioned.

American Wheat or Rye (6D): Any ale or lager with a distinct wheat or rye aroma and/or flavor, but without German hefeweizen aroma and flavors. Can be hazy.

Amber Hybrids (Category 7)

Northern German Alt (7A): Darker, sweeter and less bitter than Düsseldorf Alt. Doesn't have the signature hop character of California Common. Can have sulfury pils malt notes. Noble hop flavor & aroma. Some are just brown lagers without the distinctive character of Munich Dunkel or Schwarzbier. Others are generic German or Northern European style ales which have been cold conditioned.

California Common Beer (7B): Signature “woody, rustic, minty” Northern brewer hops. Higher hop bitterness than Northern German alt. Different hop and malt profile than either Northern German Alt or Düsseldorf Alt. Made using warm-fermenting

lager yeast strain. Not necessarily cool-conditioned. Somewhat similar to American amber or pale ale, but hop profile is different (no “C” hops). A historical American beer style, not European.

Düsseldorf Alt (7C): Lighter in color than other amber hybrids. Drier and hoppier than Northern German alt. Can have sulfury pils malt notes. Noble hop flavor & aroma. Made using special altbier yeast and then cold-conditioned. “Sticke Alt” is a stronger, hoppier version of this style.

English Pale Ales (Category 8)

Standard/Ordinary Bitter (8A): 3.2-3.8% ABV, light yellow - light copper color. Light to medium light body.

Special/Best/Premium Bitter (8B): 3.8-4.6% ABV, medium gold to medium copper, medium light to medium body.

Extra Special/Strong Bitter (English Pale Ale): 4.6-6.2% ABV. Can have higher bitterness than either S/OB or S/B/PB. Hop bitter, flavor and aroma usually more obvious. Malt flavor and aroma usually more obvious and complex. Strongest versions can overlap somewhat with Old Ale.

Scottish & Irish Ales (Category 9)

Scottish Light 60/- (9A): 2.5-3.2% ABV, 10-20 IBU, OG 1.030-1.035. Lowest in ABV of the “shilling ales.” This is sometimes reflected in slightly lower hop bitterness, malt character and body.

Scottish Heavy 70/- (9B): 3.2-3.9% ABV, 10-25 IBU, OG 1.035-1.040. Second lowest in ABV of the “shilling ales.” Can be slightly bitterer, maltier and fuller-bodied than a Scottish Light.

Scottish Export 80/- (9C): 3.9-5.0% ABV, 15-30 IBU. Highest in ABV of the “shilling ales” Can be slightly bitterer, maltier and fuller-bodied than a Scottish Heavy.

“Shilling Ales” (9A-9C): Low - medium maltiness, sometimes with low - medium kettle caramelization notes, no - low hop flavor & aroma, low - medium hop bitterness, Balanced to slightly malty. Finishes a bit dry due to restrained use of roasted barley. Low - medium peaty notes OK.

Irish Red Ale (9D): Usually dark red color. 4-6% ABV - higher than “shilling ales.” Caramel or toffee malt notes. No peaty notes. No esters in aroma or flavor. Slight diacetyl slickness OK in mouthfeel. Slight alcohol warming OK in stronger versions. Produced using different yeast strain than Scottish ales.

Strong Scotch Ale (9E): Highest in ABV (6.5% +). Rich, complex malt character. Low - medium alcohol & esters possible. Can be sweeter in finish (sweet - medium dry) than other beers in this category. Medium full - full body. Alcoholic aroma, flavor and warming can be present.

American Ales (Category 10)

American Pale Ale (10A): Lightest in color - pale gold to dark amber (SRM 5-14). Medium to high hop aroma and flavor. Medium to medium high hop bitterness. Balanced towards hops. Malt character is neutral, with hints of bready, toasty or biscuity specialty malt.

American Amber Ale (10B): Amber - copper brown (SRM 10-17). Less hop aroma than American Pale, slightly lower hop bitterness. Medium - strong malt, usually with initial sweetness followed by medium caramel notes. Balanced more towards malt. Fuller body than American pale.

American Brown Ale (10C): Darkest colored - light to dark brown (SRM 18-35). Less hop aroma than other versions (low - medium). Sweet, rich malt character, with some supporting toasty, chocolaty, nutty notes from darker specialty malts.

English Brown Ales (Category 11)

Mild (11A): 2.5-3.2 ABV. Medium - dark brown. More intense dark malts - nutty, toasty, biscuity.

Southern English Brown (11B): Lower in alcohol than NEB, can be higher in ABV than Mild. Can be intensely sweet. Balance is always towards the malt. Finish can be very sweet.

Northern English Brown (11C): Lighter in color than SEB, highest ABV of English Brown Ale styles. Balance is slightly malty to slightly sweet. Dark malt character is slightly nutty, toasty or biscuity.

Porter (Category 12)

Brown Porter (12A): Lower in ABV than other substyles, slightly lighter in color. Hop bitterness, flavor and aroma can be lower. Malt character can be less intense than others. Represents more restrained English interpretations of the style.

Robust Porter (12B): Can be higher in ABV than Brown Porter, but lower than Baltic. Hop bitterness, flavor and aroma can be quite pronounced, sometimes with American “C” hop character. Toasted malt character can be more intense than Brown Porter, although base malt and yeast character can be more neutral. Alcohol notes might be evident in aroma, flavor or mouthfeel. Represents more full-bodied English interpretations of the style, as well as American craft-brewed versions.

Baltic Porter (12C): Can have highest ABV. Hop aroma and flavor are very restrained. Hop bitterness is medium. Balance is towards malt and can be sweeter than other styles, but finish can be somewhat dry due to alcohol. No dark malt bitterness due to use of debittered dark malt (e.g., Carafa). Alcohol notes might be evident in appearance (“legs”), aroma, flavor and/or mouthfeel. Fuller body than other substyles. Often produced using lager yeast and/or cold-conditioned for extended periods of time.

Stouts (Category 13)

Dry Stout (13A): Can be lower in alcohol than other versions. Can be thinner in body than other versions. Balanced between dark malt and hop bitterness. Finish is semi-dry to very dry due to bitterness and roast barley.

Sweet Stout (13B): Malt character is sweet to intensely sweet, sometimes with non-fermentable sugars, sometimes reminiscent of milk chocolate or coffee with sugar. Balance is semi-sweet to very sweet. Finish is semi-sweet to very sweet. Body can be quite full for the gravity.

Oatmeal Stout (13C): Oatmeal character can be evident in aroma and mouthfeel, and should be evident in flavor. Balance is medium-dry to semi-sweet. Finish is somewhat smooth due to oats. Sweeter and chewier than a dry stout, but not as intensely sweet as a sweet stout.

Foreign Extra Stout (13D): A stronger version of either a Dry Stout (Foreign Extra Stouts) or Sweet Stout (Tropical Stout) with correspondingly more intense malt character and slightly fuller body. Alcohol notes can be evident in aroma, flavor, appearance and mouthfeel. Not as strong, full-bodied and intensely flavored as a RIS. Not as hoppy as an American stout. Some oxidative dark fruit notes OK.

American Stout (13E): Can be as strong as a FES, hop bitterness can be higher than all other stouts except RIS. Hop aroma and flavor are higher than other stouts and can have American “C hop” character. Base malt and yeast character can be more neutral than other varieties, although specialty malt character can be just as intense.

Russian Imperial Stout (13F): Can be stronger than other stouts. Hop bitterness can be extremely high. Hop flavor and aroma can be more subdued than American Stout. Base malt & yeast character can be neutral and slightly sweet in American interpretations of the style, or breadly, grainy and complex in English style versions. Dark malt character can be more intense than other stouts, but mellows with age. Oxidative dark fruit, sherry, rum-like, “plum pudding” notes can be quite intense in aged versions.

IPA (Category 14)

English IPA (14A): Lowest in ABV. Slightly lower in bitterness than AIPA. Hop aroma and flavor reflects English varieties. Base malt character is breadly, grainy, possibly with some caramel notes. Yeast character is estery, with very low diacetyl notes OK.

American IPA (14B): Higher in ABV than EIPA. Can be lower in bitterness than DIPA. Hop aroma and flavor usually reflects American hop varieties, but any non-English type OK. Base malt character is generally neutral and slightly sweet. Yeast character is usually clean, with few esters. No diacetyl.

Double IPA (14C): Highest in ABV. Can be fuller in body and slightly darker in color than other substyles. Hop bitterness is very high to “ridiculously high.” Malt character can reflect either English IPA or American IPA. Balance is heavily tilted towards hops. Finish is semi-dry to quite dry due to hops. Not as full-bodied or as complex in malt character as a barleywine.

German Wheat & Rye Beers (Category 15)

Weizen/Hefeweizen (15A): Lightest in color - straw to dark gold. Some versions can be filtered (“Kristallweisse”). Malt character reflects wheat and pilsner malt, not darker malts. Not as strong as a Weizenbock.

Dunkelweizen (15B): Darker than a weizen, but not always as dark as a Weizenbock - amber to dark brown. Fuller bodied. Dark malt (biscuity, toasty, crusty) notes evident. Not as strong as a Weizenbock.

Weizenbock (15C): Can be slightly darker in color than a dunkel. Highest ABV. Lower esters than other styles in the category. Alcohol notes can be evident in aroma, appearance, flavor and mouthfeel. Head can be slightly lower. Malt character can be more intense. Hop bitterness can be higher.

Roggenbier (15D): Similar to Weizen or Dunkelweizen, but with distinctive rye notes in aroma and flavor. Can smell or taste somewhat like Pumpernickel bread. Low to moderate clove and ester character (a bit lower than Weizen or Dunkelweizen). Darker in color than a Weizen.

French & Belgian Ales (Category 16)

Belgian Wit (16A): Lightest in color (straw - golden). Cloudy/hazy appearance. High carbonation. Distinctive bitter orange and coriander notes. Low hop bitterness, minimal hop flavor and aroma. Can have slight lactic sourness. Up to 50% wheat in grist. Flour sometimes added to boil to get haziness. Spice additions (e.g., cumin, grains of paradise, juniper, chamomile) sometimes added as “secret ingredient.” Special ale yeast strain used.

Belgian Pale Ale (16B): Dark gold - dark amber. Clear. Medium carbonation. Medium hop bitterness. Hop aroma and flavor can be evident. Distinctive Belgian yeast character - spicy phenols, fruity esters.

Saison (16C): Can vary widely in color. Can vary widely in alcoholic strength. Medium - high carbonation. Can have subtle spice additions. Malt character varies widely. Can be quite hoppy.

Bière de Garde (16D): Can vary widely in color. Can vary widely in alcoholic strength. Medium carbonation. Can have subtle “cork” or “cellar-like” character. Malt character varies widely.

Sour Beers (Category 17)

Berlinerweisse (17A): Lightest in color (straw-golden). Cloudy or Hazy appearance. Very high carbonation (like Gueuze or Fruit Lambic). Lowest in alcohol (2.8-3.8% ABV - but historical versions stronger). Mostly lactic sour. Fermented using *Lactobacillus Delbrückii* (minor Brett notes in aged examples). Must use at least 50% wheat malt in grist (by law). German, associated with Berlin (actually *appellation contrôlée*). Sometimes made using “sour mashing, using. Often served with raspberry (Himbeer) or sweet woodruff (Waldmeister) syrup. Very old style - noted as far back as 16th century.

Flanders Red (17B): Distinct copper/reddish color. Aged in French oak barrels (former wine barrels). Mostly lactic sour. Some barrel-aged notes O.K. Associated with Western Flanders, Belgium. Possibly a very old style (dates to at least 18th century). Most “wine-like” of beers.

Flanders Brown (17C): AKA “Old Bruin.” Darkest in color of the sour ales; amber to dark brown. Strongest of sour ales (along with Gueuze), at up to 8% ABV. No barrel character. Aged in stainless steel tanks, then bottle conditioned. Mostly lactic sour. Defined by products of Liefman’s Brasserie/Browerij. Associated with Western Flanders, Belgium.

Straight (Unblended) Lambic (17D): No/very low carbonation. Complex sourness - lactic, brett, other microbial characteristics. Associated with Brussels, Belgium and surrounding Senne River valley area (the name Lambic is an actual *appellation controlee*). Made using up to 40% unmalted wheat (sometimes added to wort). Made using *suranne* (i.e., ancient -2 to 3 year old) hops, used only for antibacterial properties. Traditionally made using spontaneous “wild” fermentation. Unblended (unlike many other sours, which are blended for consistency and flavor). Darkens and clears with age.

Gueuze (17E): Very high carbonation (like Fruit Lambic and Berlinerweisse). Very thick, moussy, long-lasting head. Golden color. Clear. Strongest of sour ales (along with Flanders Brown), at up to 8% ABV. Mixture of 1,2 and 3-year old lambics. More balanced sourness than Straight Lambic. Bottle-conditioned after blending. Doesn’t age as well as Straight Lambic.

Fruit Lambic (17F): Very high carbonation (like Gueuze and Berlinerweisse). Thick, moussy long-lasting head. Fruit aroma detectable in aroma & flavor. Whole fruit added to barrels of 1-2 year old lambic; restarting fermentation. Often blended. Kriek (Schaerbeek sour cherry), Framboise (raspberry) and Drievenlambic (Muscat grapes) traditional, many modern variants use different fruits.

Belgian Strong Ales (Category 18)

Blonde Ale (18A): Lowest alcohol of Belgian strong ales (maximum 7.5% ABV). Straw to golden color like Tripel or Belgian Golden Strong Ale. Can be sweeter than other Belgian strongs. Can have cleaner, more “lager-like” profile. Base malt profile similar to Tripel or Golden Strong, but less bitter.

Belgian Dubbel (18B): Amber to Brown color. Fuller bodied than all but Belgian Dark Strong. Second lowest in strength (after Blonde Ale). More caramel, amber and light roasted malt notes than all but Belgian Dark Strong Ale. Noticeable “dark fruit” notes due to use of Special B malt. Traditionally bottle conditioned. Up to 20% sugar or syrup added to lighten body. Developed in the 1930s by Trappist monasteries (notably Notre Dame de Scourmont - Chimay) with the aid of Jean DeClerck, revived in the 1950s.

Belgian Tripel (18C): Straw to dark gold color. Similar to Belgian Golden Strong Ale, but more varied aroma and flavor profile, fuller body and darker color. Trappist versions tend to be thinner-bodied and more highly hopped. “Abbey” versions tend to be fuller bodied and sweeter. Traditionally bottle conditioned. Up to 20% sugar or syrup added to lighten body. Developed in the 1930s by Trappist monasteries (notably Notre Dame de Scourmont - Chimay) with the aid of Professor Jean DeClerck, revived in the 1950s.

Belgian Golden Strong Ale (18D): Second strongest of Belgian strongs (at 10% ABV) after Belgian Dark Strong Ale. Lightest in color (along with Blonde ale). Lightest in body (can have thin body). Up to 20% sugar or syrup added to lighten body. Defined by Duvel-Moortgaart’s “Duvel”. Commercial examples often have “evil” names - referencing devil, pirates, madness and the like. Developed in the 1960s to compete with light lagers.

Belgian Dark Strong Ale (18E): Strongest of Belgian strongs (at 11+% ABV). Darkest in color (up to 22 SRM). Intense caramel, amber and light roasted malt notes than all but Belgian Dark Strong Ale. Noticeable “dark fruit” notes due to use of Special B malt. Traditionally bottle conditioned. Up to 20% sugar or syrup added to lighten body. Developed in the 1950s and 1960s by Trappist monasteries (notably Notre Dame de Scourmont - Chimay) with the aid of Professor Jean DeClerck.

Strong Ales (Category 19)

Old Ale (19A): Darkest in color (up to 22 SRM) along with English Barleywine. Lowest in alcohol (down to 6% ABV). Wide variety of malt profiles possible. Lowest IBU and hop character. Defined by significant age-related/oxidative character- sherry, dark fruit notes. Many interpretations possible - represents strong Burton-style ales, winter warmers, strong Brown Porters, etc. Often released for winter holidays.

English Barleywine (19B): Darkest in color (up to 22 SRM) along with Old Ale. Most malt-focused. Defined by English malt character, with supporting English hops. More estery yeast profile than American Barleywine. Can have some age-related notes.

American Barleywine (19C): Most hop-focused. Highest IBU (120+). Lightest in color (up to SRM 19). Usually has prominent American “C” hop aroma and flavor. Malt backbone more neutral, less sweet, supports hops. More neutral yeast profile.