

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ENJOYING CRAFT BEER WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE A DICKHEAD

Whether you're a seasoned craft beer lover or dipping your toes in for first time, it's easy to be overwhelmed by all the flavours and choices available. My first forays into beer usually ended with a hazy hangover after a night at a beer festival trying to get my head around — read, drink every beer available — this new delicious hobby. While finding your way around craft beer is more complicated than drinking a watery pint of Foster's — side note, does anyone even

drink Foster's? — we promise it's definitely worth the investment.

So if we've got you raising your glass and ready to hop on the good times train, we've prepared a guide to help you retire your tinnie of Carlton Draught. But before you start peppering your bar banter with words like ABV, alpha acids and IBUs, just remember that mastering beer terminology, like any language, takes time. And like your friend who keeps

misusing the word literally — no Becky, you're not literally going to explode with excitement — throwing around the wrong terms isn't going to make you look more knowledgeable. Lucky for you, we've put together an easy beginners guide so you can start enjoying craft beer without sounding like a dickhead. And that's something we can all raise our glasses to.

IPA is now the most popular style of craft beer in the world



INDIA PALE ALE (IPA)

Fun fact: the India Pale Ale got its name in the 19th century when UK brewers sent stronger versions of their pale ales to British India. These early IPAs were made with higher alcohol and hop content to ensure they could last the long journey at sea. IPA is now the most popular style of craft beer in the world. If you're used to drinking Carlton and VB, be warned, IPAs have a BIG hops and high bitterness so prepare your taste buds for that huge flavour hit!

Our recommendation: Sauce Brewing Co. Mega Hop Double IPA. This brew is beautifully fruity. With hints of melon, tropical fruits, grapefruit, citrus, resin and pine, it packs a big flavour!



STOUT

"Stout" these days refers to stout porters, which were named for the porters of east London who carried goods around the city from the ships and who helped popularise this type of beer. Stouts are usually deep brown, almost black in colour, and often impart cocoa and coffee flavours. Imperial Stout has become a particularly popular fixture known for its complexity of flavours with dried fruit, dark chocolate, smoke and spice notes. Everyone is different but I tend to categorise Stouts as my dessert, end-your-night beer.

Our recommendation: Stockade Brew Co. Old Money Imperial Stout. This Imperial Stout has smooth and sweet flavours with velvety chocolate, caramel and spice notes and just a hint of smoky bitterness from the whiskey barrel-ageing process.

Get to know the players

According to craft beer store Beer Cartel, Australia's favourite beers in 2016 were (in this order): India Pale Ale, Pale Ale, Stout, Wheat Beer, Belgian Ale, Lager, Sour Beer, Amber Ale, Golden Ale, Porter, Pilsner, Saison/Farmhouse Ale and Barley Wine. Now before you start throwing around terms like IPA and Saison like you're Oprah giving away sports cars, remember we're here to make sure you don't commit any party fouls. If all those buzzwords just smacked you in the face harder than a hoppy double IPA, there's no need to stress, we'll unpack the top five most popular styles.

PALE ALE

This is probably the most well known and easy-to-appreciate craft beer style. Pale Ale is used to describe a wide range of beers that are light in colour, have a strong hop taste and a bit of bitterness. If this is your first time trying craft beer, a Pale Ale is a great place to start. You'll find it has quite an intense aromatic, fruity taste without pushing you too far out of your comfort zone.

Our recommendation: Stomping Ground Brewery's Gipps St Pale Ale. This refreshing Pale Ale is loaded with New World hops and packs big tropical fruit and citrus flavours.



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WHEAT BEER

"Wheat beer" means a beer is brewed with more than 50% of the fermentable being derived from malted wheat. There are many different styles including the American pale wheat, Hefeweizen and Belgian Wit. Wheat beers are generally high in protein, which gives them a hazy colour. Wheat doesn't contribute a ton of flavour so don't expect this beer to have the same powerful taste as an IPA, but it has a silky smooth quality, and also makes for a great summer beer.

Our recommendation: Batch Brewing Co. In the Shade of the Mango Tree (Hefeweizen). This is a lovely fruity beer with a refreshing mango aftertaste. A little bit bitter and very delicious.

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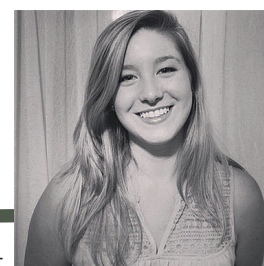
BELGIAN PALE ALE

Here's another party fact: Belgium has three official languages — Dutch, French and German — but their Pale Ale is actually surprisingly similar to English Pale Ales, how's that for diversity Mr Trump! Belgian Pale Ales are generally amber to copper in colour with a toasty malt taste and mild earthy hoppiness. A delicious beer and another great brew to try as a first-time craft beer drinker. The low hop bitterness, flavour and aroma make this an easy-drinking brew that's highly sessionable.

Our recommendation: Shenanigans Brewing Co. Wrong Turn Belgian Pale Ale. It's fruity, light and refreshing!

SHENANIGANS BREWING COMPANY

an easy drinking brew that's highly sessionable



Read more from Amber Smith at ambervsmith.wixsite.com/freelance

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