



Swipe Right for Stemware

By Amber Smith

Hi, my name is Amber and until recently I was a glassware disparager. There, I said it. I secretly thought that people who insisted on having a glass to pour their beer into were kind of, well, giant douchebags. But the first step to remedy this oversight is to admit that I was wrong, so consider this my little white flag.

We're used to pairing glasses with drinks when it comes to cocktails, wine and champagne. After all, James Bond isn't sauntering up to the bar to grab his famous shaken-not-stirred martini in a mason jar, is he? But, when it comes to beer, there seems to be more debate around cans vs bottles than around how the flavour of a beer is changed and improved by the way we pour it and how we drink it.

So, if we can all agree that, for the love of all things hoppy, we should be pouring our beers into glassware, the next question is: what glass should we use? Should my sessionable IPA find its home in the same vessel as my boozy imperial stout? Why does it matter?

On a quest to find the truth, I chatted with Miro Bellini, co-founder of Melbourne's Good Beer Week and glassware connoisseur, about why choosing the right stemware is so important. Miro started working in the industry at the Belgian Beer Cafe, running training to explain Belgium's wonderful history with style-specific glassware and service standards. When I spoke to him, his passion shone through – I reckon if everyone was as passionate about their favorite things as Miro is about beer and glassware pairings we'd be onto a good thing.

So whether you're a sceptic, uninitiated in the art of glassware pairing, or just a choir

that loves a little preaching, I'm here to share with you a few important things you need to consider when it comes to pouring the perfect beer.

Get the best out of your beer

"If you're drinking from the bottle or can you're just not getting the best out of the beer," says Miro. It's as simple as that. He explains that when you drink a beer straight from the bottle, the carbonic acid is pushed to the back of the palate as you take a swig and can seriously change the flavour of your tasty froth. At best it gives the beer a Coca-Cola taste and, at worst, you get hit with a tangy metallic taste.

"Drinking from a smaller vessel such as wine glass also creates a more social experience."

Miro says if you're skipping the glass, you're actually changing the flavour profile and not getting the full experience.

Coffee comparison

One of the ways Miro likes to get his message across is to compare it to coffee. "Everyone knows what shit coffee looks like," Miro says. A badly poured coffee has that awful, thick, almost pimply look to it. There's little to no crema on top and it looks about as appetising as, well, a pimply looking coffee. When pouring beer, you want to think about achieving that thick, creaming head which traps all the volatiles (compounds that evaporate from beer to create its aroma, such as hop oils, yeast fermentation byproducts like alcohol, fruity esters, spices or other additions) and accentuates the flavours of the beer.

Miro mentions one of the popular go-to vessel for enjoying IPA, the Spiegelau IPA glass. Designed to showcase the complex and alluring aromatic profiles of American "hop-forward" IPA beers, this glass preserves a frothy head, enhances taste and mouthfeel, and presents a comfortably wide opening for the drinker to savour each sip.

Miro explains that the knucky bumps stir up the IPA, which results in a continuous stream of bubbles. The resulting frothy head is much more bitter than the rest of the beer, so the glass will really accentuate the bitter, hoppy qualities of the IPA.

Final word of advice

Don't pour it to the top. Instead you should be filling to the broadest point of the glass and allowing for 2-3 fingers of head. This way you're giving the beer enough space to enhance all the elements. If you're getting a beer for a special occasion or just want to make sure you're getting the best from any beer, Miro's advice is: "Ask for a wine glass."

"Don't tilt the wine glass, just pour straight through and keep that foam alive," says Miro. When drinking the beer, hold the glass by the stem to keep the froth at an ideal temperature.

Drinking from a smaller vessel such as wine glass also creates a more social experience as you can split a bottle with a friend. When I spoke to Miro, he told me that he'd spent his Saturday afternoon with a mate as they worked their way through the beer list at Collingwood bar/brewery/deli Craft & Co – splitting each bottle into wine glasses so they not only got the best from each brew but they also got to try more beer. And if that's not a reason to get behind stemware, I don't know what is!

Amber's Crafty Glass Tips



You have: Belgian IPA, dubbel, tripel, Belgian strong ale
Glass: A goblet (or chalice)
Beer: Red Hill Brewery – 'Dubbel Life' Belgian Dubbel
Why? Goblets can be as artistic as the beers inside them, with features such as golden rims. The benefit of this glass, aside from the eye-candy, is it's designed to maintain head by scoring the inside bottom of the glass, which results in a stream of bubbles that creates the perfect head.



You Have: American lager, bock, pilsner, blonde ale
Glass: A pilsner glass
Beer: Bridge Road Brewers – Enigma
Why? The pilsner glass is a tall, slender and tapered 12-ounce (355ml) glass that perfectly captures the sparkling effervescence, colour and clarity of the beer while promoting head retention and enhancing volatiles.



You Have: Belgian dark ale, imperial stout, double IPA
Glass: A snifter
Beer: Boatrockers – Ramjet Whisky Barrel-Aged Imperial Stout
Why? These wide-bowled and stemmed glasses with tapered mouths are perfect for capturing the aromas of strong ales. The snifter comes in a range of volumes, but they all provide room to swirl and agitate volatiles.



You Have: Saison, Scotch ale, Belgian pale ale
Glass: A tulip glass
Beer: La Sirène – Saison
Why? This tulip-shaped stemmed glass looks very similar to its namesake (shocking!) with the top of the glass pushing out slightly to form a lip and a bulbous body. The shape of the glass's lip induces and supports a large foamy head while also capturing and enhancing volatiles.



You Have: Weizenbock, wheat ale, kristalweizen, dunkelweizen
Glass: A Weizen glass
Beer: Redoak – Weizen Doppelbock
Why? Nothing beats serving your wheat beer in an authentic Bavarian Weizen Glass. These glasses are specifically designed to take on volume and allow for a large, full head while locking in the banana-like and phenol aromas associated with this style.



You Have: American pale ale, oatmeal stout, Scottish ale, Irish dry stout, English bitter
Glass: A mug (or stein, seidel)
Beer: Murray's Beer – Punch & Judy's
Why? These glasses are heavy and sturdy with a handle and can hold plenty of beer. The mug comes in many sizes and shapes and is almost too easy to drink out of.



You Have: Rye beer, lambic, gueuze, bock, gose
Glass: A stange
Beer: Colonial Brewing Co – Rye 'n Gose Sling
Why? A traditional German glass, or stange, means 'stick' in German. These tall, slender cylinders are used to serve more delicate beers. Because of their slim, cylindrical shape these glasses allow for a tighter concentration of volatiles which amplifies the malt and hop nuances.



You Have: Double IPA, imperial stout, IPA, brown ale, or porter
Glass: A pint glass
Beer: Kaijui Beer – Aftermath Double IPA
Why? The pint glass is probably one of the most typically seen glasses in Australian pubs and breweries and an easy go-to. The glass is near cylindrical, with a slight taper and wide-mouth. There are two standard sizes, the 16-ounce (US Tumbler and most common) or the 20-ounce Imperial (Nonic), which has a slight ridge towards the top, a grip of sorts. The 20-ounce version is preferred to accommodate more beer or beers with large crowning heads. The benefit of the pint glass is that they are easy to store and stack and also easy to drink out of. Cheers!



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