

✦ ARTISAN ✦

BEER

**A COMPLETE GUIDE TO
SAVORING THE WORLD'S
FINEST BEERS**

Gary Monterosso



BEER STYLES AND FLAVORS

PAIRING BEER AND FOOD

GREAT BEERS YOU MUST TRY

COLLECTING AND STORING FINE BEER

BREW PUBS AND MICROBREWS

AND MUCH MORE...



ARTISAN BEER

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Gary Monterosso



BURFORD BOOKS

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AN INTRODUCTION TO ARTISAN BEER

The renaissance in beer making that started several decades ago had its roots in the brewing centers of the world, a factor noted by the new generation of craftsmen. Flavors and styles were adapted by this group of artisan brewers, often designed to please themselves and their colleagues. No longer would the mass-marketed varieties be adequate; it was time for a change. Beer makers opted to create their own take on how beer should taste and trusted that the public would approve.

These artisan brewers analyzed what was in the market, frequently using non-American beers as their guide. In my talks with brewers, especially those in the midst of building a new beverage, would not be unusual to see bottles of various beers being sampled and dissected. “What do I like about this?” “How can I accomplish what I want, yet remain true to the style?” were questions asked.

Small test batches were produced and people, often from the general public, provided feedback, much of which was employed in the final recipe. Ultimately, however, the brewer decided for himself the specifics and then produced his beer.

Now, well into the twenty-first century, this new group of artisans has taken the reins. They started as homebrewers, honing their skills on a limited basis to a small but appreciative audience. There are no rules, ingredients vary, and, in some cases, brewers do not replicate the same beer twice. Imagine drinking a Budweiser or Coors that didn’t always taste the same! That’s part of the beauty of beer today.

I had my first taste of beer before the age of two. That got your attention, didn’t it? I’m not petitioning for a guest spot on *Intervention*, nor am I suggesting that I’ve ever had an issue with alcohol abuse in my family. I can recall my mother having a glass of beer and giving me a sip—much to the amusement of the rest of my family—because I liked the feel of “toam” (that’s “foam” to you). I don’t think she really liked the stuff that much, but everyone seemed to enjoy my performance whenever a bottle was opened.

Even as a young boy and well shy of legal drinking age, I was able to have a beer at home, under the supervision of my parents. This made me the envy of all the guys in my neighborhood. Friends would tell me how cool my dad was because I was allowed to drink at home.

In reality they had no idea of my parents’ logic. My mother and father felt that, under proper supervision, a slight intake of beer would instill respect for the beverage when a child was maturing. Think of it. Tell a child not to do something and what frequently is the outcome? That kid wants to do what is forbidden. Knock on wood, but overconsumption never was a concern for me. I guess you could call it “love at first sip,” but, as you now understand, my love of beer has existed just about as long as I’ve been alive. And now we are in an era when the choices are broad with flavors to suit all tastes. It is the perfect time to enjoy the most social of all adult beverages, beer.



Malted barley is grain that is allowed to sprout to a degree before it is dried. This converts starch into simple sugar and enzymes necessary in the brewing process.

In its most basic form, beer is made from water, yeast, an herb or spice for flavor, and a malted grain. Although barley normally is that grain, rice, corn, wheat, and other items can also be used.

Evidence exists that barley, a substance that produces good beer but not-so-good bread, was grown six thousand years ago in Mesopotamia. Other cultures, such as that of the Sumerians, have left artifacts that affirm the production of beer. In some societies, beer served as legal tender. The people who built the Egyptian pyramids were given the beverage as payment, known as *kash*. It would be safe to say that the drink was accepted universally throughout the recorded history of humankind.



Credited with being the makers of the first beer, Sumerians, living in what is present day Iraq, created a form of wedge writing on clay tablets sometime around the 4th century B.C. This tablet depicts one of the most important discoveries to the civilization, directions on how to make beer, quite possibly discovered several centuries earlier.

For hundreds of years, beer was perceived as a nutritious concoction, at least in part because the presence of alcohol made it a safer beverage choice than water.

As time progressed, the science of brewing evolved into a deep-rooted native trade, where the drink was made for local consumption. Because transportation consisted of horse-drawn carts traversing bumpy dirt roads, it made little sense to worry about sending beer over long distances. That thought, however, came to an end during the era of exploration to the New World.

Although a maize beer was created by Mexicans, brewing first took place in what would become the colonies in the late 1500s, years before the first settlement at Jamestown. In September 1620, the Pilgrims set sail on the ship *Mayflower* from England. The 102 people on board (only 35 of whom actually sought religious freedom) simply wanted to leave England for a new life in America. The two-thousand-mile voyage took over two months to complete.

Aboard the ship were items such as bread, fruits, dried meats, cheese—and beer. Unusual, you say? Including beer on sea crossings was common practice in the years prior to refrigeration, as fresh water would go bad quickly. (Remember, this was before chlorine and filtered water.) With its alcohol content, beer remained potable longer than water. Additionally, there are records indicating that the Pilgrims landed on the shores of Massachusetts in part because of a lack of beer.

In *Saints and Strangers*, author George F. Willison refers to John Alden as “tall, blond and very powerful in physique ... a cooper by trade, he was now carefully tending the Pilgrims’ precious barrels of beer.”

A journal entry from 1622 declared that the Pilgrims actively looked for a place to set up

permanent landing, “our victuals being much spent, especially our beer.”

~~Had there been more beer on the ship, might they have landed on what now is New York?~~ As for the Puritans who set sail for Massachusetts Bay a decade later, Willison wrote that their “good ship *Arbella* carried 10,000 gallons of wine, fourteen tons of fresh water and forty-two tons of beer.”

Throughout the seventeenth century, those people who chose to travel to the colonies of Maryland and Virginia faced similar risks: pirates, warships, storms, sickness, and disease. Add to that the sameness of being at sea with no change of surroundings. Conditions were cramped with little headroom, causing people to travel with supplies and much of the ship’s cargo. Ventilation was poor. Depending on one’s social status, time spent on deck was limited and occurred only when there would be no interference with the sailors who labored on the ship. During times of inclement weather, all hatches were sealed to prevent water from entering. Diseases such as dysentery or typhoid spread quickly.

Food that was brought on board usually was eaten cold, although some of it could be cooked on the ship’s hearth, depending upon the size of the vessel. In any event, the same foods were eaten every day. Biscuits, known as hardtack, were baked until rock-hard so they might last as long as possible. Before they were eaten, they would be soaked in beer to try to soften them. Why beer and not water? As I mentioned earlier, beer remained safe to drink, whereas water turned bad. It was common practice to use one’s teeth to strain water in an effort to remove the algae and bugs that tended to fill the cask after a week.



In ancient Egypt, brewing often was done by women, in part to make extra money. To the left, workers are crumbling lightly baked bread into small pieces before it is strained with water. Fruit was added to provide additional fermentables before the mixture was placed in a large vat, then stored in jars.

Make no mistake about it, although beer remained drinkable for much longer than water, it did not have an endless shelf life. The British navy had to cope with long journeys, especially when traveling to warm regions, resulting in flat, spoiled beer. Keep in mind that these primitive brews were unfiltered, suggesting that they were cloudy in appearance. That murkiness came from the presence of yeast, meaning that not having beer usually meant not having the B vitamins that the drink supplied. In addition, the beer was relatively weak, providing just enough alcohol to keep the fresh water from turning undrinkable.

By the mid-1700s, another beverage became popular with sailors: grog. Because colonization had expanded and the men aboard the ships were being sent on longer expeditions, some of which were to balmy climates, grog became the drink of choice. Rum was issued to sailors, but many instances of drunkenness occurred, adversely affecting the operation of the ship. Up to one-quarter of a pint of rum was given twice a day to each person. In time, Admiral Edward Vernon ordered it to be diluted at the rate of one part rum to three parts water. Vernon had the nickname "Old Grogam" because of the grogram coat he wore, and his sailors called the diluted rum grog after the admiral. The term *grog*

originated at this time, an indication of a person who was feeling the effects of drinking a bit too much. The rationing of rum continued in the Royal Navy until 1969.

Sailors stationed in the English Channel maintained their love of beer and were issued a gallon of it daily, per person. The same practice applied to all men stationed in cool climates. The problem of keeping the drink fresh for those long trips into the tropics had to be addressed.

Before the end of the century, the government decided to get involved. A number of ideas were put forth and considered. Finally, a suggestion was made that brewers should boil away most of the wort (pronounced *wert*, this is the liquid prior to fermentation). Then sailors could add water at sea, providing a fresher beverage. Even though this procedure worked well in cool waters, the obstacle relating to warm territories was not overcome. As British troops moved into India, something had to be done, and soon.

To preserve as much freshness as possible, ale was placed in the lower part of the ship's hull, the coolest part of the vessel. Yet the temperature varied greatly. Documents from this time period confirm a range from the low fifties to the mid-eighties, particularly when the ships entered the equatorial regions and also as they approached India. Take a four- or five-month crossing and couple it with temperature extremes and the constant swaying of the boat and you have the ingredients for severely damaging the quality of any beer. Yet brewers continued to make beer for export.

Porter, a dark roasty style of beer that was extremely popular in London, typically was the beer sent to India. Regrettably, it arrived tasting stale and sour. Also, the dark ales plainly were not as satisfying to the colonists now living in the warmth of their new country.

The solution came from a brewer living in London. Until this time, most brewers were trying to alter their methods, in an attempt to turn out a more stable beer. George Hodgson, however, created his India ale, a derivation of his pale ale.

Hodgson's ales were among the first beers that were not brown or black. What separated India ale from all others was the increased alcohol content, a primary weapon against spoilage. Brewers also recognized the preservative qualities that hops offered. Consequently, Hodgson added an additional dose of hops (and more sugar) to keep the yeast functioning during the lengthy voyage. The end result was a bitter, bubbly pale ale that successfully survived the long trip. Hodgson became a folk hero. Within twenty-five years, beer shipments to India increased fivefold.

By 1830, Hodgson controlled the Indian market, although some unethical business methods were employed. Upon hearing that another brewer was preparing pale ale for export, Hodgson flooded the market with his product, effectively lowering the price and removing competition. Then, in following years, he reduced deliveries, thus recovering lost profits from the past.

Success breeds copiers, and there was no shortage of them throughout England. The best came from an area known as Burton-on-Trent, now considered the brewing hub of the country. The secret was in the water, possibly the most overlooked component in the construction of beer. Burton water is high in sulfates, allowing the brewer to vary the amount of hops used. The net result was a strong, flavorful ale that tasted better and had a longer shelf life than that of Hodgson, ultimately leading to his demise.

India pale ale or IPA remained an export-only drink until a ship heading for India was demolished. Its cargo was sold, and Britons were exposed to this beer's existence. It became enormously popular locally and soon spread throughout much of Western Europe. These were powerful beers indeed, approaching 10 percent alcohol by volume. Before the end of the nineteenth century, all that changed, and India pale ales became remarkably weaker.

The British government moved from a structure that taxed the raw materials used, to one that was reliant upon the alcohol content of the wort. Hence, watery beers now were produced. As the Industrial Revolution came to be, including the introduction of refrigeration, IPAs fell out of favor, replaced by

the colonial trade as the Germans gained recognition with lager beer.

~~The practice of equating beer with seafaring has been revived by the Global Beer Network~~
importers of Piraat, a Belgian-made 10.5 percent alcohol-by-volume India pale ale, brewed in the
tradition of the type of beer that probably was found on many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century
ships.

Mechanical refrigeration was the single most important innovation that changed the brewing
industry. It allowed beer to be moved worldwide. The invention of the microscope meant that yeast
action could be studied and improved. As the drinkability of the beverage increased, so did the
distance that beer could be successfully shipped. Within a few generations, improvements in
transportation changed people from hesitant to enthusiastic travelers.

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SUMMER HEALTH



DRINK SCHLITZ
ALL WINTER



TO help retain the peak of sunny summer health—to help maintain rugged resistance to winter colds and sickness—drink SCHLITZ, with SUNSHINE VITAMIN D.

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SCHLITZ, with SUNSHINE VITAMIN D*, gives you the sunny source of health you need the

whole year around. Beer is good for you—but SCHLITZ, with SUNSHINE VITAMIN D, is extra good for you. It has all the old-time SCHLITZ FLAVOR AND BOUQUET brewed to mellow ripe perfection under PRECISE ENZYME CONTROL, with new health benefits . . . and at no increase in price.

Drink SCHLITZ regularly—every day—for health with enjoyment. Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

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Schlitz

WITH SUNSHINE VITAMIN-D



The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous

The Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company, was once the largest beer producer in the world. Its signature slogan was "The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous." Note the reference to the maintenance of good health by regular consumption of Schlitz with its "Sunshine Vitamin D."



Started in 1829, the Yuengling brewery started in Pottsville, PA and holds the title of “America’s Oldest Brewery.” Its fans are among the most loyal of all beer drinkers. Canada’s Molson Brewery actually was founded in 1786. An American court of law sided with Yuengling in its claim that they may proclaim themselves as the oldest American brewery, citing a belief that U.S. residents equate the use of the word “America,” with “United States.”

Beer has been popular in the United States since the country’s inception. There were more breweries in the late nineteenth century than exist today, but there are different concerns. Obviously back then access to a variety of beers was limited because transportation simply didn’t allow for extensive distribution. Consequently, I’ll limit any further discussion regarding beer history to the period from the mid-1970s forward.

Certain key events that took place in that decade still resound today. The year 1976 is considered a landmark in American beer history, as it was in October of that year that the first modern microbrewery, New Albion Brewing Co. of Sonoma, California, was incorporated. Keep in mind that the working definition of a *microbrewery* is a company producing up to fifteen thousand barrels (17,600 hectoliters) of beer annually. Today the word *microbrewery* has evolved into *craft brewery*, an independently owned business turning out up to two million barrels of beer a year. Near the end of the 1970s, there were fewer than fifty breweries in the entire country. Contrast that with a hundred years prior, when close to three thousand breweries existed nationwide.

Although New Albion lasted only six years, the wheels were in motion for an increased interest

full-flavored beers, as opposed to the mass-marketed, cookie-cutter beverages that had been the norm. Also in the late 1970s, two other elements provided direction for this burgeoning industry. British writer, Michael Jackson, achieved acclaim for his 1977 book, *The World Guide to Beer*, legitimizing the trade and alerting the masses to the fact that the American beer scene was about to change. In October 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a decree that legalized homebrewing at the federal level. It was this piece of legislation that was the driving force behind authorization and sanction more areas to permit microbreweries. Less than a decade later, a number of western states had their own micros, including the still-thriving Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. of Chico, California. By the way, I would be remiss not to mention the contribution of Fritz Maytag of appliance fame, who took ownership of a failing San Francisco, California, brewery, the Anchor Brewing Co., and transformed it into a classic example of an industry leader. Anchor remains one of the most respected companies in the business.

In the 1980s, a splinter from the micro, the “brewpub,” came into being. What distinguished it from a brewery was the fact that food was served in the place where the beer was made. Although the handcrafted beer remained the primary attraction for those who frequented the brewpub, as time progressed emphasis was given to food preparation. Today any good brewpub will feature an extensive array of beers and a bill of fare that complements the house brews. Some brewpubs have received recognition for excellence from prestigious culinary publications.

The trend toward more flavorful drinks—now known by a number of names, including *craft beer* and *boutique beer*—expanded geographically when the Manhattan Brewing Co. became the first brewpub to open in the East, in New York City. One of the brewers there was Garrett Oliver, who later achieved fame as the brewmaster of the Brooklyn Brewery. No one furthered the developing relationship between beer and food more than Oliver, by way of numerous speaking appearances centered on books he authored, especially *The Brewmaster’s Table*, an authoritative expression of beer styles and fine cuisine.

Another pioneer in the business was Jim Koch (pronounced *cook*), who in the 1980s decided to carry on his family’s tradition by starting the Boston Beer Company, maker of the popular Samuel Adams line of products. With its flagship Samuel Adams Boston Lager, along with other styles emerging, the company expanded from a few thousand barrels a year to over a million.

Make no mistake about it, despite the enormous surge in the popularity of handcrafted brews, sales of the beverages made by the giants of the trade continued to flourish. Well into the 1990s, the “Big Three”—Anheuser-Busch, Coors, and Miller Brewing—produced three of every four domestic beers. In fact, Anheuser-Busch had surpassed the billion mark in cases produced worldwide. Cleveland advertising promotions perpetuated the image of the “typical” American beer drinker as a male blue collar worker and a sports devotee. By the end of the century, however, the perception of that drinker had changed somewhat to include men and women, cultural differences, and the like. This shift in attitudes was fueled by an array of books and periodicals on the subject of beer. In short, the consumer had become more educated. Fifteen hundred breweries operated, and all but a couple of dozen were specialty breweries, turning out new flavors and styles. Remember those 1979 figures? Of forty-four breweries, only two could be considered as specialties.

If you think the popularity of these “new” beers, now called boutique or craft, sounded the death knell for the large breweries, nothing could be farther from the truth. The *Brookston Beer Bulletin* published a listing of the top fifty breweries based on 2009 sales. To no one’s surprise, the top three were Anheuser-Busch, MillerCoors, and Pabst. Clearly, they are doing something very right. To weigh the immense size of A-B, for example, just two of their brands, Bud Light (the best seller in the United States) and Budweiser, are responsible for annually shipping over seventy million barrels of beer worldwide. Contrast that with a company such as O’Fallon Brewery in Missouri. Keeping in mind

that most breweries don't distribute outside their immediate area, O'Fallon sends its beers to about a dozen states in its part of the country. Yet the total number of barrels brewed is approximately four thousand annually, the equivalent of about fifty-four thousand cases. And that reflects a 37 percent increase from 2008.



The final step in brewing is called "mashing" and occurs when hot water is added to ground malt or "grist." The water breaks down the starch within the grain, converting it into fermentable sugars. This process takes place in huge kettles called "mash tuns," as shown at the Coors brewery in Colorado.



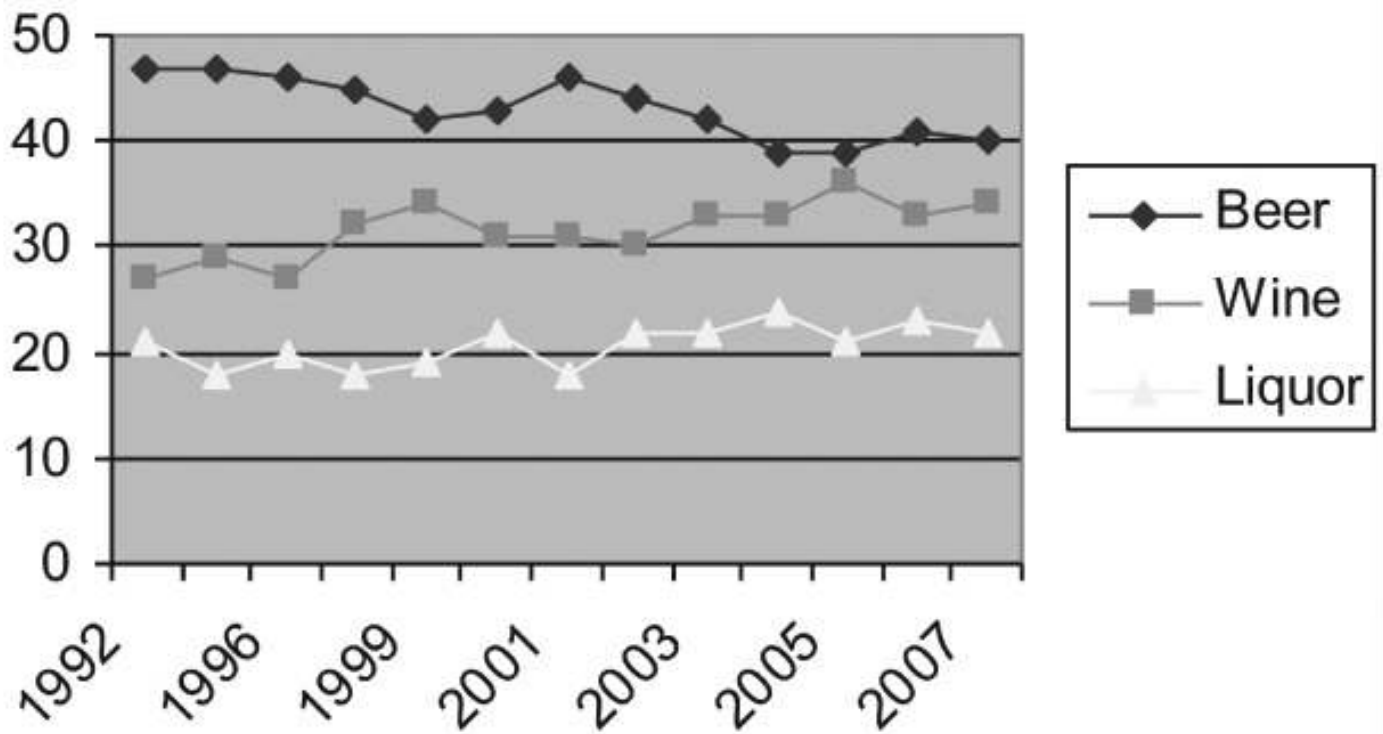
The Miller Brewery, located in Milwaukee, WI. The company had its origin in 1855. The company's peak in popularity was, in part based on the "Champagne of Beers" advertising slogan from years ago.

Too often we hear it said that beer no longer is a "hip" drink. I recall once walking into a brewpub where eight female servers who had finished their shifts were seated at the bar, enjoying a drink. Seven of them had a colorful martini—well, at least the twenty-first-century version of a martini. Only one was drinking beer. I asked them why so few were drinking their company's beverage and the response was that they really didn't consider beer to be in vogue. I then asked what made it so outdated, in their estimation. Answers didn't waver among the women, with most saying that it wasn't colorful enough or was the drink favored by their fathers and they wanted their own style.

Are those valid claims? Although the sample size is small, I've seen this phenomenon repeated elsewhere. So then, if beer isn't dead, is it wounded?

Many of us recall a 2005 Gallup Poll suggesting that wine had tied beer as the adult beverage of choice. I recall many members of the press, as well as non-beer-drinkers, jumped on the story in the quest to back up claims that the popularity of beer was waning. Now, I'll admit that the numbers do show a narrowing of the gap among wine, spirits, and beer. The question is why? I think the gals I spoke with in the brewpub were on target. The wine and spirits people have done a remarkable job promoting their preferred beverages to prominence.

Which Alcoholic Beverage Do You Most Often Drink?



Look at advertisements for these products. They usually reflect some degree of elegance. There's a fancy party or hip club scene attended by beautiful people clad in the latest designer clothing. They are the "beautiful people."

I have to applaud what is going on in the sake world, too. By tradition, the drink is presented in a small wooden box cup called *masu*. I've seen ceramics used, but for the most part you'll see sake served in glass stemware, much the way you'd order wine. Which looks more elegant and more upscale "American"? Yet sake, mistakenly referred to as "rice wine," actually is similar to beer in development. Multiple fermentations takes place; starch is converted to sugar, then the sugar changes to alcohol via the introduction of yeast. Mr. Restaurant Owner, try offering this to your customers in a wooden box and see the looks you'll get. Serve it in a tulip glass and realize how easy it is to get several dollars.

Compare that with the beer ads that still are common today. You'll see guys sitting around the television on a Sunday afternoon, eating pretzels and chips and pounding down the longnecks by the six-pack. One ad speaks elegance and exclusivity, the other screams commonality. In dealing with a generation of people brought up on upscale merchandise and lifestyle, is it any wonder that they are favoring colorful twenty-first-century Kool-Aid pop "martinis"?

The beer industry should not be held innocent. The gap between the mega- and microbrewers has been just what the rest of the beverage world needed.

What has happened in the last couple of years to swing the numbers back in favor of beer, at least according to the folks at Gallup? It's not in the number of people who call themselves drinkers. In 1945, the percentage of Americans who said they use alcohol was 67 percent. In mid-2007, the

number was 64 percent. Gallup did find that young male drinkers prefer beer, but women and older people in general favor wine. The survey indicated that people are drinking more, with the average drinker consuming 4.8 drinks per week as compared with under 4 as recently as 2001.

Over the last few years, there has been an influx of more unusual beer flavors, incorporating atypical ingredients. Take a look at Dogfish Head Brewery as a prime example. At any one time you'll find beers such as Festina Pêche, a Berliner weisse made with peaches; Chateau Jiahu, an ancient Chinese re-creation using rice flakes, wildflower honey, Muscat grapes, hawthorn fruit, chrysanthemum flowers, and sake yeast; Fort, a raspberry-infused fruit beer that tops out at 18 percent alcohol by volume (ABV); and Midas Touch Golden Elixir, a hybrid based on the funerary feast of King Midas: elements of barley (beer), Muscat grapes (wine), and honey (mead). To top things off, saffron, one of the most expensive spices in the world, is added to the mix. You don't think the introduction of those beers didn't excite beer drinkers? As esoteric as Dogfish Head is, what they are doing is being replicated at small breweries throughout the country. I once asked a brewer why he was experimenting with bizarre ingredients in his recipes. He said, "I'm small. I'll always remain small. I can afford to take chances and, quite frankly, my customers like it."

Perhaps not so coincidentally, the upsurge in regular drinking has coincided with medical reports suggesting that not only is moderate drinking harmless, but it may also have health benefits. Initially, red wine consumption was linked with heart protection, but more recently that has extended to beer.

According to the Brewers Association, moderate beer consumption (no more than two drinks a day for men, one for women) may be able to:

- Lower rates of heart disease by 30 to 60 percent.
- Aid in bone formation. Beer contains silicon, a mineral that helps to build bone mass.
- Prevent cell damage that can lead to cancer and heart disease.

Two ingredients in beer, hops and malt, supply much-needed antioxidants, known to fight diseases. Beer contains polyphenols, also found in berries, tea, grapes, wine, olive oil, cocoa, certain nuts, and other fruits and vegetables.

- Reduce incidence of diabetes.
- Protect against certain types of strokes, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia.

Lastly, beer contains no fat or cholesterol. The calories come principally from the alcohol.

As with most things in this world, the key is moderation. If taking a one-hundred-milligram tablet of vitamin E is good, would ingesting fifty times that amount be fifty times better? Because vitamin E acts as an anticoagulant that could lead to bleeding, drastically increasing the dosage is foolish. Likewise, having a couple of bottles of beer a day may have the previously mentioned positives, but multiplying one's intake radically will cause health problems and probably won't do much to guarantee the longevity of your job or marriage.

ITS HEALTH-GIVING VALUE

Guinness builds strong muscles. It feeds exhausted nerves. It enriches the blood. Doctors affirm that Guinness is a valuable restorative after Influenza and other weakening illnesses. Guinness is a valuable natural aid in cases of insomnia.

ITS NOURISHING PROPERTIES

Guinness is one of the most nourishing beverages, richer in carbo-hydrates than a glass of milk. That is one reason why it is so good when people are tired or exhausted.

GUINNESS

IS GOOD FOR YOU



Throughout the years, Guinness was recommended as a health drink and researchers have found antioxidant compounds, similar to those in wine and chocolate. For some time, pregnant women were advised to have an occasional glass of it. The company and its American importer make no such claims and allow the flavor and popularity of the drink to speak for itself.

BEER STYLES: ALES, LAGERS, AND HYBRIDS

Most beers fall into one of two principal classifications: ales and lagers. There's a third group, small in number, which will be discussed later. Pour a beer and by appearance alone, you'd be hard-pressed to identify its category. What separates ales from lagers is in how they were created. Some companies like to refer to a "born on" date, but I'll leave that to them.

There are complicated, esoteric descriptions of how ales and lagers differ, so let's take the mystery out of it. Simply stated, the key is in the type of yeast used in the fermentation process. Ale yeast does its work under warm conditions, probably not below fifty-five or sixty degrees Fahrenheit and up to about eighty degrees. They tend to do their job at the upper part of the fermentation vessel; thus, ales are known as a "top-fermenting" beverage. Ales are especially popular with microbrewers and homebrewers because they can be consumed within days of packaging. Let's face it, when you own a very small company, who has the time to allow the beer to age? Time is money.

Lagered beers take their name from the German word meaning "to store." Whereas ale yeast likes warmth and the top of the fermenter, lagers are the opposite. Optimum production from most lager yeast strains ranges from roughly thirty-five to sixty degrees. They settle to the bottom of the vat to do their thing.

The time spent in fermentation for ales and lagers is similar. Within a couple of weeks, the resulting liquid can be called beer.

Ah, but here is where the lagering comes into play. For those brews, a move to cold storage takes place, generally for a few weeks. Czechvar, a delightful Czech beer, boasts of a lagering period of ninety days for their premium original lager and up to two hundred days for their specialty beer.

I referred to a third style earlier. For lack of a better term, beers of this variety are called hybrid. Think of the auto industry for comparison. Most of the hybrid cars currently on the market operate based on the combination of gasoline and electric power. In the beer world, hybrids really aren't lagers or ales. Obviously, very few beers qualify for this special distinction. One that does, however, is the immensely popular Anchor Steam, made by Anchor Brewing of San Francisco. Known by the tagline *California common*, Anchor Steam is brewed using a special lager yeast. Prior to refrigeration, makers of this style used huge shallow open fermenters that allowed the beer to cool in the chilly Bay Area temperatures. The outcome is a malty (somewhat sweet) beer that retains lager's characteristic dryness. Interestingly, this is one of the very few styles that didn't begin in Europe. Be advised that Anchor is not the only brewery making California common beer, although the name *Steam Beer* is trademarked. Old Scratch Amber Lager by Flying Dog Brewery, based in Denver, Colorado, is outstanding and should be readily available in most locations. Also, I've seen plenty of brewpubs that have released their own versions of this beer, but I've yet to sample any as good as the two I've mentioned.

There are other examples of hybrids on the market, and opinions vary as to what constitutes beer of this style. Some feel that the use of fruits or herbs is grounds for reclassification, but stick to the use of either lager or ale yeasts in a nontraditional brewing method.

ALE VERSUS LAGER

Okay, we've gotten the background we need in ales, lagers, and hybrids, but what we still need is a way to generalize about the flavor differences among them. And from here forward, we'll drop the hybrids and just focus on the other two.

The manner in which certain strains of yeast work is what sets apart the two primary beer types. Ale yeasts, fermenting at a warmer temperature than lager yeasts, give off esters, those fruity and spicy flavor qualities so prevalent in beers of this sort. Some say ales are more complex than lagers and I suppose there is truth in that statement. What it means is that the drinker may note a combination of aromas and flavors in those beers. Not all flavors present themselves with the initial sip, either. One sensation may be noted initially, whereas another may come forward later.

Lagers are more straightforward in presentation. Remember, lagered beers are aged for a much longer period than are ales. What maturation does is to deliver evenness. Allowing the beer to rest at chilly temperatures triggers fewer esters than with ales. Consequently, other flavors tend to emerge, including hop bitterness.

There are drinkers who find lagers to be dull and boring. I suspect they've never tasted all-malt lagers, those beers that don't have cereal adjuncts added. A true lager, minus the cheap additions, offers a big malt presence, balanced by a hop bitterness that produces a memorable beverage.

Needless to say, one can find virtually anything on the Internet, including information about beer styles. As with virtually every subject, there's good to be found by Googling, and there's garbage. Depending on your source, you may find anywhere from a few dozen to well over a hundred different classifications of beer. As of 2011, the Brewers Association, hosts of The Great American Beer Festival held each fall in Denver, has identified seventy-nine types. The World Beer Cup, a spring event, shows ninety. Whatever you accept as true is immaterial for our purpose here. Frankly, many of the varieties are so esoteric, you simply won't find them in most well-stocked packaged goods stores. Vendors are in business to make money, and they tend to carry the best-selling styles. That's what our focus is. I'll identify the most common types of beer along with representative samples of each, then let you find them and begin your enjoyment.

I am going to mention a book that is invaluable for beer research. Michael Kuderka is the author of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*, published by MC Bassett LLC, in Asbury, New Jersey. Michael decided to write his book after going to a beer festival and then realizing he didn't necessarily know where to go to purchase the beers he enjoyed. Hasn't that happened many times over? At New Jersey's Atlantic City Beer Festival, only beers that are readily accessible to the public are invited to attend as vendors. Promoters insist that company representatives be present to answer questions from those curious patrons who might require additional information.

Kuderka's book is a reference, and that might turn off some people. However, if you are looking for information on beer styles and availability, as well as a complete brewery portfolio, there is no better reference to be had anywhere. When I was a regular on a program on the Sirius Satellite Radio network, Kuderka did a guest spot, and he was informative and entertaining.

The Beverage Testing Institute, founded in 1981, is a highly respected company that offers unbiased appraisals of wine, spirits, and beer. Based in Chicago, the organization publishes a monthly newsletter called *eTastings* and hosts a free website at Tastings.com. Their expertise goes beyond mere identification of beer types; rather, they offer commonsense tips dealing with matching beer with food, glassware, and how beer is made. Furthermore, you can search for a beverage of your choosing and read what their team of experts has to report.

Below is a list of the most common beer styles you are likely to find, along with representative brands, created in conjunction with the Beverage Testing Institute.

ALES

Abbey Ales (Dubbel, Tripel, Singel), Trappist Ale

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 beer bearing their abbey name to large commercial brewers. These abbey ales can vary enormously in specific character, but most are quite strong in alcoholic content, ranging from 6 percent alcohol by volume (ABV) to as high as 10 percent. Generally, abbey ales are labeled as either dubbel or tripel, though this is not a convention that is slavishly adhered to. The former conventionally 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 will conventionally be referred to as a singel, though it is rarely labeled as such.

Trappist ales may only come from seven abbeys of the Trappist order that still brew beer on the premises. Six are in Belgium and one, La Trappe, in Holland. Although the styles may differ widely among them, they all share a common traits 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. The ales from Trappist abbeys are: Chimay, Rochefort, Orval, Westmalle, Westvleteren, Achel, and La Trappe. Trappist ales are among the most complex and old-fashioned of beers that you can find. It's little wonder that many connoisseurs treat them as the holy grail of beer drinking.

Among the best: Ommegang, Maredsous 10, Chimay Première, Chimay Grand Réserve, Westmalle Dubbel, Westmalle Tripel, Rochefort 8, Rochefort 10, Westvleteren 12, Orval

Alt

Put simply, an altbier has the smoothness of a classic lager with the flavors of an ale. A more rigorous definition must take account of history. 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- to medium-bodied when compared with traditional English ales. In the United States, some amber ales are actually in the alt style.

Among the best: Uerige Sticke, Long Trail Double Bag, Otter Creek Copper Ale

Amber Ales

Many North American brewers are now producing ales that are known as amber ales. This is a more modern, nontraditional 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. From the consumer's viewpoint, the dividing line between these styles can often be a more marketing concern than a consistently observed brewing convention.

Among the best: Anderson Valley Boont Amber Ale, Tröegs Hopback Amber Ale, Rogu American Amber Ale, Stone Levitation Ale

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 criteria are that they are brewed domestically and will have less body and hop and malt character than a pale ale from the same brewery.

Among the best: Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Anchor Liberty Ale, Otter Creek Pale Ale, Dale's Pale Ale

Barleywine

Barleywine is the evocative name coined by British brewers to describe extremely potent ales 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. American versions tend to be a bit hoppier than their British counterparts.

Among the best: Sierra Nevada Bigfoot, Weyerbacher Blithering Idiot, Rogue Old Crustacean, Victory Old Horizontal

Belgian-Style Golden Ale

Belgian golden ales are pale to golden in color with a lightish body for their deceptive alcohol 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.

Among the best: Leffe Blond, Val-Dieu Blond, Affligem Blond

Belgian-Style Strong Ale

Beers listed in this category will generally pack a considerable alcohol punch and should be approached much like you would a barleywine. Indeed, some of them could be considered Belgian-style barleywines. Expect a fruity Belgian yeast character and a degree of sweetness coupled with a viscous mouthfeel.

Among the best: Duvel, Unibroue La Fin du Monde, Allagash Grand Cru, La Chouffe, Brooklyn Local 1

Belgian-Style Red Ale

These are also known as soured beers, and their defining character classically comes from having been aged for some years in well-used large wooden tuns, allowing bacterial action in the beer and the

imparting the sharp “sour” taste. 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. The ales are among the most distinctive and refreshing to be found anywhere.

Among the best: Rodenbach Grand Cru, Duchesse de Bourgogne, Ommegang Rouge

Belgian-Style Amber Ale

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

Among the best: New Belgium Fat Tire Amber Ale, Ommegang Rare Vos

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.

Among the best: Val-Dieu Blond, Leffe Blonde, Affligem Blond

Biere de Garde

Biere de garde is a Flemish and northern French specialty ale generally packaged distinctively in 750ml 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.

Among the best: 3 Monts Grande Réserve Spécial Ale, Perdition, Southampton Biere de Mars

Bitter

Bitter is an English specialty and very much an English term, generally denoting the standard ale, the “session” beer. Bitters are characterized by a fruitiness, 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 is the English yeast cultures used in fermentation. These impart a fruity, mildly 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 rather more assertive character than seen in traditional English bitters.

Among the best: Fuller's London Pride, Fuller's ESB, Rogue Younger's Special Bitter

Brown Ale

The precise definition of a brown ale would depend on where you live. In England, it is nowadays

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