

21B. Specialty IPA: New England IPA

Overall Impression

An American IPA with intense fruit flavors and aromas, a soft body, and smooth mouthfeel, and often opaque with substantial haze. Less perceived bitterness than traditional IPAs but always massively hop forward. This emphasis on late hopping, especially dry hopping, with hops with tropical fruit qualities lends the specific ‘juicy’ character for which this style is known.

Aroma

Intense hop aroma, typically with fruity qualities (stone fruit, tropical fruit, and citrus are most commonly present) reflective of newer American and New World hop varieties without being grassy or herbaceous. Clean, neutral malt in the background, potentially with a light bready sweetness without caramel or toast. Absence of any malt character is a fault. Neutral to fruity fermentation character that is well-integrated with the hops. A creamy, buttery, or acidic aroma is inappropriate. Any perceived alcohol character should be restrained and never hot.

Appearance

Color ranges from straw to yellow, sometimes with an orange hue. Hazy, often opaque, clarity; should not be cloudy or murky. The opacity can add a ‘shine’ to the beer and make the color seem darker. Any visible floating particulates (hop matter, yeast clumps, etc.) are a fault. Medium to rocky meringue white head with high to very high retention.

Flavor

The hop flavor is high to very high, and reflects the same characteristics as the aroma (emphasis on fruit, with ripe tropical fruit, stone fruit, and citrus being most common). The perceived bitterness can be somewhat low to medium-high, often being masked by the body and finish of the beer. The hop character in the aftertaste should not be sharp or harsh. Low to medium malt flavor, generally neutral, sometimes having a bready, grainy, lightly sweet flavor. Noticeable toast or caramel flavors are a flaw. Fermentation character is neutral to fruity, but as with the aroma, supportive of the hops. Off-dry to medium finish. Creamy, starchy, or sugary-sweet flavors are inappropriate, although a high ester level and lower bitterness may give the impression of up to moderate sweetness. A moderate, supportive alcohol character is acceptable but should never be hot or dominating.

Mouthfeel

Medium to medium-full body with a smooth character. No harsh, hop-derived astringency. Alcohol warmth may be present in stronger versions, but should never be hot. Medium carbonation is standard. The beer should not have a creamy or viscous mouthfeel, an acidic twang, or a raw starch texture.

Comments

The style is still evolving, but this style is essentially a smoother, hazier, juicier American IPA. In this context, ‘juicy’ refers to a mental impression of fruit juice or eating fresh, fully ripe fruit. Heavy examples suggestive of milkshakes, creamsicles, or fruit smoothies are beyond this range; IPAs should always be drinkable. Haziness comes from the dry hopping regime, not suspended

yeast, starch haze, set pectins, or other techniques; a hazy shine is desirable, not a cloudy, murky mess.

History

A modern craft beer style originating in the New England region of the United States. Alchemist Heady Topper is believed to be the original example and inspiration for many other interpretations that grew in popularity in the early to mid-2010s. Brewers are continuing to innovate and evolve the style, with the style trending towards a less bitter presentation to the point of making a mockery of the term “IPA”.

Characteristic Ingredients

Similar to many newer American IPAs but often with more oats or wheat in the grist, and less caramel or specialty malts. Restricted hop choice to American or New World varieties with a tropical fruit, stone fruit, or citrus character. Neutral to estery yeast strain. Water ranges from balanced between sulfate and chloride to using more chlorides. Heavily dry-hopped, partly during active fermentation, using a variety of hopping doses and temperatures to emphasis hop depth of aroma and flavor over bitterness. Biotransformation of hop oils during fermentation may add to the fruit character.

Style Comparison

Compared to American IPA, New England IPA has a fuller, softer mouthfeel, a more fruit-forward late hop expression, a more restrained perceived bitterness balance, and a hazier appearance. Many modern American IPAs are fruity and somewhat hazy; if they have a dry, crisp finish, at most medium body, and high perceived bitterness, these examples should be entered as American IPAs. Noticeable additions of fruit, lactose, or other materials to increase the fruity, smooth character should be entered in another category defined by the additive (e.g., Fruit Beer, Specialty Beer).

Vital Statistics

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| IBU | 25 – 60 |
| SRM | 3 – 7 |
| OG | 1.060 – 1.085 |
| FG | 1.010 – 1.015 |
| ABV | 6% – 9% |

Commercial Examples

Hill Farmstead Susan, Other Half Green Diamonds Double IPA, Tired Hands Alien Church, Tree House Julius, Trillium Congress Street, WeldWerks Juicy Bits