



BREWER'S
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Brewer's Glossary

Alcohol

A synonym for ethyl alcohol or ethanol, the colorless primary alcohol constituent of beer. Alcohol ranges for beer vary from less than 3.2% to greater than 14% ABV. However, the majority of craft beer styles average around 5.9% ABV.

Ale

Ales are beers fermented with top fermenting yeast. Ales typically are fermented at warmer temperatures than lagers, and are often served warmer. The term ale is sometimes incorrectly associated with alcoholic strength.

Alpha Acid

One of two primary naturally occurring soft resins in hops (the other is Beta Acid). Alpha acids are converted during wort boiling to iso-alpha acids, which cause the majority of beer bitterness. During aging, alpha acids can oxidize (chemical change) and lessen in bitterness.

Attenuation

The reduction in wort specific gravity caused by the yeast consuming wort sugars and converting them into alcohol and carbon dioxide gas through fermentation.

Bitterness

In beer, the bitterness is caused by the tannins and iso-humulones of hops. Bitterness of hops is perceived in the taste. The amount of bitterness in a beer is one of the defining characteristics of a beer style.

Body

The consistency, thickness and mouth-filling property of a beer. The sensation of palate fullness in the mouth ranges from thin- to full-bodied. Synonym: Mouthfeel.

Bottle Conditioning

A process by which beer is naturally carbonated in the bottle as a result of fermentation of additional wort or sugar intentionally added during packaging.

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

The gaseous by-product of yeast. Carbon dioxide is what gives beer its carbonation (bubbles).

Color

The hue or shade of a beer, primarily derived from grains, sometimes derived from fruit or other ingredients in beer. Beer styles made with caramelized, toasted or roasted malts or grains will exhibit increasingly darker colors. The color of a beer may often, but not always, allow the consumer to anticipate how a beer might taste. It's important to note that beer color does not equate to alcohol level, mouthfeel or calories in beer.

Degrees Plato

An empirically derived hydrometer scale to measure density of beer wort in terms of percentage of extract by weight.

Dry Hopping

The addition of hops late in the brewing process to increase the hop aroma of a finished beer without significantly affecting its bitterness. Dry hops may be added to the wort in the kettle, whirlpool, hop back, or added to beer during primary or secondary fermentation or even later in the process.

Fermentation

The chemical conversion of fermentable sugars into approximately equal parts of ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide gas, through the action of yeast. The two basic methods of fermentation in brewing are top fermentation, which produces ales, and bottom fermentation, which produces lagers.

Final Gravity

The specific gravity of a beer as measured when fermentation is complete (when all desired fermentable sugars have been converted to alcohol and carbon dioxide gas). Synonym: Final specific gravity; final SG; finishing gravity; terminal gravity.

Flocculation

The behavior of suspended particles in wort or beer that tend to clump together in large masses and settle out. During brewing, protein and tannin particles will flocculate out of the kettle, coolship or fermenter during hot or cold break. During and at the end of fermentation, yeast cells will flocculate to varying degrees depending on the yeast strain, thereby affecting fermentation as well as filtration of the resulting beer.

Hydrometer

A glass instrument used to measure the specific gravity of liquids as compared to water, consisting of a graduated stem resting on a weighted float.

Krausen

n – The rocky head of foam which appears on the surface of the wort during fermentation.

v – A method of conditioning in which a small quantity of unfermented wort is added to a fully fermented beer to create a secondary fermentation and natural carbonation.

Lager

Lagers are any beer that is fermented with bottom-fermenting yeast at colder temperatures. Lagers are most often associated with crisp, clean flavors and are traditionally fermented and served at colder temperatures than ales.

Mashing

The process of mixing crushed malt (and possibly other grains or adjuncts) with hot water to convert grain starches to fermentable sugars and non-fermentable carbohydrates that will add body, head retention and other characteristics to the beer. Mashing also extracts colors and flavors that will carry through to the finished beer, and also provides for the degradation of haze-forming proteins. Mashing requires several hours and produces a sugar-rich liquid called wort.

Mouthfeel

Synonym for body of a beer, weight on the tongue, perceived carbonation (sensation), perceived warmth (alcohol) and perceived astringency.

Primary Fermentation

The first stage of fermentation carried out in open or closed containers and lasting from two to twenty days during which time the bulk of the fermentable sugars are converted to ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. Synonym: Principal fermentation; initial fermentation.

Priming

The addition of small amounts of fermentable sugars to fermented beer before racking or bottling to induce a renewed fermentation in the bottle or keg and thus carbonate the beer.

Racking

The process of transferring beer from one vessel to another, especially into the final package or keg.

Sediment

The refuse of solid matter that settles and accumulates at the bottom of fermenters, conditioning vessels and bottles of bottle-conditioned beer.

Specific Gravity

The ratio of the density of a substance to the density of water. This method is used to determine how much dissolved sugars are present in the wort or beer. Specific gravity has no units because it is expressed as a ratio. See also Original Gravity and Final Gravity.

Trub

Wort particles resulting from the precipitation of proteins, hop oils and tannins during the boiling and cooling stages of brewing.

Wort

The bittersweet sugar solution obtained by mashing the malt and boiling in the hops, which becomes beer through fermentation.