

Specialty IPA (BJCP Cat. 21B)



Presented by Ryan Reschan

Past to Present



BJCP Special IPA Description

Specialty IPA isn't a distinct style, but is more appropriately thought of as a competition entry category. Beers entered as this style are not experimental beers; they are a collection of currently produced types of beer that may or may not have any market longevity. This category also allows for expansion, so potential future IPA variants (St. Patrick's Day Green IPA, Romulan Blue IPA, Zima Clear IPA, etc.) have a place to be entered without redoing the style guidelines. The only common element is that they have the balance and overall impression of an IPA (typically, an American IPA) but with some minor tweak.

The term 'IPA' is used as a singular descriptor of a type of hoppy, bitter beer. It is not meant to be spelled out as 'India Pale Ale' when used in the context of a Specialty IPA. None of these beers ever historically went to India, and many aren't pale. But the craft beer market knows what to expect in balance when a beer is described as an 'IPA' – so the modifiers used to differentiate them are based on that concept alone.

Overall Impression

Recognizable as an IPA by balance – a hop-forward, bitter, dryish beer – with something else present to distinguish it from the standard categories. Should have good drinkability, regardless of the form. Excessive harshness and heaviness are typically faults, as are strong flavor clashes between the hops and the other specialty ingredients.

Aroma

Detectable hop aroma is required; characterization of hops is dependent on the specific type of Specialty IPA. Other aromatics may be present; hop aroma is typically the strongest element.

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Appearance

Color depends on specific type of Specialty IPA. Most should be clear, although certain styles with high amounts of starchy adjuncts, or unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be slightly hazy. Darker types can be opaque making clarity irrelevant. Good, persistent head stand with color dependent on the specific type of Specialty IPA.

Flavor

Hop flavor is typically medium-low to high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Hop bitterness is typically medium-high to very high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Malt flavor generally low to medium, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Commonly will have a medium-dry to dry finish. Some clean alcohol flavor can be noted in stronger versions. Various types of Specialty IPAs can show additional malt and yeast characteristics, depending on the type.

Mouthfeel

Smooth, medium-light to medium-bodied mouthfeel. Medium carbonation. Some smooth alcohol warming can be sensed in stronger versions.

Entry Instructions

Entrant must specify a strength (session, standard, double); if no strength is specified, standard will be assumed. Entrant must specify specific type of Specialty IPA from the library of known types listed in the Style Guidelines, or as amended by the BJCP web site; or the entrant must describe the type of Specialty IPA and its key characteristics in comment form so judges will know what to expect. Entrants may specify specific hop varieties used, if entrants feel that judges may not recognize the varietal characteristics of newer hops. Entrants may specify a combination of defined IPA types (e.g., Black Rye IPA) without providing additional descriptions. Entrants may use this category for a different strength version of an IPA defined by its own BJCP subcategory (e.g., session-strength American or English IPA) – except where an existing BJCP subcategory already exists for that style (e.g., double [American] IPA).

Currently Defined Types: Black IPA, Brown IPA, White IPA, Rye IPA, Belgian IPA, Red IPA

Strength classifications:

Session – ABV: 3.0 – 5.0%

Standard – ABV: 5.0 – 7.5%

Double – ABV: 7.5 – 10.0%

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New Belgium Accumulation White IPA



“This winter, IBUs start accumulating like snow in Colorado with our new Accumulation White IPA. Brewing a white IPA was not only a way to salute the white beauty falling from the sky, but a direct revolt to the longstanding tradition of brewing dark beers for winter and winter seasonal beers . At least that’s what our rebellious brewer Grady Hull likes to claim as he shovels in plenty of new hop varietals and a bit of wheat for a smooth mouthfeel. Stack up a few cases of Accumulation White IPA to keep your long nights glowing blizzard white.”

Commercial Examples: Blue Point White IPA, Deschutes Chainbreaker IPA, Harpoon The Long Thaw, New Belgium Accumulation

White IPA

- Overall Impression: A fruity, spicy, refreshing version of an American IPA, but with a lighter color, less body, and featuring either the distinctive yeast and/or spice additions typical of a Belgian witbier.
- Aroma: Moderate fruity esters – banana, citrus, perhaps apricot. May have light to moderate spice aroma such as coriander or pepper from actual spice additions and/or Belgian yeast. Hop aroma is moderately-low to medium, usually American or New World type with stone fruit, citrus and tropical aromas. Esters and spices may reduce hop aroma perception. Light clove-like phenolics may be present.
- Flavor: Light malt flavor, perhaps a bit bready. Fruity esters are moderate to high, with citrus flavors similar to grapefruit and orange, or stone fruit like apricot. Sometimes banana-like flavors are present. Hop flavor is medium-low to medium-high with citrusy or fruity aspects. Some spicy clove-like flavors from Belgian yeast may be present. Coriander and orange peel flavors may be found as well. Bitterness is high which leads to moderately dry, refreshing finish.

White IPA

- Comments: A craft beer interpretation of American IPA crossed with a witbier.
- History: American craft brewers developed the style as a late winter/spring seasonal beer to appeal to Wit and IPA drinkers alike.
- Characteristic Ingredients: Pale and wheat malts, Belgian yeast, citrusy American type hops.
- Style Comparison: Similar to a Belgian Wit style except highly hopped to the level of an American IPA. Bitter and hoppy like the IPA but fruity, spicy and light like the Wit. Typically the hop aroma and flavor are not as prominent as in an American IPA.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.056 – 1.065

IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.010 – 1.016

SRM: 5 – 8 ABV: 5.5 – 7.0%

R^3 Brewing X-IPA

Recipe for 6 gallons:

Grist:

O.G. - 1.064 F.G. - 1.011

96.7% Red X Malt

ABV – 7.0% IBUs – 31 for just bittering

3.3% Sugar In The Raw

Hops:

1.0 oz. Magnum 60 min.

2.0 oz. Belma 10 min.

2.5 oz. 007 Golden Hop 10 min.

1.5 oz. Centennial 10 min

2.0 oz. Belma Whirlpool

2.0 oz. 007 Golden Hop Whirlpool

1.0 oz. Centennial Whirlpool

Dry-hop: 2.5 oz. 007 Golden Hop, 2.0 oz. Belma, 2.0 oz. Centennial

Yeast: WLP001 California Ale (2L starter)

Commercial examples: Green Flash Hop Head Red Double Red IPA (double), Midnight Sun Sockeye Red, Sierra Nevada Flipside Red IPA, Summit Horizon Red IPA, Odell Runoff Red IPA

Red IPA

- Overall Impression: Hoppy, bitter, and moderately strong like an American IPA, but with some caramel, toffee, and/or dark fruit malt character. Retaining the dryish finish and lean body that makes IPAs so drinkable, a Red IPA is a little more flavorful and malty than an American IPA without being sweet or heavy.
- Aroma: A moderate to strong fresh hop aroma featuring one or more characteristics of American or New World hops, such as tropical fruit, stone fruit, citrus, floral, spicy, berry, melon, pine, resinous, etc. Many versions are dry hopped and can have an additional fresh hop aroma; this is desirable but not required. Grassiness should be minimal, if present. A medium-low to medium malty-sweet aroma mixes in well with the hop selection, and often features caramel, toffee, toasty, and/or dark fruit character. Fruitiness from yeast may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable. A restrained alcohol note may be present, but this character should be minimal at best. Any American or New World hop character is acceptable; new hop varieties continue to be released and should not constrain this style.

Red IPA

- Flavor: Hop flavor is medium to very high, and should reflect an American or New World hop character, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Medium-high to very high hop bitterness. Malt flavor should be medium-low to medium, and is generally clean but malty-sweet up front with medium-dark caramel, toffee, toasty and/or dark fruit malt flavors. The character malt choices and the hop selections should complement and enhance each other, not clash. The level of malt flavor should not adversely constrain the hop bitterness and flavor presentation. Low yeast-derived fruitiness is acceptable but not required. Dry to medium-dry finish; residual sweetness should be medium-low to none. The bitterness and hop flavor may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. A very light, clean alcohol flavor may be noted in stronger versions.
- Comments: Previously might have been a sub-genre of American Amber Ales or Double Red Ales, hoppier and stronger than the normal products, but still maintaining the essential drinkability by avoiding sweet flavors or a heavy body or finish.
- History: A modern American craft beer style, based on American IPA but with the malt flavors of an American Amber Ale.

Red IPA

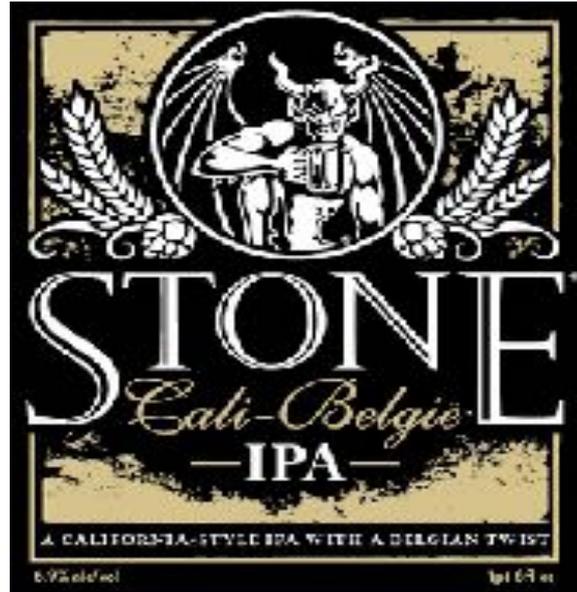
- **Characteristic Ingredients:** Similar to an American IPA, but with medium or dark crystal malts, possibly some character malts with a light toasty aspect. May use sugar adjuncts. American or New World finishing hops with tropical, fruity, citrusy, piney, berry, or melon aspects; the choice of hops and character malts is synergistic – they very much have to complement each other and not clash.
- **Style Comparison:** Similar to the difference between an American Amber Ale and an American Pale Ale, a Red IPA will differ from an American IPA with the addition of some darker crystal malts giving a slightly sweeter, more caramelly and dark fruit-based balance. A Red IPA differs from an American Strong Ale in that the malt profile is less intense and there is less body; a Red IPA still has an IPA balance and doesn't trend towards a barleywine-like malt character. A Red IPA is like a stronger, hoppier American Amber Ale, with the characteristic dry finish, medium-light body, and strong late hop character.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.056 – 1.070

IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.008 – 1.016

SRM: 11 – 19 ABV: 5.5 – 7.5%

Stone Cali-Belgique IPA



“Stone Cali-Belgique IPA features a complex and surprising combination of flavors, but behind the fancy title is the simply delicious Stone IPA. The addition of a carefully selected strain of Belgian yeast adds banana and spice notes to the hoppy brightness of our flagship IPA. Think of it as an otherwise identical twin to Stone IPA that was raised in a Belgian culture. Literally.”

Commercial Examples: Brewery Vivant Triomphe, Houblon Chouffe, Epic Brainless IPA, Green Flash Le Freak, Stone Cali-Belgique, Urthel Hop It

Belgian IPA

- Overall Impression: An IPA with the fruitiness and spiciness derived from the use of Belgian yeast. The examples from Belgium tend to be lighter in color and more attenuated, similar to a tripel that has been brewed with more hops. This beer has a more complex flavor profile and may be higher in alcohol than a typical IPA.
- Aroma: Moderate to high hop aroma, often tropical, stone fruit, citrus or pine-like typical of American or New World hop varieties. Floral and spicy aromas are also found indicating European hops. Grassy aroma due to dry hopping may be present. Gentle, grainy-sweet malt aroma, with little to no caramel. Fruity esters are moderate to high and may include aromas of bananas, pears and apples. Light clove-like phenols may be noticeable. Belgian candi sugar-like aromas are sometimes present.
- Flavor: Initial flavor is moderately spicy and estery associated with Belgian yeast strains. Clove-like and peppery flavors are common. Banana, pear and apple flavors are also typical. Hop flavors are moderate to high in intensity and may reflect tropical, stone fruit, melon, citrusy, or piney American/New World varieties or floral and spicy Saazer-type hop flavors. Malt flavor is light and grainy-sweet, sometimes with low toasted or caramel malt flavor but not required. Bitterness is high and may be accentuated by spicy yeast-derived flavors. The finish is dry to medium-dry although some examples have a slight sweetness mixed with the lingering bitterness.

Belgian IPA

- Comments: The choice of yeast strain and hop varieties is critical since many choices will horribly clash.
- History: A relatively new style, started showing up in the mid 2000s. Homebrewers and microbreweries simply substituted Belgian yeast in their American IPA recipes. Belgian breweries added more hops to their tripel and pale ale recipes.
- Characteristic Ingredients: Belgian yeast strains used in making tripels and golden strong ales. American examples tend to use American or New World hops while Belgian versions tend to use European hops and only pale malt.
- Style Comparison: A cross between an American IPA/Imperial IPA with a Belgian Golden Strong Ale or Tripel. This style is may be spicier, stronger, drier and more fruity than an American IPA.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.058 – 1.080

IBUs: 50 – 100 FG: 1.008 – 1.016

SRM: 5 – 15 ABV: 6.2 – 9.5%

Brown IPA

Commercial Examples: Dogfish Head Indian Brown Ale, Grand Teton Bitch Creek, Harpoon Brown IPA, Russian River Janet's Brown Ale

Brown IPA

- Overall Impression: Hoppy, bitter, and moderately strong like an American IPA, but with some caramel, chocolate, toffee, and/or dark fruit malt character as in an American Brown Ale. Retaining the dryish finish and lean body that makes IPAs so drinkable, a Brown IPA is a little more flavorful and malty than an American IPA without being sweet or heavy.
- Aroma: A moderate to moderately-strong fresh hop aroma featuring one or more characteristics of American or New World hops, such as tropical fruit, stone fruit, citrus, floral, spicy, berry, melon, pine, resinous, etc. Many versions are dry hopped and can have an additional fresh hop aroma; this is desirable but not required. Grassiness should be minimal, if present. A medium-low to medium malty-sweet aroma mixes in well with the hop selection, and often features chocolate, nuts, dark caramel, toffee, toasted bread, and/or dark fruit character. Fruitiness from yeast may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable. A restrained alcohol note may be present, but this character should be minimal at best. Any American or New World hop character is acceptable; new hop varieties continue to be released and should not constrain this style.

Brown IPA

- Flavor: Hop flavor is medium to high, and should reflect an American or New World hop character, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Medium-high to high hop bitterness. Malt flavor should be medium-low to medium, and is generally clean but malty-sweet up front with milk chocolate, cocoa, toffee, nutty, biscuity, dark caramel, toasted bread and/or dark fruit malt flavors. The character malt choices and the hop selections should complement and enhance each other, not clash. The level of malt flavor should nearly balance the hop bitterness and flavor presentation. Low yeast-derived fruitiness is acceptable but not required. Dry to medium finish; residual sweetness should be medium-low to none. The bitterness and hop flavor may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. A very light, clean alcohol flavor may be noted in stronger versions. No roasted, burnt, or harsh-bitter malt character.
- Comments: Previously might have been a sub-genre of American Brown Ales, hoppier and stronger than the normal products, but still maintaining the essential drinkability by avoiding sweet flavors or a heavy body or finish. The hops and malt can combine to produce interesting interactions.

Brown IPA

- History: A more modern craft beer name for a style that has long been popular with US homebrewers, when it was known as a hoppier American Brown Ale or sometimes Texas Brown Ale (despite origins in California).
- Characteristic Ingredients: Similar to an American IPA, but with medium or dark crystal malts, lightly roasted chocolate-type malts, or other intermediate color character malts. May use sugar adjuncts, including brown sugar. American or New World finishing hops with tropical, fruity, citrusy, piney, berry, or melon aspects; the choice of hops and character malts is synergistic – they very much have to complement each other and not clash.
- Style Comparison: A stronger and more bitter version of an American Brown Ale, with the balance of an American IPA.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.056 – 1.070

IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.008 – 1.016

SRM: 11 – 19 ABV: 5.5 – 7.5%

21st Amendment Brewery Back In Black



“Back in Black is a year-round beer available in six pack cans and on draft. Brewed like an American IPA but with the addition of rich, dark malts, this beer has all the flavor and hop character you expect with a smooth, mellow finish.”

Commercial Examples: 21st Amendment Back in Black (standard), Deschutes Hop in the Dark CDA (standard), Rogue Dad’s Little Helper (standard), Southern Tier Iniquity (double), Widmer Pitch Black IPA (standard)

Black IPA

- Overall Impression: A beer with the dryness, hop-forward balance, and flavor characteristics of an American IPA, only darker in color – but without strongly roasted or burnt flavors. The flavor of darker malts is gentle and supportive, not a major flavor component. Drinkability is a key characteristic.
- Aroma: A moderate to high hop aroma, often with a stone fruit, tropical, citrusy, resinous, piney, berry, or melon character. If dry hopped, can have an additional floral, herbal, or grassy aroma, although this is not required. Very low to moderate dark malt aroma, which can optionally include light chocolate, coffee, or toast notes. Some clean or lightly caramelly malty sweetness may be found in the background. Fruitiness, either from esters or from hops, may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable.

Black IPA

- Flavor: Medium-low to high hop flavor with tropical, stone fruit, melon, citrusy, berry, piney or resinous aspects. Medium-high to very high hop bitterness, although dark malts may contribute to the perceived bitterness. The base malt flavor is generally clean and of low to medium intensity, and can optionally have low caramel or toffee flavors. Dark malt flavors are low to medium-low; restrained chocolate or coffee flavors may be present, but the roasted notes should not be intense, ashy, or burnt, and should not clash with the hops. Low to moderate fruitiness (from yeast or hops) is acceptable but not required. Dry to slightly off-dry finish. The finish may include a light roast character that contributes to perceived dryness, although this is not required. The bitterness may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. Some clean alcohol flavor can be noted in stronger versions.
- Comments: Most examples are standard strength. Strong examples can sometimes seem like big, hoppy porters if made too extreme, which hurts their drinkability. The hops and malt can combine to produce interesting interactions.

Black IPA

- History: A variation of the American IPA style first commercially produced by Greg Noonan as Blackwatch IPA around 1990. Popularized in the Pacific Northwest and Southern California of the US starting in the early-mid 2000s. This style is sometimes known as Cascadian Dark Ale (CDA), mainly in the Pacific Northwest.
- Characteristic Ingredients: Debittered roast malts for color and some flavor without harshness and burnt qualities; American or New World hop varieties that don't clash with roasted malts. Hop characteristics cited are typical of these type of hops; others characteristics are possible, particularly if derived from newer varieties.
- Style Comparison: Balance and overall impression of an American or Double IPA with restrained roast similar to the type found in Schwarzbiers. Not as roasty-burnt as American stouts and porters, and with less body and increased smoothness and drinkability.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.050 – 1.085

IBUs: 50 – 90 FG: 1.010 – 1.018

SRM: 25 – 40 ABV: 5.5 – 9.0%

Questions?

All information is from the 2015 BJCP Beer
Style Guidelines.

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