

# CRAFTBEER.COM BEER FLAVORS SIX PACK

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- 1. Crisp & Clean**  
Groupings: Clean, Malt, Hop
- 2. Malty & Sweet**  
Groupings: Toast, Caramel
- 3. Dark & Roasty**  
Groupings: Dark and malty, Dark and dry
- 4. Hoppy & Bitter**  
Groupings: Earthy and bitter; Hop-bitter, malt-forward; Strong hop, herbal, earthy or citrus
- 5. Fruity & Spicy**  
Groupings: Bright yeast, Dark
- 6. Sour, Tart & Funky**  
Groupings: Sour, Tart, Funky

Not all styles listed below are overviewed in Common U.S. Beer Styles starting on page 17. For reference on styles listed, refer to CraftBeer.com Style Finder ([CraftBeer.com/Style-Finder](https://craftbeer.com/Style-Finder)) and Brewers Association Styles.

## 1. Crisp & Clean

Crisp beers will present clean and refreshing on the palate. They have a very delicate impact on the palate and can sometimes produce a feeling of dryness in the mouth. Crisp beers can cleanse the palate of flavors and leave it feeling refreshed when properly paired. These beers should be paired carefully as to allow the subtle notes of the beer to speak through the pairing. Simple and clean pairings focusing on a single dominant flavor work best to allow the palate to experience the notes in the craft beer style.

**Clean:** Showing a nice balance of hops and malt. The yeasts used in these beers can contribute flavors of green apple or pear, and the malt comes across smooth on the palate. The flavors from these styles will not linger on the palate and should be paired with ingredients to create an overall delicate outcome.

### Examples:

Bohemian and German-Style Pilsener  
Belgian-Style Blonde Ale  
Blonde Ale  
German-Style Kölsch

**Malt:** These beers bring notes of bread and biscuit to the palate. They can handle more complex pairings and flavor combinations and are versatile with both dry-heat and moist-heat cooking methods that allow the craft beer to finish clean.

### Examples:

American Amber Lager  
German-Style Helles  
American Amber Ale  
German-Style Märzen/Oktobertfest  
German-Style Maibock

**Hop:** By dry-hopping these beers, the usual crisp and clean notes of these styles will come across drier and have a distinct hop bite in the finish. Herbal or floral notes from the hops will be noticeable from the aroma all the way to the finish of the beer. The malt notes tend to take a back seat in pairing. Subtle use of grain or vegetal flavors can balance out the malt and hops on the palate.

### Examples:

Specialty Beer: Hoppy Lager / India Pale Lager  
Specialty Beer: Imperial Pilsner

## 2. Malty & Sweet

Malt-driven flavors dominate this flavor profile. The palate can expect a degree of sweetness and deep notes of nuts, toffee, caramel, toast and dark fruit. Hops are still present and can be pulled out through careful pairing, but the focus of the pairing should be on highlighting the malt profile on the palate. Pairings rely on carbonation more than hop bitterness to help cleanse the palate.

**Toast:** Beers with this flavor profile pack in crisp notes along with very full malt flavors. Biscuity, nutty and toast flavors will run through the palate. Stronger versions present the palate with caramel and roasted fruit notes. The biggest of these will begin to pull on flavors from dried fruits such as raisins, dates and figs. Successful pairings often mimic the beer's fruit notes in the dish, and use dry-heat cooking methods that bring out the maillard reaction.

### Examples:

English-Style Mild  
German-Style Schwarzbier  
German-Style Dunkel  
English-Style Brown Ale  
German-Style Bock  
German-Style Doppelbock

**Caramel:** While still focusing on a very sturdy malt presence, these craft beers will bring a brighter dried-fruit note to the palate. Notes of toffee can be found next to red apples, orange zest and plum. These craft beers pair well with simpler dry-heat cooking methods. The use of vegetal flavors can often bring out the fruit profiles in each style.

### Examples:

English-Style Bitter  
Scottish-Style Ale  
Irish-Style Red  
French-Style Bière de Garde  
English-Style Pale Ale / ESB  
Scotch Ale / Wee Heavy

## 3. Dark & Roasty

These craft beers focus their flavor profiles on dark roasted malts that contribute coffee and cocoa notes. From aroma to palate to finish, the roast of the malt comes through stronger than in other flavor profiles.

**Dark and malty:** Intense roasting can produce a delicate bitterness in these beers, which gravitate more toward the profiles of milk chocolate, raw tree nuts and coffee with cream. The more intense these styles get, the more the fruit profile of dates and figs becomes present. Pair these beers by using ingredients that calm the stronger roast flavors on the palate and bring out the more subtle and delicate notes of fruit and hops that can often be hidden behind roasted malts.

*Examples*

German-Style Schwarzbier  
English-Style Brown Porter  
Robust Porter  
English-Style Oatmeal Stout  
American Brown Ale  
English-Style Brown Ale

**Dark and dry:** These craft beers use the darkest roasts and are commonly the driest of the dark flavor profiles. Burnt grain, dark chocolate and espresso are the most notable aromas. Fruit flavors emerge in the strongest versions, often giving off aromas of plums and cherries. Though the aroma often suggests a heavier mouthfeel, these beers tend to be lighter on the palate, which allows the dry notes to come into play in pairing. Both dry and moist heat cooking methods work well for pairings, but caution should be taken with the depth of flavors so as to not overpower the beer. Pair to the mouthfeel of these craft beer styles and use the aroma as a supporting quality.

*Examples:*

Irish-Style Dry Stout  
Specialty Beer: American Black Ale  
American Stout  
American Imperial Stout

#### 4. Hoppy & Bitter

Hops contribute the majority of aromas and pronounced bitterness found in many beer styles. Though these beers will have a solid malt base, the hops will always provide the most dominant flavors. These beers cover a very wide range and can easily be the most difficult to pair. Hops typically respond well to pairings with fatty foods, which calm the hop flavors on the palate. Fat coats the palate, and the bitterness of the hops pleasantly cleanses it away. Note: Hop bitterness that has very little to no malt support can clash with some seafood, such as salmon, imparting a metallic flavor. Always do a test tasting to be sure.

**Earthy and bitter:** These craft beers will intentionally use a lighter malt bill in order to focus the palate on the hops. Common hop varieties used here will give more herbal deep bittering notes. Using ingredients in the pairing to calm the hops on the palate will bring the malt forward and hold the hops off, so the palate can experience the full flavor of these craft beer styles.

*Examples:*

English-Style Bitter  
American Pale Ale  
American India Pale Ale (IPA)  
Specialty Beer: Belgian IPA

**Hop-bitter, malt-forward:** While the hops are still the driving notes for pairing, these craft beers will have a stronger malt bill that enables them to pair with heavier dishes. Caramel notes will become present from the malt, but the balance of the flavor and finish will still lean toward the bittering of the hops. It is common for the aroma to start with hop notes of pine and then shift to caramel malt while the beer is on the palate. The bitterness of the hops will almost always be the ending note on the palate. These craft beer styles tend to be balanced on the palate and work well with dry-heat cooking methods. Focus the flavor profile of the pairing to pull out either the malt or the hops and let the other be a supporting ingredient.

*Examples:*

California Common  
American Amber Ale  
American Barley Wine

**Strong hop, earthy, herbal or citrus:** The malt takes a back seat and the heavy use of intensely flavorful hops creates craft beers that are brimming with hop-driven notes of citrus, resin and tropical fruit. The aromas in these beers can overtake the senses at times, and the bittering can be in excess of 100 IBUs (past the point at which most people can perceive additional bitterness). A current trend in American craft brewing with these styles is hops, hops and more hops, which can overpower many flavors. Cooking methods that utilize dry-heat methods or the addition of fat help the palate cut through the intense hop profiles.

*Examples:*

American Pale Ale  
India Pale Ale (IPA)  
Specialty Beer: Fresh Hop IPA  
Imperial IPA

#### 5. Fruity & Spicy

While still showing flavors of malt and hops, these craft beers are dominated by notes of fruit and spice. The spice flavors are derived from the yeast and can be supported by adding additional, complementary spices. To enhance the fruity notes present, actual fruit puree or fruit may be added to the beer. Common pairing practices can be to highlight the fruit or spice in the pairing, or to use the fruit or spice profile in the craft beer as a supporting ingredient in the dish.

**Bright yeast:** Brighter fruit notes are common aromas in these styles, like tart apple, pear, peach, orange, lemon and apricot. Bubblegum is also a very common aroma sensation, as well as the following spices: clove, pepper, vanilla, coriander, cinnamon, nutmeg and bay leaf. Darker versions with more of a malt presence may show notes of toast, caramel, and deep dark fruit, but still maintain a spicy yeast note.

*Examples:*

Belgian-Style Wit  
German-Style Hefeweizen  
Belgian-Style Saison  
Specialty Beer: Gruit Ale  
Belgian-Style Blonde Ale  
Belgian-Style Golden Strong Ale  
Belgian-Style Tripel

**Dark:** Darker fruit notes come to the palate of these styles, like fig, raspberry, prune, raisin, cherry, plum and strawberry. Pairing is sometimes akin to pairing a red wine with deep vinous notes. Spicy aromatics will present on the palate as notes of clove, pepper, rose, nutmeg, cinnamon, and even a hint of smoke in some cases. Malt flavors are more present in these styles and can strengthen the overall body of the beer. These craft beers can be heavy on the palate and flavors can linger post-sip for several minutes. Pairing to the richness of these beers and using key ingredients in the dish will cut through their depth to further explore the entire flavor profile. Richer foods are commonly used so that the beer does not dominate the palate.

*Examples:*

Belgian-Style Dark Strong Ale  
Belgian-Style Dubbel  
Belgian-Style Quadrupel

## 6. Sour, Tart & Funky

Sour craft beers show a wide range of flavor profiles. Rustic, funky, barnyard, farmhouse, leather, hay, grass, and even wet socks are notes that have commonly been attributed to many of these styles. When acidic, these craft beer styles will also show the most wine-like notes and are often aged in wood to add complexity. These craft beers can also be blended with other styles to deepen the overall impact on the palate. When pairing these styles, it is best to address the sour, tart or funky notes head-on and decide if your pairing will echo the flavor profile and elevate it, or calm the dominant notes and allow the palate to explore the secondary flavors in the craft beer.

**Tart:** Gentle acidity, lighter malts, lower alcohol and lighter body make these craft beers the tamest of the group. They are delicately tart with bright citrus notes, but will not overpower the palate with a defining funky character. They will leave the palate almost bone-dry and often have a gentle citrus finish. The carbonation level found in these styles is generally very high and can be used to refresh the palate. Pairing these craft beer styles is a delicate

balance of simple clean flavors. Delicate cooking methods and raw ingredients tend to bring out the most well-rounded pairings on the palate.

*Examples:*

Berliner-Style Weiss  
Specialty Beer: Leipzig-Style Gose

**Sour:** The most wine-like of all the styles. Pronounced acidity is blended on the palate with fruity aromas of cherry, plum, apricot, peach, pluot and strawberry. These styles can often see the addition of whole fruit to the beers. Notes of caramel from the malt can balance the middle, and if the craft beer has been barrel-aged the palate will pick up additional supporting notes of vanilla and spice. In pairing, cooking proteins with the maillard reaction can pull out roast notes in the beer that balance the vinous character on the palate. Overpowering these beers with fat can hide the acidity, and caution should be taken to not completely diminish those palate reactions.

*Examples:*

Belgian-Style Flanders  
American Brett  
Belgian-Style Fruit Lambic

**Funky:** These craft beers will possess intense qualities of earthy, farmhouse, grassy, barnyard and leather notes. Milder fruit notes in the aroma are commonly identified on the palate as peach, strawberry, apricot and grape. The carbonation level in these craft beers will often be higher and can have a refreshing quality on the palate. These craft beer styles can hide their ABV quite well and therefore are more versatile than the initial flavors may suggest. Cleaner cooking methods with the gentle use of fat and supporting notes of herbs and spice can round out these craft beer styles on the palate.

*Examples:*

Belgian-Style Saison  
American Brett  
Belgian-Style Lambic / Gueuze