



« **BEST BEER IN THE WORLD**
"Earthy, herbal, and impossibly delicious"



« **BEST PILSNER**
"Soft, lively, and peerlessly refreshing"



« **BEST BITTER**
"Grassy, creamy, and, above all, fresh"



« **BEST BELGIAN**
"Potent, spicy, and complex"

50 Best Beers in the World

In our second annual ranking, we lapped the world looking for the perfect pint. Hundreds of beers — and thousands of calories — later, we bring you *Men's Journal's* definitive guide to man's oldest, greatest, and most popular drink.

By Christian DeBenedetti and Seth Fletcher

THE EXPERT PANEL Daniel Bradford, publisher of *All About Beer* magazine; Julie Johnson Bradford, editor of *All About Beer* magazine; Ray Deter, D.B.A. Bar, NYC; Alan Justice & Dave Brodrick, Blind Tiger Ale House, NYC; Ray Daniels, director of craft beer marketing, Brewers Association; Jerald O'Kennard, director of the Beverage Tasting Institute



« **BEST IPA**
"Loud, aggressive, and intense"



« **BEST DARK BEER**
"Garnet-colored, with a smoky dryness"



« **BEST SUMMER BEER**
"Cloudy orange, with a lemony body"



« **BEST LIGHT BEER**
"Puts scores of full-fledged lagers to shame"

THE BEST BEER IN THE WORLD, PERIOD.

Saison Dupont

ORIGIN: BELGIUM
ALCOHOL CONTENT BY VOLUME: 6.5%

With its luminous orangey-blond color and huge, rocky head, this beer just looks great. But wait till you taste it: Like other saisons, Dupont's is made with a secret mix of herbs that give it an addictive earthy taste and an agreeable bitterness. At 6.5 percent, it's also got a mild kick, which balances a range of citrusy, malty flavors that even wizened beer connoisseurs struggle to describe. "Impossible delicious," says legendary brewmaster Garrett Oliver. Saison Dupont is the "desert island beer" of many men (Oliver and present company included). Pop a cork, guys — we think you'll feel the same way (brasserie-dupont.com).



Lagers & Pilsners

ONCE UPON A TIME, all beers were dark and cloudy. Then in 1842 a brewer in Pilsen, Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic), invented the clear, crisp golden nectar that most of the world now knows as beer; Saturday afternoons would never be the same. These days, unfortunately, lagers and pilsners get a bad rap. Most industrial American macrobrews are better suited to shotgunning than sipping, and too many European lagers and pilsners are skunky and tired by the time they wash up on our shores. These seven beers, on the other hand, will restore your faith in lagers and pilsners forever.



GOLD
VICTORY PRIMA PILS
ORIGIN: USA
ALCOHOL CONTENT BY VOLUME: 5.3%

Out of the American microbrew revolution grew new versions of classic European beer styles, recognizable but slightly tweaked and amped-up riffs on tradition. Exhibit A: Prima Pils. Last year we voted Prima Pils one of the greatest beers in the country, and since then our affection for it has grown bottle by bottle. Far hoppier than most pilsners (though less bitter than the venerable Pilsner Urquell), Prima Pils is soft,

lively, and peerlessly refreshing. This, friends, is what beer should taste like. VICTORYBEER.COM



SILVER
MAHR'S UNFILTERED LAGER
ORIGIN: GERMANY
ABV: 5.2%

One of the first beers we tried in this quest, Mahr's Ungespundet Hefetrüb, or unfiltered lager, set the bar very, very high. Brewed artisanally in Germany's most underestimated beer-producing region, Franconia, Mahr's is big and ballsy, cloudy to the eye but bright and full on the

tongue. With a potent, buttery aroma and richness to spare, this flavor-packed beer begs to be paired with the best steak you can grill. MAHRS.DE



BRONZE
EKU PILS
ORIGIN: GERMANY
ABV: 5%

Germany is a land of bucket-size steins meant to be filled with delicious, truly drinkable beer. Eku Pils, a soft, spritzy German pilsner, is the lightest brew in this category — perfect for those enormous steins. But that doesn't mean it's short on taste. Clean and straw-colored, crisply bitter but rounded out by a subtle malt flavor, it's perfect for sipping or, if you must, chugging. KULMBACHER.DE

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- ✦ **AYINGER JAHRHUNDERT-BIER** (AYINGER.DE)
- ✦ **STOUDT'S PILS** (STOUDTSBEER.COM)
- ✦ **CZECHVAR** (CZECHVAR.COM)
- ✦ **PILSNER URQUELL** (PILSNER-URQUELL.COM)



Ales & Bitters

THE BRITISH call a few hours down at the pub a drinking "session," which tells you that when it comes to beer, the Brits mean business. So it's no surprise that English-style ales — the most popular of which are bitters, pale ales, and India pale ales — are staples for microbreweries on both sides of the pond. Here are the very best.



GOLD
RIDGWAY BITTER
ORIGIN: ENGLAND
ABV: 4.0%

If you can imagine an early spring breeze liquefied and bottled, then you have a good idea of what to expect when you open your first bottle of Ridgway's exceptional bitter. Even after traveling 4,000 miles to the States, this beer still smells, tastes, and feels as though it were made a quick bike ride away — soft, grassy, creamy, and, above all, fresh. SHELTONBROTHERS.COM



SILVER
ALESMITH IPA
ORIGIN: USA
ABV: 7.25%

Beer, like wine, speaks for the land it comes from, so it's no surprise that microbrews from Southern California are loud, aggressive, and intense. Alesmith IPA is no exception. The beer geeks adore it, and for once, it seems, they're onto something: This is without a doubt the most pleasant of the SoCal "extreme" beers we've found. ALESMITH.COM



BRONZE
FULL SAIL PALE ALE
ORIGIN: USA
ABV: 5.4%

From the brewing hub of Oregon comes this soft, clean, copper-colored brew, true to its Anglo roots but with a trademark hoppy kick that sets it apart from its British forebears. FULLSAILBREWING.COM

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- ✦ **CONISTON BLUEBIRD BITTER** (CONISTONBREWERY.COM)
- ✦ **FULLER'S ESB** (FULLERS.CO.UK)
- ✦ **SAMUEL SMITH'S INDIA ALE** (MERCHANTDUVIN.COM)
- ✦ **DESCHUTES MIRROR POND PALE ALE** (DESCHUTESBREWERY.COM)
- ✦ **SIERRA NEVADA PALE ALE** (SIERRANEVADA.COM)

Belgian Beers

WITH EXPORTS that include designer chocolate and Jean-Claude Van Damme, Belgium is a country of acquired tastes. But take a sip of one of its big, bold, amazingly drinkable beers — there are more than 1,500, in a country the size of Maryland — and you'll be thinking of moving to Brussels for the rest of the summer.



GOLD
TRAPPISTES
ROCHFORT 10
ABV: 11.3%

In the great tradition of always having beer on hand for company, Belgium's Trappist monks still brew their own, to revive weary pilgrims — and stock their own ready supply. There are still six Trappist breweries going strong (and a seventh in Holland); all of their beers, the most famous of which is the revered Chimay, are worth seeking out. But for us, the 11.3 percent Rochefort 10 easily takes the crown. Potent, spicy, and complex, this ale is suitable for aging like a vintage burgundy. Keep one on hand for your next visitor, and you know she'll be back. MERCHANTDUVIN.COM



SILVER
XX BITTER
ABV: 6.2%

In Belgium, a country overflowing with "cult classics" and full of obsessed consumers, each new zymurgical development is tracked with the kind of rapt

attention we give to the NBA draft. So eight years ago, when friends and novice brewers Nino Bacelle and Guido Devos introduced XX Bitter — "the hoppiest in Belgium" — the populace took notice. These days XX is one of the most sought-after beers in Belgium. SHELTONBROTHERS.COM



BRONZE
LA BAVAISSIENNE
ABV: 7%

From the tiny Theillier brewery comes a beer French by birthright but Belgian in spirit. It's as delicious as it is scarce, though we hope not for long: Just last year it took the top spot at the World Beer Championships with the highest score in history. SHELTONBROTHERS.COM

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- ✦ **LOTERBOL BLOND** (SHELTONBROTHERS.COM)
- ✦ **CHIMAY TRIPLE** (CHIMAY.COM)
- ✦ **LA CHOUFFE GOLDEN ALE** (ACHOUFFE.BE)
- ✦ **ACHEL BRUIN** (SHELTONBROTHERS.COM)

THE BEST BREWERY IN THE WORLD

IN A TOWN IN SOUTHEASTERN GERMANY, YOU'LL FIND CRAFT BREWING AT ITS FINEST



The tap room at Mahr's Bräu. Right: the brewery's facade.

Conjure up a fantasy image of a 17th-century German brewhouse. See the people inside: locals drinking enthusiastically, all day. Imagine that the beer is some sort of magic elixir, world-class and rare, but — what do you know! — available in the U.S. This brewery is Mahr's Bräu, in Bamberg, Germany, represented on our list by its unassailable unfiltered lager and "leicht." If you can't make it to Bamberg, track down a bottle of any Mahr's brew, pour it into a porcelain stein, and you'll be transported to this idyllic 335-year-old Franconian brewery.

The laws governing interstate alcohol commerce are tricky, but online sources, such as Liquid Solutions (liquidsolutions.ws), will ship anywhere they legally can. Still, there's no substitute for standing in awe before row after row of fine beers. Here are spots in eight major cities where you can do just that.

BOSTON

BUY: Charles Street Liquors (charlesstreetliquors.com)
DRINK: Redbones (redbones.com)

CHICAGO

BUY: Binny's Beverage Depot (binny.com)
DRINK: The Map Room (maproom.com)

DENVER

BUY: Libations (libationswines.com)
DRINK: Falling Rock Tap House (fallingrocktaphouse.com)

LOS ANGELES

BUY: Hi-Time Wine Cellars (hitimewine.com)
DRINK: Yard House (yardhouse.com)

NEW YORK CITY

BUY: Bierkraft (bierkraft.com)
DRINK: D.B.A. (drinkgoodstuff.com)

PHILADELPHIA

BUY: Foodery (215-928-1111)
DRINK: Monk's Café (monkscafe.com)

SAN FRANCISCO

BUY: Plumpjack Wine Store (plumpjack.com)
DRINK: Toronado (toronado.com)

WASHINGTON, DC

BUY: Chevy Chase Wine and Spirits (chevychasewine.com)
DRINK: Brickkeller (thebrickkeller.com)

Dark Beers

IF YOU STUDIED the beer family tree going all the way back to mankind's most ancient styles — the first date to some 8,000 years ago — dark beers would rule the roost. Today, the style is stronger than ever. Here is the cream of the crop.



GOLD CELEBRATOR DOPPELBOCK

ORIGIN: GERMANY
ABV: 6.7%

Bavarian recipes for doppelbock (literally, "double goat," as in "strong as a ram") date back more than 150 years, but there's nothing quaint about this modern classic, brewed since 1878 by the legendary Ayinger brewery outside Munich. Packed with rich roasted-malt flavors, this garnet-colored brew is balanced by notes of coffee and a smoky dryness. AYINGER.DE



SILVER KULMBACHER MÖNCHSHOF SCHWARZBIER

ORIGIN: GERMANY
ABV: 4.9%

Locals call it the black pils (schwarz is German for "black"), and unlike most dark beers around the planet, Mönchshof is fermented like a pilsner — at low tem-

peratures. The result? A clean, crisp, exceptional dark brew. KULMBACHER.DE



BRONZE GUINNESS STOUT

ORIGIN: IRELAND
ABV: 4.2%

Guinness is synonymous with stout, and for good reason: Since 1759 the company's roasty jet-black beer has set the standard by which all other dry stouts are judged. Because of aggressive international distribution, the Irish standard is now available in nearly every corner of the globe. GUINNESS.IE

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- ✦ **DOG FISH HEAD INDIAN BROWN ALE** (DOGFISSH.COM)
- ✦ **CARNEGIE STARK PORTER** (CARLSBERG.SE)
- ✦ **SOUTHAMPTON IMPERIAL PORTER** (PUBLICK.COM)
- ✦ **HEAVYWEIGHT PERKUNO'S HAMMER** (HEAVYWEIGHTBREWING.COM)
- ✦ **SCHNEIDER AVENTINUS WEIZENBOCK** (SCHNEIDER-WEISSE.DE)

Summer Beers

ALTHOUGH IT'S TRUE that any of the lighter beers on this list makes a great summer thirst-quencher, these three beers demand special designation. Bright, refreshing, and packed with spice and fruit aromas, they should be appreciated outside on a sunny day, preferably with a barbecue grill nearby.



GOLD AYINGER BRÄU-WEISSE

ORIGIN: GERMANY
ABV: 5.1%

This classic Bavarian wheat beer is a perfect specimen: cloudy orange, with a thirst-quenching lemony body and a whiff of banana, figs, and spices at the top. Pair with a freshly grilled brat and life, for a moment, will be complete. AYINGER.DE



SILVER HOEGAARDEN

ORIGIN: BELGIUM
ABV: 4.8%

Hoegaarden is an institution in its native Belgium, but only in the past 13 years have we been able to get our hands on this fantastic summer beer. Bright, frothy, and lemony, this witbier, or "white beer," is brewed with wheat, spiced with coriander, and often served with a lemon. HOEGAARDEN.BE



BRONZE FANTÔME SAISON

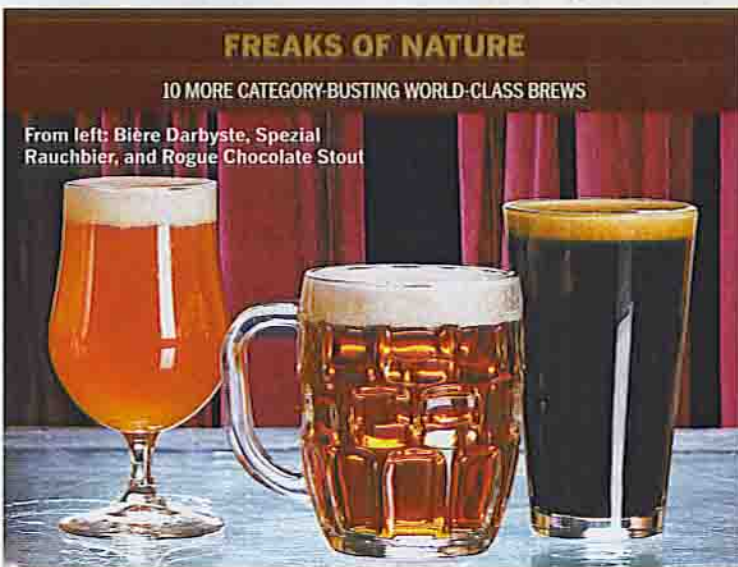
ORIGIN: BELGIUM
ABV: 8%

When we say this is one of the great summer sippers, the emphasis is on "sipper." It's 8 percent alcohol, but this artisanal ale is ripe with natural melon and tropical fruit aromas that mask the booze. FANTOME.BE

BEST LIGHT BEER

Mahr's Leicht

The good people at our World's Best Brewery have concocted a low-alcohol, low-carb brew that's not just good for a light beer — it's spectacular for any beer, putting scores of full-fledged lagers to shame.



FREAKS OF NATURE

10 MORE CATEGORY-BUSTING WORLD-CLASS BREWS

From left: Bière Darbyste, Spezial Rauchbier, and Rogue Chocolate Stout

WORLD'S STRONGEST

The charge to make the strongest beer in the world is the brewing equivalent of the space race. The trick, you see, is to find yeast hardy enough to keep turning sugar to alcohol long after normal yeast has drowned in booze. And in the past decade, two mad-scientist American brewers have found these mutant yeast strains and used them to create the strongest beer the world has ever known. Jim Koch's 25 percent alcohol **SAMUEL ADAMS UTOPIAS** (samueladams.com), a delicious cognac-like concoction, is now in the lead. **DOG FISH HEAD WORLDWIDE STOUT** (dogfish.com), thick as oxblood and richer than the strongest dessert wine you've ever tasted, is a close second at an all-time high of 23 percent, reached in '02. Down closer to earth is the German **AVENTINUS EISBOCK** (12%, schneider-weisse.com) and the Dutch **DE HEMEL NIEUW LIGT GRAND CRU** (12%, brouwerijdehemel.nl/eng) — both great after-dinner sippers.

WORLD'S WEIRDEST

The briny, dark-hued rauchbier, or smoked beer, is brewed with beechwood-smoked barley malt, lending a taste like smoked gouda. **SPEZIAL RAUCHBIER** (sheltonbrothers.com) is a mild introduction to the style, while **AECHT SCHLENKERLA** (schlenkerla.de) packs more mojo. Fruit beers can be disgustingly syrupy and crassly marketed to lure non-beer-drinkers. Not **BIERE DARBYSSTE** (brasserie-de-blaugies.com), a microbrewed Belgian saison brewed with figs. Another Belgian, **CANTILLON LOU PEPE KRIEK** (cantillon.be), is a beer for the truly bold: Brewed with whole schaarbeek cherries, Cantillon's kriek (cherry) lambic is sour, but balanced by a fresh fruit flavor. For a no-holds-barred Belgian experience, try the punishingly tart **CANTILLON 1900 GRAND CRU**. For dessert, reward yourself with **ROGUE CHOCOLATE STOUT** (rogue.com), a pleasant marriage of roasted barley, hops, and cocoa.

THE BEST BEER ON EACH CONTINENT

NORTH AMERICA

VICTORY PRIMA PILS
This hoppy Pennsylvania pilsner is well on its way to becoming a true American classic.

SOUTH AMERICA

CARIB LAGER From the island paradise of Trinidad comes the planet's best beach beer, a surprisingly malty, thirst-quenching tropical lager.

EUROPE

SAISON DUPONT The complex brew that is our Best Beer in the World

AFRICA

TUSKER The mighty, malty Tusker stands out in a continent of bland lagers.

ASIA

LION STOUT The milky, high-alcohol Sri Lankan stout is a favorite of beer aficionados worldwide.

AUSTRALIA

COOPER'S PALE ALE
Foster's? No way! It's brewed in Montreal. Cooper's cloudy pale ale is the best Aussie brew you can get here in the States.

ANTARCTICA

SPEIGHT'S OLD DARK
No brewery at the bottom of the world: The handful who live there ward off the cold with this New Zealand ale.