

Winter Beers

Christmas Ale

Brouwerij St. Bernardus - Watou, BEL

10% ABV. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

St. Bernardus Christmas Ale is a dark seasonal brewed in the classic 'Quadrupel' style of Belgium's best Abbey Ales.

Christmas Ale (aka 'Our Special Ale 2012')

Anchor Brewing - San Francisco, CA

5.5% ABV. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

Since 1975, Anchor Brewing creates a distinctive Christmas Ale. A rich, dark spiced ale, our secret recipe is different every year—as is the tree on the label. Our tree for 2012 is the Norfolk Island pine.

Old Jubilation Ale English Olde Ale

Avery Brewing - Boulder, CO

8.3% ABV. 45 IBUs. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

Hop: Bullion.

Malt: Two-row barley, Special roast, Black, Chocolate, Victory.

This winter strong ale features no spices, just a blend of five specialty malts.

Jubelale Strong Ale

Deschutes Brewery - Bend, OR

6.7% ABV. 60 IBUs. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

Malt: Pale, Crystal, Extra Special, Carapils, Roasted Barley.

Hops: Nugget, Cascade, Willamette, Styrian, Tettnang, East Kent Goldings.

The 2012 label artwork, titled "Revelers and Troubadors," was created by artist Kaycee Anseth Townsend. She uses small scraps of paper to create designs, and she comprised this year's packaging entirely from pieces of past year's Jubelale labels. In 1988 Jubelale was the first seasonal release from Deschutes and the first bottled offering.

Wassail (FS Pub Series)

Full Sail - Hood River, OR

7.2% ABV. 56 IBUs. Winter release (avail. for 90 days only).

Bottles, draft.

This year's Wassail is brewed with a range of caramel malts and dark chocolate malts giving it a deep mahogany color and a full malty body. We used a blend of Pacific Northwest hops for a pleasant hoppy aroma and finish creating a deliciously balanced beer that appeals to both hop and malt lovers alike.

Winter Welcome Ale

Samuel Smith - Tadcaster, UK

6% ABV. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

The full body resulting from fermentation in 'stone Yorkshire squares' and the luxurious malt character, is balanced against whole-dried Fuggle and Golding hops with nuances and complexities that should be contemplated before an open fire.

Merry Mischief Gingerbread Stout

Samuel Adams - Jamaica Plain, MA

9% ABV. 25 IBUs. Winter release. Bottles.

Malt: Samuel Adams two row pale malt blend, wheat, Special B, Paul's roasted barley, & flaked oats.

Hops: East Kent Goldings & Fuggles.

Criminally Bad Elf English Barleywine-Style Ale

Ridgeway Brewing - Oxfordshire, UK

10.5% ABV. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

Ebenezer Ale

Bridgeport Brewing - Portland, OR

6.4% ABV. 40 IBUs. Winter release. Bottles, draft.

Our special Holiday brew is a smooth ale with a complex palate derived from four different roasted malts and a blend of local and imported hops.

Christmas/Winter Beers (BJCP)

Aroma: A wide range of aromatics is possible, although many examples are reminiscent of Christmas cookies, gingerbread, English-type Christmas pudding, spruce trees, or mulling spices. Any combination of aromatics that suggests the holiday season is welcome. The base beer style often has a malty profile that supports the balanced presentation of the aromatics from spices and possibly other special ingredients. Additional fermentables (e.g., honey, molasses, maple syrup, etc.) may lend their own unique aromatics. Hop aromatics are often absent, subdued, or slightly spicy. Some fruit character (often of dried citrus peel, or dried fruit such as raisins or plums) is optional but acceptable. Alcohol aromatics may be found in some examples, but this character should be restrained. The overall aroma should be balanced and harmonious, and is often fairly complex and inviting.

Appearance: Generally medium amber to very dark brown (darker versions are more common). Usually clear, although darker versions may be virtually opaque. Some chill haze is acceptable. Generally has a well-formed head that is often off-white to tan.

Flavor: Many interpretations are possible; allow for brewer creativity as long as the resulting product is balanced and provides some spice presentation. Spices associated with the holiday season are typical (as mentioned in the Aroma section). The spices and optional fermentables should be supportive and blend well with the base beer style. Rich, malty and/or sweet malt-based flavors are common, and may include caramel, toast, nutty, or chocolate flavors. May include some dried fruit or dried fruit peel flavors such as raisin, plum, fig, orange peel or lemon peel. May include distinctive flavors from specific fermentables (molasses, honey, brown sugar, etc.), although these elements are not required. A light spruce or other evergreen tree character is optional but found in some examples. The wide range of special ingredients should be supportive and balanced, not so prominent as to overshadow the base beer. Bitterness and hop flavor are generally restrained so as to not interfere with the spices and special ingredients. Generally finishes rather full and satisfying, and often has some alcohol flavor. Roasted malt characteristics are rare, and not usually stronger than chocolate.

Mouthfeel: A wide range of interpretations is possible. Body is generally medium to full, and a certain malty chewiness is often present. Moderately low to moderately high carbonation is typical. Many examples will show some well-aged, warming alcohol content, but without being overly hot. The beers do not have to be overly strong to show some warming effects.

Overall Impression: A stronger, darker, spiced beer that often has a rich body and warming finish suggesting a good accompaniment for the cold winter season.

History: Throughout history, beer of a somewhat higher alcohol content and richness has been enjoyed during the winter

holidays, when old friends get together to enjoy the season. Many breweries produce unique seasonal offerings that may be darker, stronger, spiced, or otherwise more characterful than their normal beers. Spiced versions are an American or Belgian tradition, since English or German breweries traditionally do not use spices in their beer.

Ingredients: Generally ales, although some dark strong lagers exist. Spices are required, and often include those evocative of the Christmas season (e.g., allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, ginger) but any combination is possible and creativity is encouraged. Fruit peel (e.g., oranges, lemon) may be used, as may subtle additions of other fruits. May use a wide range of crystal-type malts, particularly those that add dark fruit or caramel flavors. Flavorful adjuncts are often used (e.g., molasses, treacle, invert sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc.).

Comments: Overall balance is the key to presenting a well-made Christmas beer. The special ingredients should complement the base beer and not overwhelm it. The brewer should recognize that some combinations of base beer styles and special ingredients work well together while others do not make for harmonious combinations. If the base beer is a classic style, the original style should come through in aroma and flavor. Whenever spices, herbs or additional fermentables are declared, each should be noticeable and distinctive in its own way (although not necessarily individually identifiable; balanced with the other ingredients is still critical). English-style Winter Warmers (some of which may be labeled Christmas Ales) are generally not spiced, and should be entered as Old Ales. Belgian-style Christmas ales should be entered as Belgian Specialty Ales (16E).

Vital Statistics: OG, FG, IBUs, SRM and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer. ABV is generally above 6%, and most examples are somewhat dark in color.

Commercial Examples: Anchor Our Special Ale, Harpoon Winter Warmer, Weyerbacher Winter Ale, Nils Oscar Julöl, Goose Island Christmas Ale, North Coast Wintertime Ale, Great Lakes Christmas Ale, Lakefront Holiday Spice Lager Beer, Samuel Adams Winter Lager, Troegs The Mad Elf, Jamtlands Julöl

Winter Warmer (beeradvocate.com)

These malty sweet offerings tend to be a favorite winter seasonal. Big malt presence, both in flavor and body. The color ranges from brownish reds to nearly pitch black. Hop bitterness is generally low, leveled and balanced, but hop character can be pronounced. Alcohol warmth is not uncommon.

Many English versions contain no spices, though some brewers of spiced winter seasonal ales will slap "Winter Warmer" on the label. Those that are spiced, tend to follow the "wassail" tradition of blending robust ales with mixed spices, before hops became the chief "spice" in beer. American varieties many have a larger presence of hops both in bitterness and flavor.