

BCJP 2021 Guidelines Beer

3. CZECH LAGER

Czech lagers are generally divided by gravity class (draft, lager, special) and color (pale, amber, dark). The Czech names for these categories are světlé (pale), polotmavé (amber), and tmavé (dark). The gravity classes are výčepní (draft, 7–10 °P), ležák (lager, 11–12 °P), and speciální (special, 13 °P+). Pivo is of course the Czech word for beer. The division into gravity classes is similar to the German groupings of schankbier, vollbier, and starkbier, although at different gravity ranges. Czech beers within the classes are often simply referenced by their gravity. There are often variations within the gravity-color groupings, particularly within the speciální class. The style guidelines combine some of these classes, while other beers in the Czech market are not described (such as the strong Czech Porter). This is not to imply that the categories below are the full coverage of Czech beers, simply a way of grouping some of the more commonly found types for judging purposes.

Czech lagers in general are differentiated from German and other Western lagers in that German lagers are almost always fully attenuated, while Czech lagers can have a slight amount of unfermented extract remaining in the finished beer. This helps provide a slightly higher finishing gravity (and thus slightly lower apparent attenuation), slightly fuller body and mouthfeel, and a richer, slightly more complex flavor profile in equivalent color and strength beers. German lagers tend to have a cleaner fermentation profile, while Czech lagers are often fermented cooler (7–10 °C) and for a longer time, and can have a light, barely noticeable (near threshold) amount of diacetyl that often is perceived more as a rounded body than overtly in aroma and flavor [significant buttery diacetyl is a flaw]. Czech lager yeast strains are not always as clean and attenuative as German strains, which helps achieve the higher finishing gravity (along with the mashing methods and cooler fermentation). Czech lagers are traditionally made with decoction mashes (often double decoction), even with modern malts, while most modern German lagers are made with infusion or step infusion mashes. These differences characterize the richness, mouthfeel, and flavor profile that distinguishes Czech Lagers.

3A. Czech Pale Lager

Overall Impression: A lighter-bodied, rich, refreshing, hoppy, bitter pale Czech lager having the familiar flavors of the stronger Czech Premium Pale Lager (Pilsner-type) beer but in a lower alcohol, lighter-bodied, and slightly less intense format.

Aroma: Light to moderate bready-rich malt combined with light to moderate spicy or herbal hop bouquet; the balance between the malt and hops may vary. Faint hint of caramel is acceptable. Light (but never intrusive) diacetyl and light, fruity esters are optional. No sulfur.

Appearance: Light yellow to deep gold color. Brilliant to very clear, with a long-lasting, creamy white head.

Flavor: Medium-low to medium bready-rich malt flavor with a rounded, hoppy finish. Low to medium-high spicy or herbal hop flavor. Bitterness is prominent but never harsh. Flavorful and refreshing. Low diacetyl or fruity esters are optional, but should never be overbearing.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body. Moderate carbonation.

Comments: The Czech name of the style is *světlé výčepní pivo*.

History: Josef Groll initially brewed two types of pale beer in 1842–3, a *výčepní* and a *ležák*, with the smaller beer having twice the production; Evan Rail speculates that these were probably 10 °P and 12 °P beers, but that the *výčepní* could have been weaker. This is the most consumed type of beer in the Czech Republic at present.

Characteristic Ingredients: Soft water with low sulfate and carbonate content. Traditional Czech hops. Czech Pilsner malt. Czech lager yeast. Low ion water provides a distinctively soft, rounded hop profile despite high hopping rates.

Style Comparison: A lighter-bodied, lower-intensity, refreshing, everyday version of Czech Premium Pale Lager.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.028 – 1.044 IBUs: 20 – 35 FG: 1.008 – 1.014 SRM: 3 – 6 ABV: 3.0 – 4.1%

Commercial Examples: Bernard světlé pivo 10, Břežňák světlé výčepní pivo, Notch Session Pils, Primátor Antonín světlé výčepní, Radegast Rázna 10, Únětické pivo 10°

Tags: session-strength, pale-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, pale-lager-family, bitter, hoppy

3B. Czech Premium Pale Lager

Overall Impression: A refreshing pale Czech lager with considerable malt and hop character and a long finish. The malt flavors are complex for a Pilsner-type beer. The bitterness is strong and clean but lacks harshness, which gives a wellbalanced, rounded flavor impression that enhances drinkability.

Aroma: Medium to medium-high bready-rich malt and medium-low to medium-high spicy, floral, or herbal hop bouquet; though the balance between the malt and hops may vary, the interplay is rich and complex. Light diacetyl, or very low fruity esters are optional. Esters tend to increase with gravity.

Appearance: Medium yellow to deep gold color. Brilliant to very clear clarity. Dense, long-lasting, creamy white head.

Flavor: Rich, complex, bready maltiness combined with a pronounced yet soft and rounded bitterness and floral and spicy hop flavor. Malt and hop flavors are medium to medium-high, and the malt may contain a slight impression of caramel. Bitterness is prominent but never harsh. The long finish can be balanced towards hops or malt but is never aggressively tilted either way. Light to moderately-low diacetyl and low hop-derived esters are acceptable, but need not be present.

Mouthfeel: Medium body. Moderate to low carbonation.

Comments: Generally a group of *pivo Plzeňského typu*, or Pilsner-type beers. This style is a combination of the Czech styles *světlý ležák* (11–12.9 °P) and *světlé speciální pivo* (13–14.9 °P). In the Czech Republic, only Pilsner Urquell and Gambrinus are called Pilsner, despite how widely adopted this name is worldwide. Outside the Czech Republic, Czech Pilsner or Bohemian Pilsner are sometimes used to differentiate the beer from other Pilsner-type beers. *Kvasnicové* (“yeast beer”) versions are popular in the Czech Republic, and may be either *kräusened* with yeasted wort or given a fresh dose of pure yeast after fermentation. These beers are sometimes cloudy, with subtle yeastiness and enhanced hop character. Modern examples vary in their malt to hop balance and many are not as hop-forward as Pilsner Urquell.

History: Commonly associated with Pilsner Urquell, which was first brewed in 1842 after construction of a new rewhouse by burghers dissatisfied with the standard of beer brewed in Plzeň. Bavarian brewer Josef Groll is credited with first brewing the beer, although there may have been earlier pale lagers in Bohemia. Just as important as the lager yeast was the use of English malting techniques.

Characteristic Ingredients: Traditional Czech hops. Czech malt. Czech lager yeast. Water low in sulfate and carbonate provides a distinctively soft, rounded hop profile despite high hopping rates. The bitterness level of some larger commercial examples has dropped in recent years, although not as much as in many contemporary German examples.

Style Comparison: More color, malt richness, and body than a German Pils, with a fuller finish and a cleaner, softer impression. Stronger than a Czech Pale Lager.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044 – 1.060 IBUs: 30 – 45 FG: 1.013 – 1.017 SRM: 3.5 – 6 ABV: 4.2 – 5.8%

Commercial Examples: Bernard světlé ležák 12°, Budvar 33 světlý ležák, Pilsner Urquell, Pivovar Jihlava Ježek 11%, Primátor Premium lager, Radegast Ryze hořká 12, Únětická pivo 12°

Tags: standard-strength, pale-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, pilsner-family, balanced, hoppy

3C. Czech Amber Lager

Overall Impression: A malty amber Czech lager with a hop character that can vary from low to quite significant. The malt flavors also can vary, leading to different interpretations and balances ranging from drier, bready, and slightly biscuity to sweeter and somewhat caramel-like.

Aroma: Moderate intensity, rich malt aroma that can be either bready and Maillard product-dominant or slightly caramelly sweet. Spicy, floral, or herbal hop character may be moderate to none. Clean lager character, though low fruity esters (stone fruit or berries) may be present. Low diacetyl optional.

Appearance: Deep amber to copper color. Clear to bright clarity. Large, off-white, persistent head.

Flavor: Complex malt flavor is dominant (medium to medium-high), though its nature may vary from dry and Maillard product-dominant to caramelly and almost sweet. Some examples have a candy-like to graham-cracker malt character. Low to moderate spicy hop flavor. Prominent but clean hop bitterness provides a balanced finish. Subtle plum or berry esters optional. Low diacetyl optional. No roasted malt flavor. Finish may vary from dry and hoppy to relatively sweet.

Mouthfeel: Medium-full to medium body. Soft and round, often with a gentle creaminess. Moderate to low carbonation.

Comments: The Czech name of the style is *polotmavé pivo*, which translates as *half-dark beer*. This style is a combination of the Czech styles *polotmavý ležák* (11–12.9 °P) and *polotmavé speciální pivo* (13–14.9 °P). Some versions may be a blend of pale and dark lagers.

History: A Vienna-style lager which has continued to be brewed in the Czech Republic. A resurgence of small breweries opening in the Czech Republic has increased the number of examples of this style.

Characteristic Ingredients: Pilsner and caramel malts, but Vienna and Munich malts may also be used. Low mineral

content water. Traditional Czech hops. Czech lager yeast.

Style Comparison: The style can be similar to a Vienna Lager but with stronger Czech late hop character, or that approaching a British Bitter but significantly richer with more of a deep caramel character. Large brewery versions are generally similar to Czech Premium Pale Lager with slightly darker malt flavors and less hop, while smaller breweries often make versions with considerable hop character, malt complexity, or residual sweetness.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044 – 1.060 IBUs: 20 – 35 FG: 1.013 – 1.017 SRM: 10 – 16 ABV: 4.4 – 5.8%

Commercial Examples: Bernard Jantarový ležák 12°, Gambrinus Polotmavá 12°, Kozel Semi-Dark, Lobkowicz Démon 13, Primátor 13 polotmavé, Strakonický Dudák Klostermann polotmavý ležák

Tags: standard-strength, amber-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, amber-lager-family, balanced

3D. Czech Dark Lager

Overall Impression: A rich, dark, malty Czech lager with a roast character that can vary from almost absent to quite prominent. Malty balance and an interesting and complex flavor profile, with variable levels of hopping that provides a range of possible interpretations.

Aroma: Medium to medium-high rich, deep, sometimes sweet maltiness, with optional qualities such as bread crusts, toast, nuts, cola, dark fruit, or caramel. Roasted malt characters such as chocolate or sweetened coffee can vary from moderate to none but should not overwhelm the base malt character. Low to moderate spicy hop aroma optional. Low diacetyl and low to moderate fruity esters (plums or berries) may be present.

Appearance: Dark copper to almost black color, often with a red or garnet tint. Clear to bright clarity. Large, off-white to tan, persistent head.

Flavor: Medium to medium-high deep, complex maltiness dominates, typically with malty-rich Maillard products and a light to moderate residual malt sweetness. Malt flavors such as caramel, toast, nuts, licorice, dried dark fruit, chocolate, or coffee may also be present, with very low to moderate roast character. Low to moderate spicy hop flavor. Moderate to medium-low bitterness, but should be perceptible. Balance can vary from malty to relatively well-balanced to gently hopforward. Low to moderate diacetyl and light plum or berry esters may be present.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-full body, considerable mouthfeel without being heavy or cloying. Moderately creamy in texture. Smooth. Moderate to low carbonation. Can have a slight alcohol warmth in stronger versions.

Comments: This style is a combination of the Czech styles *tmavý ležák* (11–12.9 °P) and *tmavé speciální pivo* (13–14.9 °P). More modern examples are drier and have higher bitterness while traditional versions often have IBUs in the 18–20 range with a sweeter balance.

History: The U Fleků brewery has been operating in Prague since 1499, and produces the best-known version. Many small, new breweries are brewing this style.

Characteristic Ingredients: Pilsner and dark caramel malts with the addition of debittered roasted malts are most common, but additions of Vienna or Munich malt are also appropriate. Low mineral content water. Traditional Czech hops. Czech lager yeast.

Style Comparison: The beer is the Czech equivalent of a dark lager ranging in character from Munich Dunkel to Schwarzbier, but typically with greater malt richness and hop aroma, flavor, and bitterness.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044 – 1.060 IBUs: 18 – 34 FG: 1.013 – 1.017 SRM: 17 – 35 ABV: 4.4 – 5.8%

Commercial Examples: Bernard černý ležák 12°, Budvar tmavý ležák, Herold tmavé silné pivo 13°, Kozel Dark, Krušovice černé, Primátor dark lager, U Fleků Flekovský tmavý ležák 13°

Tags: standard-strength, dark-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, dark-lager-family, balanced