

7. AMBER BITTER EUROPEAN BEER

This category groups amber-colored, evenly balanced to bitter balanced beers of German or Austrian origin.

7A. Vienna Lager

Overall Impression: A moderate-strength continental amber lager with a soft, smooth maltiness and a balanced, moderate bitterness, yet finishing relatively dry. The malt flavor is clean, bready-rich, and somewhat toasty, with an elegant impression derived from quality base malts and process, not specialty malts or adjuncts.

Aroma: Moderately-intense malt aroma, with toasty and malty-rich accents. Floral, spicy hop aroma may be low to none. Clean lager character. A significant caramel, biscuity, or roasted aroma is inappropriate.

Appearance: Light reddish amber to copper color. Bright clarity. Large, off-white, persistent head.

Flavor: Soft, elegant malt complexity is in the forefront, with a firm enough hop bitterness to provide a balanced finish. The malt flavor tends towards a rich, toasty character, without significant caramel, biscuity, or roast flavors. Fairly dry, soft finish, with both rich malt and hop bitterness present in the aftertaste. Floral, spicy, or herbal hop flavor may be low to none. Clean fermentation profile.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body, with a gentle creaminess. Moderate carbonation. Smooth.

Comments: A standard-strength everyday beer, not a beer brewed for festivals. Many traditional examples have become sweeter and more adjunct-laden, now seeming more like International Amber or Dark Lagers.

History: Developed by Anton Dreher in Vienna in 1841, became popular in the mid-late 1800s. The style was brought to Mexico by Santiago Graf and other Austrian immigrant brewers in the late 1800s. Seems to be embraced as a modern craft style in other countries.

Characteristic Ingredients: Traditionally, best-quality Vienna malt, but can also use Pils and Munich malts. Traditional continental hops. Clean German lager yeast. May use small amounts of specialty malts for color and sweetness.

Style Comparison: Similar malt flavor as a Märzen, but lighter in intensity, and body, with a touch more bitterness and dryness in the balance. Lower in alcohol than Märzen or Festbier. Less rich, malty, and hoppy than Czech Amber Lager.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.048 – 1.055 IBUs: 18 – 30 FG: 1.010 – 1.014 SRM: 9 – 15 ABV: 4.7 – 5.5%

Commercial Examples: Chuckanut Vienna Lager, Devils Backbone Vienna Lager, Figueroa Mountain Red Lager, Heavy Seas Cutlass, Ottakringer Wiener Original, Schell's Firebrick, Theresianer Vienna

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

7B. Altbier

A cold-conditioned, top-fermenting beer from Düsseldorf that has a cleaner and smoother palate than is typical for most ales. "Alt" refers to the "old" style of brewing (using topfermenting yeast) that was common before bottomfermenting lager brewing became popular.

Overall Impression: A moderately colored, well-attenuated, bitter beer with a rich maltiness balancing a strong bitterness. Light and spicy hop character complements the malt. A dry beer with a firm body and smooth palate.

Aroma: Malty and rich with grainy characteristics like baked bread or nutty, toasted bread crusts. Should not have darker roasted or chocolate notes. Malt intensity is moderate to moderately-high. Moderate to low hops complement but do not dominate the malt, and often have a spicy, peppery, or floral character. Fermentation character is very clean. Low to medium-low esters optional.

Appearance: The color ranges from amber to deep copper, stopping short of brown; bronze-orange is most common. Brilliant clarity. Thick, creamy, long-lasting off-white head.

Flavor: Malt profile similar to the aroma, with an assertive, medium to high hop bitterness balancing the rich malty flavors. The beer finishes medium-dry to dry with a grainy, bitter, malty-rich aftertaste. The finish is long-lasting, sometimes with nutty or bittersweet impression. The apparent bitterness level is sometimes masked by the malt character if the beer is not very dry, but the bitterness tends to scale with the malt richness to maintain balance. No roast. No harshness. Clean fermentation profile. Light fruity esters, especially dark fruit, may be present. Medium to low spicy, peppery, or floral hop flavor. Light mineral character optional.

Mouthfeel: Medium body. Smooth. Medium to medium-high carbonation. Astringency low to none.

Comments: Classic, traditional examples in the Altstadt (“old town”) section of Düsseldorf are served from casks. Most examples have a balanced (25-35 IBU) bitterness, not the aggressive hop character of the well-known Zum Uerige. Stronger *sticke* and *doppelsticke* beers should be entered in the 27 Historical Beer style instead.

History: Developed in the late 19th century in Düsseldorf to use lager techniques to compete with lager. Older German styles were brewed in the area but there is no linkage to modern Altbier.

Characteristic Ingredients: Grists vary, but usually consist of German base malts (usually Pils, sometimes Munich) with small amounts of crystal, chocolate, or black malts. May include some wheat, including roasted wheat. Spalt hops are traditional, but other traditional German or Czech hops can be used. Clean, highly attenuative ale yeast. A step mash program is traditional. Fermented at cool ale temperatures, then cold conditioned.

Style Comparison: More bitter and malty than International Amber Lagers. Somewhat similar to California Common, both in production technique and finished flavor and color, though not in ingredients. Less alcohol, less malty richness, and more bitterness than a Dunkles Bock. Drier, richer, and more bitter than a Vienna Lager.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044 – 1.052 IBUs: 25 – 50 FG: 1.008 – 1.014 SRM: 9 – 17 ABV: 4.3 – 5.5%

Commercial Examples: Bolten Alt, Diebels Alt, Füchschen Alt, Original Schlüssel Alt, Schlösser Alt, Schumacher Alt, Uerige Altbier

Tags: standard-strength, amber-color, top-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, amber-ale-family, bitter