

# 1. STANDARD AMERICAN BEER

*This category describes everyday American beers that have a wide public appeal. Containing both ales and lagers, the beers of this category are not typically complex, and have smooth, accessible flavors. The ales tend to have lager-like qualities, or are designed to appeal to mass-market lager drinkers as crossover beers. Mass-market beers with a more international appeal or origin are described in the International Lager category.*

## 1A. American Light Lager

**Overall Impression:** A highly carbonated, very light-bodied, nearly flavorless lager designed to be consumed very cold. Very refreshing and thirst-quenching.

**Aroma:** Low malt aroma optional, but may be perceived as grainy, sweet, or corn-like, if present. Light spicy, floral, or herbal hop aroma optional. While a clean fermentation profile is desirable, a light amount of yeast character is not a fault.

**Appearance:** Very pale straw to pale yellow color. White, frothy head seldom persists. Very clear.

**Flavor:** Relatively neutral palate with a crisp, dry finish and a low to very low grainy or corn-like flavor that might be perceived as sweetness due to the low bitterness. Low floral, spicy, or herbal hop flavor optional, but is rarely strong enough to detect. Low to very low bitterness. Balance may vary from slightly malty to slightly bitter, but is usually close to even. High carbonation may accentuate the crispness of the dry finish. Clean fermentation profile.

**Mouthfeel:** Very light, sometimes watery, body. Very highly carbonated with slight carbonic bite on the tongue.

**Comments:** Designed to appeal to as broad a range of the general public as possible. Strong flavors are a fault. With little malt or hop flavor, the yeast character often is what most differentiates brands.

**History:** Coors briefly made a light lager in the early 1940s. Modern versions were first produced by Rheingold in 1967 to appeal to diet-conscious drinkers, but only became popular starting in 1973 after Miller Brewing acquired the recipe and marketed the beer heavily to sports fans with the “tastes great, less filling” campaign. Beers of this genre became the largest sellers in the United States in the 1990s.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Two- or six-row barley with up to 40% rice or corn as adjuncts. Additional enzymes can further lighten the body and lower carbohydrates. Lager yeast. Negligible hops.

**Style Comparison:** A lighter-bodied, lower-alcohol, lower calorie version of an American Lager. Less hop character and bitterness than a German Leichtbier.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.028 – 1.040 IBUs: 8 – 12 FG: 0.998 – 1.008 SRM: 2 – 3 ABV: 2.8 – 4.2%

**Commercial Examples:** Bud Light, Coors Light, Grain Belt Premium Light American Lager, Michelob Light, Miller Lite, Old Milwaukee Light

**Tags:** session-strength, pale-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, north-america, traditional-style, pale-lager-family, balanced

## 1B. American Lager

**Overall Impression:** A very pale, highly-carbonated, lightbodied, well-attenuated lager with a very neutral flavor profile and low bitterness. Served very cold, it can be a very refreshing and thirst-quenching drink.

**Aroma:** Low malt aroma optional, but may be perceived as grainy, sweet, or corn-like, if present. Light spicy or floral hop aroma optional. While a clean fermentation profile is desirable, a light amount of yeast character is not a fault.

**Appearance:** Very pale straw to medium yellow color. White, frothy head seldom persists. Very clear.

**Flavor:** Relatively neutral palate with a crisp, dry finish and a moderately-low to low grainy or corn-like flavor that might be perceived as sweetness due to the low bitterness. Moderately low hop flavor optional, with a floral, spicy, or herbal quality, if strong enough to distinguish. Low to medium-low bitterness. Balance may vary from slightly malty to slightly bitter, but is usually close to even. High carbonation may accentuate the crispness of the dry finish. Clean fermentation profile.

**Mouthfeel:** Low to medium-low body. Very highly carbonated with slight carbonic bite on the tongue.

**Comments:** Often what non-craft beer drinkers expect to be served if they order *beer* in the United States. May be marketed as Pilsner outside Europe, but should not be confused with traditional examples. Strong flavors are a fault. With little malt or hop flavor, the yeast character is what most frequently differentiates brands.

**History:** Evolved from Pre-Prohibition Lager (see Category 27) in the US after Prohibition and World War II. Surviving breweries consolidated, expanded distribution, and heavily promoted a beer style that appealed to a broad range of the population. Became the dominant beer style for many decades, and spawned many international rivals who would develop similarly bland products for the mass market supported by heavy advertising.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Two- or six-row barley with up to 40% rice or corn as adjuncts. Lager yeast. Light use of hops.

**Style Comparison:** Stronger, more flavor and body than an American Light Lager. Less bitterness and flavor than an International Pale Lager. Significantly less flavor, hops, and bitterness than traditional European Pilsners.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.040 – 1.050 IBUs: 8 – 18 FG: 1.004 – 1.010 SRM: 2 – 3.5 ABV: 4.2 – 5.3%

**Commercial Examples:** Budweiser, Coors Original, Grain Belt Premium American Lager, Miller High Life, Old Style, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Special Export

**Tags:** standard-strength, pale-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, north-america, traditional-style, pale-lager-family, balanced

## 1C. Cream Ale

**Overall Impression:** A clean, well-attenuated, highly carbonated, flavorful American “lawnmower” beer. Easily drinkable, smooth, and refreshing, with more character than typical American lagers, yet still subtle and restrained.

**Aroma:** Medium-low to low malt notes, with a sweet, cornlike aroma. Low DMS optional. Medium-low hop aroma optional, using any variety but floral, spicy, or herbal notes are most common. Overall, has a subtle, balanced aroma. Low fruity esters optional.

**Appearance:** Pale straw to light gold color, although usually on the pale side. Low to medium head with medium to high carbonation. Fair head retention. Brilliant, sparkling clarity. Effervescent.

**Flavor:** Low to medium-low hop bitterness. Low to moderate malty sweetness, varying with gravity and attenuation. The malt is generally neutral, possibly grainy or crackery. Usually well-attenuated. Balanced palate, with hops only enough to support the malt. A low to moderate corny flavor is commonly found, but light DMS is optional. Finish can vary from somewhat light, dry, and crisp to faintly sweet. Clean fermentation profile, but low fruity esters are optional. Low to medium-low hop flavor of any variety, but typically floral, spicy, or herbal. Subtle.

**Mouthfeel:** Generally light and crisp, although body can reach medium. Smooth mouthfeel with medium to high attenuation; higher attenuation levels can lend a “thirst quenching” quality. High carbonation.

**Comments:** Most commercial examples are in the 1.050– 1.053 OG range, and bitterness rarely rises above 20 IBUs.

**History:** A sparkling or present-use ale from the second half of the 1800s that survived prohibition. An ale brewed to compete with lagers brewed in Canada and the US Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest states.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** American six-row malt, or a combination of six-row and North American two-row. Up to 20% maize in the mash, and up to 20% sugar in the boil. Any variety of hops, often rustic American or Continental. Clean ale yeast, or a mix of ale and lager beer.

**Style Comparison:** Similar to a Standard American Lager, but with more character. Lighter body, smoother, and more carbonated than a Blonde Ale. May seem like a somewhat subtle Kölsch.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.042 – 1.055 IBUs: 8 – 20 FG: 1.006 – 1.012 SRM: 2 – 5 ABV: 4.2 – 5.6%

**Commercial Examples:** Genesee Cream Ale, Liebotschaner Cream Ale, Kiwanda Pre-Prohibition Cream Ale, Little Kings Cream Ale, Sleeman Cream Ale, Sun King Sunlight Cream Ale

**Tags:** standard-strength, pale-color, any-fermentation, northamerica, traditional-style, pale-ale-family, balanced

## 1D. American Wheat Beer

**Overall Impression:** A pale, refreshing grainy, doughy, or bready wheat beer with a clean fermentation profile and a variable hop character and bitterness. Its lighter body and higher carbonation contribute to its easy-drinking nature.

**Aroma:** Low to moderate grainy, bready, or doughy wheat character. A light to moderate malty sweetness is acceptable. Moderate esters optional, usually a neutral profile; banana is inappropriate. Low to moderate citrusy, spicy, floral, or fruity hop aroma. Not typically dry-hopped. No clove phenols.

**Appearance:** Usually pale yellow to gold. Clarity may range from brilliant to hazy with yeast approximating a Weissbier. Big, long-lasting white head.

**Flavor:** Light to moderately-strong bready, doughy, or grainy wheat flavor, which can linger into the finish. May have a moderate malty sweetness or can finish quite dry and crisp. Low to moderate hop bitterness, sometimes lasting into the finish. Balance is usually even, but may be slightly bitter. Low to moderate citrusy, spicy, floral, or fruity hop flavor. Moderate esters optional. No banana. No clove phenols.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light to medium body. Medium-high to high carbonation. Slight creaminess is optional; wheat beers sometimes have a soft, 'fluffy' impression.

**Comments:** Different variations exist, from an easy-drinking fairly sweet beer to a dry, aggressively-hopped beer with a strong wheat flavor. American Rye beers should be entered as 31A Alternative Grain Beer.

**History:** An American craft beer adaptation of the Weissbier style using a cleaner yeast and more hops, first produced by Anchor in 1984 and later widely popularized by Widmer.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Clean American ale or lager yeast. German Weissbier yeast is inappropriate. Wheat malt (often 30–50%, lower than is typical in Weissbier). American, German, or New World hops.

**Style Comparison:** More hop character and less yeast character than Weissbier. Never with the banana and clove character of Weissbier. Generally has the same range and balance as Blonde Ales, but with a wheat character as the primary malt flavor.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.040 – 1.055 IBUs: 15 – 30 FG: 1.008 – 1.013 SRM: 3 – 6 ABV: 4.0 – 5.5%

**Commercial Examples:** Bell's Oberon, Boulevard Unfiltered Wheat Beer, GoodLife Sweet As! Pacific Ale, Goose Island 312 Urban Wheat Ale, Widmer Hefeweizen

**Tags:** standard-strength, pale-color, any-fermentation, northamerica, craft-style, wheat-beer-family, balanced