

Fruit Beers

Fruit Beers have been around for millennia. As sugar in some form is an essential ingredient in the fermentation process, it was simple for ancient people to brew beer with fruit, utilizing the sugar from the fruit to aid in the fermentation process. Only as recently as the Middle Ages has the hop been used as a beer seasoning and preservative. Fruit Beers are often very refreshing on their own, but they can also be a wonderful accompaniment to a meal, particularly when a little sweetness or a light taste is desired.

A great Fruit Beer allows the beer and the fruit to complement each other with neither being overwhelmed.

Fruit Lambics

Belgian beers have been brewed with a variety of fruits for centuries, even before hops became a common beer ingredient. Some of the best known Belgian fruit beers are the Fruit Lambics. Lambics are spontaneously fermented beers, meaning that they are slowly fermented by wild yeast found in the air. The addition of fruit to the fermenting beer creates a new layer of flavor that is sometimes very subtle and sometimes very sweet. Varieties of fruit used in Belgium include cherry (Kriek), raspberry (Framboise), black currant (Cassis) and peach (Pêche).

Melbourn Bros. of Stamford, England, has a different take on spontaneously fermented fruit beers with their Strawberry, Apricot and Cherry fruit beers. Each has a completely fresh, lively flavor of fruit, while maintaining a wonderful balance with its traditional ale.

Other Fruit Beers

In America, the brewing of fruit beers is also very popular these days. Pyramid Brewing in Seattle makes a wonderful Apricot Weizen that pairs well with some desserts, as suggested for some of the fruit beers above, but the relatively light, refreshing apricot flavor in this beer makes for a terrific match with spicy foods like Thai.

Dogfish Head Brewing in Milton, Delaware makes some rather eccentric and delicious fruit beers that are very well suited to the discriminating beer palate. Dogfish Head's ApriHop is a welcome summer seasonal ale that combines a marvelous India Pale Ale with the taste of apricots.

Locally, Oaken Barrel of Indianapolis makes a very refreshing beer they called Razz Wheat. Made with fresh raspberries, Razz Wheat provides a very clean, slightly sweet taste of fruit while not overwhelming the palate.

Cuisine

Fruit beers can be incredible with desserts, chocolates or as an aperitif. Earthy cheeses can also be a great pairing. Some spicy foods and salads also benefit from the refreshing qualities of fruit beers.