

A BRIEF BEER & FOOD MATCHING CHART



Key to Symbols:

Color approximates actual beer
Shaded circles = range of variation

Alcohol/volume: 3% 10%+
Hop Bitterness: 15 IBU 70+
Flavor impact: Delicate Intense

Flavor impact includes: original gravity, sweetness, bitterness, maltiness, roastiness and fermentation character.

Beer Type	Alcohol	Flavor Impact	Bitterness	Color	Suggested Foods	Cheese	Dessert	Glassware	Serving Temp
1. Blonde Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Lighter food: chicken, salads, salmon, bratwurst; Monterey jack cheese.	Monterey Jack, brick or similar light, nutty cheese.	Light apricot or mandarin cake, lemon custard tart.	Beer glass	4.5–7 °C 40–45 °F
2. British-Style Bitter	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Wide range of food: roast chicken or pork, fish & chips; mild cheese.	Mild English cheese such as Lancashire or Leicester.	Oatmeal-raisin-walnut cookies or some other satisfyingly basic dish.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
3. Pale Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Wide range of food: meat pie, English cheese; great with a burger!	English cheese such as cheddar or Derby with sage.	Pumpkin flan, maple bread pudding, bananas Foster.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
4. India Pale Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Strong, spicy food (classic with curry!); bold, sweet desserts like carrot cake.	Milder blue such as Gorgonzola or Cambozola.	Caramel apple tart, ginger spice cake, persimmon rice pudding.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
5. Double/Imperial IPA	10%+	Intense	70+	Light	Smoked beef brisket, grilled lamb; Southern chicken-fried steak.	Sharp and rich American artisanal blue.	Very sweet desserts like carrot cake, caramel cheesecake or crème brûlée.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
6. Amber/Red Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Wide range of food: chicken, seafood, burgers; great with spicy cuisine.	Port-Salut or other lightly tangy cheese.	Poached pears with dulce de leche, banana pound cake, pecan lace cookies.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
7. Brown Ale, Altbier	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Hearty foods: roast pork, smoked sausage, grilled salmon.	Aged Gouda or a crumbly Cheshire.	Almond or maple-walnut cake, pear fritters, cashew brittle.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
8. Abbey Dubbel	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Barbecue, meat stews, or a nice thick steak or smoked rib roast.	Washed-rind abbey-type cheese or French Morbier.	Heavenly with milk chocolate; butter truffles, chocolate bread pudding.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
9. Old or Strong Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Big, intense dishes such as roast beef, lamb or game, grilled or roasted.	Double Gloucester or other rich, moderately aged cheese.	Spiced plum-walnut tart, classic canoli, toffee apple crisp.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
10. Barley Wine	10%+	Intense	70+	Light	Easily overpowers most main dishes. Best with strong cheese or dessert.	Stilton and walnuts is a classic updated. Who needs port?	Rich, sweet desserts: chocolate hazelnut torte, toffee caramel cheesecake.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
11. Porter	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Roasted or smoked food: barbecue, sausages, roasted meat, blackened fish.	Cow milk such as Tilsit or Gruyère.	Chocolate peanut butter cookies, toasted coconut cookie bars.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
12. Sweet or Oatmeal Stout	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Rich, spicy food like barbecued beef, Oaxacan mole or hearty Szechuan dishes.	Great with very buttery well-aged cheddar.	Chocolate espresso cake, cream puffs, profiteroles.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
13. Imperial Stout	10%+	Intense	70+	Light	Easily overpowers most main dishes, but stands up to foie gras, smoked goose.	Long-aged cheese: Gouda, Parmesan or cheddar.	Dark chocolate truffles, chocolate raspberry mousse cake.	Beer glass	10–13 °C 50–55 °F
14. Hefeweizen	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Great with lighter food: salads, seafood, sushi; classic with weisswurst	Simple chèvre goat cheese or herbed spread such as Boursin.	Strawberry shortcake, fruit trifle or other very light dessert; key lime pie.	Beer glass	4.5–7 °C 40–45 °F
15. American Wheat Ale	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Best with very light foods: salads, sushi, vegetable dishes.	Buffalo mozzarella or Wisconsin brick.	Generally too light for dessert, but could pair with fresh berries or a fruit soup.	Beer glass	4.5–7 °C 40–45 °F
16. Witbier	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Great with lighter seafood dishes—classic with steamed mussels.	Mascarpone or herb cheese spread on crackers.	Banana orange crêpes, blood orange sorbet, panna cotta with lemon.	Beer glass	4.5–7 °C 40–45 °F
17. Classic Pilsener	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Great with lighter food: chicken, salads, salmon, bratwurst.	Mild white Vermont cheddar.	Light desserts: lemon shortbread, fresh berries with sabayon.	Beer glass	4.5–7 °C 40–45 °F
18. Oktoberfest, Märzen, Vienna	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Mexican or any hearty, spicy food; chicken, sausage, pork.	The perfect beer for spicy jalapeño jack.	Mango or coconut flan, almond biscotti, spice cake with pine nuts.	Beer glass	7–10 °C 45–50 °F
19. Dark Lager, Dunkel, Schwarzbier	3%	Delicate	15 IBU	Light	Hearty, spicy food: barbecue, sausages, roasted meat.	Authentic washed-rind Münster.	Pomegranate tart with walnuts, candied ginger pear cake.	Beer glass	7–10 °C 45–50 °F

BREWERS ASSOCIATION THREE-STEP, CAN'T FAIL GUIDE TO MATCHING BEER & FOOD

Three basic principles should be considered; these are listed below. Each one is important, but there is no 1-2-3 order for the pairing process. Start with either a specific beer or food, then seek a suitable partner according to the following guidelines:

1 MATCH STRENGTH WITH STRENGTH. Delicate dishes work best with delicate beers, and strongly-flavored foods demand assertive beers—no surprise there. Intensity of flavor is not any single thing, but a sum of the taste experience. In beer, it may involve alcoholic strength, malt character, hop bitterness, sweetness, richness, roastiness and more. In food, richness (okay, let's just say it—fat), sweetness, cooking methods, spicing, texture and complexity all play a role.

2 FIND HARMONIES. Combinations often work best when they share some common flavor or aroma elements. The nutty flavors of an English-style brown ale and a handmade cheddar cheese; the deep, roasted flavors of imperial stout and chocolate truffles; the clean caramelly flavors of an Oktoberfest lager and roasted pork are all examples of this.

3 CONSIDER SWEETNESS, BITTERNESS, CARBONATION, HEAT (SPICE) AND RICHNESS. Certain qualities of food and beer interact with each other in specific, predictable ways. Taking advantage of these interactions ensures that the food and beer will balance each other, with one partner not throwing the match out of whack. These are specific interactions, different from the intensity-matching mentioned above. One sort of has to parse these out one-by-one as the situation demands, and find flavors that will enhance one another. The chart below lays out the specifics.

Foods that have a lot of sweetness or fatty richness (or both) can be matched by a various elements in beer: hop bitterness, sweetness, roasted/toasted malt or alcohol. Carbonation is also effective at cutting richness.

Malty sweetness cools the heat, so if you're leaning to a hoppy beer with spicy food, make sure it has plenty of malt as well.



BEER AND FOOD: SPECIFIC INTERACTIONS

Beer Flavor	Interaction	Food
Hop Bitterness Roasted Malt	Balances	Sweetness Richness (fat) Umami
Carbonation Alcohol		
Sweetness Maltiness	Balances	Spiciness (chili heat) Acidity
Hop Bitterness	Emphasizes	Spiciness (chili heat)

? WHAT ABOUT COMPLEMENT AND/OR CONTRAST? The complement aspect is covered by step 2, Find Harmonies. Contrast is always present to some degree, and may dominate the relationship or not. It's usually the case that contrasting and complimentary relationships exist, as they are not mutually exclusive. Most of the major players in contrast are covered by the interacting elements noted in step 3, above. Be aware, however, that having some degree of contrast doesn't remove the need to match intensities as described in step 1.