

Category 19: Strong Ale

19A: Old Ale

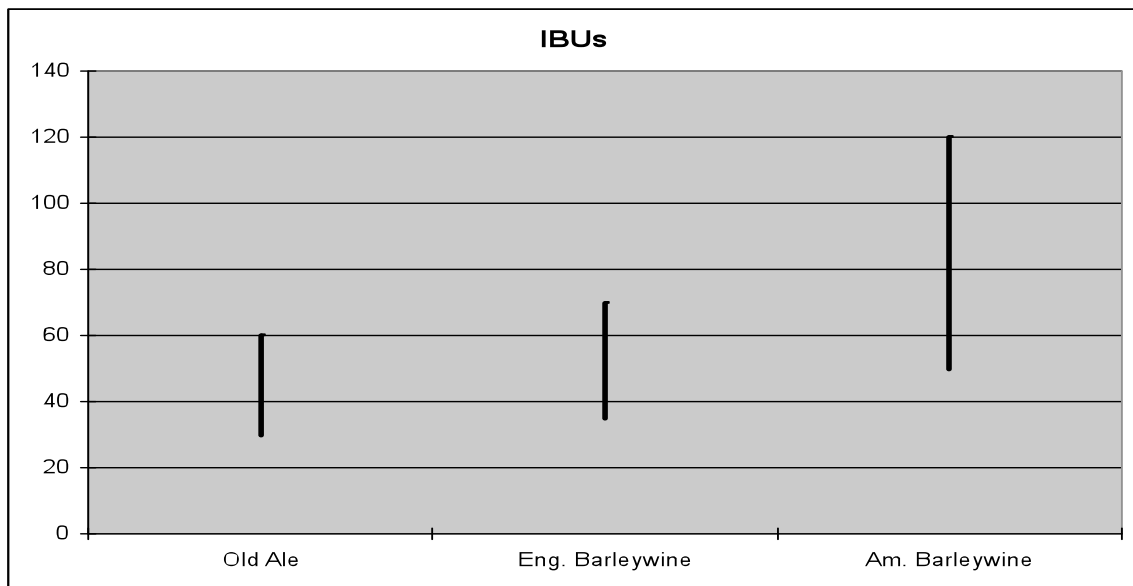
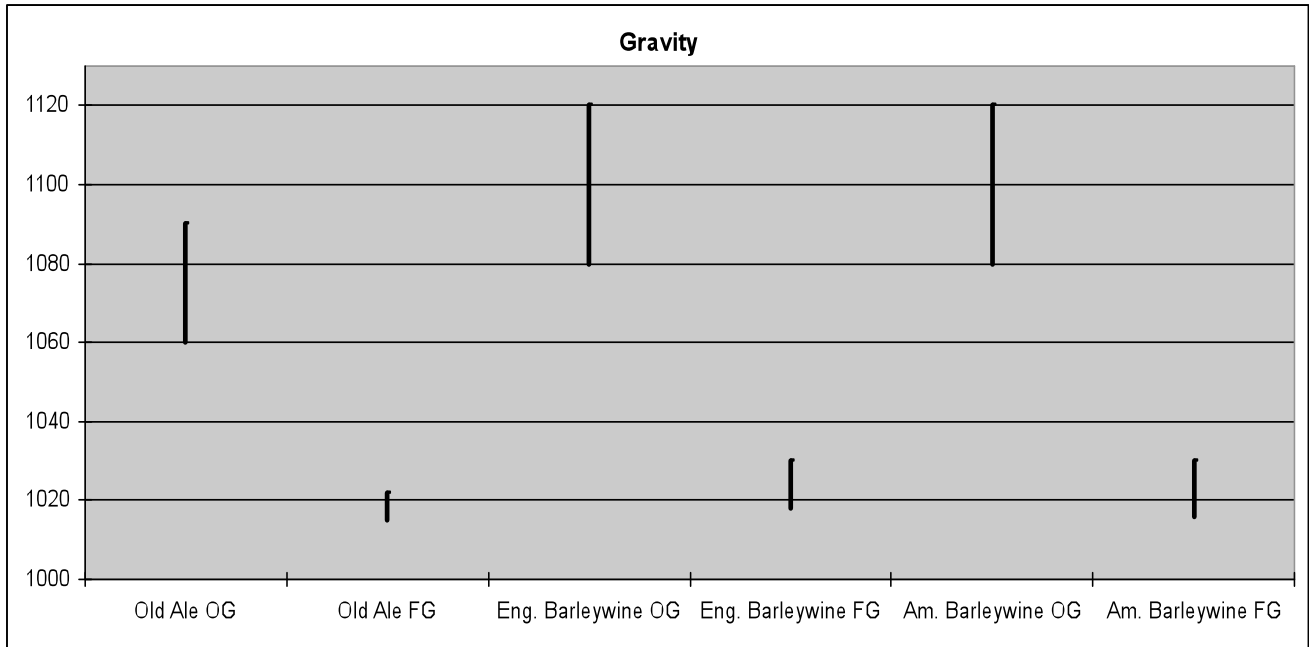
OG: 1.060 – 1.090 FG: 1.015 – 1.022 IBUs: 30 – 60 SRM: 10 – 22 ABV: 6 – 9%

19B: English Barleywine

OG: 1.080 – 1.120 FG: 1.018 – 1.030 IBUs: 35 – 70 SRM: 8 – 22 ABV: 8 – 12%

19C: American Barleywine

OG: 1.080 – 1.120 FG: 1.016 – 1.030 IBUs: 50 – 120 SRM: 10 – 19 ABV: 8 – 12%



Old Ale, 19A:

History:

Ray Daniels, Designing Great Beers summary:

Somewhat ignored style these days, but rich in history. Two early commercial examples using the “old ale” moniker were “London XXX Old Ale” and “Dorset XXX Old Ale”. They both used high saccharification temps (low attenuation) and were aged. Other sources support the notion that aging was an important trait for this style. English consumers had a taste for the characteristics brought about by the aging process: acid, fruity, horselike, leather, solventlike. Sometimes these would be called stock ales and would be mixed with other, fresher ales to provide an instant aged character. They would also be drunk straight as “old ale”.

Around the turn of the century, between prohibition and the ultra success of lager beer, little was written about old ale. Today there are a number of products labeled “old ale” and cover a large range of gravity and bitterness. However, the BJCP has defined the category more stringently.

Malt:

Old ales should use pale ale malt as a base and may include a variety of other ingredients including caramel malt, chocolate malt, black malt, and often use adjuncts to boost gravity (such as sugar, corn, flaked barley), or malt extract.

Hops:

While there are a wide variety of malts used in Old ales, the hop bill is usually pretty simple. Hops are not showcased in this style, so their role is relatively unimportant. Typically, an English hop such as Goldings, Challenger, or Fuggle is used.

Yeast:

English-style yeasts with low to moderate attenuation properties are usually used.

Water:

Michael Jackson has noted that the commercial brewery of Eldridge Pope has “very hard, chalky water, which has to be softened slightly” and that Gale’s uses well water “with some bicarbonate”. Ray Daniels mentions that many British homebrewing guides recommend a mild burtonization of the brewing water for old ales.

Character:

From 2008 BJCP Style Guidelines: Overall Impression

“An ale of significant alcoholic strength, bigger than strong bitters and brown porters, though usually not as strong or rich as barleywine. Usually tilted toward a sweeter, maltier balance.”

English and American Barleywines, 19B, and C:

History:

The barleywine style began in England during the 19th century as a very strong version of an English Pale ale or Bitter. In fact, barleywines share many similarities with these styles (high to moderately attenuated, pale malt base, and plenty of bitterness.) They were typically the strongest beer that a brewery offered. The first product to actually be named a barleywine was “Bass No. 1 Barley Wine” in 1903. These beers are usually given a vintage date and are meant to be cellared for a number of years as their flavors change and mature.

Malt:

Compared to an Old Ale, a barleywine malt bill is fairly simple. Again, this will be similar to a pale or bitter, with pale malt base, and a small amount (10-15%) of specialty malt such as caramel, munich, or carapils.

Hops:

This is the primary place where American versions depart from their English predecessors. American barleywines typically utilize citrusy/resiny American hops, and plenty of them (although their potency may fade with aging.) English versions will be more malt oriented with little hop presence.

Yeast:

According to Ray Daniels’ analysis of second round NHC entries, only two out of fourteen recipes used the same yeast. Almost any med-high attenuation yeast may be used successfully. Wine and champagne yeasts may also be used to drive attenuation. There are certain things that should be done to give the yeast every advantage in this high gravity ale—see notes below.

Water:

Some have recommended the same water treatment that would be used for a bitter or pale ale (somewhat burtonized). However, with the already strong character of this style, water does not seem to have a very big effect.

Character:

English:

“The richest and strongest of the English ales.” Showcasing malt and with a hops in a supporting role.

American:

A well hopped version of the English barleywines.

“A barley wine is meant to be sipped in front of the fire on a cold winter’s night, providing the fuel for philosophical thoughts on science and the wonders of metallurgy.”

-John J. Palmer – How to Brew

English Vs. American Barleywine:

“The English versions in my experience seem to be more malt forward (quality malts like marris otter), more crystal / caramel / toffee / diactyl, slightly less attenuated / sweeter, slightly less alcoholic with little to no aroma hops and tend to pick up oxidized - sherry / nutty - almond with prolonged storage.”

-Bill Aimonetti

Notes:

Given the huge original gravities of barleywine and the desire for a high attenuation, there are some special brewing considerations. Several tactics may be employed to produce a barleywine: The wort should be very well oxygenated. Attention must be given to the yeast pitching rate—plenty of yeast is needed to complete the fermentation. Rousing of the yeast, and/or adding fresh yeast or wine/champagne yeast may also be employed.

Examples:

Old Ale (19A):

- Samuel Smith's Winter Welcome
- Great Divide Hibernation Ale

American Barleywine (19C):

- Great Divide Old Ruffian ('08)
- Rogue Old Crustacean ('08)
- Avery Hog Heaven
- Stone Old Guardian ('09)
- Full Sail Old Boardhead ('08) *not listed in BJCP style guideline

Sorry, I couldn't find any English Barleywines.