

## Roasted malts for toasty days



### Summertime is the right time for stouts, too

**B**eer-drinking conventions call for heavy, dark beers, high in sugar and alcohol in the winter and lighter beers like pilsners, kolsches, sours and IPAs in the summer. This makes intuitive sense. Dark

by  
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beers—and I'm thinking especially of stouts—can taste and look like chocolate pudding or fudge, typically desserts we consume in the winter. On the other hand, crisp, lighter styles might resemble thirst-quenching lemonade, ideal

for baking-hot afternoons.

But stouts can and do have a valid place in summertime drinking. They can even be refreshing. Moreover, stouts vary. While giant stouts high in alcohol and aged in booze barrels gain the most attention in their category on social media, they are almost cloyingly sweet and filling.

More subdued stouts, including many made by Nor Cal breweries, are just as good—and arguably better. They are also deceptively light and easy-drinking, with their rich, roasty flavors belying the fact that 12 ounces of low-alcohol stout have no more calories than, say, a session IPA.

At Moylan's Brewing Co. in Novato, a 22-ounce bottle of Dragoons Dry Irish Stout runs just 5 percent alcohol by volume (ABV), has hearty flavors of coffee and roasted grain, and settles into a glass beneath a thick head of foam.

In Fort Bragg, North Coast Brewing Co.'s Old No. 38 Stout is made in the tradition of dry Irish stouts. It runs 5.4 percent ABV, has plenty of flavor, but won't fill you up. And Anderson Valley Brewing Co.'s Barney Flats Oatmeal Stout, at 5.8 percent, is

another light beer in flavorful disguise.

At Sierra Nevada Brewing Co., its year-round stout was actually the first beer that the Chico brewery ever produced. At 5.8 percent ABV, it's in the same realm as the warm-weather fave, Summerfest (5.0), and the same strength as the flagship Pale Ale (also 5.8). And both the smooth, roasted-malt flavored stout and the somewhat more mild porter (5.6 ABV) are two dark beers that pair as well with summer as the colder seasons.

If you're thinking that these beers, brewed in northern European traditions, hardly make a case for drinking stouts in the summer, consider that there is even a style of beer called the tropical stout. Represented by a handful of commercial products—Lion Stout, from Sri Lanka, and Dragon Stout, from Jamaica (brewed by Desnoes and Geddes, makers of Red Stripe), for instance—these beers are made with lager yeasts at relatively high temperatures and are brewed to be slightly sweet and fruity.

But not every stout is suited for summertime drinking, as there is some logic to the guidelines of drinking lighter beers in hot weather and saving the big guns for winter. Indeed, I was taken aback to receive an email notification last week that Trillium Brewing Co., in Massachusetts, was about to release Coconut Cake, an imperial stout brewed with coconut and vanilla. It almost makes me sweat just to ponder a pint of this 13.5 ABV beer—part of a dubious substyle known as “pastry stouts”—on a hot August evening. I'll save dessert beers for Christmastime (and even then, just a sip will do).

For now, and through the summer, traditional stouts will find a place in my beer rotation. □

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