



DRINK

# Jeers to green beer

BY RACHEL MAYFIELD / [rachelm@newsreview.com](mailto:rachelm@newsreview.com)

**St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner, and we** all know what that means—it's time to dye every last drop of moisture a bright, shimmering green. The cafeteria punch bowl. Your mom's pool. The White House fountains. The Chicago River. Everything must turn green, including, wait ... beer? Now we've gone too far.

For those unfamiliar with green beer, the recipe is pretty basic: Drop a little blue food coloring into an empty glass, then pour in your choice of ale and let chemistry take over.

It may seem gimmicky, but the American invention of and fascination with green beer dates back more than a century. One of the earliest accounts from a 1914 newspaper describes a St. Patrick's Day party in New York where the host altered the color of their beer using "wash blue," a type of laundry whitener. Sounds ... refreshing.

Despite green beer's popularity, not all bartenders are into the idea of serving it to thirsty throngs on a day that's supposedly all about traditional Irish culture.

"I think it's silly," says Pam Alfaro, who's been bartending at de Vere's Irish Pub for five years. "You're just putting food dye in your beer, there isn't anything special about it ... I don't think they would do that in Ireland, so I wouldn't think to do it here."

David Walsh, also a de Vere's bartender, doesn't believe beer necessarily belongs in authentic, Irish-owned pubs, but it's OK for dive bars or chains.

"I think it is appropriate for certain spaces," he says. "I'm not talking about putting a hard ban on it."

de Vere's is one of those Irish family owned pubs that doesn't serve green beer. So what should people drink instead?

"Whiskey. Or Guinness," Walsh says.

Alfaro also recommends Guinness, shots and really just any beer that isn't green. "You can drink [regular] beer as long as you want and you won't get as drunk, and I just think it's better."

Not everyone has the sense to watch what they imbibe during the holiday though. Having poured drinks for 17 years, Walsh has pretty much seen it all when it comes to St. Patrick's Day crowds.

"I think it's awesome that people get into it," he says. "Unfortunately, [it's one] of those 'amateur hour' drinking holidays where people who don't normally drink a lot have stuff they wouldn't normally drink, like whiskey and beer, and they mix them together and don't have a great time with it. But then you also see the troopers and the professionals who are walking around with a jug of water and things like that."

At the end of the day, no one's saying you absolutely shouldn't drink green beer. Even if it lacks class, or tastefulness or any real ties to traditional Irish culture, don't let that stop you from slamming back a couple Shrek-hued pints on Sunday. Heck, you might even try pouring a little laundry whitener in there for good measure. St. Patrick's Day is, after all, about making mistakes and never learning from them. □

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