

## 21B. Specialty IPA

*Specialty IPA isn't a distinct style, but is more appropriately thought of as a competition entry category. Beers entered as this style are not experimental beers; they are a collection of currently distinct styles that may or may not have any market longevity. This category also allows for expansion, so potential future IPA variants (St. Patrick's Day Green IPA, Romulan Blue IPA, Zima Clear IPA, etc.) have a place to be entered without redoing the style guidelines. The only common element is that they have the balance and overall impression of an IPA (typically, an American IPA) but with some minor tweak. The term 'IPA' is used as a singular descriptor of a type of hoppy, bitter beer. It is not meant to be spelled out as 'India Pale Ale' when used in the context of a Specialty IPA. None of these beers ever historically went to India, and many aren't pale. But the craft beer market knows what to expect in balance when a beer is described as an 'IPA' – so the modifiers used to differentiate them are based on that concept alone.*

**Aroma:** Detectable hop aroma is required; characterization of hops is dependant on the specific type of Specialty IPA. Other aromatics may be present; hop aroma is typically the strongest element.

**Appearance:** Color depends on specific type of Specialty IPA. Most should be clear, although certain styles with high amounts of starchy adjuncts, or unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be slightly hazy. Darker types can be opaque making clarity irrelevant. Good, persistent head stand with color dependent on the specific type of Specialty IPA.

**Flavor:** Hop flavor is typically medium-low to high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Hop bitterness is typically medium-high to very high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Malt flavor generally low to medium, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Commonly will have a medium-dry to dry finish. Some clean alcohol flavor can be noted in stronger versions. Various types of Specialty IPAs can show additional malt and yeast characteristics, depending on the type.

**Mouthfeel:** Smooth, medium-light to medium-bodied mouthfeel. Medium carbonation. Some smooth alcohol warming can be sensed in stronger versions.

**Overall Impression:** Recognizable as an IPA by balance – a hop-forward, bitter, dryish beer – with something else present to distinguish it from the standard categories. Should have good drinkability, regardless of the form. Excessive harshness and heaviness are typically faults, as are strong flavor clashes between the hops and the other specialty ingredients.

**Entry Instructions:** Entrant must specify a **strength** (session, standard, double); if no strength is specified, standard will be assumed. Entrant must specify specific **type** of Specialty IPA from the library of known types listed in the Style Guidelines, or as amended by the BJCP web site; or the entrant must describe the type of Specialty IPA and its key characteristics in comment form so judges will know what to expect. Entrants may specify specific **hop varieties** used, if entrants feel that judges may not recognize the varietal characteristics of newer hops. Entrants may specify a combination of defined IPA types (e.g., Black Rye IPA) without providing additional descriptions. Entrants may use this category for a different strength version of an IPA defined by its own BJCP subcategory (e.g., session-strength American or English IPA) – except where an existing BJCP subcategory already exists for that style (e.g., double [American] IPA).

**Currently Defined Types:** Black IPA, Brown IPA, White IPA, Rye IPA, Belgian IPA, Red IPA

**Vital Statistics:** Variable by type

**Strength classifications:**

Session – ABV: 3.0 – 5.0%

Standard – ABV: 5.0 – 7.5%

Double – ABV: 7.5 – 9.5%

## Specialty IPA: Black IPA

**Aroma:** A moderate to high hop aroma, often with a stone fruit, tropical, citrusy, resinous, piney, berry, or melon character. If dry hopped, can have an additional floral, herbal, or grassy aroma, although this is not required. Very low to moderate dark malt aroma, which can optionally include light chocolate, coffee, or toast notes. Some clean or lightly caramelly malty sweetness may be found in the background. Fruitiness, either from esters or from hops, may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable.

**Appearance:** Color ranges from dark brown to black. Should be clear, although unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be a bit hazy; if opaque, should not be murky. Good head stand with light tan to tan color should persist.

**Flavor:** Medium-low to high hop flavor with tropical, stone fruit, melon, citrusy, berry, piney or resinous aspects. Medium-high to very high hop bitterness, although dark malts may contribute to the perceived bitterness. The base malt flavor is generally clean and of low to medium intensity, and can optionally have low caramel or toffee flavors. Dark malt flavors are low to medium-low; restrained chocolate or coffee flavors may be present, but the roasted notes should not be intense, ashy, or burnt, and should not clash with the hops. Low to moderate fruitiness (from yeast or hops) is acceptable but not required. Dry to slightly off-dry finish. The finish may include a light roast character that contributes to perceived dryness, although this is not required. The bitterness may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. Some clean alcohol flavor can be noted in stronger versions.

**Mouthfeel:** Smooth, medium-light to medium-bodied mouthfeel without significant hop- or (especially) roasted malt-derived astringency. Dry-hopped versions may be a bit resinous. Medium carbonation. A bit of creaminess may be present but is not required. Some smooth alcohol warming can and should be sensed in stronger (but not all) versions.

**Overall Impression:** A beer with the dryness, hop-forward balance, and flavor characteristics of an American IPA, only darker in color – but without strongly roasted or burnt flavors. The flavor of darker malts is gentle and supportive, not a major flavor component. Drinkability is a key characteristic.

**Comments:** Most examples are standard strength. Strong examples can sometimes seem like big, hoppy porters if made too extreme, which hurts their drinkability. The hops and malt can combine to produce interesting interactions.

**History:** A variation of the American IPA style first commercially produced by Greg Noonan as Blackwatch IPA around 1990. Popularized in the Pacific Northwest and Southern California of the US starting in the early-mid 2000s. This style is sometimes known as Cascadian Dark Ale (CDA), mainly in the Pacific Northwest.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Debittered roast malts for color and some flavor without harshness and burnt qualities; American or New World hop varieties that don't clash with roasted malts. Hop characteristics cited are typical of these type of hops; others characteristics are possible, particularly if derived from newer varieties.

**Style Comparison:** Balance and overall impression of an American or Double IPA with restrained roast similar to the type found in Schwarzbiers. Not as roasty-burnt as American stouts and porters, and with less body and increased smoothness and drinkability.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.050 – 1.085  
IBUs: 50 – 90 FG: 1.010 – 1.018  
SRM: 25 – 40 ABV: 5.5 – 9%

**Commercial Examples:** Stone Sublimely Self-Righteous Ale (double), Widmer Pitch Black IPA (standard), Deschutes Hop in the Dark CDA (standard), Rogue Dad's Little Helper (standard), 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment Back in Black (standard), Southern Tier Iniquity (double)

**Reference:** IPA: Brewing Techniques, Recipes and the Evolution of India Pale Ale by Mitch Steele. Incorporates elements from contributed writeups by Abram Goldman-Armstrong, Mike Winnie, and Drew Beechum.

## Specialty IPA: Brown IPA

**Aroma:** A moderate to moderately-strong fresh hop aroma featuring one or more characteristics of American or New World hops, such as tropical fruit, stone fruit, citrus, floral, spicy, berry, melon, pine, resinous, etc. Many versions are dry hopped and can have an additional fresh hop aroma; this is desirable but not required. Grassiness should be minimal, if present. A medium-low to medium malty-sweet aroma mixes in well with the hop selection, and often features chocolate, nuts, dark caramel, toffee, toasted bread, and/or dark fruit character. Fruityness from yeast may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable. A restrained alcohol note may be present, but this character should be minimal at best. Any American or New World hop character is acceptable; new hop varieties continue to be released and should not constrain this style.

**Appearance:** Color ranges from reddish-brown to dark brown but not black. Frequently opaque, but should be clear if visible. Unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be a bit hazy. Medium-sized, cream-colored to tan head with good persistence.

**Flavor:** Hop flavor is medium to high, and should reflect an American or New World hop character, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Medium-high to high hop bitterness. Malt flavor should be medium-low to medium, and is generally clean but malty-sweet up front with milk chocolate, cocoa, toffee, nutty, biscuity, dark caramel, toasted bread and/or dark fruit malt flavors. The character malt choices and the hop selections should complement and enhance each other, not clash. The level of malt flavor should nearly balance the hop bitterness and flavor presentation. Low yeast-derived fruitiness is acceptable but not required. Dry to medium finish; residual sweetness should be medium-low to none. The bitterness and hop flavor may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. A very light, clean alcohol flavor may be noted in stronger versions. No roasted, burnt, or harsh-bitter malt character.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light to medium body, with a smooth texture. Medium to medium-high carbonation. No harsh hop-derived astringency. Very light, smooth alcohol warming not a fault if it does not intrude into overall balance.

**Overall Impression:** Hoppy, bitter, and moderately strong like an American IPA, but with some caramel, toffee, and/or dark fruit malt character. Retaining the dryish finish and lean body that makes IPAs so drinkable, a Red IPA is a little more flavorful and malty than an American IPA without being sweet or heavy.

**Comments:** Previously might have been a sub-genre of American Brown Ales, hoppier and stronger than the normal products, but still maintaining the essential drinkability by avoiding sweet flavors or a heavy body or finish. The hops and malt can combine to produce interesting interactions.

**History:** A more modern craft beer name for a style that has long been popular with US homebrewers, when it was known as a hoppier American Brown Ale or sometimes Texas Brown Ale (despite origins in California).

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Similar to an American IPA, but with medium or dark crystal malts, lightly roasted chocolate type malts, or other intermediate-color character malts. May use sugar adjuncts, including brown sugar. American or New World finishing hops with tropical, fruity, citrusy, piney, berry, or melon aspects; the choice of hops and character malts is synergistic – they very much have to complement each other and not clash.

**Style Comparison:** A stronger and more bitter version of an American Brown Ale, with the balance of an American IPA.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.056 – 1.070  
IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.008 – 1.016  
SRM: 11 – 19 ABV: 5.5 – 7.5%

**Commercial Examples:** Dogfish Head Indian Brown Ale, Grand Teton Bitch Creek, Russian River Janet's Brown Ale, Evil Twin Hop Flood, Harpoon Brown IPA

## Specialty IPA: White IPA

**Aroma:** Moderate fruity esters – banana, citrus, perhaps apricot. May have light to moderate spice aroma such as coriander or pepper from actual spice additions and/or Belgian yeast. Hop aroma is moderately-low to medium, usually American or New World type with stone fruit, citrus and tropical aromas. Esters and spices may reduce hop aroma perception. Light clove-like phenolics may be present.

**Appearance:** Pale to deep golden color, typically hazy. Moderate to large, dense white head that persists.

**Flavor:** Light malt flavor, perhaps a bit bready. Fruity esters are moderate to high, with citrus flavors similar to grapefruit and orange, or stone fruit like apricot. Sometimes banana-like flavors are present. Hop flavor is medium-low to medium-high and reflects citrusy American type hops. Some spicy clove-like flavors from Belgian yeast may be present. Coriander and orange peel flavors may be found as well. Bitterness is high which leads to a moderately dry, refreshing finish.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light body with medium to medium-high carbonation. Typically no astringency, although highly spiced examples may exhibit a light astringency which is not distracting.

**Overall Impression:** A fruity, spicy, refreshing version of an American IPA, but with a lighter color, less body, and featuring either the distinctive yeast and/or spice additions typical of a Belgian witbier.

**Comments:** A craft beer interpretation of American IPA crossed with a witbier.

**History:** American craft brewers developed the style as a late winter/spring seasonal beer to appeal to Wit and IPA drinkers alike.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Pale and wheat malts, Belgian yeast, citrusy American type hops.

**Style Comparison:** Similar to a Belgian Wit style except highly hopped to the level of an American IPA. Bitter and hoppy like the IPA but fruity, spicy and light like the Wit. Typically the hop aroma and flavor are not as prominent as in an American IPA.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.056 – 1.065

IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.013 – 1.016

SRM: 5 – 8 ABV: 5.7 – 7.0%

**Commercial Examples:** Deschutes Chainbreaker IPA, Blue Point White IPA, Harpoon The Long Thaw, Sierra Nevada Snow Wit, New Belgium Accumulation

## Specialty IPA: Rye IPA

**Aroma:** A prominent to intense hop aroma featuring one or more characteristics of American or New World hops, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Many versions are dry hopped and can have an additional fresh hop aroma; this is desirable but not required. Grassiness should be minimal, if present. It may have low peppery rye malt aroma. A low to medium-low clean grainy-malty aroma may be found in the background. Fruitiness from yeast may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable. A restrained alcohol note may be present, but this character should be minimal at best. Any American or New World hop character is acceptable; new hop varieties continue to be released and should not constrain this style.

**Appearance:** Color ranges from medium gold to light reddish-amber. Should be clear, although unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be a bit hazy. Medium-sized, white to off-white head with good persistence.

**Flavor:** Hop flavor is medium to very high, and should reflect an American or New World hop character, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Medium-high to very high hop bitterness. Malt flavor should be low to medium-low, and is generally clean and grainy-malty although some light caramel or toasty flavors are acceptable. A light grainy spiciness from rye malt should be present. Low yeast-derived fruitiness is acceptable but not required. Rye malt contributes to a dry finish; residual sweetness should be low to none. The bitterness, hop flavor and dryness may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. A very light, clean alcohol flavor may be noted in stronger versions.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light to medium body, with a smooth texture. Medium to medium-high carbonation. No harsh hop-derived astringency. Very light, smooth alcohol warming not a fault if it does not intrude into overall balance.

**Overall Impression:** A decidedly hoppy and bitter, moderately strong American pale ale, showcasing modern American and New World hop varieties. The balance is hop-forward, with a clean fermentation profile, dry finish, and clean, supporting malt allowing a creative range of hop character to shine through.

**Comments:** A modern American craft beer variation of American IPA. Rye malt character should be noticeable, otherwise enter in American IPA. Oak is inappropriate in this style; if noticeably oaked, enter in wood-aged category.

**History:** Looking to add complexity and variety to their IPAs, craft brewers and homebrewers substituted rye malt for a portion of their base malt. Rye IPAs, RyePAs or RIPAs have found a place in many craft breweries seasonal rotations.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Pale ale or 2-row brewers malt as the base, 15-20% Rye malt, American or New World hops, American or English yeast with a clean or slightly fruity profile. Generally all-malt, but mashed at lower temperatures for high attenuation. Sugar additions to aid attenuation are acceptable. Water character varies from soft to moderately sulfate. Restrained use of crystal malts, if any, as high amounts can lead to a sweet finish and clash with the hop character.

**Style Comparison:** Drier and slightly spicier than an American IPA. Bitterness and spiciness from rye lingers longer than an American IPA. Does not have the intense rye malt character of a Roggenbier. Some examples are stronger like a Double IPA.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.056 – 1.075  
IBUs: 50 – 75 FG: 1.008 – 1.014  
SRM: 6 – 14 ABV: 5.5 – 8.0%

**Commercial Examples:** Sierra Nevada Ruthless Rye, Arcadia Sky High Rye, Founders Reds Rye, Bear Republic Hop Rod Rye, Great Lakes Rye of the Tiger, Arbor Brewing Ryeclops Imperial Rye

## Specialty IPA: Belgian IPA

**Aroma:** Moderate to high hop aroma, often tropical, stone fruit, citrus or pine-like typical of American or New World hop varieties. Floral and spicy aromas are also found indicating European hops. Grassy aroma due to dry hopping may be present. Gentle, grainy-sweet malt aroma, with little to no caramel. Fruity esters are moderate to high and may include aromas of bananas, pears and apples. Light clove-like phenols may be noticeable. Belgian candi sugar-like aromas are sometimes present.

**Appearance:** Light golden to amber in color. Off-white head is moderate to large in size and has good retention. Clarity is fair to quite hazy in dry hopped examples.

**Flavor:** Initial flavor is moderately spicy and estery associated with Belgian yeast strains. Clove-like and peppery flavors are common. Banana, pear and apple flavors are also typical. Hop flavors are moderate to high in intensity and may reflect tropical, stone fruit, melon, citrusy, or piney American/New World varieties or floral and spicy Saazer-type hop flavors. Malt flavor is light and grainy-sweet, sometimes with low toasted or caramel malt flavor but not required. Bitterness is high and may be accentuated by spicy yeast-derived flavors. The finish is dry to medium-dry although some examples have a slight sweetness mixed with the lingering bitterness.

**Mouthfeel:** The body is medium to light and varies due to carbonation level and adjunct use. Carbonation level is medium to high. Some higher alcohol versions may be warming although this may not be readily apparent.

**Overall Impression:** An IPA with the fruitiness and spiciness derived from the use of Belgian yeast. The examples from Belgium tend to be lighter in color and more attenuated, similar to a tripel that has been brewed with more hops. This beer has a more complex flavor profile and may be higher in alcohol than a typical IPA.

**Comments:** The choice of yeast strain and hop varieties is critical since many choices will horribly clash.

**History:** A relatively new style, started showing up in the mid 2000s. Homebrewers and microbreweries simply substituted Belgian yeast in their American IPA recipes. Belgian breweries added more hops to their tripel and pale ale recipes.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Belgian yeast strains used in making tripels and golden strong ales. American examples tend to use American or New World hops while Belgian versions tend to use European hops and only pale malt.

**Style Comparison:** A cross between an American IPA/Imperial IPA with a Belgian Golden Strong Ale or Tripel. This style is may be spicier, stronger, drier and more fruity than an American IPA.

### Entry Instructions:

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.058 – 1.080

IBUs: 50 – 100 FG: 1.008 – 1.016

SRM: 5 – 15 ABV: 6.2 – 9.5%

**Commercial Examples:** Brewery Vivant Triomphe, Houblon Chouffe, Urthel Hop It, Stone Cali-Belgique, Epic Brainless IPA, Green Flash Le Freak, Lagunitas Little Sumpin' Wild

**References:** Writeup by Mike Winnie

## Specialty IPA: Red IPA

**Aroma:** A moderate to strong fresh hop aroma featuring one or more characteristics of American or New World hops, such as tropical fruit, stone fruit, citrus, floral, spicy, berry, melon, pine, resinous, etc. Many versions are dry hopped and can have an additional fresh hop aroma; this is desirable but not required. Grassiness should be minimal, if present. A medium-low to medium malty-sweet aroma mixes in well with the hop selection, and often features caramel, toffee, toasty, and/or dark fruit character. Fruitness from yeast may also be detected in some versions, although a neutral fermentation character is also acceptable. A restrained alcohol note may be present, but this character should be minimal at best. Any American or New World hop character is acceptable; new hop varieties continue to be released and should not constrain this style.

**Appearance:** Color ranges from light reddish-amber to dark reddish-copper. Should be clear, although unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be a bit hazy. Medium-sized, off-white to cream-colored head with good persistence.

**Flavor:** Hop flavor is medium to very high, and should reflect an American or New World hop character, such as citrus, floral, pine, resinous, spicy, tropical fruit, stone fruit, berry, melon, etc. Medium-high to very high hop bitterness. Malt flavor should be medium-low to medium, and is generally clean but malty-sweet up front with medium-dark caramel, toffee, toasty and/or dark fruit malt flavors. The character malt choices and the hop selections should complement and enhance each other, not clash. The level of malt flavor should not adversely constrain the hop bitterness and flavor presentation. Low yeast-derived fruitiness is acceptable but not required. Dry to medium-dry finish; residual sweetness should be medium-low to none. The bitterness and hop flavor may linger into the aftertaste but should not be harsh. A very light, clean alcohol flavor may be noted in stronger versions.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light to medium body, with a smooth texture. Medium to medium-high carbonation. No harsh hop-derived astringency. Very light, smooth alcohol warming not a fault if it does not intrude into overall balance.

**Overall Impression:** Hopy, bitter, and moderately strong like an American IPA, but with some caramel, toffee, and/or dark fruit malt character. Retaining the dryish finish and lean body that makes IPAs so drinkable, a Red IPA is a little more flavorful and malty than an American IPA without being sweet or heavy.

**Comments:** Previously might have been a sub-genre of American Amber Ales or Double Red Ales, hoppier and stronger than the normal products, but still maintaining the essential drinkability by avoiding sweet flavors or a heavy body or finish.

**History:** A modern American craft beer style, based on American IPA but with the malt flavors of an American Amber Ale.

**Characteristic Ingredients:** Similar to an American IPA, but with medium or dark crystal malts, possibly some character malts with a light toasty aspect. May use sugar adjuncts. American or New World finishing hops with tropical, fruity, citrusy, piney, berry, or melon aspects; the choice of hops and character malts is synergistic – they very much have to complement each other and not clash.

**Style Comparison:** Similar to the difference between an American Amber Ale and an American Pale Ale, a Red IPA will differ from an American IPA with the addition of some darker crystal malts giving a slightly sweeter, more caramelly and dark fruit-based balance. A Red IPA differs from an American Strong Ale in that the malt profile is less intense and there is less body; a Red IPA still has an IPA balance and doesn't trend towards a barleywine-like malt character. A Red IPA is like a stronger, hoppier American Amber Ale, with the characteristic dry finish, medium-light body, and strong late hop character.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.056 – 1.070

IBUs: 40 – 70 FG: 1.008 – 1.016

SRM: 11 – 19 ABV: 5.5 – 7.5%

**Commercial Examples:** Green Flash Hop Head Red Double Red IPA (double), Sierra Nevada Flipside Red IPA, Midnight Sun Sockeye Red, Summit Horizon Red IPA, Odell Runoff Red IPA