

beers: DARK BEERS

# EXTRA CHEER, with beer

Luxurious Dark Beer Indulgences for Anytime Celebrations





**‘Tis** the season for stouts, porters and other dark beers to have a moment. Although they are available all year round, what better time to enjoy what makes them so luxurious, from that velvety layer of naturally occurring foam to lush flavor profiles with layers of chocolate, espresso, vanilla and peanut butter.

Dark beer can serve as an alternative to dessert or the perfect partner for holiday favorites, including chocolate chip cookies, chocolate truffles, cakes and pies. Brewers who prefer savory flavors, meanwhile, know there is no better foil for sharp cheeses, nuts, dried fruit and meat-based main courses. Beyond that, dark beers are also being tapped by chefs and cooks as the “secret” ingredient that elevates a sweet or savory recipe to new heights.

Dominic Bergquist, representing New Holland Brewing Company, insists dark beers can be so versatile that they

have the potential to convert non-beer drinkers into fans. “When people visiting our Holland, Michigan brewery tell me they don’t like beer, our interpretation is that they haven’t found a flavor that best fits their palette,” he says. “Beer, in some minds, tastes like a light lager or maybe a bitter IPA. Therefore, we ask them if they like chocolate, coffee, vanilla or coconut. As the answer is usually ‘yes,’ we introduce them to something like our Dragon’s Milk Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stout, which has all those flavor notes and you can see the light go off in their head... ‘Whoa, maybe I **do** like beer!’”

“I think our Tusk & Grain barrel-aged offerings tend to do well with the non-beer drinking crowd,” observes Greg Garrity, Brewing Manager at Saint Archer in San Diego. “If you’re a wine drinker, you probably enjoy rich, oaky, dark fruit and jammy flavors which barrels can add to a beer. If you’re a spirit drinker, you probably enjoy the

vanilla, char, peat and roasted flavors. Depending on what kind of spirit occupied the barrel before we add our beer, the barrels infuse some of the same flavor components as that spirit into the beer. I like to tell people that our Coffee Porter has so many dessert-like qualities that it not only can be paired with desserts, but it can stand alone as a nightcap.”

“Dark beers are typically made with highly roasted malts and grains,” says De’Ann Wellwerts, Food & Beverage Director for Chicago-based Bottle-neck Management (which helms beer and tavern-focused restaurants such as the Old Town Pour House and City Works Eatery & Pour House). “The original flavor profile changes and new flavors are brought out by the roasting process. Think of something similar like coffee beans. The longer the beans are roasted, the more bold or complex the flavor can become, all the way to a bitter, almost burnt flavor.”





## A TOUCH OF ALCHEMY

Many magical things happen during the brewing process when hops, grain and malt are spun into the dramatic darks. The desired roast of the malt selected will impact the color of the beer. The darker the roast of the desired grain, the more pronounced the flavors or nuttiness, chocolate and coffee notes. As these flavors express themselves naturally, they yield themselves to be built upon with other nutty, chocolate or dessert-like ingredients.

"Stouts like Prairie Bomb, Founders Breakfast Stout and Goose Island Bourbon County Stout can carry hints of coffee, chocolate, caramel, molasses, smoke and sometimes bourbon, if they are aged in bourbon barrels," says Scott Jones, assistant general manager/beer specialist at The Shannon Rose Irish Pub in Ramsey, NJ. "They should be creamy, silky and full. Porters like Great Lakes Porter and Flying Dog Gonzo, on the other hand, tend to have the same flavor profiles as stouts, but tend to be a little thinner."

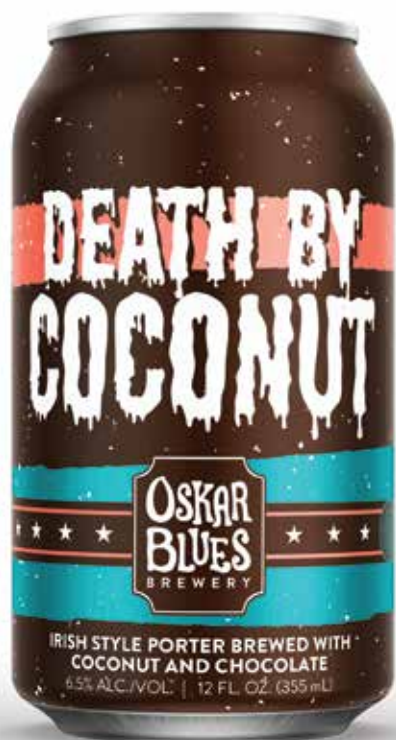
"I think that non-beer drinkers probably don't realize that beer can taste like almost anything," adds Garrett Oliver, Brooklyn Brewery's Brewmaster in New York City, regarding some of the

more high-concept brews inspired by bakeries and dessert carts. "Given its strong cacao-like flavors, people are often surprised to hear that our Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout contains no actual chocolate. The secret is the use of a particular roasting of a malt known as 'chocolate malt.' The same roasting techniques that give chocolate and coffee their flavors can also give similar flavors to malts."

If the techniques are executed correctly by the brew master, he or she will get a beer that isn't necessarily sweet but very nuanced and sophisticated. With that, Oliver says that although dessert wine should be at least as sweet as the dessert itself according to some in the wine world, beer is much more versatile. Like coffee, the beer isn't sweet. Instead, the bitterness and relatively dryness achieved in the process provides a nice counter-point while the roasted flavors harmonize with each other and whatever food is being enjoyed.

New Holland's "Dragon's Milk" gets its unique flavor through aging for three months in bourbon barrels, and is brewed in such a way to take on as much flavor as possible from the oak during aging. "The bourbon





barrel provides notes of vanilla and pleasant oak, while the roasted malt brings flavors of chocolate and coffee,” says Bergquist. Saint Archer’s Tusk & Grain’s collection of barrel-aged beers includes a coconut stout as well as a chocolate-forward coffee porter. Garrity explains the brandy barrel-aged porter has flavor notes and aromas of dark fruit, oak, and baker’s chocolate, which are wrapped in a finish using Bird Rock Coffee Roasters Coffee.

“In crafting our dark beers, we tend to get inspired from the culinary aspects of baking,” affirms Garrity. “We like to layer in a bunch of different malts to give the beer depth. We might layer in caramel malt, chocolate malt, pale chocolate malt, honey malt, or

even roasted barley which gives you a slightly ‘burnt’ note. All of those layers provide the drinker with an experience rather than a means to an end. I think everyone tends to lean towards pairing dark beers with desserts, and most of the time it’s something like coffee beer with coffee desserts, or chocolate on chocolate, which can be great! I personally enjoy a little bit of contrast with dark beers, a pastry made with dark fruit, berries, or a lightly acidic dish would go very well with our coffee porter.”

Seth Falvo, bartender at the Hotel Zamora in St. Pete Beach, Florida likens beers to quality wines, especially as stouts can range from dry and savory to rich and fruity, and all points in

between. “‘Death by Coconut’ from Oskar Blues in Colorado is a particularly good way to break a novice drinker into dark beers, as there are plenty of chocolate and coconut notes to this beer that complement the coffee and roasted malt flavors of the base porter,” he says.

## DESSERTS IN A GLASS

Evil Twin Brewing loads up their stout with actual wedding cakes, while 903 Brewers used 300 pounds of fresh-baked cinnamon rolls in their “Down with the PastryArchy Cinnamon Roll Stout.” Other breweries add whole pastries — cakes, doughnuts, pies and more — to the mix.





“I feel like the big surprise about BirthdayFace is how closely it resembles actual cake,” says Bhramari Brewing Company owner Gary Sernack, who suggests dropping a scoop of vanilla into a pint or including it in a Chocolate Birthday Cake martini recipe makes dessert effortless. “The ingredients we use in this particular beer are very dark-roasted malts, a copious amount of fluffy oats and milk sugar. Couple that with putting actual cake in the beer and it turns into dessert in a glass. The low level of bitterness and balanced sweetness makes this a perfect pairing for any decadent dessert with coffee, caramel, chocolate, or nutty flavor profiles. “

Los Angeles’ Frogtown Brewery’s offers up its seasonal Broken Vessel Imperial Pumpkin Ale, brewed with victory malt, which gives it a bready characteristic for the base layer. The brewers then brew the beer with over 250 pounds of pumpkin puree per batch and add a touch of pumpkin spice (nutmeg, cinnamon, clove) during the boil to accentuate the pumpkin pie flavor. It is finished by aging it with Madagascar vanilla bean to give it that whipped cream flavor.

Of course, there are exceptions to every rule, even with dark beers. White stouts and golden stouts are actually very light-bodied and light in hue, yet still offer interesting, multi-layered flavors for those preferring lighter desserts. Two Docs Brewery in Lubbock, TX has delighted regulars with its Notorious Irish Stout, their answer to Guinness with its dry roasted grains and dispensing by a “Nitro” tap. According manager JC Lopez, it results in a cleaner, smoother beer that is lighter on the bubbles and you don’t have heavy bubbles from the CO2 making it a lighter, creamier take on Irish stout that’s still rich in flavor as it is served out of a tap. Its bock, meanwhile, has sweeter cocoa notes but a much lighter body in comparison to traditional variations of the brew.





## SWEET SERVINGS

There is consensus among most brewers that porters and stouts are best either when served slightly chilled or just under room temperature at “wine cellar temperature,” and the best glass to serve it in is a snifter glass (though pint glasses are commonly used at most brewery tasting rooms and pubs). Garrity points out that the heat from one’s hand holding the glass will slowly warm it up and allow for deeper aroma and flavor to emerge over the time. Sipping should be slow and intentional to experience all of the nuances and flavors.

While any of these beers are a treat on their own, sometimes pairing them with foods — dessert or otherwise — with complimentary or contrasting flavor profiles truly allows their unique characteristics to shine brighter. The same holds true when integrating them into food or cocktail recipes. Several of the brewers also agree that dark beers complement smoked meats and strong cheeses such as Stilton and sharp cheddar, which benefit from the

strong, dark contrast provided by the beer.

Oliver, meanwhile, points out that Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout is a “total rock star” when teamed with a sharp Stilton cheese as it brings out a massive chocolatey character in the cheese that you might never have otherwise discovered. It’s a flavorful addition to traditional Mexican *molé* negro sauces. It also makes a fine partner for Champagne in a bold version of the classic Black Velvet, or the base of a modern cocktail like the “Black Flip.”

Garrity says Saint Archer’s dark beers provide an excellent flavor profile when creating marinades for smoked or grilled meats, or even as a chaser for a briny appetizer like oysters. Belgian-Style Dubbel beers are good companion for lamb, venison, duck or roasted pork loin, with a malty sweetness converging with caramel or cocoa flavors evolving out of the fruity esters of Belgian yeast. Jones mentions that The Shannon Rose’s kitchen adds Guinness Stout to its BBQ sauce, after winning over customers when the kitchen tossed boneless wings

in their Guinness BBQ sauce and served them on their home-made baked mac and cheese. Bock-style beers are also harmonious with both sweet and savory ingredients in the kitchen.

“As our bock is slightly sweeter, it’s quite versatile in food recipes,” says Two Doc’s Lopez. “The catering companies we work with like to use the bock in recipes for barbecue sauces, fried Oreos or even fish stick batter. The Irish stout is great for cake and brownie recipes because it helps enrich the flavors.”

While Bergquist finds Dragon’s Milk is an excellent pairing with grilled steak and strong or pungent cheeses, its strong flavor profile allows it to partner with foods that are equal to it in flavor intensity. His dream cheese plate includes Moody Blue (a classic blue cheese from Wisconsin with subtle smokey flavor), Midnight Moon (a gouda-like ivory-colored goat cheese that’s nutty and brown buttery up front, with a long caramel finish) and earthy pasteurized triple crème *Delice de Bourgogne* by French producer by Fromagerie Lincet.



“Buttery, salty cheeses immediately bring forward the chocolate and roast in Dragon’s Milk, especially if neither beer nor cheese are too cool,” says Bergquist. “Another interesting pairing effect is created when both the beer and cheese are in your mouth at the same time (cheese first, if you don’t want to make a mess). A whole new flavor is created as the notable acidity in the cheese mingles with the sweetness of the beer. You have to taste this to truly experience it. There’s a brightness that fools the mind into tasting lemony citrus before things get salty then sweet again. Make sure to get enough beer with it to wash everything down clean. Quite the thrill ride!”

Another thing that sets craft dark beers apart from the others is that they often get better with age.

“Don’t be afraid to ‘cellar’ dark beers,” says Wellwerts. “In most cases, Imperial stouts, porters, barley wines and dark beers with higher ABVs can benefit from aging. Dark beers begin to take on a more complex and smoother flavor as they age. Darker beers tend to have more residual sugar and therefore stand the aging process better than most IPA’s or pilsners, meant to be consumed while fresh. During the aging process, the hoppy flavor that is present will fade and the underlying chocolate, coffee or added flavor (i.e. cherry, coconut etc.) will be more pronounced. The beer will also thin with age, not drinking so thick or heavy.”

The quality and shape of the glassware can also make a big difference, according to The Shannon Rose’s Jones. “Personally, I enjoy my beer cold, but try drinking them out of the glass that they are meant to be poured in,” he recommends. “While stouts will open up a little when they get warmer, I prefer them cold. Abbey Dubbels should be served in an Abbey beer glass. The shape of the glass allows the heat from your hand to warm the beer. I appreciate the Belgian-Style Dubbels a little warmer than my stouts, but not quite room temperature.” —ELYSE GLICKMAN



# RECIPES



## LONGMONT SOUR

SETH FALVO, HOTEL ZAMORA,  
ST. PETE BEACH, FLORIDA

MAKES 1 DRINK

- 2 oz whiskey, preferably Gentleman Jack
- $\frac{3}{4}$  oz lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz simple syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Egg white from 1 medium egg
- 2 oz Death by Coconut Porter
- Lemon slice, for garnish
- Cherry, for garnish

1. In a dry shaker, combine all ingredients except for the Death by Coconut.
2. Shake ingredients for approximately twenty seconds, to integrate egg white into cocktail.
3. Add ice, then shake cocktail again for approximately fifteen seconds to chill it.
4. Strain drink into a rocks glass filled with ice, then float Death by Coconut over top.
5. Garnish with a lemon slice and a cherry.



## DRAGON'S MILK ICE CREAM SODA

MAKES 1 DRINK

- 2 to 3 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 1 oz chocolate syrup
- 1 oz New Holland Spirits Beer Barrel Bourbon
- 1 12-oz bottle Dragon's Milk Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stout
- Dollop whipped cream
- 1 toasted marshmallow
- Chocolate shavings or sprinkles, for topping

1. Scoop vanilla ice cream into chilled pint glass.
2. Add chocolate syrup and bourbon to glass; gently stir.
3. Top with Dragon's Milk, whipped cream, marshmallow and chocolate shavings or sprinkles.
4. Serve with paper or metal straw.



## THE BLACK FLIP

PAYMAN BAHMANI, UMAMI MART,  
OAKLAND, CA FOR BROOKLYN BLACK  
CHOCOLATE STOUT

MAKES 1 DRINK

- 2 oz Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout
- 1½ oz Cruzan Black Strap rum
- ½ oz Demerara syrup
- 1 whole organic egg
- Fresh grated nutmeg, as garnish

1. Chill a fizz glass.
2. In a shaker, add stout, rum and syrup. Swirl around a few times to decarbonate beer.
3. Dry-shake (without ice) to emulsify egg, then add ice and shake again.
4. Strain

### Bartender's note:

"Be careful when opening up the shaker to add ice, because there's always some residual carbonation that could explode in your face, as has happened to me a few times. Getting a stain made of a mix of egg, beer, and booze off your shirt is not an easy task!"

## ONCE MORE AROUND THE SUN

GARY SERNACK, BROKEN VESSEL  
IMPERIAL PUMPKIN ALE

MAKES 1 DRINK

- 1 oz Pinnacle Cake Vodka
- ½ oz Crème De Cacao
- 1½ oz Birthday Face Imperial Stout
- Whipped cream, for garnish
- Sprinkles, for garnish

1. In a shaker filled with ice, combine ingredients. Shake.
2. Strain into chilled martini glass.
3. Garnish with whipped cream and sprinkles.

## COOKING WITH STOUT

## DRAGON'S MILK CARAMEL CORN

SERVES 5

- 14 cups popped unflavored popcorn
- 2 cups dry roasted peanuts
- 1 to 2 cups mini pretzels
- 12 oz Dragon's Milk Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stout
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp baking soda

1. Preheat oven to 250°F. Place popped popcorn in a large baking pan.
2. Add peanuts and pretzels, keep warm in oven.
3. Add Dragon's Milk and butter to a sauce pan and bring to a low boil. Let reduce by 25%.
4. Add sugar gradually to sauce pan; do not stir. Let boil for about 10 minutes, until mixture becomes thick and syrup-like.
5. Slowly add heavy cream; stir to incorporate. Cook for another 5 minutes until caramel is thick.
6. Remove from heat. Add salt, vanilla and baking soda. (Note: the caramel will foam up.)
7. Remove pan of popcorn from oven; pour

caramel over. Mix until everything is well coated.

8. Return to oven. Bake for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes.

9. To check for doneness, take a few kernels out of pan and allow to cool. If caramel is not sticky after a few minutes, it's done.

10. Remove from oven and spread caramel corn mixture out on parchment paper to cool. Drizzle with Dragon's Milk chocolate sauce before serving.

## DRAGON'S MILK CHOCOLATE SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup Dragon's Milk Bourbon Barrel-Aged Stout
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 oz semisweet chocolate chips

1. In a small saucepan, whisk sugar, Dragon's Milk, salt and cocoa powder together. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat to low. Simmer for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Whisk in chocolate chips until smooth and completely melted.
3. Will keep in refrigerator for a few weeks. If



cold, warm for 10-20 seconds in microwave for easy pouring.

## LEFT COAST VOO DOO STOUT BROWNIES

MAKES 12

- 1 12-oz bottle Left Coast Voo Doo Stout
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup unsalted butter
- 8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, chopped coarsely
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp espresso powder (optional)

### For the frosting

- 2 to 3 tbsp reduced Voo Doo Stout
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp espresso powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp vanilla extract
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt

1. In saucepan, bring the Voo Doo Stout to a boil over medium-high heat.
2. Reduce to medium heat. Simmer until reduced to  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup, about 20 to 22 minutes.
3. Set aside to cool for at least 10 minutes.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup will go into the brownies and balance into frosting.
4. Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter a 9×9-inch pan or line with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on sides to lift finished brownies out. Set aside.
5. Place butter and chopped chocolate in a large microwave-safe bowl and on 80% power melt in 30 second increments, whisking after each until completely smooth.
6. Whisk in sugar and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of reduced Voo Doo Stout until completely combined.
7. Whisk in eggs and vanilla. Whisk in flour, salt and espresso powder. Batter should be thick and shiny. Pour and spread evenly into prepared pan.
8. Bake for 30-33 minutes, testing with toothpick. Insert a toothpick into the center of pan; if it comes out with wet batter, brownies are not done. If there are only a few moist crumbs, brownies are done.

9. Place on a wire rack to cool completely before frosting or cutting into squares.
10. Make frosting. In a large bowl, using either a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, beat butter on high speed until completely smooth and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes.
11. Add in the confectioners' sugar, beat on low to start and then increase to high speed.
12. Once blended, add 2 tablespoons of reduced Voo Doo Stout, the espresso powder, vanilla and salt.
13. Taste frosting and add the remaining reduced Voo Doo Stout if needed. If desired, add a splash of milk to thin the frosting.
14. Frost brownies when cool.

Note: Leftover brownies can be covered and stored at room temperature for several days.

## BREWSITES

### Fremont Brewing

fremontbrewing.com  
Frogtown Brewing  
frogtownbrewery.com

### Ghostfish Brewing Company

ghostfishbrewing.com

### Left Coast Brewing

leftcoastbrewing.com

### New Holland Brewing & Distillery

neshollandbrew.com  
dragonsmilk.com

### Oskar Blues

oskarblues.com

### Two Docs

twodocsbrewing.com

### 903 Brewers

903brewers.com

## SWEET TIDINGS

Seattle's Ghostfish Brewing Company, noted for its smooth, flavorful gluten-free beers, offers a seasonal cacao-based beer that not only pairs well with chocolate but also a variety of made-in-Seattle food offerings. This season, it has compiled a gluten-free beer and pairing kit gift box with products made by five independent artisanal food companies (including chocolate by "indi"). This gift that keeps on giving includes:

- » Ghostfish Brewing Beer and Chocolate Truffles from indi chocolate
- » The Seattle Stick salami from Salt Blade Meats with indi chocolate nibs
- » Smokey Coffee Molé with Broadcast Coffee Roaster's coffee and indi chocolate nibs
- » 6-pack of cacao-based spice rubs by indi chocolate to make infinite pairing combinations.

