

# girls guide to tasting beer like a professional

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Believe it or not, there is more to tasting beers than just drinking them. Don't get us wrong though, drinking different beers is a wonderful experience altogether. However, if you're trying a new beer or tasting several ones, it is important to know what differentiates them and this can be determined by a proper taste test.

Knowing how to properly taste test is essential when determining which beers you like versus which beers you love.

Every professional taste-tester knows the FIVE steps to tasting beers which are outlined below.

## first things first pouring the beer

If you're tasting a beer, we recommend always pouring it into a separate glass designed for beers. By pouring the bottle, you're helping to release the carbonation and increasing the aroma of the beer.

Tip your tasting glass to the side so it is at a slight angle. As you pour the beer, ideally from a bottle, let the beer slide down the side of the glass. Be careful not to pour too quickly as it will develop more head (also known as foam). Your goal at the end of the pour is to have a "two finger head" and this can be judged by taking two fingers and putting them up to the glass to see if it is approximately the same size as the head.

Some beers will have visible residue towards the bottom of the bottle, this is yeast. The yeast is meant to be consumed along with the rest of the beer. The trick to getting this into your tasting glass is to pour the beer until there is a little left. Then swirl the bottle to lift the yeast and pour the rest of it into your glass.

## appearance

After you've poured your beer, the next thing to note is the appearance. The appearance is the color and clarity of the beer, the type of head and the color of the head.

To examine the beer itself, hold it up to the light. Look at the color and the clarity. Is the beer cloudy or can you visibly see your fingers on the other side?

Next look at the type of foam on the beer as well as the color. Pilsners tend to have white foam and porters and stouts have a light to medium brown head.

## aroma

Before you take your first sip, smell the beer. This step can be difficult for novices as they're not sure what smell to pinpoint.

As a point of reference, lighter beers smell more of hops. For example, Miller Light always markets their "triple hopped" beers. Since Miller Light is a lighter beer, it should smell of hops. Darker beers like stouts and porters tend to have a more malt smell. Lastly, ales are a little more difficult to determine by smell, but generally have a fruity smell. A great example of ale is Magic Hat #9 because it is apricot flavored.

## first sip

In taking your first sip, note the primary flavors as it enters your mouth. Is the beer sweet, bitter or something else unexplainable? Many beers, like ales, are quite complex and will taste different from the initial flavor upon entering your mouth and the final flavor.

## mouthfeel

Mouthfeel is the term commonly used by professional tasters when describing how the beer feels in the mouth. There are a lot of different components to mouthfeel such as sting, bubble size, foam volume, density, viscosity, stickiness and oily mouthfeel.

**Sting:** Described as a "biting" sensation.

**Bubble size:** The smaller the bubbles and the tighter they are, is generally a sign of natural carbonation. Natural carbonation can occur by fermenting the beer in a closed container. However, large bubble generally indicate artificially included carbonation. Some of the basic terms professional beer tasters use are cream, rocky and even champagne-like.

**Foam Volume:** Generally this relates to the type of beer – it can be either thin or full.

**Density:** The thickness of the beer. Is it a light, medium or full-bodied beer?

**Viscosity:** Relates to the speed at which the beer flows. Heavier and thicker beers tend to be more viscous leading to a longer "finish."

**Stickiness:** The tendency to remain on the tester's tongue.

## finish

The last part of tasting a beer is noting the finish. The finish dictates whether the beer flavor lingers or is short. It also relates to whether the finish is different from the first flavor you note upon sipping. Is the finish of the beer short or lasting? Is the finish sweet or bitter? The finish of the beer depends on how the beer was brewed.

## other tips and tricks

- Each time you try a new beer, it is important to note what you liked about it and what you didn't like. This way, moving forward you'll have an easier time selecting beers to purchase with a higher probability of liking them from the beginning.
- Try not to eat a particular food right before or in-between tastings as this can skew the flavors. In order to cleanse your palate in-between beers, try eating salt-less crackers.
- Remember to smell the beer.
- Try not to wear perfume before a tasting since it can affect your sense dramatically.
- Drink bitter beers last. This includes hoppy beers like IPAs.