



American Brown Ale

BAM Style of the Quarter April 2011

History

- Style category can be traced back to a single homebrew recipe, an ingredient kit, called “Purple Passion” (recipe later)
- Scott Birdwell, owner of DeFalco’s Homebrew Supply in Houston said:

The history of Texas Brown Ales goes back to the early 80’s when I was attending a convention in San Rafael, California. I was visiting Jay Conner & Byron Burch, owners of a homebrew shop, Great Fermentations. They had a flyer for recipe for Purple Passion Dark Ale with John Bull Dark Malt Extract, crystal & chocolate malts, and a ton of hops. This was a popular recipe with their customers and did well in local and regional homebrew competitions, but got slammed in the American Homebrewers Association (AHA) & HWBTA Nationals for not meeting the style guidelines for “Brown Ales” (assumed to be British brown ales).¹

...

We decided to call the new category “California Dark” in deference to our friends on the West Coast. The category was an immediate success, even if we weren’t overwhelmed with entries like we were in 1990 when we were the first to recognize “American Pale Ale” as a separate style.

The AHA immediately picked up on the California Dark category, but curiously decided to name the style “Texas Brown Ale” in deference to us (nice, but we weren’t the brewing innovators — just the competition innovators). Obviously this struck a note with homebrewers all over the country as this proved to be a popular style, and eventually the name evolved into “American Brown Ale.” This is probably an appropriate name given its widespread popularity. These days I consider “Texas Brown Ales” to be “extreme” American Brown Ales: O.G. at least 1.060 and 40 IBU’s, but that may just be me.

¹<http://texasbeerfreedom.org/2011/02/history-texas-brown-ales/>

BJCP Guidelines

10C. American Brown Ale

Appearance: Light to very dark brown color. Clear. Low to moderate off-white to light tan head.

Aroma: Aroma: Malty, sweet and rich, which often has a chocolate, caramel, nutty and/or toasty quality. Hop aroma is typically low to moderate. Some interpretations of the style may feature a stronger hop aroma, a citrusy American hop character, and/or a fresh dry-hopped aroma (all are optional). Fruity esters are moderate to very low. The dark malt character is more robust than other brown ales, yet stops short of being overly porter-like. The malt and hops are generally balanced. Moderately low to no diacetyl.

Flavor: Medium to high malty flavor (often with caramel, toasty and/or chocolate flavors), with medium to medium-high bitterness. The medium to medium-dry finish provides an aftertaste having both malt and hops. Hop flavor can be light to moderate, and may optionally have a citrusy character. Very low to moderate fruity esters. Moderately low to no diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-full body. More bitter versions may have a dry, resinous impression. Moderate to moderately high carbonation. Stronger versions may have some alcohol warmth in the finish.

Overall Impression: Can be considered a bigger, maltier, hoppier interpretation of Northern English brown ale or a hoppier, less malty Brown Porter, often including the citrus-accented hop presence that is characteristic of American hop varieties.

History/Comments: A strongly flavored, hoppy brown beer, originated by American home brewers. Related to American Pale and American Amber Ales, although with more of a caramel and chocolate character, which tends to balance the hop bitterness and finish. Most commercial American Browns are not as aggressive as the original homebrewed versions, and some modern craft brewed examples. IPA-strength brown ales should be entered in the Specialty Beer category (23).

Ingredients: Well-modified pale malt, either American or Continental, plus crystal and darker malts should complete the malt bill. American hops are typical, but UK or noble hops can also be used. Moderate carbonate water would appropriately balance the dark malt acidity.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.045 – 1.060

IBUs: 20 – 40 FG: 1.010 – 1.016

SRM: 18 – 35 ABV: 4.3 – 6.2%

Some Commercial Examples

(available in California)

- **Big Sky Moose Drool Brown Ale**
 - Very malt-forward, lots of roasted and caramel malt character.
- **Lost Coast Downtown Brown**
 - Has restrained roasted malt flavor, more prominent caramel flavor balanced by the perception of less residual sweetness
- **Grand Teton Bitch Creek ESB (Extra Special Brown)**
 - Features more aromatic malts (melanoidin malt) and more hop flavor and aroma than other examples.

BJCP List: Bell's Best Brown, Smuttynose Old Brown Dog Ale, **Big Sky Moose Drool Brown Ale**, ~~North Coast Acme Brown~~, Brooklyn Brown Ale, **Lost Coast Downtown Brown**, Left Hand Deep Cover Brown Ale

General Recipe Guidelines

Overall:

Very broad style description permits interpretations balanced either on the malty of the hoppy side, but the beer should not be a brown IPA.

Grain Bill:

Domestic 2-row is the most commonly used base malt. Chocolate and Black Patent Malts, Roasted Barley are good options to get roasted malt flavors in malty examples. Pale chocolate in moderation adds subtle chocolate notes.

Hops:

Cascade is the most commonly used hop in American Brown Ales, followed by Northern Brewer.² Many commercial examples have BU/GU between 0.5 and 0.75. Homebrew examples are generally hoppier – 0.9 to 1.0 BU/GU Dry hopping can be appropriate.

Yeast:

Either an American Ale yeast like White Labs WLP001/Wyeast 1056 or a British yeast like White Labs WLP002/Wyeast 1968 seem to be acceptable for the style. Hoppier recipes seem to favor the American Ale strains.

²Source: Designing Great Beers

Purple Passion

(from the Beverage People)
Extract with specialty grains

3.3 lbs. “John Bull” Light Malt Extract
3.3 lbs. “John Bull” Dark Malt Extract
1 lb. Medium Caramel 40 Malt
1/2 tsp. Gypsum
1/4 tsp. Calcium Chloride
1 tsp. Chalk
1 tsp. Irish Moss
3/4 oz. Northern Brewer Hop Pellets
(60 min.) 26 IBU
1 oz. Northern Brewer Hop Pellets
(30 min.) 12 IBU
1 1/2 oz. Cascade Hop Pellets
(dryhopped) 6 IBU
Water to 5 gallons
3/4 cup Corn Sugar for priming
1 pack #1056 (American Ale), or
#WLP023 (Burton Ale Yeast)

This may not be the original recipe from Great Fermentations of San Rafael – there is no Chocolate Malt in the grain bill. It would be interesting to taste nonetheless.

Grand Teton Bitch Creek ESB

From BYO 150 clones via <http://www.tastybrew.com/forum/thread/145666>

8 lbs. 5 oz. 2 row

14.5 oz. CaraAroma

1 lb 5 oz crystal 60L

2 lbs 1.25 oz melanoidin malt

6.25 oz CaraAmber malt

1.47 AAU Galena hops @ 45 min

1.47 AAU Chinook @ 45 min

1.47 AAU Centennial @ 45 min

1.76 AAU Galena @ 30 min

1.76 AAU Chinook @30 min

2.47 AAU Centennial @ 30 min

2.67 AAU Galena hops @ 15 min

2.67 AAU Chinook @ 15 min

3.21 AAU Centennial @ 15 min

10.75 AAU centennial @ 5 min

0.53 oz Centennial flameout

0.58 oz Centennial DH

Wyeast 1056 (American Ale)

From Grand Teton's website:

O.G. 1.060

54 IBU

Moose Drool

from Can You Brew It?

O.G. 1.052

F.G. 1.012

26 IBU

Grain Bill:

Domestic 2 row pale malt	87%
Chocolate malt	2.8%
Black patent	0.2% (0.5 oz – tiny amount)
Crystal 80	10%

Single infusion mash at 154F

Hops (6 gallon batch):

EKG	(to IBU)	60 min
Liberty	0.6 oz	10 min
Willamette	0.6 oz	10 min

Yeast:

White Labs WLP 002 English Ale

WYeast 1968 London ESB

Fermentation:

Pitch and ferment at 66F. When fermentation is nearly complete, raise temperature to 70F for 2 days to reduce diacetyl.

Homebrew Recipe

Grain Bill:

10 lbs Domestic 2-row
1.25 lbs carapils
1 lb Caramel 40L
1 lb White wheat malt
¼ lb Pale Chocolate 200L
1/3 lb Chocolate Malt

Mash: Single infusion at 152F

Hops:

1 oz	Northern Brewer (mash hop)	
1.25 oz	Northern Brewer	60 min
1 oz	Northern Brewer	15 min
1.5 oz	Cascade	10 min
1.5 oz	Cascade	0 min
Up to 2 oz	Centennial dry hop	

Yeast:

WLP001 California Ale

This is my take on Mike McDole's Janet's Brown Ale. The starting point was the recipe in Brewing Classic Styles. I like to make the beer smaller (1.060) and reduce the amount of crystal malt and increase the roasted malt character.

O.G. 1.060

F.G. 1.012