

Bavarian Wheat Beer

10. GERMAN WHEAT BEER This category contains vollbier- and starkbier-strength German wheat beers without sourness, in light and dark colors.

10A. Weissbier Overall Impression: A pale, refreshing German wheat beer with high carbonation, dry finish, a fluffy mouthfeel, and a distinctive banana-and-clove yeast character.

Aroma: Moderate to strong phenols (usually clove) and fruity esters (typically banana). The balance and intensity of the phenol and ester components can vary but the best examples are reasonably balanced and fairly prominent. The hop character ranges from low to none. A light to moderate wheat aroma (which might be perceived as bready or grainy) may be present but other malt characteristics should not. Optional, but acceptable, aromatics can include a light to moderate vanilla character, and/or a faint bubblegum aroma. None of these optional characteristics should be high or dominant, but often can add to the complexity and balance.

Appearance: Pale straw to gold in color. A very thick, moussy, long-lasting white head is characteristic. The high protein content of wheat impairs clarity in an unfiltered beer, although the level of haze is somewhat variable.

Flavor: Low to moderately strong banana and clove flavor. The balance and intensity of the phenol and ester components can vary but the best examples are reasonably balanced and fairly prominent. Optionally, a very light to moderate vanilla character and/or faint bubblegum notes can accentuate the banana flavor, sweetness and roundness; neither should be dominant if present. The soft, somewhat bready or grainy flavor of wheat is complementary, as is a slightly grainy-sweet malt character. Hop flavor is very low to none, and hop bitterness is very low to moderately low. Well-rounded, flavorful palate with a relatively dry finish. The perception of sweetness is more due to the absence of hop bitterness than actual residual sweetness; a sweet or heavy finish would significantly impair drinkability.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body; never heavy. Suspended yeast may increase the perception of body. The texture of wheat imparts the sensation of a fluffy, creamy fullness that may progress to a light, spritzy finish aided by high to very high carbonation. Always effervescent.

Comments: These are refreshing, fast-maturing beers that are lightly hopped and show a unique banana-and-clove yeast character. These beers often don't age well and are best enjoyed while young and fresh. The version mit hefe is served with suspended yeast; the krystal version is filtered for excellent clarity. The character of a krystal weizen is generally fruitier and less phenolic than that of the weissbier mit hefe. May be known as hefeweizen, particularly in the United States.

History: While Bavaria has a wheat beer tradition dating back hundreds of years, brewing wheat beer used to be a monopoly reserved for Bavarian royalty. Modern weissbier dates from 1872 when Schneider began production. However, pale

weissbier only became popular since the 1960s. It is quite popular today, particularly in southern Germany.

Characteristic Ingredients: By German brewing tradition, at least 50% of the grist must be malted wheat, although some versions use up to 70%; the remainder is typically Pilsner malt. A decoction mash is traditional, although modern brewers typically don't follow this practice. Weizen ale yeast produces the typical spicy and fruity character, although high fermentation temperatures can affect the balance and produce off-flavors.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044 – 1.052 IBUs: 8 – 15 FG: 1.010 – 1.014 SRM: 2 – 6 ABV: 4.3 – 5.6%

Commercial Examples: Ayinger Bräu Weisse, HackerPschorr Weisse, Paulaner Hefe-Weizen Naturtrüb, Schneider Weisse Unser Original, Weihenstephaner Hefeweissbier