



The Northern Craft Brewers

"We Live We Brew"



15A. Irish Red Ale

Overall Impression: An easy-drinking pint, often with subtle flavours. Slightly malty in the balance sometimes with an initial soft toffee/caramel sweetness, a slightly grainy-biscuit palate, and a touch of roasted dryness in the finish. Some versions can emphasize the caramel and sweetness more, while others will favour the grainy palate and roasted dryness.

Aroma: Low to moderate malt aroma, either neutral-grainy or with a lightly caramel-toasty-toffee character. May have a very light buttery character (although this is not required). Hop aroma is low earthy or floral to none (usually not present). Quite clean.

Appearance: Medium amber to medium reddish-copper colour. Clear. Low off-white to tan coloured head, average persistence.

Flavour: Moderate to very little caramel malt flavour and sweetness, rarely with a light buttered toast or toffee-like quality. The palate often is fairly neutral and grainy, or can take on a lightly toasty or biscuit note as it finishes with a light taste of roasted grain, which lends a characteristic dryness to the finish. A light earthy or floral hop flavour is optional. Medium to medium-low hop bitterness. Medium-dry to dry finish. Clean and smooth. Little to no esters. The balance tends to be slightly towards the malt, although light use of roasted grains may increase the perception of bitterness slightly.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body, although examples containing low levels of diacetyl may have a slightly slick mouthfeel (not required). Moderate carbonation. Smooth. Moderately attenuated.

Comments: Several variations exist within the style, which causes the guidelines to be somewhat broad to accommodate them. Traditional Irish examples are relatively low in hops, are grainy with a slight roast dryness in the finish, fairly neutral in general. Modern export Irish examples are more caramel and sweet, and might have more esters. American craft versions are often more alcoholic versions of the Irish export examples. An emerging Irish craft beer scene is exploring more bitter versions of traditional examples. Finally, there are some commercial examples that sound Irish but are essentially International Amber Lagers, with sweetish palates and little bitterness. These guidelines are written around the traditional Irish examples, with slight extensions for export Irish versions and modern craft Irish versions.

History: While Ireland has a long ale brewing heritage, the modern Irish Red Ale style is essentially an adaptation or interpretation of the popular English Bitter style with less hopping and a bit of roast to add colour and dryness. Rediscovered as a craft beer style in Ireland, today it is an essential part of most brewery line-ups, along with a pale ale and a stout.

Characteristic Ingredients: Generally has a bit of roasted barley or black malt to provide reddish colour and dry roasted finish. Pale base malt. Caramel malts were historically imported and more expensive, so not all brewers would use them.



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Style Comparison: A less-bitter and hoppy Irish equivalent to an English Bitter, with a dryish finish due to roasted barley. More attenuated with less caramel flavour and body than equivalent-strength Scottish ales. Vital Statistics: OG: 1.036 – 1.046 IBUs: 18 – 28 FG: 1.010 – 1.014 SRM: 9 – 14 ABV: 3.8 – 5.0% Commercial

Examples: Caffrey’s Irish Ale, Franciscan Well Rebel Red, Kilkenny Irish Beer, O’Hara’s Irish Red Ale, Porterhouse Red Ale, Samuel Adams Irish Red, Smithwick’s Irish Ale Tags: standard-strength, amber-colour, top-fermented, British isles, traditional-style, amber-ale-family, balanced