

What is a N.E. Hazy IPA?

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“I don’t see what the big deal is. It’s just an unfiltered IPA”. WRONG!!!!!!

One of the newest and hottest beers on the craft beer scene, the New England Hazy IPA, is about as misunderstood as it is loved. Liked by IPA, and non-IPA lovers alike, it is one of the biggest movers in our tap room by a fair bit and flies off the shelves at supermarkets nation-wide. Let’s take a closer look at some of the things that make the Hazy truly something special.

First, some interesting facts about the Hazy.

The style is credited to John Kimmich and Greg Noonan of Alchemist Brewing in Stowe, Vermont in the mid 1990’s. The beer they created was the Heady Topper, still considered the quintessential Hazy!

Often referred to as a Juicy or Hazy IPA, the style was added this year as a category by the Brewers Association and North American Brewers Association. The BA defines the beer as follows:

Juicy or Hazy India Pale Ale

- Color: Straw to deep gold
- Clarity: Low to very high degree of cloudiness is typical of these beers. Starch, yeast, hop, protein and/or other compounds contribute to a wide range of hazy appearance within this category.
- Perceived Malt Aroma & Flavor: Low to low-medium malt aroma and flavor may be present
- Perceived Hop Aroma & Flavor: Medium-high to very high hop aroma and flavor are present, with attributes typical of hops from any origin
- Perceived Bitterness: Medium-low to medium
- Fermentation Characteristics: Low to medium fruity-estery aroma and flavor may be present, but are usually overwhelmed by hop fruitiness. Diacetyl should not be perceived.
- Body: Medium-low to medium-high. Perceived silky or full mouthfeel may contribute to overall flavor profile.
- Additional notes: Grist may include a small amount of oat, wheat or other adjuncts to promote haziness. Descriptors such as “juicy” are often used to describe the taste and aroma hop-derived attributes present in these beers.

What makes it different from a traditional West Coast style IPA?

Indeed, the grist bill, hop load and brewing techniques are substantially different between the two styles.

As the name implies, it's hazy! Does that mean it's unfiltered like many traditional IPAs? Yes. But it also means a combination of brewing techniques and ingredients to form a *permanent* haze when correctly utilized. Unlike a traditional West Coast IPA, the Hazy style undergoes a special chemical reaction caused by oils in the hops, and proper dry-hop timing during fermentation, called **biotransformation**. Specific trace hop oils must be present making proper hops variety selection important. If in doubt, go with high-alpha oil choices. This, coupled with traditional dry-hopping methods, creates a beer that has a unique flavor, mouthfeel, and aroma.

In addition to biotransformation, the larger than normal addition of hops very late in the boil and/or whirlpool, at high krausen, and post fermentation, add to the overall "juicy" nature of the style. Few, if any, early additions in the boil are what lead to the low to moderate bitterness, far different than traditional IPAs. This is one of the keys to the cross appeal among IPA and non-IPA taste preferences.

Grain bill selection can also differ from those found in traditional IPAs. Higher protein content is needed to facilitate haze formation. Additions of white wheat, oats, and other high protein malts should be used. Unfermentable sugars from the grains can be used to boost the perceived sweetness so often found in the style as well.

Yeast selection is the biggest unknown at this time. While lower flocculating varieties are preferred, the true science behind what is necessary is still a puzzle. Brewers continue to experiment with this aspect of recipe development. Varieties such as London Ale 3, British Dry Ale, and Safale S-04 are most common, but not known yet if they are required for proper biotransformation.

As a home brewer, new beer styles can be a challenge and fun to experiment with. Don't be afraid to give the Hazy a try. Even if you don't get it just right, you still might come up with a great new IPA!