



SPRING FOR BC BEER & CIDER

In summer, beer lovers seek light, crisp lagers or refreshing, golden ales to enjoy in the sunshine. Come fall, tastes turn to Oktoberfest lagers, fresh-hopped IPAs and harvest-themed pumpkin beers. And nothing will warm you up better in the cold, wet winter months than a heavy, dark porter or stout.

So what about spring? As seasons go, spring is all about awakening from the cold, dark months of winter, and transitioning from dormancy back to life. Although it does not mark the start of the new year, spring does signify a fresh start.

With that in mind, spring is a good time to look for beers that are a transition between dark and light, or between heavier and lighter styles: amber ales, rye-infused IPAs, dark lagers, and caramel-coloured *Dunkelweizen* (dark wheat beer). It is also a good time for something fresh and new, perhaps



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a style you've never tried before.

In Germany, there is a long tradition of brewing stronger, sweeter lagers called *Bocks* throughout winter and spring. In the coldest months, darker *Doppelbocks* are brewed as strong as 10 to 13 percent ABV, but as spring approaches, and the weather warms enough to rekindle memories of outside *Biergartens*, brewers make *Maibocks*, named for the month of May. These are lighter in colour and alcohol strength, though still stronger (six to seven percent ABV) than a summertime *Helles* lager.

Other springtime brewing traditions in Europe originated before mechanized refrigeration, when beer made in the summer would spoil quickly, so brewers had to stop brewing in spring and wait until fall before they could start again. As a result, Bavarian brewers would make a lot of *Märzen* beer in early spring – literally, in March – and store it away

in caves and cellars until fall. They would then celebrate the harvest season and the return to brewing with a giant party called Oktoberfest.

Nowadays, *Märzen* can be made at any time of year, but some North American brewers like to brew it in March and release it in the spring. As styles go, it is slightly stronger and darker than typical German lager, so it fits the spring season well.

Similarly, in Belgium, farmers would make big batches of Farmhouse Ales in the spring to sustain their *Saisoniers*, or seasonal workers, during the harvest at the end of summer. These beers came to be called *Saisons*, and many craft brewers have been experimenting in recent years with this delicious, refreshing style. A great example is Driftwood Brewery's Farmhand Saison. Also, look for a new Saison from Central City Brewers & Distillers this spring.

A hybrid style known as Belgian

IPA or White IPA has also emerged in recent years. This beer is made with a Belgian-style yeast, but with the malts and hops usually used in North American IPAs. The result is a spicy, fruity, lighter-bodied IPA with a dry and hoppy finish – perfect for spring. Deschutes' Chainbreaker White IPA is a great example, and here in BC, several breweries make them, too, including Parallel 49 Brewing's hilariously named Toques of Hazzard Imperial White IPA and Tin Whistle Brewing's Osprey Pear White IPA, and Steamworks is adding one to their seasonal Mash Up Mix Pack.

How about some gluten-free options for spring?

If you are one of many British Columbians who have adopted a gluten-free lifestyle, whether by choice or necessity, you will be happy to hear that a BC brewery has finally produced a truly gluten-free beer: Whistler Brewing launched