



# Don't Call It a Comeback

## The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of Barleywine

BY KENDALL JONES

Don't let the name fool you. Barleywine is not wine. As the name suggests, this burliest of all beer styles rivals wine in terms of potency, typically weighing in at 10 percent alcohol by volume (ABV) or higher.

Barleywine is one of the oldest styles in the beer family and originated in England during the 15th and 16th centuries. It didn't really catch on because it was so expensive to brew and difficult to sell. In the 18th century, when political realities shut down the flow of wine from the European continent, England's aristocratic houses turned to the country's brewers for a replacement, wanting a libation that matched the alcoholic strength of wine. Suddenly there was a market for barleywine, albeit a small one, but it didn't last long and the style slipped back into obscurity.

For most of the 20th century, barleywine was one of many all-but-forgotten beer styles, but in 1975 Anchor Brewing in San Francisco introduced

Old Foghorn, which most beer scholars agree was the first American barleywine. In 1983, Sierra Nevada Brewing introduced Bigfoot Barleywine, America's second barleywine. Both breweries still produce those beers today.

Barleywine is now a fairly common style in the United States and breweries typically release it once a year during the autumn or winter. It remains less popular in England, where just a few brewers produce the beer but rarely ship it across the Atlantic.

There is a lot of variation within the style. The color can range from light golden to deep amber to light brown, but the flavor is almost always sweet and malty, with lots of bready and caramel-like character, which is balanced with varying degrees of bitter, resinous hop character. Expect some degree of alcohol burn, often imparted by the whiskey or bourbon barrels used for aging. ●

### POTENT SWALLOWS

#### Old Bawdy

▶ PIKE BREWING CO.

Named in honor of the 19th century brothel (bawdy house) that once occupied the location of the original brewery. Deep brown and ruby-tinged, the flavor is dominated by caramel and toffee, a deep fruitiness and a helping of floral hops to round it all out. Released each year in January.



#### Mother of All Storms

▶ PELICAN BREWING CO.

This bourbon barrel-aged beer glows dark brownish-red and you'll taste figs, dates, chocolate, vanilla, oak and just enough alcohol burn to keep you warm on a stormy night. Released each year in November.



#### Old Birdbrain

▶ BLACK RAVEN BREWING CO.

This award-winning beer pours a deep, dark amber and releases herbal and fruity aromas. The flavor is succulent and rich, with sweet notes of toffee, vanilla, figs, raisins, hints of citrus and a touch of whiskey character from the barrels. All of this is balanced nicely with a piney bitterness that leaves you wanting more. Released annually in the winter.



# THIS WHISKEY OF OUR ISLAND



## YAMA MIZUNARA CASK AMERICAN SINGLE GRAIN WHISKEY

PHOTOGRAPHED NEAR THE YAMA VILLAGE SITE, PORT BLAKELY HARBOR, BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

CRAFT WHISKEY OF THE YEAR - Whisky Advocate 2017  
WORLD'S BEST AMERICAN GRAIN WHISKEY - World Whiskies Awards 2017  
95 POINTS; ULTIMATE RECOMMENDATION - Ultimate Spirits Challenge 2016  
GOLD MEDAL 95 POINTS; EXCEPTIONAL - BTI International Review Of Spirits

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