

21B. Specialty IPA

Specialty IPA isn't a distinct style, but is more appropriately thought of as a competition entry category. Beers entered as this style are not experimental beers; they are a collection of currently produced types of beer that may or may not have any market longevity. This category also allows for expansion, so potential future IPA variants (St. Patrick's Day Green IPA, Romulan Blue IPA, Zima Clear IPA, etc.) have a place to be entered without redoing the style guidelines. The only common element is that they have the balance and overall impression of an IPA (typically, an American IPA) but with some minor tweak.

The term 'IPA' is used as a singular descriptor of a type of hoppy, bitter beer. It is not meant to be spelled out as 'India Pale Ale' when used in the context of a Specialty IPA. None of these beers ever historically went to India, and many aren't pale. But the craft beer market knows what to expect in balance when a beer is described as an 'IPA' – so the modifiers used to differentiate them are based on that concept alone.

Overall Impression: Recognizable as an IPA by balance – a hop-forward, bitter, dryish beer – with something else present to distinguish it from the standard categories. Should have good drinkability, regardless of the form. Excessive harshness and heaviness are typically faults, as are strong flavor clashes between the hops and the other specialty ingredients.

Aroma: Detectable hop aroma is required; characterization of hops is dependent on the specific type of Specialty IPA. Other aromatics may be present; hop aroma is typically the strongest element.

Appearance: Color depends on specific type of Specialty IPA. Most should be clear, although certain styles with high amounts of starchy adjuncts, or unfiltered dry-hopped versions may be slightly hazy. Darker types can be opaque making clarity irrelevant. Good, persistent head stand with color dependent on the specific type of Specialty IPA.

Flavor: Hop flavor is typically medium-low to high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Hop bitterness is typically medium-high to very high, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Malt flavor generally low to medium, with qualities dependent on typical varieties used in the specific Specialty IPA. Commonly will have a medium-dry to dry finish. Some clean alcohol flavor can be noted in stronger versions. Various types of Specialty IPAs can show additional malt and yeast characteristics, depending on the type.

Mouthfeel: Smooth, medium-light to medium-bodied mouthfeel. Medium carbonation. Some smooth alcohol warming can be sensed in stronger versions.

Entry Instructions: Entrant must specify a **strength** (session, standard, double); if no strength is specified, standard will be assumed. Entrant must specify specific **type** of Specialty IPA from the library of known types listed in the Style Guidelines, or as amended by the BJCP web site; or the entrant must describe the type of Specialty IPA and its key characteristics in comment form so judges will know what to expect. Entrants may specify specific **hop varieties** used, if entrants feel that judges may not recognize the varietal characteristics of newer hops. *Entrants may specify a combination of defined IPA types (e.g., Black Rye IPA) without providing additional descriptions.* Entrants may use this category for a different strength version of an IPA defined by its own BJCP subcategory (e.g., session-strength American or English IPA) – except where an existing BJCP subcategory already exists for that style (e.g., double [American] IPA).

Currently Defined Types: Black IPA, Brown IPA, White IPA, Rye IPA, Belgian IPA, Red IPA

Vital Statistics: Variable by type

Strength classifications:

Session – ABV: 3.0 – 5.0%

Standard – ABV: 5.0 – 7.5%

Double – ABV: 7.5 – 10.0%