

# BEER BUZZ:

## WET, DRY OR FRESH?

by Joey Williams



Harvest time has come and gone and it's now time to consume the fruits of this year's labor. Hop harvest in the Northern Hemisphere takes place around August and September each year, depending on the growing season and the location. Decades ago, this time just marked a fresh crop of hops that would be sold to and used by brewers to craft their beers. But, for the last ten years or more, we've been able to enjoy beers brewed with fresh, undried, straight from the vine hops that offer an experience that is unlike any other.

Like the herbs used in cooking, hops degrade very quickly if not dried and stored properly. This fact is the reason that each year after harvest, hops are dried and processed. The process is intended to keep the integrity of the hop in tact, so that the brewer might extract all of the possible flavor and aromas, but there is still some lost in the process. Wet hops compared to dried hops is like comparing fresh herbs to their dried counterparts. The dried version checks all of the necessary flavor boxes, but there is just something more dynamic about the fresh, undried counterpart.

As seems to be the case when a story involves craft beer and hops in America, the story of the "Wet Hop" ale starts with Sierra Nevada. In the 1990s, Sierra Nevada, in collaboration with Pacific Northwest hop farmers, created the first Harvest ale, now called Northern Hemisphere Harvest Ale. The beer was only available at and around the brewery for a short amount of time each year. The beer became so popular, Sierra Nevada began bottling the beer and the rest of us got to enjoy the bright, green hoppiness that launched this style into the spotlight.

Today there are dozens of breweries creating beers with the freshest hops available to them. The terms "Wet Hop" and "Fresh Hop" are used often, but without any regulated meaning and often appear interchangeable. Sierra Nevada's Bill Manley went on record with TheFullPint.com to clear up some of the confusion between these two terms:

*"Although some breweries use terms interchangeably, we take pride in noting the differences between wet-hops, fresh-hops and standard hops. Wet-hops being the green, un-dried hops fresh from the fields within 24 hours of picking and Fresh Hops being fast tracked...picked, dried and shipped within 7 days of the fields."*

Wet, Fresh or Dried, hops are an important and delicious part of any beer and this annual celebration of the leafy, green cones is a welcome sight on our shelves. If you're interested in the idea, here are some current favorites:

### Sierra Nevada Northern Hemisphere Harvest Ale

The beer that started the Wet Hop revolution over a decade ago, Northern Hemisphere is a balanced IPA that packs loads of hop flavor and aroma. Impressive every year it's released.



### Sierra Nevada Estate Homegrown Ale

Another craft beer milestone for the boys in Chico, Estate is a beer brewed with barley malt and hops grown at the Sierra Nevada brewery by Sierra Nevada. Venturing into wine territory with terroir, Homegrown Ale is also grown organically, bearing a USDA Organic stamp on the side of the eye-catching label. And, although the organic status doesn't add to the flavor, it does speak to Sierra's responsible approach to brewing.



### Boulevard 21st Anniversary Fresh Hop Ale

Finally old enough to consume its own beer, the Boulevard brewery celebrates by doing a sort of "throwback" beer. The story goes that pale ales, like Boulevard Pale Ale, were the hoppiest beers on store shelves in the 80s, but now they've been overstepped by IPAs and Imperial/Double IPAs. Boulevard sought to recreate their palate dominating and mind changing Pale Ale with this beer.



### Deschutes Bond Street Hop Trip

Situated in the heart of America's hop growing region, it makes sense that the brewers at Deschutes would capitalize on their location during hop harvest season. Hop Trip is the brewery's fresh hop IPA, featuring the fruit of the land and the balance, skill and flavor that Deschutes is known for.



### Left Hand Warrior IPA

Colorado is not a prime hop growing region. The fact that Left Hand has created a beer with locally grown hops for their fresh hop is a testament to the brewery's dedication to crafting excellent beers. Warrior is the name of the core hop varietal, prized for its high level of bittering acids. Warrior IPA is another beer in Left Hand's arsenal that makes them a prized addition to Spec's shelves. ☺



E-mail me: [jwilliams@specsonline.com](mailto:jwilliams@specsonline.com)

## NEW ON SHELVES AT SPEC'S DOWNTOWN:

Anchor OSA '10 1.5L & 6pk

Mikkeller Red & White

Christmas 1.5L

Mikkeller Santa's Little Helper  
750ml

Duvel Tripel Hop 750ml

Boulevard 21st Anniversary Fresh  
Hop Ale 750ml

Ommegang Adoration 750ml

Delirium Noel 750ml

Rogue XS McRogue Scotch Ale 7oz

Great Divide Hibernation 6pk

Full Sail Wassail 6pk

Brooklyn Winter Ale 6pk

