

BEER BUZZ:

A BEER WITH NO NAME

by Justin Cody



I have always been in love with hops. Big pale ales, IPAs and double IPAs were all I drank. In fact, I fell so in love with two IPAs, I had paintings of them commissioned so I could look at them even when I wasn't drinking them. But, over the years my love of hops began to fade. I slowly began transitioning into the world of stouts and porters. I don't know if it was a subconscious urge for something different or a case of wanting something I had never had before.

Until recently, I had all but abandoned hoppy beers. What once was a mecca for IPAs, my fridge had now become home to several rich and robust stouts and porters. Every now and again I would be reminded of my long lost love when I would dive into an aggressive stout, such as Stone's Imperial Russian Stout, but it was never enough to win me back.

All this changed about a year or so ago when the "Black IPA" phenomenon swept across the country. In an ever changing craft beer community, these beers were revolutionary. Black IPAs are a marriage between hops and big malty dark ales. When brewing a BIPA, the brewer's main goal is to showcase the dominate characteristic of both hops and dark malt while still remaining balanced. BIPAs tend to exhibit big, citrusy, piney aromas typical of IPAs, but with a flavor profile that allows the roasted grains and their flavors to really shine through. The body and mouth feel maintain the consistency of an IPA as well. When done right, these beers are really the best of both worlds.

When their popularity peaked, they were so unique, there wasn't a beer style category in which to classify them. As a result, no one knew what to call them. Several names were coined to describe these concoctions; Black IPA, Cascadian Dark Ale and Black Ale were the most popular. Cascadian Dark Ale, or CDA for short, seemed to prevail as the months passed.



That name refers to the Pacific Northwest and the Cascadian Mountains, which is where a good amount of commercial BIPA producers are located. Due to the term CDA taking off, most consumers relate the style to that region, but ironically, the first BIPA was brewed in Vermont at the Vermont Pub & Brewery in the early 1990's. Finally, this month, the Brewers Association released their annual update to their style guide, in which they determined the name of this style; "American-Style Black Ale". No matter what you call them, this is a style you are sure to enjoy.

Look for these American-Style Black Ales next time you are at Spec's:

Victory Yakima Glory (Formerly Yakima Twilight) –

A new release for Texas from the Hop Gods of the Northeast.

Stone Sublimely Self-Righteous –

An aggressively hopped interpretation of the style.

Widmer Pitch Black IPA (Formerly Widmer W '10) –

A seasonal success that the brewery is now adding to their year-round lineup.

Deschutes Hop in the Dark –

Released in the fall as part of their Bond Street Series. An instant cult classic. ☺



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