

Spiced Beer

Chuck West

History:

Before widespread use of hops, other plants and herbs were used to preserve and bitter beer. These included: spruce, ginger, ground ivy, sweet mary, tansy, sage wormwood and sweet gale. To this day, many styles of beer still use spices to obtain the desired flavor.

Style:

See attached copy of BJCP Style Guidelines

Available Spices for use in beer:

Cinnamon	Juniper Berries	Lime Leaves
Coriander Seeds	Anise	Root Beer Extract
Ginger	Spruce	Szechuan Peppercorn
Cardamon	Pepper	Ginseng
Cloves	Sweet Basil	Star Anise
Allspice	Horehound	Cubub Berries
Nutmeg	Horseradish	Orange Peel
Licorice	Walnut Leaves	Mint

Note: Whenever possible, use fresh or freshly ground dried spices. Only use pre-ground ingredients as a last resort.

Procedures:

- 1) Add spices directly to boil kettle for last 10 to 12 minutes (or let steep for 10 minutes with no heat applied at end of boil).
- 2) Boil spices separately in a small amount of water to make a spiced "tea", cool, and add "tea" directly into secondary fermentation vessel. (Be careful not to introduce oxygen when using this process).
- 3) Make spice "tea" as in Step 2 above and add directly to bottling bucket or keg.

When using spices be very careful with amounts used as a little goes a long way. Certain spices are quite strong (e.g. clove, pepper) and too much will ruin a good beer.

Consider reducing the amount of bittering hops used as the spices will add bitterness to the beer. This is more dependent on how long the spices are in the boil. Much the same way dry hopping adds hop aroma, dry spicing (adding spice “tea” during or after fermentation) will increase the spice aroma.

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Aroma:

The character of the particular spices, herbs and/or vegetables (SHV) should be distinctive in the aroma. Overall the aroma should be a balanced combination of malt, hops and the featured SHV(s) as appropriate to the specific type of beer being presented. If the base beer is an ale then general fruitiness and other fermentation byproducts such as diacetyl may be present as appropriate for the warmer fermentation. If the base beer is a lager, then overall less fermentation byproducts would be appropriate. Some malt aroma preferable, especially in dark styles; hop aroma absent or balanced with the SHVs used, depending on style. The overall aroma should be balanced and harmonious.

Appearance:

Appearance should be appropriate to the base beer being presented and will vary depending on the base beer. For lighter beers with spices, herbs or vegetables that exhibit distinctive colors, the colors should be noticeable.

Flavor:

The character of the particular SHV(s) should be distinctive in the flavor profile. Hop bitterness, flavor, malt flavors, alcohol content, and fermentation byproducts, such as diacetyl, should be appropriate to the base beer and harmonious and balanced with the distinctive SHV flavors present.

Mouthfeel:

Mouthfeel may vary depending on the base beer selected and as appropriate to that base beer. Body and carbonation levels should be appropriate to the base beer style being presented.

Overall Impression:

A harmonious marriage of spices, herbs and/or vegetables and beer.

Comments:

Overall balance is the key to presenting a well-made spice, herb or vegetable (SHV) beer. The SHV should complement the original style and not overwhelm it. The brewer should recognize that some combinations of base beer styles and SHVs work well together while others do not make for harmonious combinations. The entrant must specify the underlying beer style as well as the type of SHV(s) used. If the base beer is a classic style, the original style should come through in aroma and flavor. Additionally, whenever multiple spices, herbs or vegetables are used each should be distinctive in their own way.

Vital Statistics:

OG, FG, IBUs, SRM and ABV will vary depending on the underlying base beer.

Commercial Examples:

Harpoon Winter Warmer, Ed's Cave Creek Chili Beer, Buffalo Bill's Pumpkin Ale, Anchor Our Special Ale, Wild Onion Pumpkin Ale.

Spiced Holiday Ale (Base Style - Belgian Strong Dark Ale) Current Version

11.0 lbs. Great Western 2-Row
1.5 lbs. Crystal Malt 80L
0.5 lbs. Dark Munich
0.125 lb. Black Patent
0.125 lb. Carapils
1.0 lb. Dark Belgian Candi Sugar
24 oz. Honey - 15 minutes
2.0 oz. Tettnanger Hops 5.6% AAU - 60 minutes
2.0 oz. Halletaur Hops 5.2 % AAU - 2 minutes
1.0 oz. Grated Fresh Ginger - 10 min.
6 each Cinnamon Sticks - 10 min.
2 tsp. Ground Nutmeg - 10 min.
2 tsp. Ground Allspice - 10 min.
6 tsp. Ground Coriander Seeds (1/2 oz.) - 10 min.
0.5 oz. Dried Orange Peel - 10 min.
1 tsp. Irish Moss - 15 min.
1 vile White Labs Trappist Ale Yeast (WLP-500)

Brew 11/01/03 - Original Gravity	1.076
Keg 11/15/03 - Final Gravity	1.010
Alcohol by Volume	8.6%

Spiced Holiday Ale (Base Style - Belgian Strong Dark Ale) Previous Version

11.0 lbs. Great Western 2-Row
1.5 lbs. Crystal Malt 80L
0.5 lbs. Crystal Malt 60L
0.125 lb. Black Patent
0.125 lb. Carapils
24 oz. Honey - 15 minutes
2.0 oz. Cascade Hops 5.8% AAU - 60 minutes
2.0 oz. Halletaur Hops 4.5 % AAU - 2 minutes
2.0 oz. Grated Fresh Ginger - 12 min.
6 each Cinnamon Sticks - 12 min.
2 tsp. Ground Nutmeg - 12 min.

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4 tsp. Ground Allspice - 12 min.
6 tsp. Ground Coriander Seeds (1/2 oz.) - 12 min.
1/2 tsp. Whole Cloves - 12 min.
Fresh Orange Peel from 6 each Oranges - 12 min.
1 tsp. Irish Moss - 15 min.
1 vile White Labs Trappist Ale Yeast (WLP-500)

Brew 10/21/01 - Original Gravity 1.070
Keg 11/02/01 - Final Gravity 1.020
Alcohol by Volume 6.6%

PUMKINLESS PUMPKIN BREW

4 lbs. Amber Malt Extract
4 lbs. Pale Malt Extract
1/2 lb. 40 L Crystal Malt
1/2 lb. Victory
1 oz. Willamette boil 60 Minutes
1 oz Willamette last 20 minutes
3 teaspoons Cinnamon stew 10 minutes no applied heat with lid on at end of boil
1/2 teaspoon Nutmeg stew 10 minutes no applied heat with lid on at end of boil
6 whole cloves stew 10 minutes no applied heat with lid on at end of boil (strain out)
1 teaspoon allspice stew 10 minutes no applied heat with lid on at end of boil
English Ale Yeast

HOLIDAY STRONG XMAS ALE

10 lbs. Pale Malt extract
1/2 LB Special B
1/2 lb Special Roast
1 lb 80 L Crystal
1/2 lb dark Carastan
1 lb Mountain Flower Honey
2 oz. Mt hood pellets boil 60 minutes
2 tsp cinnamon (or one stick)
1/2 oz Curacao
1/2 tsp nutmeg
White Labs Trappist Ale Yeast

HOLIDAY SPICE

6 lbs. Light Malt Extract Syrup

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3 lbs. Amber Malt Extract Syrup
1 lb. 60 L Crystal
1/4 lb. Special B
1/2 lb. Special Roast
2 oz. Fuggle Boil 1 hour
2 tsp Cinnamon last min of boil steep 10 min
2 tsp Allspice last min of boil steep 10 min
3 whole cloves last min of boil steep 10 min
1/2 tsp nutmeg last min of boil steep 10 min
1 vanilla bean last min of boil steep 10 min
White Labs English Ale yeast

An active fermentation will blow a lot of spices out the hose while a quiet one will result in most of the spices staying in the beer. Here are three ideas to improve home brewed spiced beers:

- 1) Don't use the blowoff method. Ferment in a 6 or 7 gallon carboy and you'll retain everything you put into the beer. [This, of course, will be unacceptable to the people who swear by the blowoff method to remove fusel alcohols, etc., but it's your call...]
- 2) Boil the spices longer to capture the spice flavor directly in the wort. [The problem with this is that you could lose all your spice aroma due to the extended boil.]
- 3) Boil the spices separately in a small amount of water to make a spiced 'tea', cool, and dump the 'tea' into the secondary to flavor your brew.

I have had good success with spices added to the fermenter, *not* during the boil, for a Christmas Ale I made last November. I put all the spices (cinnamon, clove, ginger, orange zest, and nutmeg) into about 2 quarts of water, boiled them long enough to feel confident that they were sterile, cooled to room temp. I added them to secondary, and then racked wort on top, from the primary. If you use one-step fermentation, I would add after pitching yeast. Beer came out very good, a bit ginger heavy, but was drinkable after two weeks (orange was strong, after about 4 weeks ginger was the winner), it is wonderful now, if only, I had more of it :(It was real popular with the Christmas Guests.

Typical quantities I use in making an excellent spiced ale are: 1/2 Teaspoon (tsp.) powdered nutmeg, 1.5 tsp. powdered cinnamon, 1/2 tsp. powdered clove (all 8 minutes from end of boil), 1 tsp. liquid vanilla (5 minutes from end). Add to this 1 lb. honey, 6 lbs. light extract, a pound or two of pale-to-crystal grains, hops of your choice, and barring infection I promise you a winner. This recipe has been called "the best homebrew I've ever tasted" by anyone who's tasted it. If you get the same reaction, just give credit where due! :-)

OK, some more opinions:

1) Why should it make a difference whether the spices are powdered or not, as far as your question goes? Does it assume that all the spices are left in the brewpot and none get into the primary?

2) I am now firmly convinced that the only way to add spices is to "dry spice", by adding the spices only to the secondary. After all, we know that the amount of flavor and aroma contributed by hops boiled a long time is much less than that of hops boiled a short time or hops not boiled at all (dry hopping). Why should spices be different? And since I only use spices for flavor and aroma, I dry spice.

Did a real nice job on my Pumpkin Pie Ale. Plus, you don't have to use powdered spices if you don't want to, just let them sit longer in the secondary.

According to Randy Mosher, who has a lot of experience making strangely spiced brews, the best way to add cinnamon is to make a "potion". Soak some cinnamon in vodka for a week or two, then add the potion gradually to the finished (but not yet bottled) beer until it tastes right.

I have very vigorous mint plants in my back yard, and use them for my annual Christmas spiced ale. I pick about two ounces of fresh mint leaves and drop them in the kettle just at the end of the boil. This gives a mild, but definitely noticeable mint flavor. If you want a strong mint flavor, I would suggest three ounces (this is for a five gallon batch). This is one of my favorite brews of the year, and I use other spices as well, but the minty note is what really makes it special for me.