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IRISH EXTRA STOUT



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BY GORDON STRONG

IRISH EXTRA STOUT

The Irish extra stout is actually more like the original stouts and porters than most other styles.

IRISH EXTRA STOUT BY THE NUMBERS

OG: 1.052-1.062
FG: 1.010-1.014
SRM: 25-40
IBU: 35-50
ABV: 5.5-6.5%



Photo by Charles A. Parker/Images Plus

Most beer enthusiasts are familiar with Irish stout (also known as dry stout), the lower-gravity dark beer typified by Guinness Draught. But how many of you know about its bigger brother, the Irish extra stout? The ubiquity of Guinness Draught probably makes you think that it has the longest history, but it really doesn't. The Irish extra stout is actually more like the original stouts and porters than most other styles. In fact, Guinness says that "of all the types of Guinness available today, Guinness Extra Stout is the closest to the porter originally brewed by Arthur Guinness."

So while these types of beers are more similar to historical porters and the later double stouts, today's versions also have more modern changes in ingredients and process (as with other stouts). I didn't want to leave the impression that somehow these beers are using original recipes or haven't changed over time. Just that the finished product superficially bears a closer resemblance to those earlier beers.

In modern terms, the Irish extra stout style fits between the Irish stout and the foreign extra stout styles in strength and flavor intensity, with a strength between 5.5 and 6.5% ABV. They all are black and have a similar balance, with the body, richness, and malt complexity all increasing with strength.

Irish extra stout is style 15C in the 2015 BJCP Style Guidelines, and is a member of the Irish Beer category along with Irish red ale and Irish stout.

SENSORY PROFILE

Irish extra stout is a black beer — the black color is closely tied with the

consumer recognition of the style. In a beer this dark, the clarity should be opaque. A tan head is characteristic, and often has a thick, creamy quality. Do not associate the long-lasting creamy head of a Guinness Draught with this style; that's due to using a nitrogen gas blend for dispensing. Most Irish extra stouts today are bottled products.

The aroma and flavor are typically dominated by roasted notes of coffee and dark chocolate, but can also have a fair amount of complexity with cocoa, biscuit, and vanilla accents. Hops are primarily present as a bittering addition, adding a medium to medium-high bitterness component (which is often accentuated by a roasted bitterness). The fermentation character is fairly clean, perhaps with low fruity esters.

The roasted character and overall balance is somewhat variable across different products; not all stouts are like Guinness, and regional differences exist in Ireland. Guinness-type stouts from the Dublin area tend to feature more of a roasted barley character, are more bitter, and have a drier finish. Cork-type stouts are sweeter, less bitter, and have more chocolate-type flavors and other flavors from specialty malts; these versions tend to have more of a balanced impression and finish. I personally see this part of the profile as the aspect best suited to interpretation by the brewer since it drives the overall character of the beer. Irish extra stouts have an alcohol level around 6% ABV, so they can have a little bit of an alcohol character present. The body is typically medium-full to full with a somewhat creamy character (again, don't expect something like a nitro pour from a bottle-conditioned beer). Carbonation is moderate, and the overall palate impact is smooth.

IRISH EXTRA STOUT

(5 gallons/19 L, all-grain)

OG = 1.059 FG = 1.014

IBU = 40 SRM = 50 ABV = 6%

This recipe is not necessarily a clone recipe of O'Hara's Leann Folláin, however it is based on information I gleaned from Carlow Brewing Co.'s Head Brewer Conor Donoghue and is at least similar. Many Irish extra stouts use anywhere from 7–15% roasted grains, however this recipe skips using any roasted barley or black patent and instead uses a higher percentage of chocolate malt. I have found that the higher percentage really does give it a deep roasted character.

INGREDIENTS

8 lbs. (3.6 kg) UK Golden Promise malt
2 lbs. (0.91 kg) flaked barley
8 oz. (227 g) torrified wheat
1.75 lbs. (0.79 kg) UK chocolate malt (425 °L)
8 oz. (227 g) UK brown malt
6 AAU UK Northdown hops (90 min.) (0.75 oz./21 g at 8% alpha acids)
4.5 AAU UK Fuggle hops (30 min.) (1 oz./28 g at 4.5% alpha acids)
0.5 oz. (14 g) UK Fuggle hops (5 min.)
Wyeast 1084 (Irish Ale) or White Labs WLP004 (Irish Ale) yeast
¾ cup corn sugar (if priming)

STEP BY STEP

Two or three days before brew day, make a 1-qt. (1-L) yeast starter, aerating the wort thoroughly (preferably with oxygen) before pitching the yeast.

On brew day, prepare your ingredients; mill the grain, measure your hops, and prepare your water. This recipe uses reverse osmosis (RO) water. Add ¼ tsp. 10% phosphoric acid per 5 gallons (19 L) of brewing water, or until water measures pH 5.5 at room temperature. Add 1 tsp. calcium chloride (CaCl₂) to the mash. On brew day, mash in the Golden

Promise, flaked barley, and torrified wheat at 147 °F (64 °C) in 15 qts. (14 L) of water, and hold this temperature for 60 minutes. Infuse with boiling water or direct heating to reach 155 °F (68 °C); hold this temperature for 30 minutes. Raise the temperature by infusion or direct heating to 168 °F (76 °C) to mashout. Add the chocolate and brown malts, and recirculate for 20 minutes. Fly sparge with 168 °F (76 °C) water until 7 gallons (26.5 L) of wort is collected.

Boil the wort for 120 minutes, adding the hops at times indicated in the recipe.

Chill to 66 °F (19 °C). Oxygenate, then pitch the yeast starter. Ferment at 68 °F (20 °C) until fermentation is complete. Rack the beer. Prime and bottle condition, or keg and force carbonate to 2.3 volumes.

IRISH EXTRA STOUT

(5 gallons/19 L, extract

with grains)

OG = 1.059 FG = 1.014

IBU = 40 SRM = 50 ABV = 6%

INGREDIENTS

5.9 lbs. (2.7 kg) light liquid malt extract
1 lb. (0.45 kg) Carapils® malt
1.75 lbs. (0.79 kg) UK chocolate malt
8 oz. (227 g) torrified wheat
8 oz. (227 g) UK brown malt
6 AAU UK Northdown hops (90 min.) (0.75 oz./21 g at 8% alpha acids)
4.5 AAU UK Fuggle hops (30 min.) (1 oz./28 g at 4.5% alpha acids)
0.5 oz. (14 g) UK Fuggle hops (5 min.)
Wyeast 1084 (Irish Ale) or White Labs WLP004 (Irish Ale) yeast
¾ cup corn sugar (if priming)

STEP BY STEP

Two or three days before brew day, make a 1-qt. (1-L) yeast starter, aerating the wort thoroughly (preferably with oxygen) before pitching the yeast.

Use 6.5 gallons (24.6 L) of water in the brew kettle; heat to 158 °F (70 °C). Place the Carapils®, chocolate malt, torrified wheat, and brown malts in a mesh bag, and steep in the hot water for 30 minutes. Remove the mesh bag, then turn the heat off.

Add the liquid malt extract and stir thoroughly to dissolve the extract completely. You do not want to feel liquid extract at the bottom of the kettle when stirring with your spoon. Turn the heat back on and bring to a boil. Boil the wort for 90 minutes, adding the hops at the times indicated in the recipe.

Chill to 66 °F (19 °C). Oxygenate, then pitch the yeast starter. Ferment at 68 °F (20 °C) until fermentation is complete. Rack the beer. Prime and bottle condition, or keg and force carbonate to 2.3 volumes.

BREWING INGREDIENTS AND METHOD

English and Irish ingredients are typical for this beer, although not all types of ingredients are produced in Ireland. Irish ale yeast, such as Wyeast 1084 (Irish Ale) or White Labs WLP004 (Irish Ale), is my first choice, although a dry English ale yeast would also work. English hops are typically used, but there is no need to spend the extra money on the finest English aroma hops.

The grist for an Irish extra stout can vary widely with the regional interpretations. Guinness is believed to use about 10% roasted barley, 20–30% flaked barley, and the remainder pale ale malt. Other breweries use a more complex grain bill, and can bring in other darker malts such as black patent malt and chocolate malt. I think all the dark malts probably can be in the 7 to 15% range in the grist. Historically, brown and amber malts were also used in this style. Crystal malts can add some sweetness but they are not universally used.

There are Irish maltsters, such as Minch, making pale ale or stout malt but British maltsters will also work. There are no Irish maltsters making specialty malts, so English versions are generally used. Using a slightly higher kilned or dextrinous base malt would be appropriate for this style.

Flaked barley seems to be the preferred choice today for adding the body and mouthfeel to the beer. I've seen brewers use between 10 and 30% in the grist. Using mash techniques for attenuation without excessively degrading the body is desirable, so conversion temperatures in the upper 140s °F (63–65 °C) will work. The grist will drive the body, so having very high mash temperatures isn't required.

HOMEBREW EXAMPLE

I'm reserving more of this article for this section than is typical since I have a story associated with the recipe. I've made two trips to Ireland to research Irish beer styles and talk with homebrewers and beer judges, with the most recent trip being in April 2016 when I was the keynote speaker at their Brew-Con 2016. Sponsored by the National

Homebrew Club of Ireland and held in Dublin, this was a great chance to do some primary research.

During the week of the event, I asked the local organizers if I could meet with BJCP judges to do a training program, and also to do a "meet the brewer" event with Carlow Brewing Company, brewers of my favorite Irish Extra Stout, O'Hara's Leann Folláin (which they pronounced, to my ear, as "Lohn Foh-LAHN"). James Keane arranged the event at a local pub, and I led a guided tasting while discussing the beer with their Head Brewer, Conor Donoghue. Several of the local homebrewers had researched the beer as well, so were keen to gain insights into making this world-class beer.

Conor started by saying that the beer was first brewed for the brewery's 10th anniversary and was called Celebration Stout before being renamed and put into their regular lineup. They were looking to make something similar to a 19th century porter but also fit between the normal Irish dry stout and foreign extra stout styles. Beyond that, he wasn't going to give up secrets easily. That was fine with me, since I wasn't looking to make an exact clone of the beer, just a beer with the same general balance and flavor profile.

He said the grist was fairly simple, containing only one dark malt and a bit of wheat (less than 5% of the grist). He said the most important part of the style was actually the flaked barley (greater than 10% of the grist) since it, not final gravity, contributed the most body and mouthfeel effects. He stressed that no crystal malt was used in the recipe, and that there were between four and six components in the grist with pale malt as the base.

He said the mash schedule was a two-step mash to improve efficiency, but that it was a fairly low temperature conversion. He later admitted that the rests were at 147 °F (64 °C) and 155 °F (68 °C) after I first guessed 145 °F (63 °C) and 162 °F (72 °C).

I asked about the wheat addition, and whether it was malted wheat or flaked wheat. When he replied, "neither," I knew it had to be torried wheat. He said they used Irish pale ale

malt, but Thomas Fawcett malts from England as their specialty grains. Since he mentioned that there was one dark malt (not grain), I guessed that a dark chocolate malt was used since the beer had a strong chocolate and cocoa flavor. I haven't tested other dark malts from Fawcett, but their chocolate was one of my favorites so I penciled that into my recipe.

That makes four malts in the grist, and since he said there was between 4 and 6, I decided to add a little bit of brown malt since it is a historical stout addition. I didn't want it to taste like a London porter so I kept the percentage fairly low.

The brewery's website says the beer is 6% ABV and has 40 IBUs, so I used those statistics. Conor said the original gravity was 1.058 so I had the rest of my answers from that. Local brewers had researched that the hops were Northdown and Fuggle, and Conor said "that sounds right" so that was an easy pick. He confirmed that there were three hop additions with one less than 10 minutes, and that a greater than 90-minute boil was used. He also said Irish ale yeast (they use a house strain) is used, and is fermented at 68 °F (20 °C).

Armed with this information, I put together the recipe presented on page 29. I described this process as part of my talk on recipe formulation at the 2016 American Homebrewers Association HomebrewCon in Baltimore, Maryland. But I still hadn't tested the beer. It wasn't until I was doing a brewing demonstration during a visit to the New York City area that I was able to test it. Peter Tripp at Homebrews and Handgrenades in Baldwin, New York arranged for me to brew on an electric system along with local brewer Tom Weber. So I suggested we try this Irish extra stout recipe, as long as they'd agree to send me a few bottles, which they did. The brew day went great, and I was happy the store had a great air conditioner and we were using an electric system since it was over 100 °F (38 °C) outside that day.

When I received the bottles I didn't have a side-by-side example to compare against, but my tasting notes were

similar. As I said, I don't really like to do clone beers, but I think this example does a good job of matching the style. Even though it uses chocolate malt only, the higher percentage really does give it a deep roasted character.

I like this beer so much I'm trying to arrange a collaboration brew with my local brewpub to use this recipe. I think it would be a great beer to have on hand during the cold days of winter and definitely in March for St. Patrick's Day celebrations. 