

& BEER FOOD



WHICH BEER WITH WHICH FOOD?

Beer, the versatile beverage. With anything from light fare at a summer picnic to the spiciest of Asian dishes—the dry, refreshing taste of a beer goes down well. Speaking of spicy dishes, did you know that lagers can cool your tongue more quickly than a glass of water? That's because the alcohol in beer actually dissolves the alkaloids in chilies commonly used in spicy dishes. Ale, on the other hand, pairs very well with sausage, cheese and red meats. Stronger brews tend to complement fuller-flavoured dishes. A rich ale, fragrant with hops, pairs well with steak or roast beef, while a lighter and sweeter brew (pale, golden ale) can be the perfect partner to a good hamburger. The pronounced acidity, or tart, hoppy flavour, offsets the fatty taste of deep-fried and heavier foods. Fruity and premium ale brings out the best in mature cheddar, while beers with a stronger palate benefit the soft, sharper cheeses. Hearty meat stews and, surprisingly, shellfish, pair well with porter and stout. You may often see oysters and stout acknowledged as one of world's great gastronomic marriages.

Probably the best way to experiment with food and beer pairing is to find a brewpub or similar establishment that offers quality food and an ever-changing roster of beers. Chances are the proprietors are beer and food fanatics, so will have many suggestions.

Different styles of beer

There are two main styles of beer: ale and lager. The difference between the two is primarily the type of yeast used in the fermentation process.

Lagers are bottom-fermented, which means that the type of yeast used ferments at the bottom of the fermentation vessel. Lagers generally have a crisp and delicate flavour. Pilsner and bock are two styles of beer that fall under the lager category.

Ales, on the other hand, are top-fermented, which means that the type of yeast used to produce the beer rises to the top. The abundance of hops creates a distinct fruitiness and pleasantly bitter taste. More assertive than lager, even at the same alcoholic strength, it is best served at room temperature. Porter and stout are examples of top-fermenting beer.

What temperature should you serve beer?

Lagers, bocks and light-bodied ales should be served at 7–10° C. Most other ales can be served a little warmer at 11–12° C, and heavy ales, porters and stouts are ideal if served no less than 13° C.

Like wine, beer and food pairings are hotly debated and, while theories abound, there are no hard-and-fast rules. This brochure lists some general pairings to keep in mind, but remember, the ultimate decision is a matter of personal taste.

