FREE GUIDE

The NA Beer Field Guide

You deserve better NA beer. Here's how to find it: how it's made, the styles worth knowing, what to pair them with, and how to find your next favorite.

nabeerclub.com

START HERE

It's about the beer again

There's a whole world of non-alcoholic beer beyond the two six-packs on the grocery store shelf. Small breweries all over the country are making NA IPAs, stouts, pilsners and sours that stand next to any craft beer.

And when there's no alcohol to pick by, you get to pick by what matters: which one tastes best, has the best story, has the best can art. It's craft beer all over again. Go ahead and be a snob about it.

What's inside

How NA beer is made · Things most people don't know · A guide to every style · Where to start if you like... · A pairing and serving cheat sheet · How to taste like a pro · A printable tasting scorecard

Why keep it exciting

The fastest way to fall off NA beer is getting bored with it. Trying something new every so often, a new style, a new brewery, a can you've never seen, is what keeps it fun. This guide is your map.

THE BASICS

How NA beer is made

NA beer starts the same way any beer does: water, grain, hops and yeast. The difference is what happens to the alcohol.

1. Brew it, then take the alcohol out

Brewers make a full-strength beer, then gently remove the alcohol, usually with low-temperature vacuum distillation or very fine filters. Done well, the flavor stays and the alcohol goes.

2. Never let much alcohol form

Brewers use special yeasts that make very little alcohol, or stop fermentation early. Many craft NA brewers have built their own house methods around this.

Then the hard part: keeping it fresh

Alcohol helps protect regular beer. NA beer doesn't have that, so it has to be carefully stabilized (usually pasteurized) before it goes in the can. That's a big reason great NA beer is harder to make than it looks.

0.0% vs. "under 0.5%"

In the US, "non-alcoholic" beer is under 0.5% alcohol by volume. Some brewers go all the way to 0.0% and print it on the can. Either way, check the label: it always tells you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Things most people don't know

Many NA beers are "contract brewed"

Removing alcohol takes specialized equipment, so many brands team up with a production brewery that specializes in NA beer. The recipe, the flavor and the people behind it are still theirs. It's how small brands get great beer into cans.

Why you rarely see it on tap

Once a keg is opened, NA beer doesn't stay fresh long without alcohol's protection, and most bars don't pour it fast enough. Cans keep it fresh, which is why nearly all the good stuff comes in a can.

Fresh is best

Hoppy styles like IPAs taste best fresh, when the hop aroma is brightest. Keep cans cold and out of the sun, and drink IPAs sooner rather than later.

About half the calories

A typical 12 oz craft NA beer has about 50 to 90 calories. A regular beer is around 150 and a light beer around 100. Dark and fruited beers usually sit at the higher end.

STYLES AT A GLANCE

Find your style

Know which style you like and you'll stop guessing in the beer aisle.

Lager & pilsner

Tastes: crisp, clean, a little bready.

Drink it: cold, after yard work, at a cookout.

Pair: pizza, tacos, anything salty.

West Coast IPA

Tastes: piney, citrusy, bitter, dry finish.

Drink it: when you want your beer to bite back.

Pair: burgers, spicy wings.

Hazy IPA

Tastes: soft, juicy, tropical, low bitterness.

Drink it: the easiest IPA to fall for.

Pair: Thai food, fish tacos.

Pale ale & golden

Tastes: a little hop, a little malt, balanced.

Drink it: any time, any season.

Pair: sandwiches, roast chicken.

Stout & dark

Tastes: coffee, chocolate, roasted malt.

Drink it: cold nights, after dinner.

Pair: dessert, barbecue, chili.

Sours & radlers

Tastes: tart, fruity, bright.

Drink it: hot days, by the pool.

Pair: salads, goat cheese, grilled fish.

YOUR NEXT FAVORITE

If you like this, start here

Think about what you used to reach for. Then start with the NA style that drinks like it.

Light, easy-drinking lagers

Start with an NA **lager or pilsner**. Crisp, clean and cold. Craft versions have more flavor than you'd expect.

Shop lagers & lights

Mexican lager with lime

Look for an NA **cerveza** or Mexican-style lager. Light, bright and made for tacos.

Shop cervezas

Wheat beer with an orange slice

Try a **golden, blonde or wheat** style: soft, a little citrusy, easy to like.

Shop golden & blonde

Craft IPAs

Go **West Coast** if you like it bitter and piney, **hazy** if you like it juicy. This is where NA beer has come the furthest.

Shop IPA & hoppy

Stouts and porters

NA **stouts** bring the coffee, chocolate and roast. Great on cold nights and with dessert.

Shop dark beers

Cider, seltzer or wine

Try a **sour or radler**. Tart, fruity and refreshing, and nothing like the beer you're picturing.

Shop fruity & sours

Links go to the NA Beer Market, where what you see is always in stock.

FOOD & SERVING

Pairing and serving cheat sheet

Style	Serve at	Glass	Great with
Lager & pilsner	Cold, 38–45°F	Pint or pilsner glass	Pizza, tacos, fried chicken, anything salty
Cerveza	Cold, 38–45°F	Pint (lime optional)	Tacos, nachos, grilled shrimp
Golden, blonde, wheat	40–45°F	Tall wheat glass or pint	Salads, seafood, brunch
Pale ale	45–50°F	Pint	Burgers, sandwiches, roast chicken
West Coast IPA	45–50°F	Pint or tulip	Spicy wings, curry, sharp cheddar
Hazy IPA	45–50°F	Tulip or stemmed glass	Thai food, fish tacos, BBQ
Stout & dark	50–55°F	Snifter or pint	Chili, barbecue, chocolate desserts
Sour & radler	Cold, 38–45°F	Stemmed glass	Goat cheese, fruit desserts, grilled fish

Three pairing rules that always work

Match intensity: light beer with light food, big beer with big food. **Cut or contrast:** bitter and bubbly beers cut through rich, fried and fatty food. **Complement:** roasty stouts with grilled or chocolatey things, fruity sours with fruit.

Hosting?

Set out three styles: one crisp lager, one IPA and one sour or dark. Everyone finds something, and nobody feels left out.

TASTE LIKE A PRO

Get more out of every can

1. **Use a glass.** Pouring opens up the aroma, and most of what you taste starts with your nose.
2. **Mind the temperature.** Lagers and sours shine cold. Let IPAs and stouts warm up for a few minutes to bring out the hops and roast.
3. **Look first.** Color and haze tell you a lot: pale and clear means crisp, hazy means juicy, dark means roast.
4. **Smell before you sip.** Citrus? Pine? Bread? Coffee? Name one thing.
5. **Take three sips.** The first wakes up your palate, the second tells you the flavor, the third tells you the finish: dry, sweet or bitter.
6. **Keep notes.** A quick "loved it / fine / not for me" on your phone means you'll never forget a favorite.

Buying for someone else?

The best NA beer gift is one they get excited about. If they're picky about styles, pick the ones they like: on the NA Beer Market you can mix any 12 cans into one pack.

PRINT ME

Tasting scorecard

Keep track of what you try, so you never forget a favorite. Print a few and keep them by the fridge.

Beer _____
Brewery _____
Style _____
Looks _____
Smells like _____
Tastes like _____
Verdict: ☐ Loved it ☐ Fine ☐ Not for me Buy again? ☐

Beer _____
Brewery _____
Style _____
Looks _____
Smells like _____
Tastes like _____
Verdict: ☐ Loved it ☐ Fine ☐ Not for me Buy again? ☐

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KEEP DISCOVERING

Where to go next

The world's largest NA beer list

800+ non-alcoholic beers available in the US, searchable by style and brewery.

Explore the list

The NA Beer Market

Pick your own: mix and match any 12 craft NA cans, with new arrivals every week.

Build a 12-pack

The NA Beer Club box

Let us do the hunting. Every month: 5 craft NA beers, 2 of each, mostly small-batch cans you won't find in stores. Free shipping, and every box has a "can't wait to try that one" moment.

See the Club box

Cheers to better NA beer.

The NA Beer Club crew