

# Hoppy Pursuits Pay Off

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

Surprise! Through July, IPAs were the fastest growing craft beer style in America in both dollar sales and in case sales, according to Symphony IRI Group. The good news is that these trends should get even better as the year finishes up and brewers take to the fields to harvest fresh hop cones off the vines to create more spicy, earthy, citrusy, piney, grapefuit, wet-hopped beers.

## Definition of a “Hop Head”

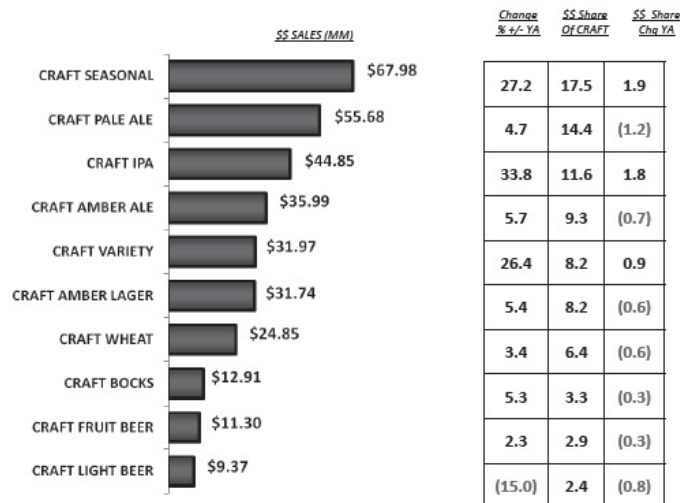
Not all IPA fans are Hop Heads, but IPA consumers are definitely attracted to brands that offer more of a bitter hop flavor and less of a sweet malt backbone. Hop Heads stand out because they are very interested in skimming beer packaging to find the IBU information (International Bitterness Units) and they are well versed in alpha acid range differences between the various varieties of hops. So, even if the IBUs are not listed on the packaging, these consumers have a good idea of what bitterness quality to expect just by knowing which hops were used in the brew.

You might recognize your hoppy consumers as those that come into your store and make requests for special order hoppiest beers, and it benefits you as retailers to offer beer brand information that includes the “hoppiness” of each beer brand. Remember, hopped up beers are not limited to IPAs and Imperial IPAs; pilsners, bitters, pale ales, barley wines, and imperial stouts can all contain an impressive amount of hops.

## Segmenting IPAs by complexity

Beer brands and consumers can be differentiated by level of beer complexity, and level of beer complexity is the factor that differentiates brands in any style

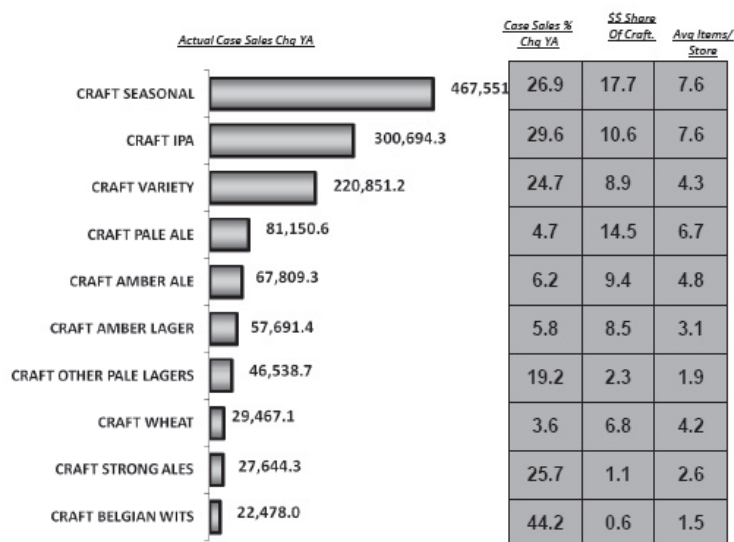
### Top 10 Craft Styles Based On Dollar Sales TOTAL U.S. Supermarkets



Data is Year-to-Data Ending July 11, 2010  
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### Top 15 Growing Craft Styles – Case Sales Chg YA TOTAL U.S. Supermarkets



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The Symphony IRI Group derives their information from a data set that includes 15,000+ grocery retailers from around the United States.

category due the variety ingredients used to create each beer. To better match beer consumers to the beer brands you offer, consider the complexity that individual beer brands offer and the beer complexity individual consumers enjoy. Specifically, look at your beer brands and your consumers as offering or enjoying Basic, Transitional, Complete, or Peak complexity:

**Basic Complexity** - these brands generally consist of Lagers and Light Lagers, or other beer styles which offer a balanced, mild, flavor profile. These brands are not overly malty, are slightly hoppy, and are often described as clean and crisp.

**Transitional Complexity** - these brands consist of both Ales and Lagers and offer a step up in flavor from those of Basic Complexity. These beers are less balanced and are perfect for allowing consumers to experience an expanded taste profile as they tend not to overload the palette and generally offer one or two unique flavor components. For example, these brands might have an increased hop bitterness, a bigger malt profile, or a predominate wheat, fruit, or spice flavor. These beers are often described as session beers.

**Complete Complexity** - these brands offer an increased taste profile with a balanced complexity. Beers with Complete Complexity consist of both Ales and Lagers and offer a wonderful flavor experience for consumers. Greater amounts of hops, malt and other additional ingredients provide a more defined bitterness, sweetness and overall fuller taste profile.

**Peak Complexity** - these brands are strong, big and

unbalanced by design, with flavors that tip the scale toward hops, malt, yeast, or adjuncts depending on the style and brewer. These beers can consist of both Ales and Lagers and are often marketed as being Imperial, Limited Releases, collaboration beers, and seasonal brews.

Beer brand complexity is derived by factoring in the color, bitterness, ABV, fullness and style of each beer brand. You can match your consumers to the right

beer complexity by finding out the beer experience your customers are looking for. You can discover this by asking your consumers three basic questions:

- \* What beer styles have you enjoyed before?
- \* Did you like them because they were sweet or bitter – full or light?
- \* Do you want a beer experience that is different or the same?

As a retailer, look for opportunities to

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expand your consumers' complexity boundaries. Also, consider pricing your beer brands by the complexity and the uniqueness of the brands that you sell.

### IPA recommendations by complexity

**Basic:** Harpoon IPA, Odell Brewing India Pale Ale, Tallgrass IPA, Sweetwater Brewing IPA, Schlafly American IPA, New Belgium Ranger, Sierra Nevada Torpedo, Lagunitas IPA, Bridgeport IPA, Big Sky IPA, Goose Island IPA.

**Transitional:** Boulder Beer Mojo India Pale Ale, Firestone Walker Union Jack India Pale Ale, Great Lakes Brewing Commodore Perry India Pale Ale, Heavy Seas Brewing Loose Cannon Hop 3 Ale, Left Hand Fresh Hopped Warrior IPA, Avery India Pale Ale, Victory HopDevil Ale, Bear Republic Rebellion IPA, Redhook Long Hammer IPA, Pyramid Thunderhead IPA.

**Complete:** Boulevard Brewing Single-Wide IPA, Dogfish Head 60 Minute IPA, Great Divide Brewing Titan IPA, Green Flash West Coast I.P.A., Sierra Nevada Estate Ale, Ballast Point Sculpin, Bell's Two Hearted, Green Flash West Coast, Port Brewing Wipeout IPA, Bear Republic Racer 5, Surly Furious, Marin Brewing IPA

**Peak:** Rock Art Brewery Belvidere Big IPA, Harpoon Leviathan – Imperial IPA, Stone Ruination IPA, Dogfish Head 90 Minute Imperial IPA, Weyerbacher Double Simcoe, Southern Tier Unearthly, Russian River Blind Pig, Port Brewing Wipeout IPA, Terrapin Rye Squared, Founders Devil Dancer, Flying Dog Raging Bitch, Two Brothers Hop Juice.

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# Not to Tell You What to Say, But...

BY DAVID KRATT

Part of working with the public is dealing with the public.

When dealing with the public, beginning bartenders must first learn what to say and how to say it. The next level of bartending is figuring out that there usually is a right thing to say and, many times, what not to say.

Here are a few examples:

### Say a “can” with “can’t” –

A new customer works his way through the crowd to the only open barstool, which is already occupied. First thought is to say nothing. But we don't make a customer fend for his barstool when he returns from the bathroom. You end up saying, “That barstool is taken.” The right thing to say is to add, “...but I'll keep an eye open for a barstool for you.”

### Being the good middleman –

A customer points and says, “Bring her a drink.” The right thing to say is, “I'll ask her.” But the trick is to quickly head over to the customer before he can say, “Just bring her one!” Now you know she doesn't want another drink.

He says, “Just bring her one!”

You say, “I hate to see you waste your money.”

### One for all and all for one –

A coworker cut off a customer. That customer then comes to you because he knows you; not the coworker who cut him off. You say the first thing that comes to mind. “(So-and-so) cut you off so I can't serve you, either. I wish I could.” Now that coworker comes off as the bad guy. The right thing to say is something

like, “Sorry, but we can't serve you anymore tonight.”

### Apologies all around –

“Sorry for the wait folks. The cooks just aren't cutting it tonight.” Are you as brutally honest when you're “not cutting it”? You should be. The right thing to say is, “Sorry for the wait folks,” when the shoe fits.

### Getting put on the spot –

He says, “Make it a strong one this time.”

I don't like this spot because, to me, the real issue is that I don't want to be a party to what I suspect his mission is. You need to make the call on this one. What I want to say is, “I can't do that,” but, instead, I'll usually just smile and go make his drink. The drinks at my bar are strong enough. So I pack the glass full of ice so there's less room for mix and pour the specified amount of liquor.

Then I keep an eye on him.

### Bartender with only so many words –

There will be times when a customer just doesn't get the message. That's the time to put on your, There's-nothing-I-can-do face, act like you have some pressing business to attend to and then say, “I'll be right back.”

With time, the message may sink in. But many times it doesn't. About the only right thing to say is, “Sorry....”

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