

BEER TRENDS by Michael Kuderka

EISBOCK: THE REAL “ICE BEER”

Eisbock or “ice strong beer” is a lager style which is perfect for colder fall and winter evenings. This beer style typically begins by brewing a Doppelbock, a beer style already well recognized for its strength and character, then freezing it and extracting the resulting frozen water. What remains is the Eisbock, a strong, highly concentrated beer with alcohol contents ranging from 9% to 31% by volume.

Eisbock is steeped in beer folklore. This beer style’s origins rivals the “Post-it Note” and the “Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup” for unimagined success being derived from a potentially disastrous mistake. On a wintery day in the year 1890, a brewery worker was sent to move barrels of finished Bock Beer from the brewery yard to the brewery cellar. The task was never completed, and instead the beer remained outside overnight in the bitter cold, and was subsequently frozen.

When the brewery staff returned the next morning, they found that a majority of their beer barrels had burst open as a result of the expanding frozen contents, and the Bock Beer was presumed to be a total loss. Lore tells us that as the brewers examined their ruined beer, they found small, concentrated pools of brownish liquid resting in the center of each frozen barrel. In punishment the brewers forced the lazy brewery worker who had left the barrels out to freeze, to drink the cold dark muck which he had consequently created. Thus the Eisbock style was born, and what a wonderful, strong, sweet, “punishment” it was. The poor fellow didn’t patent the brewing process!

- Eisbock beers are deep copper to black in color and are full bodied. These beers tend to be very sweet, high in alcohol, and offer only a slight hop bitterness.
- They pair well with poultry, beef and pork.
- The brands and the brewers that produce an Eisbock:

Aventinus Weizen-Eisbock - G.Schneider & Sohn - Germany, GR
 Eggenberger Urbock Dunkel Eisbock - Brewery Castle Eggenberg - Austria, AT
 Kulmbacher Eisbock - Kulmbacher Brauerei - Germany, GR
 Kulmbacher Eku 28 - Kulmbacher Brauerei - Germany, GR
 New Glarus Brewing Eisbock - New Glarus Brewing - New Glarus, WI

Out-of-the-Box: “Beer Guy” Cloning and Working with Distributors
 This month’s Out-of-the-Box tip comes from Rolando Lopez of the

Village Bottle Shoppe # 1 in West Lafayette, Indiana. Rolando has been the “Beer Guy” at the Village Bottle Shoppe for about six years.

For those of you who are or have been the store “beer guy,” you know that your biggest challenge is preparing the staff on how to handle beer questions when the “beer guy” is out. Rolando suggests taking a proactive approach:

Generally when I order a new beer or new seasonal comes in, I try and do a sampling with my staff. In fact the team has begun taking notes on each beer we sample and we use this as a reference. This helps everyone pick up first hand beer knowledge and gets them thinking about beer. When they stop and think about the flavors of each beer, it really helps them make the right beer recommendation for customers,” Rolando notes.

Rolando says that his store has also “started to use a rating system on their beer racks. The beer ratings system gives customers an extra aid when looking for something special. If people can see that a beer has scored a higher rating, it gets them curious about that beer and other beers from that brewer.”

Another tip Rolando offers is about working with his distributors. In Roland’s experience he has found that his distributors are very eager to help out with store staff education and in providing product samples. “I was amazed to see the eagerness from the distributors to come in and sample different products,” continued Rolando, “our most recent training featured Oktoberfest/Fall beers. Cavalier Distributing let us sample the Heavy Seas Imperial Oktoberfest from Clipper City and it was a big hit. Most people had only tasted Sam Adams and Leinenkugel Oktoberfest, so exposing them to the Clipper City beer was great. Most of our group did know the big potential Oktoberfest beer had.”

Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasset.com with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The Third Edition of The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands.

Michael Kuderka is the Managing Partner at MC Basset, LLC. The company designs beer selling solutions and training for On- and Off-Premise retailers. www.thebeerbible.com – Contact Michael at mkuderka@mcbasset.com. © 2009 MC Basset LLC