

## BEER AND SERVING TEMPERATURE: TACKLING A HOARY BUSH MYTH

### A cold beer?

In sun-soaked Australia, what could be more thirst-quenching than a cold beer? In summer, that may be true, but in winter, in cool-climate Victoria with its frequent single-digit overnight temperatures, ice-cold beer is often inappropriate. Indeed, can a single serving temperature suit all beers all the time?

### Looking at wine

Consider first a digression to the world of wine. When tasting wines, including white wines, they are invariably presented at higher temperatures than usual (typically 10–12°C) so as to develop their flavour to the full. Under such conditions, one can smell subtle aromas and taste delicate characteristics of a wine. For drinking, white wines are typically served at a slightly lower temperature (6–8°C) than reds (10–12°C), but in winter we might well prefer our whites a little warmer and, in summer, our reds a little cooler. In fact, I would suggest that drinking wine a little warmer than usual, determined through practice, will enhance its flavour and provide you with greater enjoyment.

### What of beer?

As with wine, so too with beer: there are whites and reds of the beer world. There are two major beer styles, ales and lagers, characterised through their fermentation temperature. Ales – the beer reds – are top-fermented at a higher temperature, typically 18–24°C, whereas the newer style of lager – the beer whites – are bottom-fermented at a cooler 12–16°C, using a different yeast species, named after the Danish Carlsberg lager brewery.

Fermentation temperature provides a good indication of serving temperature. Lagers, classically typified by Pilsener, the floral, dry and intensely bitter golden-straw coloured and highly filtered low temperature fermented beer, drinks crisply and refreshingly, like a white wine at a cold 6–8°C. By contrast, ales, fermented at a higher temperature, and classically exemplified by English bitter ale, typically a malty-sweet, fruity yet bitter beer, drink best at the serving temperature of a fine red, a cool – but most certainly not warm 10–12°C. Other members of the ale world are the darker porters, the ruby-red winter ales, and the black stouts. In spite of the recent efforts of a major stout producer, it still drinks better at the higher temperature range.

Some indication of exemplars of beer styles will better enable their identification and enable their enhanced enjoyment by serving and drinking them at an appropriate temperature.

Exemplar	Style	Notes
<b>Reds</b>		
Fullers 1845	Extra-strong Special Bitter (Ale)	Classic, award-winning bottle-conditioned ale
Dolphin Best Bitter Ale	English Best Bitter (Ale)	Dolphin's Australian-made version of this style
Fullers London Pride	English Bitter (Ale)	Classic London ale

Penguin Porter	Victorian-era traditional entire porter (ale)	A classic original-style entire porter ale
Dolphin Amber Ale	Traditional amber kitchen (AK) mild ale	A kitchen mild as made at home in the 1830s.
<b>Whites</b>		
Pilsner style; e.g. Weihenstephan	Floral, dry pale-coloured (Lager)	Basis of modern-style beers or lagers
Hoegaarden	Belgian-style Witbier (a floral gentle ale)	A 'white' beer containing wheat malt and pale in colour
Dolphin Shag	A loose variant of a Belgian-style Witbier (see above)	Ultra-pale, honey-driven spiced beer
Dolphin Pale Ale	English Pale Ale	May be drunk as a 'white' or a 'red'. Try it both ways.

### Seasonal beer styles

Here at Dolphin we like the idea of seasonal beer styles: lighter in the spring and summer and becoming heavier and darker into autumn then winter. So, we have devised some seasonal styles:

**Spring:** Shag – a bright easy-drinking spiced ultra-pale ale;

**Summer:** Killer Whale American Pale Ale – pale but with some intensely flavoured US hops;

**Autumn:** Penguin Porter – a luscious, rich, chocolate porter ale;

**Winter:** Bottlenose Oatmeal Stout – oat-smooth, silky yet toasty; a drop to savour on those cold evenings.

What temperature should I serve these beers? You now have the knowledge: so, you decide...

### An experiment with ale

By now some of you may be thinking that I have lost the plot, but you don't have to believe me, all you need do is to try this for yourself:

Do a side-by-side taste comparison of a Dolphin Best Bitter Ale (or a Cooper's Sparkling Ale) from the fridge compared with one that you have kept in the pantry or laundry, or outside the back door (no, not in summer!).

You will notice the strong fruitiness and full body of the warmer ale (not warm ale) that has been allowed to develop its flavour. Even if this is too 'warm' for you, experiment further with shorter fridge residence times, aiming to drink as warm as you *really* like it, that is, as you have now tutored yourself to like it, so as to build flavour enjoyment from the glass. Go ahead and learn to enjoy your ales as they were meant to be drunk!

**Seasonal effects**

Now, consider wine again. Reds are designed to be drunk at a cool temperature of 10–12°C, perhaps a little cooler in summer, but certainly not at a random ambient temperature.

For beer too, this is where a careful drinking temperature is appropriate. It seems to me that in Australia we have become conditioned to expect a frosty-cold beer regardless of its type and the outside temperature. This is just as thoughtless as drinking a red wine at ambient or room temperature.

So, always consider the beer style and the season in which you are imbibing, then adjust the temperature at which you serve it.  
Now your enjoyment of beer (and wine) should be suitably enhanced. Cheers!