



Best in Beer 2025

Despite the headwinds facing breweries in recent years, one thing is certain: In the minds of our readers, judges, writers, and editors, craft beer collectively has never been as good as it is right now. Here, we share our bests for the year—your favorites as tracked by our annual reader survey, the Best 20 Beers in 2025 as judged by our panel and our editors, and the personal best lists from our editors and writers around the world.

CRAFT
Beer
& **Brewing**

BEST
IN
BEER
2025

**EDITORS'
PICKS**



Editors' Picks: Best 20 in 2025

Editors' Picks: The Best 20 Beers in 2025

Uncork the magnums, this is the winners' circle. Through a gauntlet of judging panels and on to the editors' table for a last round of blind tasting and spirited discussion, these are the beers that lit up our palates and our brains—or that simply had us yearning for another, and another.

By Jamie Bogner, Joe Stange, Kate Bernot, and Stan Hieronymus

Cape May Light

(Cape May, New Jersey)

 Craft brewers and drinkers have embraced lagers wholeheartedly over the past few years, seeking beers that effortlessly refresh while retaining flavorful intrigue. Cape May nails that assignment, brewing an American light lager with all the ease the style promises—and just a touch of added roundness. A cap of persistent white foam springboards aromas of cornflakes and citrus zest (or what Joe describes as “lime rice in a tortilla.”) The malts taste just a bit doughier—not at all heavy—on the tongue, delivering just a smidge more body than a typical entry in this category. Fine bitterness and a pleasing dryness close the sip with a bow, immediately inviting another. Cape May Light punches above its weight, offering more citrus and a smoother texture than we'd expect from 4.2 percent ABV light lager, while still maintaining all the approachability. —K.B.

Pinthouse Gold Steps

(Austin, Texas)

 This Austin powerhouse is no stranger to our best list (witness their win for Mosaic Takedown last year), and the 99 that Gold Steps scored in our IPA issue earned it a place in our discussion. Not bad for a one-off recipe submitted for review in a crowler. We hear this was the first Pinthouse recipe designed by Ryan Elam, who joined the brewery after

nearly five years with Other Half. And—like the Mosaic Takedown recipe designed by Trevor Kelly, Jacob Passey, and Tom Fischer—it's further evidence of their deep brewing bench.

It's difficult to deliver full-volume fruit character in a hazy, low-ABV beer that can't use sweetness as an amplifier, but the rich (yet properly dry) body holds the ranging notes—ginger crisp, lime, mimosa, lemon cake, berries—in a bit of vanilla-tinged suspension. The result is a beer that showcases great hops in a stunning way while embracing drinkability. As Kate said when we tasted it, “Really modern, really now.” —J.B.

American Solera Nine Lives

(Tulsa, Oklahoma)

 The fact that these persistent purveyors of big flavors were in this spot five years ago for something totally different—the spontaneously fermented Coolship Roadtrip—says enough about the breadth and length of their chops. Just to underscore that point, anyway, their other high scorers in the past few years have included a triple IPA, a foeder-aged lager, a banana-berry smoothie sour, and a rum-barrel-aged hard seltzer. This time, they're steering us into the deepest darknesses with a thick, leggy stout aged 40 months in Heaven Hill wheated bourbon barrels. The aroma evokes a juicy bonbon of tangy prune and dried cherry, toasted walnut, darkest cocoa—all injected with just enough whiskey. Hefty and broad on the palate, subtle layers

of fruit and roast nearly balance the sweetness—the burnt edge of a marsh-mallow? huckleberry? a wisp of sweet tobacco?—inviting you to go diving back in to unlock further mysteries. We found it incredibly difficult to stop sipping, investigating, and discussing. —J.S.

Cerebral Access Request

(Denver)

 Early-days pedantic fretting about whether cold IPA is actually IPL has evolved into whether it's actually West Coast IPA... but we really don't give a damn what you call it when y'all keep making these bangers for us to drink. This one is as modern as it gets, both in form and flavor: It's lean, trim, and dry, with *just* enough honey-like sweetness to give the hops a brief palate playground on the way to a quick finish. Meanwhile, the hops reach for Day-Glo brightness via passion fruit, lemon, kiwi, and pineapple, all deepened by the earthier, funkier notes of cannabis, mint, green tea, and papaya. Cerebral had other top scorers this year—the Parallax Effect pilsner, and the barrel-aged stout Here Be Monsters—but this one edges them out by combining sleek pilsner drinkability with luminous hop depth. —J.S.

Fair Isle Knitting Circle Season 6 Batch B

(Seattle)

 We're always rooting for oak-aged, mixed-culture beers—and for the brewers who defy the market by embracing them—and Fair Isle has been one

of our favorites to watch since opening nearly six years ago. We've greatly enjoyed previous iterations of Knitting Circle, and we'd like to see Fair Isle's steady climb to our highest pedestal as evidence of their dedication to refinement. That's certainly the case with this beer, originally brewed in 2022 but layered ever since with time in gin barrels plus additions of fireweed, foraged fir tips, and a house-made syrup made from Douglas fir cones. In conjunction with their house culture, the effect is utterly beguiling—and if the idea was to capture the flavor of the Cascades, then now we know the Cascades are a cocktail of semidry riesling, candied lime peels, lemony menthol, and white pepper. Punchy and tart yet delicate, dry, and deeply complex, their foraged flavors have sent us foraging for a deeper lexicon. —J.S.





About our methodology

Categories are based on barrels of beer brewed in 2024. Ranking correlates with reader votes received. In order to not influence results, we asked readers to type in their own answers to these questions rather than select from a list, and they were allowed to type in as many as five favorites.



Readers' Choice

Your Favorite Breweries

You voted, we tallied. Here are your favorite breweries broken down into categories by volume brewed.

Small

(fewer than 5,000 barrels per year)

1. **Green Cheek** (Orange, California)
2. **Highland Park** (Los Angeles)
3. **North Park** (San Diego)
4. **Goldfinger** (Downers Grove, Illinois)
5. **Alma Mader** (Kansas City, Missouri)
6. **BKS Artisan Ales** (Kansas City, Missouri)
7. **Absolution** (Torrance, California)
8. **Geisthaus** (Sacramento, California)
9. **Floodland** (Seattle)
10. **Brujos** (Portland, Oregon)
11. **Monkish** (Torrance, California)
12. **Triptych** (Savoy, Illinois)
13. **Bierstadt Lagerhaus** (Denver)
14. **Lumen** (Omaha, Nebraska)
15. **Side Project** (Maplewood, Missouri)
16. **Everywhere** (Orange, California)
17. **Cerebral** (Denver)
18. **Gold Dot & Heater Allen** (McMinnville, Oregon)
19. **Wondrous** (Emeryville, California)
20. **Holy Mountain** (Seattle)

Midsized Regional

(25,000–100,000 barrels per year)

1. **Russian River** (Windsor, California)
2. **Tree House** (Charlton, Massachusetts)
3. **pFriem** (Hood River, Oregon)
4. **Breakside** (Portland, Oregon)
5. **Fort George** (Astoria, Oregon)
6. **Other Half** (Brooklyn, New York)
7. **Revolution** (Chicago)
8. **Toppling Goliath** (Decorah, Iowa)
9. **Half Acre** (Chicago)
10. **Maine Beer** (Freeport, Maine)
11. **Pizza Port** (Carlsbad, California)
12. **Fat Head's** (Middleburg Heights, Ohio)
13. **Saint Arnold** (Houston)
14. **Destihl** (Normal, Illinois)
15. **Fremont** (Seattle)
16. **Lawson's Finest** (Waitsfield, Vermont)
17. **North Coast** (Fort Bragg, California)
18. **Real Ale** (Blanco, Texas)
19. **Ballast Point** (San Diego)
20. **Big Grove** (Solon, Iowa)

Small Regional

(5,000–25,000 barrels per year)

1. **Pinthouse** (Austin)
2. **Hop Butcher For The World** (Chicago)
3. **Burial** (Asheville, North Carolina)
4. **Alvarado Street** (Monterey, California)
5. **Outer Range** (Frisco, Colorado)
6. **Meanwhile** (Austin)
7. **Ghost Town** (Oakland, California)
8. **Humble Sea** (Santa Cruz, California)
9. **Westbound & Down** (Erie, Colorado)
10. **Hill Farmstead** (Greensboro Bend, Vermont)
11. **Block 15** (Corvallis, Oregon)
12. **Cellarmaker** (Oakland, California)
13. **WeldWerks** (Greeley, Colorado)
14. **Pure Project** (San Diego)
15. **Schilling** (Littleton, New Hampshire)
16. **Trillium** (Canton, Massachusetts)
17. **The Alchemist** (Stowe, Vermont)
18. **Phase Three** (Lake Zurich, Illinois)
19. **Prost** (Northglenn, Colorado)
20. **Dovetail** (Chicago)

Large

(100,000+ barrels per year)

1. **Sierra Nevada** (Chico, California)
2. **New Glarus** (New Glarus, Wisconsin)
3. **Firestone Walker** (Paso Robles, California)
4. **Allagash** (Portland, Maine)
5. **Bell's** (Kalamazoo, Michigan)
6. **Stone** (Escondido, California)
7. **Odell** (Fort Collins, Colorado)
8. **Founders** (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
9. **New Belgium** (Fort Collins, Colorado)
10. **Boulevard** (Kansas City, Missouri)
11. **Dogfish Head** (Milton, Delaware)
12. **Deschutes** (Bend, Oregon)
13. **Goose Island** (Chicago)
14. **Avery** (Boulder, Colorado)
15. **Wicked Weed** (Asheville, North Carolina)
16. **Three Floyds** (Munster, Indiana)
17. **Augustiner** (Munich)
18. **Great Lakes** (Cleveland)
19. **Guinness** (Dublin)
20. **Ommegang** (Cooperstown, New York)

Editors' Picks: Best 20 in 2025

Wayward Lane Terraform Fresh Hop Edition 2025

(Schoharie, New York)



Capturing the essence of fresh hops in a beer that stands up to today's expectations for flavor saturation and intensity poses a particular challenge: Dry hop too hard, and you blow out that delicate fresh-hop character; play it too light, and you lose edge definition and contrast.

This fresh-hop beer from East Coasters Wayward Lane threads the needle deftly, offering spicy melon and mango salad in the aroma, voluminous orange oil with a bit of berry, stone fruit, clean petrol, and white scallion in the flavor, and a touch of old-school pine character in the finish. Just as the juicier fruit notes start to feel saturated, a light pithiness with a faint touch of astringency reins it back in—texture and flavor intertwine.

The fact that the brewery is nearly 3,000 miles away from the farm that grew the Strata isn't lost on us—but when tasting it blind, none of that matters. From the engaging aroma to the elegant structure and refined balance in flavor, it captures the essence of hops from fresh cone to dried pellet.—J.B.

Meanwhile Japanese Lager

(Austin)



As we suggested last year when pFriem's won a spot here, American brewers have decided that Japanese-style lagers should be about *flavor*. This one is part of a rotating series of lagers and—according to a Meanwhile salesperson at the Great American Beer Festival—this is one that customers ask for well outside of its April–June window. Our judges would be right there with them, having scored this a 98 back in April. “Clean, crisp, and

dry, with soft complexity and delicate notes of dried rose petals and green tea,” they wrote. “Very spring-like—flowers budding on young limbs with a pleasant woody note.” Sorachi hops amplify the fermentation character, blending zesty notes that become more apparent retronasal. Although the bitterness is relatively low, it packs a quick, clean punch. (Bonus tip, if you go: Meanwhile has been known to infuse this lager with yuzu, adding a zesty twist—for taproom customers only.) —S.H.



Readers' Choice

Readers' Top 25 Beers of 2025

(2024 rank is listed in parentheses)

1. **Pinthouse** Electric Jellyfish (new)
2. **Russian River** Pliny the Elder (1)
3. **Absolution** 405 IPA (new)
4. **Sierra Nevada** Pale Ale (2)
5. **Highland Park** Timbo Pils (3)
6. **Alvarado Street** Mai Tai P.A. (6)
7. **North Park** Hop-Fu! (4)
8. **Sierra Nevada** Celebration (11)
9. **Pinthouse** Training Bines (new)
10. **Bell's** Two Hearted IPA (14)
11. **Bierstadt** Slow Pour Pils (15)
12. **Hop Butcher** Grid (new)
13. **Goldfinger** Original Lager (21)
14. **Guinness** Stout (new)
15. **Russian River** Blind Pig (10)
16. **Breakside** IPA (7)
17. **New Glarus** Spotted Cow (new)
18. **Block 15** Sticky Hands (20)
19. **Outer Range** In the Steep (5)
20. **Lawson's Finest** Sip of Sunshine (new)
21. **Burial** Surf Wax (17)
22. **Breakside** Wanderlust IPA (8)
23. **Westbound & Down** Westbound IPA (new)
24. **Humble Sea** Socks & Sandals (new)
25. **Tree House** Julius (18)

How Are Readers' Choice Lists Determined?

We polled thousands of our magazine and newsletter subscribers, and we asked you for everything from your favorite beers and breweries to styles, beer bars, and more. The results of that survey are presented here under the headers labeled “Readers' Choice.” To make it easy to follow, we've placed all of the Readers' Choice categories on this gold background.



Readers' Choice

Who Brews It Best?

The diversity of styles is one thing that makes craft beer great. Here are your favorite brewers in eight different craft-beer niches. The 2024 rank is noted in parentheses.

FAVORITE AMERICAN OR WC IPA BREWER

1. Russian River (1)
2. Pinthouse (17)
3. Absolution (+)
4. Hop Butcher (+)
5. Green Cheek (4)
6. Sierra Nevada (7)
7. Highland Park (5)
8. North Park (2)
9. Burial (8)
10. Breakside (3)
11. Westbound & Down (10)
12. Alvarado Street (9)
13. Alma Mader (+)
14. Ghost Town (20)
15. Triptych (+)
16. Lumen (+)
17. BKS (+)
18. Block 15 (+)
19. Fort George (+)
20. Bell's (14)

FAVORITE HAZY IPA BREWER

1. Pinthouse (20)
2. Hop Butcher (13)
3. Tree House (1)
4. BKS (+)
5. Burial (2)
6. Green Cheek (3)
7. Brujos (12)
8. Humble Sea (+)
9. Monkish (6)
10. North Park (4)
11. Outer Range (5)
12. Triptych (+)
13. Highland Park (7)
14. Civil Society (+)
15. Alvarado Street (9)
16. Lumen (17)
17. Cerebral (+)
18. Sierra Nevada (+)
19. Trillium (19)
20. Ruse (+)

FAVORITE SAISON BREWER

1. Dupont (1)
2. Sante Adairius (2)
3. Floodland (5)
4. Fair Isle (3)
5. Boulevard (4)
6. Jester King (11)
7. Cellar West (10)
8. Is/Was (14)
9. Side Project (12)
10. Burial (9)
11. Hill Farmstead (6)
12. Holy Mountain (+)
13. Allagash (8)
14. The Seed (+)
15. Highland Park (+)
16. de Garde (+)
17. Off Color (18)
18. Upright (19)
19. Blindhouse (7)
20. Oxbow (13)

FAVORITE STOUT OR PORTER BREWER

1. Guinness (1)
2. Burial (3)
3. Side Project (2)
4. Deschutes (16)
5. Fort George (11)
6. Founders (6)
7. Goose Island (4)
8. Highland Park (5)
9. Left Hand (8)
10. North Coast (13)
11. Revolution (15)
12. Bottle Logic (9)
13. Holy Mountain (17)
14. Private Press (12)
15. 512 (+)
16. Bearded Brewer (+)
17. Breakside (7)
18. Firestone Walker (14)
19. Fremont (19)
20. Great Lakes (+)

FAVORITE ABBEY-STYLE BREWER

1. St. Bernardus (1)
2. Chimay (5)
3. Westvleteren (4)
4. Westmalle (2)
5. The Lost Abbey (7)
6. Allagash (3)
7. Rochefort (6)
8. Duvel (11)
9. Monkless (10)
10. Boulevard (14)
11. Ommegang (9)
12. New Glarus (+)
13. New Belgium (8)
14. La Trappe (+)
15. Monkish (+)
16. Bruz (12)
17. Russian River (18)
18. Burial (+)
19. Destihl (16)
20. pFriem (+)

FAVORITE PALE ALE BREWER

1. Sierra Nevada (1)
2. Breakside (3)
3. Hop Butcher (+)
4. Cellarmaker (2)
5. Half Acre (5)
6. Highland Park (7)
7. Westbound & Down (+)
8. Burial (6)
9. Green Cheek (4)
10. New Glarus (+)
11. Pinthouse (+)
12. Russian River (20)
13. Three Floyds (12)
14. Alvarado Street (10)
15. pFriem (17)
16. Alma Mader (+)
17. Oskar Blues (9)
18. Fort George (+)
19. Humble Sea (+)
20. Firestone Walker (+)

FAVORITE SOUR OR WILD-ALE BREWER

1. Jester King (4)
2. de Garde (2)
3. Cantillon (1)
4. Side Project (9)
5. Alvarado Street (3)
6. Burial (6)
7. Floodland (14)
8. Sante Adairius (8)
9. The Bruery (+)
10. Great Notion (+)
11. New Glarus (+)
12. Russian River (15)
13. Drekker (11)
14. Destihl (10)
15. Casey (7)
16. Crooked Stave (5)
17. Fair Isle (12)
18. Blue Owl (+)
19. Wicked Weed (16)
20. Off Color (+)

FAVORITE LAGER BREWER

1. Goldfinger (3)
2. Bierstadt Lagerhaus (1)
3. Geisthaus (+)
4. Heater Allen/Gold Dot (4)
5. Highland Park (2)
6. Schilling (10)
7. pFriem (12)
8. Wayfinder (8)
9. Wondrous (+)
10. Burial (6)
11. Dovetail (14)
12. Alma Mader (+)
13. Humble Sea (+)
14. BKS (+)
15. Chukanut (9)
16. Prost (15)
17. New Glarus (+)
18. Alvarado Street (13)
19. Breakside (5)
20. Cohesion (11)



Readers' Choice

Best Beer Bars

From the smallest Belgian beer café to the largest multi-tap beer extravaganza, these are your 20 favorite places to gather for beer in 2025.

1. **A Beer Club** Eugene, Oregon (10)
2. **Toronado** San Francisco (7)
3. **Orange & Brew** Downers Grove, Illinois (8)
4. **Hopleaf** Chicago (5)
5. **The Beer Temple** Chicago (6)
6. **The Whale** various (2)
7. **Oak & Steel** Kansas City (+)
8. **The Brick Store Pub** Atlanta (4)
9. **Monk's Café** Philadelphia (3)
10. **The Beer Mongers** Portland, Oregon (9)
11. **Churchkey** Washington, D.C. (+)
12. **Novare Res** Portland, Maine (15)
13. **Casual Pint** various (7)
14. **Little Lager** St. Louis (+)
15. **Hops & Pie** Denver (+)
16. **Romero's K9 Club** Lafayette, Colorado (17)
17. **Ale Arsenal** San Carlos, California (+)
18. **Fermental** Wilmington, North Carolina (+)
19. **Yard House** various (11)
20. **Banger's** Austin (+)



Your Favorite Beer Cities

The best cities in the United States and the world for drinking craft beer in 2025 are ...



U.S. CITIES

1. **Chicago**, Illinois (5)
2. **Austin**, Texas (1)
3. **Denver**, Colorado (1)
4. **San Diego**, California (2)
5. **Portland**, Oregon (4)
6. **Asheville**, North Carolina (3)
7. **Seattle**, Washington (7)
8. **Kansas City**, Missouri (16)
9. **Portland**, Maine (8)
10. **San Francisco Bay**, California (+)
11. **Los Angeles**, California (9)
12. **Sacramento**, California (+)
13. **Omaha**, Nebraska (6)
14. **New York**, New York (+)
15. **Monterey Bay**, California (13)
16. **St. Louis**, Missouri (+)
17. **Eugene**, Oregon (+)
18. **Boston**, Massachusetts (10)
19. **Bend**, Oregon (+)
20. **Fort Collins**, Colorado (14)

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

1. **Munich**, Germany (1)
2. **Brussels**, Belgium (2)
3. **Prague**, Czechia (4)
4. **London**, England (3)
5. **Dublin**, Ireland (7)
6. **Copenhagen**, Denmark (5)
7. **Bamberg**, Germany (8)
8. **Tokyo**, Japan (+)
9. **Berlin**, Germany (+)
10. **Amsterdam**, Netherlands (9)