

“Other high-quality beers” – FAQs

Introduction

The definition of what we mean by high-quality beer is a work in progress. Examples of what this would include are beers which are unpasteurised, and unfiltered or rough filtered only. The definition is being developed by broad consultation and considering what brewing practices may be key to defining quality. We have consulted brewers from family breweries, established microbreweries and new, cutting-edge microbreweries. We have also consulted experts in the pub trade and technical experts within CAMRA's Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

Further meetings of stakeholders and technical experts will continue to refine the definition so that it is much clearer which beers can fit under this definition, and which do not. It is important to stress that this definition is not current CAMRA policy, and will not become CAMRA policy until and unless it is voted on by the membership.

The below FAQs aim to provide further background information.

What does pasteurisation mean?

Pasteurisation is a way of killing micro-organisms, including yeast, by heating beer to 60 °C. It can also change the flavour of the beer by introducing caramel or cardboard-like notes. Most bottled and keg beers from global and national breweries are pasteurised.

What does filtration mean?

Filtration is a process for removing yeast and hop debris from a beer before packaging. If a beer is completely filtered all yeast is removed and some important flavour compounds can also be removed, adversely affecting the flavour.

What is the difference between unfiltered and rough filtered?

Unfiltered beer is literally that; as it comes out of the fermenting vessel, with all the yeast. Rough filtration removes the bigger yeast particles that might block filling equipment or pipes, but leaves behind some finer yeast particles. It doesn't remove flavour compounds and in some cases can still allow the beer to undergo some secondary fermentation.

Would this definition include: All real ales?

Yes. All real ales are unpasteurised and either unfiltered or rough filtered, but still have at least 1,000,000 yeast cells per ml. Any beers claiming to be real ales but not meeting this description are therefore not real ales by our definition, but could still be high-quality beers.

Keg beer?

Yes, some keg beers are unpasteurised and unfiltered/rough filtered and allowed to continue conditioning in the keg. Examples include Keykeg beers like the newly-launched BrewDog live beer, or KeyKeg beers from brewers like Thornbridge, Magic Rock or Brass Castle. Unfiltered, unpasteurised beers are already supported in KeyKeg, but many rough filtered beers do not have sufficient yeast to meet our definition of real ales and would be supported. Some unfiltered and unpasteurised beers are dispensed using CO2 like other keg beers, and could be supported.

Craft beer?

Craft beer is a marketing term which does not have a universally-accepted meaning. But some 'craft beers' would be covered by this definition.

Lagers produced by global brands?

No. These products are filtered and pasteurized, and do not have the maturation period, where the subtle flavours develop, of many lagers produced by smaller brewers and in countries such as Germany and the Czech Republic.

Real ale in a bottle?

Yes. Real ale in a bottle is unpasteurised, and either unfiltered or filtered and reseeded with a different yeast for bottle-conditioning.

Other bottled beers?

Yes. Some bottled beers are rough filtered and unpasteurised. A good example is Thornbridge Jaipur.

Canned beer?

Yes. There is an increasing trend to can unpasteurised and unfiltered or rough filtered beers which can continue conditioning in the can, just like real ale in a bottle. Beers from Moor Brewery or Beavertown are good examples of this. However, many canned beers are still pasteurized and filtered, including the vast majority of bulk canned beer, including "smooth" beers available from supermarkets.