

The Brewsletter: Black Chocolate Stout




While most people get up early each day, climb into their cars and merge into the grind of a typical work week, I have the honor and privilege of pouring brew in Downtown New Bedford for a living. It has provided me with a great opportunity to drink some excellent beers and meet some excellent people. My favorite part of the job is talking about beer with my patrons at Rose Alley Ale House. Who better to talk about something I am passionate about than with people who share the same passion?

As a direct result of my profession, I have become very knowledgeable in the world of beer. I offer my opinion here only as an enthusiastic guide to this world, as obviously everyone has their own taste in beverages. Depending on your personal style and interests, some of my suggestions may not be what you are looking for. This is perfectly fine, because the purpose of *The Brewsletter* is not to force you into liking something, it is to expand your horizons, give you some new options, and teach you a little bit about what you are drinking.

Many people shy away from a brew they can't see through, only to deprive themselves of what may be a life changing experience. While most people order the same beers all the time, I try to encourage them to branch out and try something new. Drinking a different beer than you're used to doesn't have to be a big deal: You don't have to commit to buying a keg, or even a six-pack. Many liquor stores allow you to grab

a couple singles from the cooler and create your own sixer. It's a great way to experiment with several new brews at one time. Of course, you always have the option of coming by Rose Alley Ale House. I'll be happy to pour you a sample of any of our 38 beers on draft, or even build a beer flight for you!

As the temperature drops and our heating bills rise, we tend to naturally gravitate toward heartier food and drink, and beer is no exception. Darker, bolder, and heavier beers with higher alcohol content seem to be winter trends. That is why when we are talking about winter beers, we are talking stouts and porters.

So what is a stout, what is a porter, and what is the  difference between the two? In the most basic terms, stouts and porters are dark beers made using roasted malt or barley, in addition to the usual hops, water, and yeast. However, the difference between the two is something both recreational and professional beer drinkers have been discussing for years, due to the fact that the histories of these two types of beer are so intertwined. Considering the recent spike in the interest of more flavorful brews, it's a question that is not going away anytime soon. Both stouts and porters have evolved with the craft beer boom in ways one never thought possible. From stouts brewed with chili or spruce tips, to porters brewed with massive amounts of coffee, the possibilities are endless. You can bet that anything that can be used to make a tasty brew will be, and if it hasn't been used yet...it will be.

A stout I always look forward to at this time of year is Brooklyn Brewery's "Black Chocolate Stout." Granted it isn't the most basic stout to start off with, but I feel its flavor is universal enough to satisfy any palate. This particular stout is what's known as a "Russian Imperial," which in the beer world means you're getting double, or extra alcohol. In the 18th century, brewers in England were produced this beer for export to the Russian Empire. The beer needed to be big,

versatile, bold and high in alcohol to survive the voyages through the cold, rough countryside...and so it was. This style stout was favored by Russian royalty, including Empress Catherine the Great.



A great way to enjoy Black Chocolate Stout is to pour it into a snifter.

Black Chocolate Stout pours viscous and slow while delivering a commanding 10.6% alcohol by volume. The head is thick but dissipates quickly. The smell is of rich baker's chocolate, and is also a bit hot. One can definitely detect the high alcohol content in the nose. As it warms up, its bouquet opens and leads to scents of coffee and dark fruit, as the smell of alcohol seems to be a bit more masked. The brew itself is pitch black and opaque, and sticks to the side of the glass quite nicely.

Black Chocolate Stout doesn't simply taste like a chocolate flavored beer. Instead, it has an array of flavors that are noticeable right away. Dark chocolate and coffee nail the palate in the front while rich, dark fruit accompany the residual sugars. I taste date, raisin, licorice, and coffee, mixed together with a touch of hot alcohol. This beer sticks to your mouth, and gives your mouth the feel of a liqueur. There is no need to rush through this bad boy. Instead try pouring it in a snifter and spending some time with it, or you may hurt yourself.

You can find this brew at any decent sized liquor store during the holiday season. It does have a limited release, however, so don't procrastinate or you may miss out. You can also find this brew on draft at Rose Alley Ale House offered in 5, 10, and 16 ounce pours. Hope to see you there soon!

Cheers!

