



What makes beer develop off-flavours?

Before you begin your investigation into the realm of off-flavours, it is critical that you understand that these qualities are sometimes the actual characteristics of a beer's style or signature.

Whether you are a home-brewer or a passionate lover of beer, off-flavours do not add to the refreshing, quenching aspects of a night with a great brew. As a guide to your beer-experience, here is a list of odd-ball beer taste-sensations and their causes and cures -

Acetaldehyde – This is an intermediate compound in the formation of ethanol. If beer is not given ample time to age and condition, it develops the flavour profile of green apples or farm-fresh pumpkin.

If the ethanol oxidises or becomes contaminated with bacteria, it moves one step further, and takes on a more cidery taste. These cidery flavours often caused by cane sugar in a recipe. Usual cure: longer cold storage - don't use sugar.

Alcoholic – This profile is characterised by a hot and overly spiced flavour, accompanied by a wine-like aroma. It tends to impart a prickly feel to the lips, throughout the mouth, and in the back of the throat.

When fermentation occurs at too high a temperature, higher weight fusel oils and alcohols are released, rather than lower weight ethanol.

Esters – These fruity profiles are generally produced by the strain of yeast used. Higher fermentation temperatures produce more fruity esters, as well. Usual cure: Increased aging and conditioning, correct yeast selection lower fermentation temperature.

Grassy - This profile has the characteristics of chlorophyll or freshly cut grass, sometimes with a musty aroma. It may be caused by poorly stored malt or hops, hops that were not adequately dried in proper conditions, or the result of aldehydes that produce the odor of green grass.

Light-struck – These cat-litter or skunky aromas are due to a sulphur-based corruption of hop flavours, the resultant effect of exposure of beer to sun or fluorescent lighting conditions.

Use brown glass bottles; brew in a stable, dark environment light struck beer can occur in just a few minutes of exposure.