

Make Mine Mild

by Bill Nevits, *The w · i · z · a · r · d · s*, August 2001

Introduction & Style Overview

Mention mild in a crowd and see what you get. If you're lucky, you'll be greeted with a blank stare. If you're hanging out with the beer geeks, you're more lucky to get a puzzled stare or a look of disgust. But it doesn't have to be that way. Mild is a wonderfully flavorful beer style, albeit a little misunderstood. Mild refers to the level of bitterness not a lack of flavor. When you think of mild, think mildly hopped or "not bitter" and you'll have the best description.⁴

Although we typically hear of only dark milds, they can be light, dark and anywhere in between. In any case, they are still full of flavor. In addition to being low in bitterness milds are usually also low in alcohol and slightly lower in carbonation. Typical milds have an OG in the 1030s and an ABV rate around 3%.

You can see the BJCP's description of a mild in their style guide summary shown in the column to the right. While generally a good description of the style, it is interesting to see how the light milds are not recognized! A better way to understand the style might be to look at some classic English examples shown on the following page.

Dark milds are the more flavorful in the mild family and this flavor is usually derived from the use of dark roasted malts and cereal adjuncts. Light milds are typically more like mildly hopped ordinary pale ale than anything else.

To many, Mild can be the ultimate

According to the BJCP

10. BROWN ALE

10A. Mild

Aroma: Slight mild malt/brown malt aroma, with some fruitiness. No hop aroma.

Appearance: Medium to dark brown or mahogany color. A few light brown examples exist. May have very little head due to low carbonation.

Flavor: Malty, though not roasty, with a lightly nutty character. Flavors may include: vinous, licorice, plum or raisin, or chocolate. Usually fairly well balanced, though some are sweetly malt-oriented.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body. Low carbonation and relatively high residual sweetness contribute to a full mouthfeel relative to the gravity.

Overall Impression: A light-flavored, malt-accented beer that is readily suited to drinking in quantity. Refreshing, yet flavorful.

History: May have evolved as one of the elements of early porters. In modern terms, the name "mild" refers to the relative lack of hop bitterness. Originally, the "mildness" may have referred to the fact that this beer was young and did not yet have the moderate sourness that aged batches had.

Ingredients: English mild/brown malt, or a combination of English pale and darker malts should comprise the grist. English hop varieties would be most suitable, though their character is muted.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.030-1.038

IBUs: 10-20 FG: 1.008-1.013

SRM: 10-25 ABV: 2.5-4.0%

Commercial Examples: Brain's Dark, Banks's Mild, Highgate Mild, Fuller's Hock, McMullin AK, Robinson's Best Mild.

summertime beer. It has always been a beer meant to be drunk in quantity, more of a "restorer than a refresher."³ Maybe a better way to describe it would be the "one beer to have when you're having more than one!"

Although most milds are English, a few have started to appear in America, most notably in the brewpubs. It is almost always served as a

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British Mild Summary								
Mild Brewer	Type	OG	IBU	Ingredients²	Tasting Notes² Nose	Tasting Notes² Palate	Tasting Notes² Comments	Comments
Original AK McMullens	Light	1033°	22	East Anglian pale malt (79%), chocolate malt (1%), maltose syrup (14%), flaked maize (6%), Whitbread Goldings Variety whole hops	Hop flower and light fruit aroma	Sweet malt, fruit and delicate hop in mouth, good dry finish with orange peel and faint chocolate notes	A superb tasty, well attenuated ale	Recently reclassified as a pale ale!
Black Cat Mild Moorhouses Brewery Ltd.	Light	1034°		Maris Otter Pale malt (80.5%), chocolate malt (1%), flaked maize (9.5%), invert sugar (9%), Fuggles whole hops	Roasted grain and nut aroma	Chocolate notes in the mouth, sweet dry finish	Pale mild with tasty malt character	2000 Champion Beer of Britain
Best Mild Hook Norton	Light	1032°	22	Maris Otter Pale Malt (94%), flaked maize (6%), caramel for color, Challenger, Fuggles and Goldings whole hops	Light malt and nut aromas	Malt in the mouth with good hop finish and some fruit notes	Distinctive and tasty light mild	
Golden Mild Timothy Taylor & Co. Ltd.	Light	1033°		Golden Promise Malt, touch of caramel, Fuggles and Goldings whole hops	Light, delicate hops and malt aromas	Sweet malt flavor with short lightly bitter finish	Quaffable pleasant light mild	Past Champion Beer of Britain Finalist
Best Dark Timothy Taylor & Co. Ltd.	Dark	1033°		Golden Promise Malt, touch of caramel, Fuggles and Goldings whole hops	N/A	N/A	N/A	Same beer as Golden Mild with extra caramel
Dark Mild George Bateman & Son Ltd.	Dark	1033°	22	Pipkin Pale Ale Malt (60%), crystal malt (12%), wheat (4%), invert sugar (19%), caramel for coloring (5%), Goldings whole hops	Biscuit and hazelnut aromas	Pleasant chewy malt in the mouth, dry finish with roast malt and caramel notes	Fine example of a tasty dark red mild	My favorite beer of all time! Past Champion Beer of Britain Finalist
Sarah Hughes Ruby Red Sarah Hughes Brewery	Dark	1058°	30	Pale malt, crystal malt, Fuggles and Goldings hops	Tempting Aroma of malt and vinous fruit	Rich mouth filling malt and hops, intense dry finish with tannin and fruit	Superb dark brown beer with a gravity that recalls milds of the 19 th century.	
Banks's Mild Ale Banks's	Amber	1036°		Not Revealed	Delicate hop aroma with fruit notes developing	Fine balance of malt and hops with dry vanilla finish and hints of nuts and caramel	A superb, quaffable session mild with appealing amber color	

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cask ale in both England and America and very few bottled versions exist. One of the best, and easiest ways, to find a decent mild in America is to brew it yourself! And it isn't that difficult.

History

Although a mild from the 19th century might not resemble what we would expect today, it might not be that far off.

Mild was originally a style of beer meaning "not sour." In the 19th century, the choice beers of the day were aged or "staled" where they developed a sour taste. Believe it or not, this was the top shelf of the times. All this made mild an easy beer to make taking fewer ingredients, less time and less effort. That also made it a little bit cheaper. Perhaps that is why it became known as the working man's beer, popular among farm workers, miners and laborers in the new industrial era. It remained as England's most popular beer until just after WWII. After the war, the style started to fade away. Maybe it was due to the overall decline in cask ale, maybe it was the newer production methods eliminated the need for it or maybe there fewer laborers and more office workers trying to dodge the mild stigma. The good news is that after being in decline for years, mild is starting to make a comeback thanks to the numerous regional and small brewers in England and America.

Like many other things, the mild style has changed over the years. While it has always been a style low in bitterness, the sourness has disappeared and the strength has seen considerable change. In 1805, a

Hillside Dark Mild

This is my favorite beer to brew and drink. It's the one that always gets asked for. A nice, drinkable beer.

Ingredients:

6# 2 oz. English Pale Malt
1# 1 oz. English dark crystal malt (120L)
14 oz. Biscuit Malt
4 oz Chocolate Malt
6 oz Torrified Wheat
1.0 oz. 5.0% Kent Goldings (60 min)
0.4 oz. 5.0% Kent Goldings (30 min)
1 tsp. Irish Moss (15 min)
0.5 oz. 5.0% Kent Goldings (10 min)
0.75 oz. 5.0% Kent Goldings (dry hop in secondary)
Wyeast British Ale Yeast (#1028)

O.G. - 1.034
F.G. - 1.006
ABV - 3.6%
Estimated Color - 45 SRM
Estimated Bitterness - 27 IBU

Adjust the pale malt for your expected yield and the bittering hops for your expected utilization. Use a single step infusion mash at 152F for 90 minutes or until starch conversion is reached. I use 2 and 1/4 gallons of water for the mash and another 4 and 1/2 gallons at 176 degrees for sparging. I also treat the mash with a 1/4 tsp gypsum and a 1/2 tsp kosher salt and 1 1/2 tsp chalk for London style water, but you might want to adjust this to suit your own brewing water. Boiling time is 1 1/2 half hours.

Ferment for 1 week in primary. Add dry hops to secondary and ferment 1 additional week. Force carbonate to 2 volumes (40 degree beer at 15 psi).

typical mild might have had an OG of 1085. In 1871 the OG dropped to 1070, in 1913 it fell again to 1050 before settling at it's current rate of 1034.⁴

Brewing Techniques

Brewing a mild is ideally an all-grain proposition. I have heard that its hard to get

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the lighter body and malt flavor from an extract.

Malts and Adjuncts: The dark milds are dark from the use of dark roasted malts and adjuncts. They should exhibit a malty flavor but not necessarily an overly roasted flavor. Typical specialty malts used are chocolate and crystal. Common adjuncts include flaked maize, torrified wheat and a variety of sugars. Light milds are a different story. Recipes for a light mild are fairly simple. You should start with an ordinary pale ale with an OG in the mid-1030s and cut back on the hops. In any case, the malts should be an English variety. Perhaps a light mild might be a good candidate for an extract beer! There is such a thing as mild ale malt, which has been in the kiln a little longer than your average pale malt. It is, however, interesting to note that it is almost never used in the classic milds of today. I would suggest it be avoided for your homebrew as well.

Sugar: Many commercial milds use sugar to lighten the mouthfeel of the beer. To compensate for the extra sugar, they also use a greater proportion of crystal malts. To eliminate some of this additional sugar shown in the cloning recipes, consider cutting back the crystal malt and replacing it with a pale malt.⁵

Mashing: Brewing a mild certainly requires nothing more than a single infusion mash. A sweeter, drier beer with a little less body would seem to call for a lower mash temperature. In the Brew Your Own Real Ale At Home recipes shown, the recommended mash temperature is 146°F. Keeping in mind

the higher temperatures increases body, I usually mash around 150°F.

Hops: Remembering that a mild is mildly hopped or less bitter, the hop level must be set correctly or you'll end up with just another brown ale! Shoot for an IBU level in the very low twenties. Since most milds are English, it wouldn't hurt to keep in mind most of them use English hops although this could be open to experimentation without drastically negative effects. Most milds are also served as cask beers, which are typically dry hopped, so dry hopping would also be a good idea to get the true flavor.

Carbonation: Milds are generally lower in carbonation. When force carbonating, shoot for 2.2 volumes. When priming, cut back on the sugar somewhat.

Serving: When in England, the English beers cask ales are served at cellar temperature or around 59°F. To get the full appreciation for the mild, I would recommend the same.

Old Time Mixers¹

Half-n-Half – half mild and half bitter
Shandy – half mild and half ginger beer

References

- ¹ Brown, Howard, I'm a Mild Man Myself, But ..., Zymurgy, Fall, 1980
- ² Protz, Roger, The Real Ale Drinker's Almanac
- ³ Jackson, Michael, Beer Companion
- ⁴ Wheeler, Graham and Protz, Roger, Brew Your Own Real Ale At Home
- ⁵ Daniels, Ray, Mild-Mannered Beer, Zymurgy, Sept./Oct. 1998

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Cloning Milds⁴

Bateman's Dark Mild	McMullen Original AK
<p>OG 1033</p> <p>Mash: 2100g pale malt (60%) 420g crystal malt (12%) 175g chocolate malt (5%) 140g torrified wheat (4%)</p> <p>In the copper: 700g invert sugar (19%) 55g Goldings hops (start of boil) 10g Goldings hops (last 15 minutes)</p> <p>Mash temperature: 63C Mash time: 90 minutes Boil time: 90 minutes Final gravity: 1005 Bitterness: 22 EBU</p>	<p>OG 1033</p> <p>Mash: 2800g pale malt (79%) 210g flaked maize (6%) 35g chocolate malt (1%)</p> <p>In the copper: 250g invert sugar (7%) 250g glucose syrup (7%) 55g Whitbread Goldings hops (start of boil) 1 tsp Irish Moss (last 15 minutes)</p> <p>Mash temperature: 63C Mash time: 90 minutes Boil time: 90 minutes Final gravity: 1006 Bitterness: 22 EBU</p>
Hook Norton Best Mild	Sarah Hughes Ruby Red
<p>OG 1032</p> <p>Mash: 3350g pale malt (93%) 220g flaked maize (6%) 35g black malt (1%)</p> <p>In the copper: 18g Challenger hops (start of boil) 15g Fuggles hops (start of boil) 13g Goldings hops (start of boil) 13g Goldings hops (last 15 minutes) 1 tsp Irish Moss (last 15 minutes)</p> <p>Mash temperature: 63C Mash time: 90 minutes Boil time: 90 minutes Final gravity: 1008 Bitterness: 22 EBU</p>	<p>OG 1058</p> <p>Mash: 5000g pale malt (75%) 1650g crystal malt (25%)</p> <p>In the copper: 41g Fuggles hops (start of boil) 35g Goldings hops (start of boil) 20g Goldings hops (last 15 minutes)</p> <p>Mash temperature: 68C Mash time: 120 minutes Boil time: 120 minutes Final gravity: 1014 Bitterness: 30 EBU</p>
<p>Note, these recipes are from an English book where the final brewing volume is 23 liters. You should adjust all the ingredients for your brewing volume and efficiency but make sure you keep the same proportions as the above recipe.</p>	