

Introduction & Style Overview

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. (2)

Although we typically hear of only dark milds, they can be light, dark and anywhere in between. 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. 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%. Mild has always been a beer meant to be drunk in quantity, more of a “restorer than a refresher.” (1)

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 are 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 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 its current rate of 1034. (2)

BJCP Style Guideline

There is one guideline for English Mild and while the description doesn’t specially call it dark mild (like it did in 2015) it certainly implies we are most often talking about a darker beer.

	OG Range	FG Range	IBU Range	SRM Range	ABV Range
13A Mild	1.030 – 1.038	1.008 – 1.013	10-25	14-25	3.0%-3.8%
Overall Impression					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dark, low-gravity, malt-focused British session ale readily suited to drinking in quantity. Refreshing, yet flavorful for its strength, with a wide range of dark malt or dark sugar expression. 					
Aroma					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low to moderate malt aroma, and may have some fruitiness. The malt expression can take on a wide range of character, which can include caramel, toffee, grainy, toasted, nutty, 					

chocolate, or lightly roasted. Low earthy or floral hop aroma optional. Very low diacetyl optional.

Appearance

- Copper to dark brown or mahogany color. Generally clear, although is traditionally unfiltered. Low to moderate off-white to tan head; retention may be poor.

Flavor

- Generally a malty beer, although may have a very wide range of malt- and yeast-based flavors (e.g., malty, sweet, caramel, toffee, toast, nutty, chocolate, coffee, roast, fruit, licorice, plum, raisin) over a bready, biscuity, or toasty base. Can finish sweet to dry. Versions with darker malts may have a dry, roasted finish. Low to moderate bitterness, enough to provide some balance but not enough to overpower the malt in the balance. Moderate fruity esters optional. Low hop flavor optional. Low diacetyl optional.

Mouthfeel

- Light to medium body. Generally low to medium low carbonation. Roast-based versions may have a light astringency. Sweeter versions may seem to have a rather full mouthfeel for the gravity. Should not be flat, watery, or thin.

Comments

- Most are low-gravity session beers around 3.2%, although some versions may be made in the stronger (4%+) range for export, festivals, seasonal or special occasions. Generally served on cask; session-strength bottled versions don't often travel well. A wide range of interpretations are possible. Pale (medium amber to light brown) versions exist, but these are even more rare than dark milds; these guidelines only describe the modern dark version.

Style Comparison

- Some versions may seem like lower gravity modern English Porters. Much less sweet than London Brown Ale.

Characteristic Ingredients

- Pale British base malts (often fairly dextrinous), crystal malt, dark malts or dark sugar adjuncts, may also include adjuncts such as flaked maize, and may be colored with brewer's caramel. Characterful British ale yeast. Any type of hops, since their character is muted and rarely is noticeable.

Brewing Techniques

Since our competition is for dark mild, that is what we will focus on here. If you want to make a light mild, consider starting with an ordinary pale ale with an OG in the mid-1030s and cut back on the hops.

In my opinion, there is something that makes it hard to duplicate the process used by the English brewers in significantly smaller batch sizes associated with home brew. They seem to use lower mash temperatures and sugars and get flavor body that doesn't seem to duplicate on the home brew scale. They also use brewer's caramel for coloring which isn't readily available in the US. These are typically compensated for in home brewing by other means (higher mash temp for body, avoiding added sugars to prevent thinning and drying and using dark grains in lieu of brewer's caramel for coloring).

Attachment A, which shows several award-winning British Milds along with their ingredients OG, IBU and tasting notes, can be used to get ideas on designing your own award winning mild.

Part of the challenge in brewing a mild is to get enough body and character into such as a small beer. Here are some ways to increase body that you may want to consider:

- Higher mash temperature
- Add Dextrin / Cara-pils malt – 2-10% in dark beers; 5-20% in light beers
- Add crystal malt, dextrin powder, lactose, flaked barley/oats
- Lower attenuating yeast
- Use grains that add body: Crystal, Caramel, Bohemian Pils, Dark Wheat, Mild Ale, Dark Munich and limit grains that don't add body: biscuit, chocolate (Palmer)
- Carbonation increases perceived body/mouth-feel (may not be mild appropriate)

Mash

- Brewing a mild certainly requires nothing more than a single infusion mash.

Mash/Grist

- Marris Otter is often used as the base malt (6)
- Pale Malt or Mild Ale Malt, which has been in the kiln a little longer than your average pale malt, can also be used as the base malt.
- 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.
- Get the darker color from darker grains such as chocolate, pale chocolate, carafa special or other dehusked roasted grains (versus the use of Brewer's Caramel which is not readily available in the US).
- 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. (3)

Mash/Water

- Consider the Brun'water profile for mild ale: Ca 50, Mg 0, Na 20, SO₄ 40, Cl 65

Mash/Temperature

- Mash at a higher temperature to get body (6)
 - Commercial brewers are in the 151-155° range. (4)
 - Many home brew recipes and brewers mash in the 154°-156° range.
 - Don't be afraid to get in the low 160s. (6)

Sparging

- Sparge water temp is up to 176°. Sparge slightly above the conversion temperature. Too high a sparge temperature leaches tannins and off flavors from the mash into the beer. (4)

- Gently re-circulate – this is crucial to mild. Pour onto a plate laid on the grain bed to act as a diffuser when adding the wort back into the mash tun. (4)
- Do not over sparge – stop when runnings are at 1012. (4)

Boil

- Dark sugars can add a touch of flavor and brewer's caramel adds color (6)
- A 60-minute boil should be more than adequate.

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!
- The use of English hops is traditional although this could be open to experimentation without drastically negative effects.
- Keep hop schedule simple, bittering and a 15-minute addition is fine (6)
- Most British milds are served as cask beers, which are typically dry hopped, so dry hopping might be a good idea to get the true flavor.

Yeast

- Use moderately attenuative strain. Don't let the beer get too dry. (4)
- Some commonly used yeasts: (6)
 - Wyeast 1968 London ESB Ale (my favorite), 1028 London Ale, 1318 London Ale III
 - White Labs WLP002 English Ale Yeast
 - Saf-Ale S04
 - Danstar Nottingham Ale

Fermentation

- Ferment at cool ale temperatures, usually between 60-68°F

Carbonation

- Carbonation is lower, typically in the 1-2 volumes range (too much makes it harsh and dry)
- Target 1.5 volumes for kegging and 2 volumes for bottling

Serving

- Typically served in a traditional pint glass from at cellar temperature or around 59°F

References

1. Jackson, Michael, [Beer Companion](#)
2. Wheeler, Graham and Protz, Roger, [Brew Your Own Real Ale At Home](#)
3. Daniels, Ray, Mild-Mannered Beer, [Zymurgy](#), Sept./Oct. 1998
4. Sutula, David, [Mild Ale \(Classic Book Styles Series\)](#)
5. Yeasts Used in Dark Mild Recipe, [Brewer's Friend website](#)
6. Dark Mild, Is it even real?, [Wizards Presentation by Craig](#)
7. Protz, Roger, [The Real Ale Drinker's Almanac](#)

Attachment A, British Mild Ale Analysis (7)

British Mild Summary								
Mild Brewer	Type	OG	IBU	Ingredients ⁷	Tasting Notes ⁷ Nose	Tasting Notes ⁷ Palate	Tasting Notes ⁷ 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! 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.	Strong example
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	