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Vintage Beer: A Taster's Guide To Brews That Improve Over Time



Synopsis

2014 Gold Medal Winner from the North American Guild of Beer Writers for Best Beer Book Â Like good wine, certain beers can be aged under the right conditions to enhance and change their flavors in interesting and delicious ways. Good candidates for cellaring are either strong, sour, or smoked beers, such as barleywines, rauchbiers, and lambics. Patrick Dawson gives a list of easy-to-follow rules that lay the groundwork for identifying these cellar-worthy beers and then delves into the mysteries behind how and why they age as they do. Beer styles known for aging well are discussed and detailed profiles of commonly available beers that fall into these categories are included. There is also a short travel guide for bars and restaurants that specialize in vintage beer gives readers a way to taste what this new craft beer frontier is all about.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Storey Publishing, LLC (March 11, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 161212156X

ISBN-13: 978-1612121567

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (27 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #275,159 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 inÂ Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Wine Tasting #198 inÂ Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Beer #381 inÂ Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Homebrewing, Distilling & Wine Making

Customer Reviews

The title of this book is a bit of a misnomer and may mislead potential readers. The word vintage to me referred to a drink (normally wine) of a given year (e.g. a 2008 vintage) or perhaps to mean an especially good year. So I thought this book would be just full of reviews of good or exotic beers I could buy in the stores. As a home-brewer, why would I want that? However, this little book is far more than that and I think it's a must-read for anyone who takes beer seriously. It's really all about how some beers greatly improve with extended aging and why some don't. Anybody who has tasted a good 5-year old English barley wine and a 5-year old can of American lager will know exactly what I'm talking about here. Mr. Dawson considers beer aging from many angles from the ingredients

used to make the beer, how the beer is made, how it's stored, cellar design and even what sort of bottles to best use. He goes into a lot of chemistry to explain the aging process without confounding the reader. As a home-brewer, this is wonderful stuff. Although the book is not specifically targeted at home-brewers there is so much information here that it can influence how they would make their beer. For instance, what are the best hops to use in an American barley wine? I didn't even know that this was an important question until I read this book. Apparently some hops improve the taste and some ruin it on aging. It's not just for home-brewers. Collectors that like to buy commercial beer in bulk and put it on storage (a bit like wine connoisseurs) will find this book invaluable. I've read a lot of books on beer making and much of the material here I haven't seen elsewhere.

Vintage Beer by Patrick Dawson. While most beers turn bad rather quickly some do indeed get better with age – like finer wines and classic spirits. This is the second beer book about deliciousness I have discovered and read/reviewed over as many days. For the last book (Beerology) – by Mirella Amato I have the pleasure of knowing the author – in this case I do not (yet) but I like the approach in this almost pocket sized book – just shy of 150 pages. Both the books have presented unique profiles and charts of the beers and their flavor profiles. In this case we see aging profiles – charts of the beers (rarely - perhaps never before? used in the more popular – non technical publications). Taking a self-deprecating approach to early failures the author shows us how he learned to overcome the issues with selecting beers worthy of aging and how to do it, then why it is worth doing so by providing some excellent sensory factors and descriptors for selecting many of the world classic beers (including the new Americana) to lay down for a year or a decade or two. I will be applying facets of his 14 rules into our own professional sensory training program. Like a semi-technical book on cheese and cheese flavor chemistry I recently read the author takes us on a journey of not-too technical though relevant and sound flavor notes – origins and descriptors and how they change with age. Oxidation, normally the enemy of many beers, is shown as playing out - sympathetically with the styles of beers that can withstand long periods alone in the cellar or long-term cooler. The only disappointing feature for me was a lack (actually a complete absence) of references to sources of crucial information within the text itself.

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