

The Rise of the Power Vegan Diet

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THE PERFECT FALL WEEKEND

- America's Top Running Trails
- Surfing Santa Barbara
- Southern Blues Road Trip

SPECIAL REPORT

THE CASE AGAINST LANCE ARMSTRONG

THE MOST BADASS SPORTS OWNER EVER

by **Matt Taibbi**

25 BEST BEERS ON EARTH
plus
WORLD'S GREATEST FOOD CITY

Michael Douglas

Return of a Fighter

GEAR

SMARTER, FASTER, GREENER CARS
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THE 25 BEST BEERS IN THE WORLD

by CHRISTIAN DEBENEDETTI & SETH FLETCHER

THANKS TO AN INFLUX OF SMALL-BATCH IMPORTERS (AND some big-footprint retailers such as Whole Foods), it's easier than ever to drink obscure brews from around the globe. At the same time, the American craft scene keeps getting better as ambitious brewmasters pioneer new methods and styles. So for our seventh annual beer survey, we started by asking craft-brew luminaries a simple question: What's the best beer in the world? Then we tried them all. The result? A been-there, drank-that guide to the greatest brew on the planet — plus 24 runners-up, in no particular order. Enjoy.

ROCHEFORT 10

BELGIUM

 What's most remarkable about the Rochefort 10, besides simply how damn good it is, is that this 415-year-old recipe can still startle. Technically called a quadrupel, with 11.3 percent alcohol by volume (ABV) and layer upon layer of flavors combining to render something akin to tawny port, the Rochefort 10 is the beer every Belgian brewmaster tries to imitate — light and spicy despite a wine-level strength (the average beer is about 5 percent ABV) and an astonishing richness.

Since 1595, the monks at the Trappist Abbaye de Notre Dame de Saint Rémy in southern Belgium have lived in silence and risen at 3:15 AM to start the day's batches, which involve the simplest ingredients: malt, hops, water, yeast, and Belgian brewing sugars. They produce three styles — dubbed six, eight, and 10, after an old strength indication that now correlates loosely to the number of weeks the brewers age each type — but it's the 10 that is king. Every sip is uniquely delicious: Sometimes you notice its unexpected spritziness, unusual in a mahogany-colored beer; sometimes it's the strange unfurling of flavors, from deep toffee and caramel to bright cherry.

The only way to taste the brew is in a bottle, which at \$8 to \$10 per 11 ounces is about twice the cost of a standard microbrew. But consider the price of a top-rated whiskey or wine — and then consider that the 10 is beyond mere beer: It's the ultimate affordable luxury.



USE THIS GLASS

It may look pretentious, but the tapered shape of a stemmed tulipier glass focuses a strong ale's aromas and keeps the wine-like complexities from going to waste (\$25 for set of two; riedel.com).

NOTEBOOK

RUSSIAN RIVER PLINY THE ELDER CALIFORNIA, USA

 With about double the alcohol and a bitterness eight or nine times that of a standard American lager, so-called imperial IPAs are the new benchmark for India pale ales, and Pliny is the flag bearer. It strives for — and pulls off — a perfect harmony between sweet, pale malts and fresh, grapefruit-like hops.

NOGNE O PORTER NORWAY

 Det Kompromisslose Bryggeriet ("the uncompromising brewery" to you and me) is a new-school microbrewery in the maritime town of Grimstad making big-hearted riffs on British, Belgian, and American styles. Its signature beer, translated as

BEST DRAFT BEER



HOPWORKS URBAN BREWERY ORGANIC LAGER

OREGON, USA

 An homage to the birthplace of the pilsner style, HUB's ample but not heavy Czech-style lager is found on tap in any number of Portland's best craft-beer bars (Apex, Produce Row Cafe, and Victory Bar being our favorites). Hands down, it's the best of the "session beers" — clean, low-alcohol easy-drinkers — that we've had this year.

"Barren Isle," comes from an Ibsen description of the desolate coastline near where the beers — including this roasty, chocolaty, slightly smoky, and piney porter — are made in minuscule batches.

JOLLY PUMPKIN ORO DE CALABAZA MICHIGAN, USA

 Technically speaking, this is a *bière de garde* (meaning it's a beer that gets better with age), but we can't resist busting open and sharing this oaky, spicy, floral, and slightly tart offering from outside Ann Arbor over wood-oven pizza the minute we find it.

MIKKELLER SIMCOE SINGLE- HOP IPA

DENMARK

 "Simcoe" is the citrusy, pine-scented variety of hybrid hops used to make this juicy, American-style IPA from self-proclaimed "gypsy brewer" Mikkel Borg Bjergsø, who has no commercial beer-making operation of his own. The Dane instead travels to the world's top craft breweries to make collaborative brews, like this one with a grapefruity aroma and faintly sweet, biscuit-like backbone. It's his best experiment yet.


DE RANKE BREWERY SAISON DE DOTTIGNIES

BELGIUM

 De Ranke makes dry, herbal beers, exemplified by this rarity that manages to combine the appealing, earthy background flavors imparted by a spicy Belgian yeast strain with the juicy apricot and thyme-like notes typically found in Belgium's saison-style beers — light-bodied, medium-strength brews that are fast gaining national recognition.

HELLES SCHLENKERLA LAGERBIER

GERMANY

 Brewed in a corner of Bavaria where lagers

BEST CANNED BEER




SLY FOX PIKELAND PILS PENNSYLVANIA, USA

 A canned beer should be one that you want to string along beside the canoe and then crack open on a 95-degree day — which is why the aluminum-sheathed Sly Fox pilsner, a refreshing yet substantial straw-colored, artisanal-quality beer, gets our vote for the best damned can in the land.

are often served with breakfast, this morning-bright beer is tinged with an aged smokiness — and is made in a brewery that dates back to 1405 — that makes it the perfect mate for your weisswurst.


SCHNEIDER- BROOKLYNER HOPFEN-WEISSE

USA/GERMANY

 The product of a transatlantic collaboration between New York's Brooklyn Brewery and Germany's Schneider Weisse, Hopfen-Weisse has an aroma of citrus tang and coriander with flavors of melon and tropical fruit, all of which add up to a hefty, outdoor-drinking beer.

SINEBRYCHOFF PORTER

FINLAND

 Mud-black and deeply satisfying, this 53-year-old Finnish recipe sets the international standard by which

all other Baltic porters — extra-strong dark ales originally intended for shipment over long sea voyages — are judged.


HITACHINO NEST BEER XH

JAPAN

 A Belgian-style brown ale brewed in Japan and aged for three months in *shochu* casks? Though it may sound like some sort of beer-world curiosity that's tastier in concept than in execution, this strong, spicy, frothy oddity from Japan's most famous craft brewery reveals delicious, complex flavors of cinnamon and wood with a gin-like aroma — from its time in the rice-wine barrels — that are far more appealing than one might expect.


KOSTRITZER SCHWARZBIER

GERMANY

 Dark beers, as a rule of thumb, aren't light-bodied, but this olive-black lager's malt manages to add color — not thickness — while also giving it a slightly creamy, toasty touch.

NINKASI TOTAL DOMINATION IPA

OREGON, USA

 Oregon's Ninkasi is one of the nation's

BEST BEER TOWN



Brussels

So says **Sam Calagione**, founder of **Dogfish Head Craft Brewery** and star of the Discovery Channel's upcoming series *Brewed*. He's had a pint in just about every city where you can do such a thing, but Belgium's capital stands out because, he says, "They use whatever they want in their beer: wild yeast and fruit and different types of wood."

BEST BEER STORE



Whole Foods

Back when the first Whole Foods opened in 1980, beer was not a priority. "We didn't sell much of it," says **Doug Bell**, one half of the beer-and-wine-buying team (with **Geoff Ryan**) for the company, based in Austin, Texas. Fast-forward 30 years and beer now gets the same exhaustive treatment as cheese and heirloom vegetables. Working together, the duo oversees the 225 beer-selling locations in 38 states, with the largest flagship locations boasting more than 800 offerings — including some rarities found almost nowhere else in the country. (Whole Foods is certainly your best bet for the Rochefort 10 and Pliny the Elder on our list.) Because each store also employs at least one resident expert on beer with the authority to set the shelves, look for hometown — or home state — favorites to dominate. "Our local buyers have their fingers on the pulse," says Ryan.

fastest-growing breweries, thanks in large part to this unsightly named beer (Ninkasi was the ancient Sumerian goddess of brewing) — a potent, aggressive IPA with pungent hops and flavors of citrus rind and caramel.

SAMUEL ADAMS NOBLE PILS

MASSACHUSETTS, USA
 It's not just a commercial: Brewmaster Jim Koch actually does visit Germany's Stanglmair Farm every year to check on his crop of "noble" hops — the five most esteemed strains of the approximately 100 hop species. All five go into this crisp, slightly bitter German-

style pilsner — the most delicious new beer to come out of the now-venerable Boston Beer Company in years.

VICTORY HELIOS ALE

PENNSYLVANIA, USA
 Capped instead of corked and served in a smaller bottle than is standard for this style, Helios Ale from Pennsylvania's Victory Brewing takes the pretentiousness out of Belgian-style farmhouse ale in favor of something floral, tasty, and accessible.

BRASSERIE DE LA SENNE TARAS BOULBA

BELGIUM
 Lesser Belgian beers hammer the tongue with cloying flavors reminiscent of fruitcake. Not so with the remarkably full-spectrum Taras Boulba, a Belgian-style pale ale that, at 4.5 percent ABV, is only a smidgen stronger than a Coors Light but crackles with complex layers of peppery spice atop a mellow, grassy, and pleasantly sweet body.

ALLAGASH CURIEUX

MAINE, USA
 The first and the best in a special series of barrel-aged beers from one of America's finest breweries, Allagash Curieux is a boozy, golden Belgian-style tripel ale enhanced with caramel aromas and just a whiff of highest hooch — the latter imparted by eight weeks of aging in Jim Beam barrels.

DIEU DU CIEL! PECHE MORTEL

CANADA
 This creamy, midnight-black 9.5 percent ABV imperial stout is brewed with massive quantities of fair-trade coffee for an intense aroma and chocolate-esspresso flavor. Pêche Mortel was the first bottled beer from this experimental Canadian brewpub. It's still the best.

RUSSIAN RIVER SUPPLICATION

CALIFORNIA, USA
 Supplication's complex, woody, tart, and fleetingly sweet body, infused with the juice of whole cherries, is refreshing rather than pucker face-inducing. Simply put, it's the best beer made with fruit we've tried in ages.

DOG FISH HEAD 90 MINUTE IPA

DELAWARE, USA
 It should be impossible for a beer that's been hopped for 90 solid minutes (an average IPA gets 60) to be delicious; in fact, each sip should be like snorting aspirin. This, however, is brewmaster Sam Calagione's specialty, and this confoundingly pleasant "extreme" beer is the purest expression of his skill.

BEST CHEAP BEER



OLYMPIA BEER

WISCONSIN, USA
 Paying under a buck for a mass-produced beer usually means hop character is nowhere to be found. But this light and creamy golden lager, originally from Washington State, actually has a touch of citrusy bitterness. It's still hard to find east of the Rockies, but thanks to a growing resurgence, that might soon change.

BEST WEBSITE

CraftBeer.com

Craft-beer blogs are a dime a dozen these days, but none can equal the sheer usefulness of the Brewers Association's, which represents craft-beer makers across the U.S. Its site has beer-centric travel recommendations, a beer-style dictionary, recipes for cooking with the stuff, and even brewery tours on video. The best part: Enter your zip code on the Get Local page to find out what's happening with breweries in your area, including parties, tastings, and new releases.

PEAK ORGANIC PALE ALE

MAINE, USA
 The all-organic Peak Brewing company (in the "other" brewing Portland) has done the unheard-of: It has made a pale ale remarkable with this, a bright, copper-colored beer with a slightly spicy, hoppy citrus tang muted by a solid, toasty malt body.

21ST AMENDMENT BACK IN BLACK IPA

CALIFORNIA, USA
 Black IPA, which combines the evergreen pine of ample hops with the dark cocoa and coffee flavors of roasted barley, is the latest brewing style to be recognized by the Brewers Association. 21st Amendment has released the first year-round version available in cans, and it's true to its name: It's got all the righteous bite of AC/DC during the Bon Scott era.

SIERRA NEVADA KELLERWEIS

CALIFORNIA, USA
 We've heard a lot about this unfiltered, slightly spicy Bavarian-style wheat beer from brewmasters, but Ninkasi's Jaime Floyd summed it up best: "I only had it once on draft, but it was the best American-made Bavarian-style hefe I have ever had." We concur.

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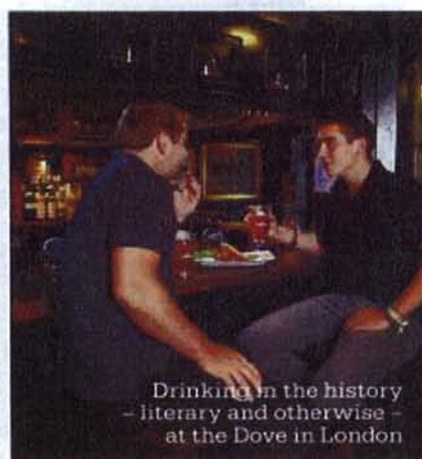
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NOTEBOOK



Drinking in the history — literary and otherwise — at the Dove in London

The World's Best Places for a Pint

THE DOVE HAMMERSMITH, LONDON, UK

1 The Dove doesn't have 450 beers on tap. In fact, there are just four drafts to pick from, all gently carbonated, carefully cellar-cooled, cask-conditioned ales from Fuller's Brewery, a local institution since 1845. But it's the best place in the world to have a pint.

The bar itself, squeezed into a low-ceilinged room with dark oak beams and a fireplace that kicks up come winter, is no bigger than a surfboard. On the walls, old photos show its history: The alleyway tavern, said to be London's old-

est riverside bar (it dates back, by some reports, to the 1730s), has hosted Hemingway, Graham Greene, and Dylan Thomas — and the patron saint of beer scribes, Michael Jackson, drank his favorite Chiswick bitter here often.

On a warm day, you'll drink out on the patio with a plate of fish-and-chips as rowers slip by on the Thames. On a great day, there will be racing. Either way, you're following a beer-lover's lineage — and drinking up an irreplaceable atmosphere.

2
TORONADO
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
The Toronado gets the nod for its 150 "no crap on tap" options, with special focus on Belgian rarities like XX Bitter and higher-alcohol styles such as barley wine, along with Bay Area-only standouts Death & Taxes and Bony Fingers, both black lagers. One piece of advice, though: Order with authority, or risk being ignored.

3
BLIND TIGER ALE HOUSE
NEW YORK, NY
The Tiger is nothing less than an unabashed shrine to craft brews, complete with wood-paneled walls and floors and a temperature-controlled cellar for aging rare ales. Best of all, there's always something new: The beer menu rotates weekly, and brewers often pop in with their freshest releases.

4
WEIHENSTEPHAN BIERGARTEN
FREISING, GERMANY
Home of the world's oldest brewing school and commercial brewery, this beer garden overlooks the hop trellis-filled terrain where Sam Adams's Jim Koch sources his hops. "No brewer can walk up that hill and not feel a sense of reverence," he says. "And their hefeweizen is the world standard."

BEST BREWPUB

Dieu du Ciel!

MONTREAL, CANADA

It's rare to walk into a neighborhood brewpub and find 15 taps pouring strange styles of house invention — "spruce" beers brewed with conifer branches, summer-wheat ales made with hibiscus. It's far rarer that every one will be worth drinking. As far as we can tell, it happens only at Montreal's Dieu du Ciel! (translation: "God in heaven!"). Since opening the place 12 years ago, brewmaster Jean-François Gravel has led his pub to a certain low-boil acclaim, if not outright notoriety; fact is, it's pretty damn tough to find Gravel's beers outside of 29 Avenue Laurier Ouest. The first thing if bottled was Pêché Mortel, in 2004 (see page 48 for a description of its genius). These days several of the brewpub's beers are shelved in American stores — try Aphrodisiaque, a rich, roasty black stout — but *nothing* beats sitting bar-side and tasting one of his creations straight out of the tap.