

So You're New to Craft Beer

We hear you're new to craft beer.

It's okay, we don't judge. This is a safe space. We know that getting into craft beer can be tricky. There are so many brands, styles, and flavors, sometimes it's easier to just order that Bud Light and move on. You deserve better.

You've come to the right place to quench your thirst for craft beer knowledge.

What is Craft Beer

We should start by answering the question, what is craft beer? Craft beer comes from craft breweries and there are very specific requirements that must be met for a brewery to be considered "craft".

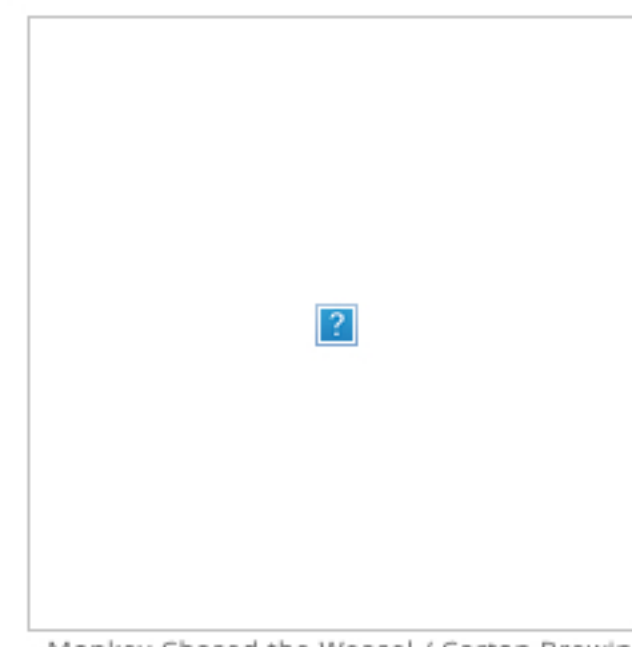
The Brewers Association has outlined a definition for the term craft brewer in which three requirements must be met. First, the brewery must be small, meaning it produces less than 6 million barrels of beer annually. Second, the brewery must be independent, meaning that less than 25% of the craft brewery is owned or controlled by an alcoholic beverage industry member that is not itself a craft brewer. Lastly, the brewery must be traditional, meaning the majority of the brewery's beer must derive from traditional or innovative brewing ingredients and their fermentation.

The main takeaway here is that while [micro and macro-breweries](#) are determined only by quantity of beer produced, beer has to be brewed a certain way in order for it to be considered a craft.

Four Things to Know When You Look at a Beer Menu

Okay now that we know what craft beer is, it's time to start sampling. Going to a bar or restaurant with a variety of beer offerings is the logical first step, but if you're new to craft beer, even the beer menu can be impossibly confusing. There are four things you need to know on a craft beer menu that will help inform your beer decision-making process. For more information, check out a previous blog post outlining [common beer terms](#).

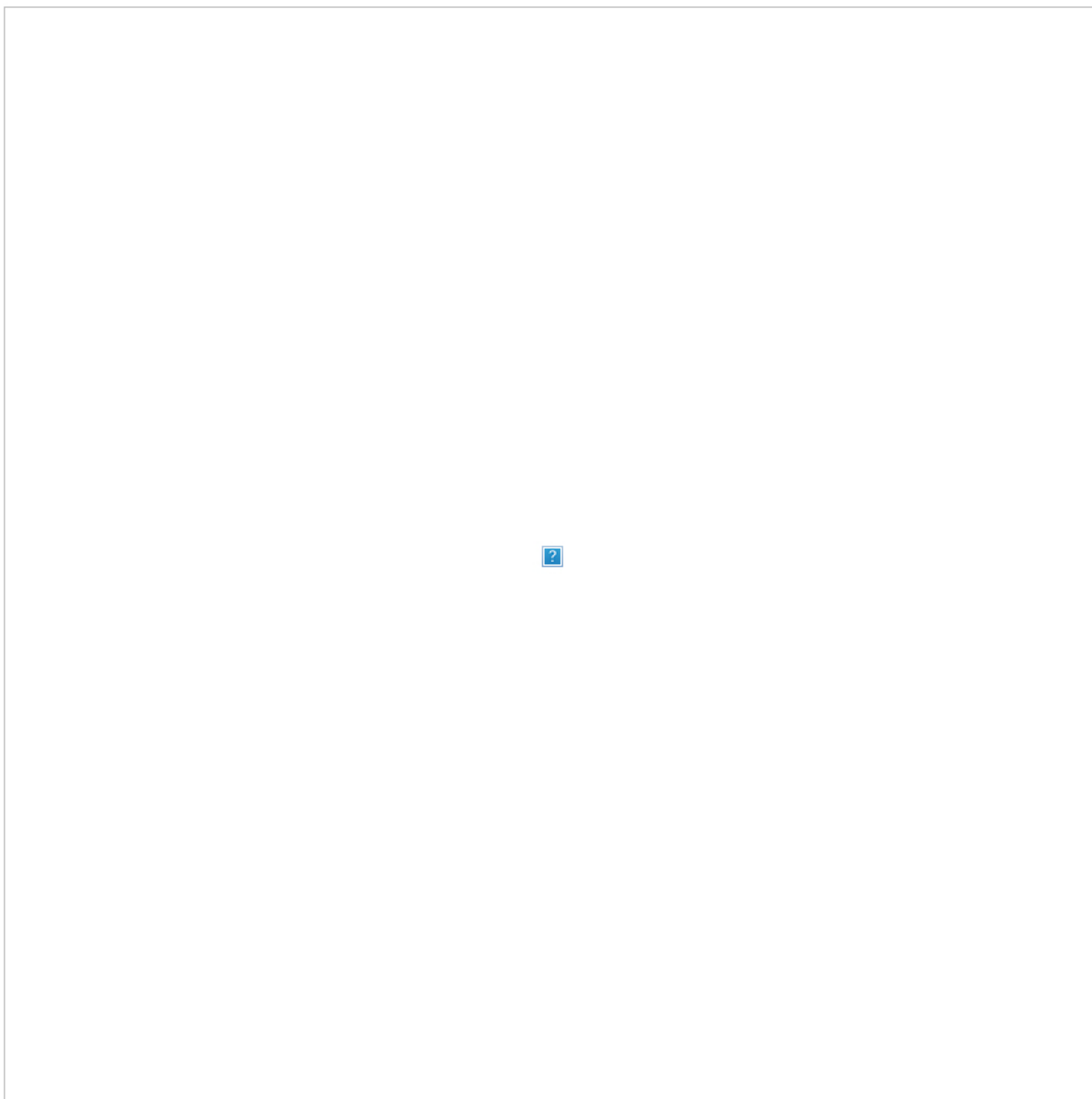
1. **ABV:** *Alcohol By Volume*. ABV lets you know what percentage of your beer is alcohol
2. **IBU:** *International Bitterness Unit*. IBU is a way to quantify how bitter your beer is. The bitterness of beer is subject to perception, but this measurement, in most cases, is accurate in telling how bitter a beer will taste.
3. **SRM:** *Standard Reference Method*. SRM is a scale for measuring the color of beer. The higher the number, the darker the beer, the SRM scale ranges from 1 – 40.
4. **Style:** Being familiar with beer style will be the easiest way for you to start figuring out what beers you like and what beers you don't. Our [previous blog post](#) details eleven of the most common beer styles and some examples. Drink these in before heading out for your next beer run.



Monkey Chased the Weasel / Carton Brewing

How to Find Your New Favorite Beer

This is the part where you are expecting us to say, "if you like this, then you should be trying that". We're not going to do that, and for good reason. Beer is a delicious, complex beverage and there are so many different styles to be tried. I don't want to limit you to only trying certain beers – go out there and try them all! You might be surprised what you take a liking to. In the meantime, I will provide you with a few helpful tips for finding your new favorite craft beer.



Most breweries, restaurants, and bars sell flights of beer. Flights are multiple 3 to 4 ounce glasses each holding a different beer. If you would like to try new beer from the comfort of your home, I completely understand, that is one of my favorite hobbies. Grocery stores often offer "create your own" six packs, perfect for sampling a few different beers. They say variety is the spice of life, and these options are perfect for someone looking for a little bit of variety.

Another tip for trying out craft beers is to simply ask your server or bartender! Restaurant patrons often forget that servers and bartenders can be a very helpful resource. They are educated on all of the tap offerings, and can likely make suggestions based on what you are in the mood for or what other types of beer you like. If you're feeling adventurous, ask your server or bartender what their favorite beer is and try that. This allows you to start trying beers that you might not normally be interested in.

Still not sure what to choose? Enjoy a seasonal beer! Certain styles of beer are perfect for the given seasons. These beers are only available seasonally, so you know that the beer you are drinking will be fresh.

Visiting a brewery will be one of the easiest ways to get into craft beer. Breweries will have flights, educated servers and bartenders, and there will be no shortage in beer variety. Resources like [BreweryMap](#) make locating breweries around you super easy. This app can be helpful if you are looking to try a new brewery in your hometown, or if you're road tripping somewhere new. BreweryMap allows you to search for breweries by location, brewery name, or even specific beer. It also allows you to log your brewery visits with personalized ratings and notes – perfect for the novice craft beer drinkers.



Permanent Funeral / 3
Floyds Brewing

If all else fails, look for the coolest beer name, bottle, or can you can find and try that. Some craft beer labels are shockingly beautiful and others are completely terrifying (see Permanent Funeral) either way, I thoroughly enjoy looking at them. There are also some truly hilarious names for craft beers. If you enjoy a good play on words as much as I do you'll enjoy these next few craft beer names: Hop Zombie by Epic Brewing Company, Smooth Hoperator by Stoudts Brewing Company, Hoptimus Prime by Ruckus Brewing Company, Hopsecutioner by Terrapin Beer Co., Hoptical Illusion by Blue Point Brewing Company, and Hop, Drop, n' Roll by NoDa Brewing Company.

When it comes to trying craft beer, any place is a good place to start. Go in with an open mind and don't feel like you have to like everything – you probably won't. No matter what method you choose, go on and get to tasting, we wish you luck.