

# The Turbid Staple

LENDING SOME CLARIFICATION ON **HAZY IPAS** by Jessie Birschbach

**ONCE UPON A TIME**, actually not too long ago, beers that displayed any sort of cloudiness—with the exception of traditionally turbid wheat beers, saisons, hefeweizens, lambics, and witbiers—were considered a sure sign of laziness on the part of the brewer. Today, however, the hazy IPA (aka the juicy IPA, Vermont IPA, or New England IPA) has become a staple in taprooms that's celebrated for its murky appearance.

The style is said to have originated with The Alchemist's Heady Topper beer, which debuted in 2003. Brewer John Kimmich made the conscious decision to not filter or pasteurize the beer (what a rule breaker you are, John!), and the rest is clouded history.

Today, the Brewers Association's beer style guidelines define the hazy pale ale and hazy strong pale ale as having a high degree of cloudiness, medium-high to high hop aromas, low to medium perceived bitterness, low to medium malt aroma and flavor, and a silky or full mouthfeel.

So how does this pillowy and aromatic style achieve the haze that's caused such a craze? Well, that brings us to the science-y part of "Beer'd Science." There are a variety of different ingredients and methods that a brewer can use. Here are a few:

- The use of active protein, i.e. high-protein grist (ground malt or cereal) like oats, spelt, and wheat, to soften the mouthfeel and impart a hazy character
- A technique known as dry hopping, in which hop polyphenols and proteins combine to form what's

known as "colloidal haze" (hazy IPAs are often double dry hopped)

■ The use of medium- to low-flocculating yeast strains (flocculation refers to yeast cells' tendency to clump together). Lower-flocculating yeast is more likely to stay in suspension, and suspended yeast makes the beer appear hazy.

■ A lack of filtering in the brewing process, which makes a beer appear cloudier

I was lucky enough to connect with two incredibly talented Los Angeles-based brewers on a variety of topics, including their opinions on the hazy style. In fact, I was so jazzed by our conversations that we're featuring a full Q&A online. Go to [sommjournal.com](http://sommjournal.com) for the unabridged version, but meanwhile, here are two telling quotes:

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## DEVON RANDALL

Brewmaster, *Imperial Western Beer Company* and *Arts District Brewing Company*

"I'm surprised you want to talk to me about them, because we don't treat hazies like the golden gods others do. I do recognize the hazy as a style, but what I have a problem with

is [when it starts to dominate brewers' attention at the expense of other styles]. I don't mind making it, but it's not my everyday beer."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE WEAVERS

## ALEXANDRA NOWELL

Brewmaster, *Three Weavers Brewing Company*

"We just released a hazy IPA called Cloud City. I was curious about the trend and wondered if it would hold on, but it has, and I think that's because there's so much variety within the style itself. It's really helped to emphasize how delicate beer is too. That being said, not everyone is doing it right. . . . A lot of people chalk [that] up to lazy brewing, but there's actually a lot more intent that goes into producing a hazy IPA than, for instance, a West Coast IPA, because there's this concept of stable haze [meaning a beer maintains a consistently cloudy appearance]. . . . Brewing tradition has led us to believe that clear beer is better, [but] consumers have pulled us in the opposite direction based on what they're buying." *SB*

*Jessie Birschbach is a Certified Cicerone and substandard homebrewer. She's also still learning, so if you have a suggestion or comment, please contact her at [jabs@sommjournal.com](mailto:jabs@sommjournal.com).*