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PARK CITY COFFEE ROASTER USES AN "OLD WORLD" TECHNIQUE THAT UTILIZES THE ROASTER'S SENSES TO GET THE PERFECT RESULT.

WEIRD SCIENCE

A LOOK BEHIND THE CREATION OF UTAH'S FAVORITE BEVERAGES

BY JENN RICE / PHOTOS BY JAY NEL-MONTGOMERY



COFFEE, BEER, WHISKEY AND GIN.

While completely different, they do share one common characteristic: They all start out with basic ingredients that don't really smell or taste like anything. In the end, what creates the unique taste each brand brings to the table boils down to the science (and people) behind the process. We decided to look behind the scenes at some of Utah's most flavorful breweries, coffee roasters and distilleries to find out what makes their beverages so delicious.

BEER

The key components of beer are water, malted barley, hops and yeast. While the basic recipe remains the same from brewery to brewery, it's the skill of each brewer that creates palate-pleasing beers.

Greg Schirf paved the path of the microbrew scene in Utah when he opened Wasatch Brewery at the top of Main Street in Park City in 1986. It was the first brewery in the state since Prohibition and also one of the first craft breweries in the country. He was just one of a long history of craft beer pioneers who have been a part of the company, says Justin Kingsford, head brewer and microbiologist.

At Wasatch Brewery, it's all about quality over quantity. The final product is dependent on the choice of malt and hops, the chemistry of the brewing water, the pH of the mash (a mixture of grains and hot water), and, most importantly, the yeast cultures. No small detail goes unnoticed. "Yeast is the lifeblood of beer, and we understand the utmost importance in keeping our yeast cultures healthy and happy," Kingsford says. "Great yeast makes great beer."

Aging beer in barrels also develops unique flavor profiles. One of Kingsford's favorite Wasatch brew creations is the sour barrel-aging program. "With this program we allow other microorganisms to ferment the beer and add their own flavor profiles to the beer, creating something else unique and special," he says. "I love the complexity of the beer after it goes through this transformation."

They also brew a one-time seasonal beer called Clothing Hoptional in late August. For that they use locally grown wild hops from the hills surrounding the Park City area. The beer is a collaboration with the Summit Land Conservancy, whose volunteers help pick wild hops for brewing, and a portion of proceeds is donated to the nonprofit organization.

Wasatch is always exploring new beers to brew and stepping outside of the boundaries. "We are always learning and trying new experiments to expand our brewing knowledge and hopefully making our beer better," Kingsford says. "We think craft beer should be an adventure our consumers share with us."



Artisanal is the key word when it comes to Epic Brewing Company, which is brewed in Salt Lake City but can be found on tap around Park City at places such as Flanagan's, Tavern and 501 On Main. Unlike mass consumer brands, Epic goes to great lengths when it comes to sourcing ingredients. "We go out of our way to import malt and hops from around the world," says brewmaster Kevin Crompton. "We also brew full-strength beer, which means more high-quality ingredients go in each batch." Because their beer is produced in small batches, Epic is able to nurture the process and ensure everything is perfect from start to finish.

Epic is also experimental when it comes to creating new flavors and willing to try out bold combinations. In fact, they developed an Exponential Series that's ever-changing for the "ever-curious" consumer. For instance, peach puree is added to Brainless on Peaches Belgian-Style Ale, which is then aged in French chardonnay casks where it develops a fruity wine flavor. Coffee and cacao nibs are infused into their Big Bad Baptist Imperial Stout (available only October through January), which is aged in used whiskey and bourbon barrels.

The company also has a diverse brewing program. "We handle more raw ingredients and types of yeast than most craft breweries," Crompton says. This is what gives Epic the ability to brew more than 40 distinctly different beers.

ALL BEER RECIPES START WITH WATER, MALTED BARLEY, HOPS AND YEAST. WHAT MAKES EACH VARIETY UNIQUE IS THE CHEMISTRY OF BREWING, THE ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS AND THE AGING PROCESS.



WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU SIP

To better understand your refreshing post-work beer, use this chart of the most popular styles and their flavor profiles.

India Pale Ale (IPA): a strong, hoppy flavor with a slightly bitter taste

Double IPA: strong, fruity, hoppy notes with deep, malty undertones

Brown Ale: flavors vary from earthy and malty to sweet and hoppy

Pilsner: fragrant with a strong hops flavor and pleasant bitterness

Stout: a heavy, roasted flavor with hints of chocolate, coffee, molasses and licorice, without any hops flavor

Port: very mild and drinkable with notes of chocolate, toffee and roasted grains

Wheat Beer: the flavor varies, but wheat beers are typically light in flavor and have banana undertones. Hefeweizen is a popular style of wheat beer.



COFFEE

Coffee beans start out as colorless, flavorless seeds derived from the fruit of coffee plants, which can only be grown in what's called the Bean Belt — a band that goes around the middle of the world, bound by the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. These regions typically boast moderate sunshine and rainfall, rich soil and steady temperatures of around 70 F. Leading coffee-producing countries include Brazil (the current largest), Vietnam, Colombia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, India, Mexico and Guatemala, to name a few. "Each coffee-growing region has different flavor profiles and qualities that make them unique, as does each individual farm within a region," says Publik's head roaster, Ryan Gee (aka Gee). What happens during the roasting process is what really makes the world of difference.

Publik is part of a coffee community that roasts in the "third wave style," which means they try to preserve varietal and regional attributes of the beans they roast, Gee says. The third wave movement is all about the culinary appreciation of coffee: high-quality beans, direct trade, single-origin coffee versus blends and lighter roasts to impart flavor. And coffee preparation methods are not your average cup of joe. Publik uses devices such as the Alpha Dominche Steampunk, which gives baristas complete control over everything from filter settings to water temperature, offering them the ability to make the most perfect cup of coffee.

After sitting down with Gee and owner Matt Bourgeois, it's apparent how much time and care goes into each roast. "We aren't necessarily doing anything groundbreaking or original, but I believe the care and attention is where we really shine," Gee says.

Publik currently has two locations: a coffee shop inside the Kimball Art Center in Park City and their flagship location in the up-and-coming Central 9th area of Salt Lake City, which also

acts as their roasting facility where customers can witness the roasting process in action.

Every 30 seconds, Gee tracks the time, temperature, air input and flame intensity, trying to hit the same exact numbers to achieve a perfect "profile," the term used for a roast when it is exact. "We follow and are attentive to the process every second of every roast, all the way to every beverage we serve at our coffee bars," he says. "We try to make the best cup every time, all the time, without compromise." It's a tedious and time-consuming process and can take up to a month to get a final profile. If numbers are off, it can change the body, sweetness, aroma and flavor.

Another factor is the level of roasting. Many companies roast dark to keep their beans consistent. "It's easier to get a consistent flavor from crop to crop and year to year if you roast to a dark level, mostly because the dominant flavors become the bitters and carbons as opposed to the acidity and sweetness of light roasts," Gee relays. Publik, on the other hand, embraces the latter. "We try to preserve varietal and regional attributes of the beans we roast," he says.

Park City Coffee Roaster, a popular roaster in Park City, follows a traditional "Old World" batch-roasting technique that utilizes the senses only. Sight is used to monitor the color and darkness, sound is used to determine the cracking of the bean sequence, and smell helps to detect the caramelization from the beans being burned and positioned for the proper profile.

Another key component is the fact they roast their beans at 7,000 feet. "We can set our roasting temperature lower because things burn faster at this elevation, and we spend less time hurting the bean — thereby leaving more coffee taste factors in the bean," says Rob Hibl, co-owner of Park City Coffee Roaster with his brother, Ray. The result? Beans that contain more character.



CAFFEINE 101

Before you order your next cup of joe, check out different types of coffee roasts to make sure you're getting what you want out of your drink. FYI, just because it's a dark roast doesn't necessarily mean it's the strongest option.

Light Roast: Light brown in color, light roasts have a toasted-grain taste with pronounced acidity and retain the majority of caffeine from the bean. As head roaster Ryan Gee mentioned, Publik keeps the acidity and sweetness by roasting lightly. The flavors of the bean are also more prominent than that of a darker roast.

Medium Roast: The beans are medium brown in color and boast a more balanced flavor, aroma and acidity. While the caffeine is subtly decreased, this roast still has more caffeine than a darker roast. Other common names for a medium roast include American Roast and Breakfast Roast.

Dark Roast: The beans are dark brown or almost black in color and tend to have a bitter or burnt taste. The caffeine amount is also significantly decreased. French Roast, Italian Roast, Espresso Roast and Continental Roast are other common names for dark roasts.

WHISKEY

Did you know whiskey comes from beer? True story. The only difference is that whiskey doesn't contain hops, and the grain is left intact through the entire distilling process as opposed to being filtered out. Whiskey then gains its flavor, coloring and higher alcohol content from aging in barrels.

Considered a frontier of the industry, High West Distillery & Saloon, located at the base of Park Avenue, is the world's only ski-in/ski-out distillery. One peek inside it and you'll feel like you're in an episode of "Breaking Bad." Perhaps it's not so far-fetched, as owner David Perkins is a biochemist-turned-whiskey distiller. Think glass beakers, tools, buckets and everything needed to make the best whiskey in the country. Seriously, it's hard to come by stuff this tasty!

The bottom line: They're not afraid to experiment, which has put them on the whiskey map for interesting flavor profiles such as their Double Rye — a combination of a 16-year-old rye and a 2-year-old rye. Campfire, which bridges the gap between Scotch whisky and American whiskey, is another top seller. It's a "trans-continental blend, which was a huge amount of fun during the blending trials," says Brendan Coyle, lead distiller.

Coyle will have anywhere from 80 to 100-plus "experiments" aging in barrels at any given time. "For decades there hasn't been a lot of lateral movement in the distilling industry, but now with all the craft distilleries entering the industry, it is really pushing the definition of whiskey," he says. "We are constantly exploring the idea of cross-pollination; looking to the rum, brandy, tequila makers and the brewing industry for new ideas and a different take on what whiskey can be."

Fermentation, though, plays the biggest role in creating the best flavors and aromas, which is why yeast is the star ingredient of whiskey. High West has an advantage over other distilleries because they produce their own yeast cultures in-house, allowing distillers to be more adventurous.

GIN

Gin is a neutral spirit that's distilled with botanicals and, by law, must contain juniper berries. Beyond that, the sky is the limit when it comes to additional ingredients, making gin a very diverse and complex spirit.

Beehive Distilling, Utah's first gin distillery since 1870, has made a name for itself with its exotic flavor profiles. These are

anything but your typical juniper-heavy gins. Chris Barlow, lead distiller and partner, went through about 30 different trials before perfecting Beehive's Jack Rabbit. Quality ingredients, unique ingredient combinations and passion really set Beehive Distilling apart from other gin labels.

Aside from juniper berries, Jack Rabbit contains lemon peel, sage leaves, coriander seeds, orris root, grains of paradise and rose petals, which give it a striking mixture of herbal and botanical qualities. Barlow says it's their maceration and vapor-infusion process, combined with the quality of ingredients, that makes the biggest difference. "We take special care when running the still to really be on top of our cuts, which ensures only the best-tasting product actually makes it into the bottle," he says. "We also went for a flavor profile that is, I think, unlike any other out there."

Barrel Reserve is definitely something the company can write home about. It contains the same ingredients as Jack Rabbit but has been aged in hand-charred French oak char-



donna barrels for up to nine months. The outcome is a sweet yet smoky flavor that's ideal for sipping neat or on the rocks. What makes all these beverages so tasty? A lot of time and care, along with the brainpower of highly intelligent brewers, roasters and distillers. And now that you're well-versed on the science behind them, you'll appreciate your next morning cup of joe or post-work libation even more. We'll cheers to that!

HIGH WEST DISTILLERY'S OWNER USED TO BE A BIOCHEMIST. TRY OUT THE COMPANY'S WHISKEY IN DRINKS AT MANY AREA RESTAURANTS.



FLETCHER'S MAPLE MANHATTAN USING HIGH WEST WHISKEY

1 ounce High West
Rendezvous Rye
0.5 ounce High West Double Rye
1 ounce sweet vermouth
0.5 ounce maple syrup
1-2 dashes orange bitters
1-2 dashes cherry bitters
Orange peel
Maraschino cherries

Shake first 6 ingredients in a shaker with ice. Serve up in a martini glass with orange peel and a cherry for garnish.

SILVER'S STEVE ZUZU WITH BEEHIVE GIN

1 serrano pepper, muddled
A couple wasabi greens
1/2 tablespoon fresh black pepper, ground
0.5 ounce Maraschino Luxardo
1.5 ounces Beehive Jack Rabbit Gin
0.5 ounce simple syrup
0.5 ounce Noilly Prat (dry vermouth)
0.5 ounce lime
Dash of lemon-pepper bitters

Shake all ingredients in a shaker with ice and serve up in a coupe champagne glass.