

5. PALE BITTER EUROPEAN BEER

5E. Alsatian Pilsner

Overall Impression:

A pale, clean, and elegant lager that combines the crispness of a German Pils with a softer, more rounded bitterness and a distinctive floral, slightly rustic hop character derived from the Alsatian terroir. The beer is well-balanced, dry, and refreshing, with a refined aromatic profile.

Aroma:

Floral and herbal, sometimes slightly spicy

(typical of Alsatian varieties such as Strisselspalt).

Fresh grain and white bread. Clean fermentation profile.

A very low corn-like sweetness may be present if adjuncts are used

Appearance:

Pale straw to light gold. Brilliant (centrifuged versions)

to crystal clear (filtered versions). A white, dense, creamy, persistent head.

Flavor:

Initial impression is Clean, lightly malty. The mid-palate is balanced, leaning toward hop expression. The finish is dry, crisp, with a smooth bitterness. Bitterness is medium to moderately high, but rounded rather than sharp. Flavor notes: Herbal, floral, slight mineral nuance possible.

Mouthfeel:

Light to medium-light body, with medium to high carbonation.

Smooth texture, with a possible subtle mineral or slightly chalky impression.

Astringency is low to moderate, if present, and should remain refined.

Comments:

The style emphasizes Alsatian hop expression. Balance is key :

not as dry and sharp as a German Pils, not as malty as a Czech Pilsner.

A refined floral elegance is expected.

History:

The brewing tradition of Strasbourg and the Alsace region was already well established by the mid-19th century, supported in part by the development of hop cultivation under figures such as Ignace Derendinger.

In the early 20th century, Alsatian breweries began producing pale lagers inspired by emerging Central European pilsner styles. Adversiting for the Fischer Brewery or the Schutzenberger brewery in 1912 during German period include the phrase « Ersatz für Pilsener » (replacement the Pilsner). In 1927, Meteor Brewery brewed one of the first documented examples of an Alsatian Pilsner using a decoction mash process.

By 1931, the brewery obtained authorization from Czechoslovak authorities to use the designation “Pils – Beer of Alsace” reflecting both the influence and recognition of the original Bohemian style.

These beers, sometimes brewed with adjuncts such as corn or rice, became widely popular across the region.

By the 1950s, most major Alsatian breweries—including Kronenbourg, Fischer, Perle, Adelshoffen - and others—produced their own interpretations of this pale lager style.

From the late 20th century onward, the use of locally grown Alsatian hop varieties (notably Strisselspalt) became a more distinctive element of these beers.

Alsace has historically been, and remains, the primary beer-producing region of France, contributing significantly to the development and identity of French lager brewing.

Characteristic Ingredients:

Continental Pilsner malt forms the base of the grist. Adjuncts such as corn or rice may be used, reflecting historical industrial brewing practices in the early to mid-20th century. Traditional European noble hops are common, including Saaz Hops, alongside distinctive Alsatian varieties such as Strisselspalt hops or Aramis hops, which contribute a refined floral and herbal character. A clean-fermenting lager yeast is used. Brewing water is typically soft to moderately mineral, allowing for a balanced expression of malt and hop character. Cold lagering (typically around 0°C for several weeks) is common, contributing to clarity and smoothness.

Style Comparison:

Compared to a German Pils, an Alsatian Pilsner is slightly less dry and less sharply bitter, with a more rounded bitterness and a more floral, delicate hop profile.

Compared to a Czech (Bohemian) Pilsner, it is less malt-forward and less rich, with a cleaner fermentation profile and a drier finish.

The hop character tends to emphasize floral and herbal notes, sometimes with a subtle spicy or peppery nuance, reflecting the use of Alsatian hop varieties.

Overall, the style sits between German and Czech Pilsners, with a distinctive regional aromatic expression.

Vital Statistics:

OG : 1.044 – 1.050

FG : 1.008 – 1.012

ABV : 4.5 – 5.5 %

IBU : 25 – 35

SRM : 2 – 4

Commercial Examples:

Meteor Pils,

Fischer Tradition, Perle Pils, Ancre Pils, Licorne Pils,

Matten, Les Intenables (Stamm, Pils), Green Bench Brewing (Le Pub)

Tags:

standard-strength, pale-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, western-europe, pilsner-family, balanced, hopforward