

Did someone say Cheese

Yes, beer does indeed go with cheese; but beer and cheese combinations only appear to be simple. The reality is that, at times, this wedding can be perilous and difficult to manage.

Most cheese authorities agree that there are some eight different categories or styles in the world of cheese. Let us examine each to see what beer types will complement them.



1. Fresh, very soft cheeses are uncooked and unripe or barely ripened; coagulated with rennet or by lactic fermentation, or even by using lemon juice; and packed simply into tubs, crocks, or molded by hand. Some are very soft, even spoonable. Very soft cheeses include pot cheese, cottage cheese, cream cheese and ricotta Beer: These cheeses have low taste profiles and go well with more mellow beers such as American wheat beer, American lagers, amber lagers, and Munich lagers.

2. Soft, spreadable cheeses, such as Camembert or Brie, have bloomy rinds. Beer: These go well with Euro-lagers, pilsners, pale ales, porters and American fruit ales.

3. Semi-soft cheeses include many monastic cheeses and washed rind cheeses that are cured with brine, beer, wine or spices. Trappist cheeses and muenster are good examples, as are Gouda, havarti, Tilsit, Liederkranz, Port-Salut and American, Colby, Monterey jack and similar cheeses. Beer: These all go with more energetic beer at the lower end of the hop rate, such as English brown ales, amber ales, golden ales, bitters, and Belgian pale ales, plus Vienna lagers, mellow bocks, or Oktoberfest brews, not to mention rye ales and Bavarian whites.

4. Semi-hard, sliceable cheese. Cheddar (there are many varieties, including white aged cheddar), Swiss, Cheshire, Tilsit, and other sliceable cheeses, such as Edam, Gruyere, emmentaler, Jarlsberg, and aged Gouda. Beer: Good sandwich cheeses go well with pilsners, extra special bitters and pale ales, plus IPAs, double bocks, strong ales and almost any Belgian ale, particularly wits and fruit ales.

5. Hard cheese. These are very firm, grainy, cooked and pressed grating cheeses, such as parmigiano. But they are also nice nibbly cheeses and need something heavy in a beverage. Beer: Strong ale or doppelbock, stout or porter.

6. Blue vein, marbled cheese, strong flavored and crumbly, including Roquefort, Stilton, Gorgonzola, and other blues. Beer: Try stronger porters, stouts, and heavier dark beers, such as old ales, barley wines, and Imperial stouts. The latter matches Stilton especially well.

7. Goat cheeses--chevre--are usually a bit more flavorful than regular cheeses of similar types. Roquefort, romano and feta are good examples. We should note here that goat cheeses are at the cutting edge of popularity these days. Beer: Think IPAs, ESBs, American brown ales, stouts and porters.

8. Pasta filata are the stretched curd cheeses of Italy, such as mozzarella and provolone. They go well with Belgian wits, Bavarian whites, and heavier Bavarian wheat beers.

Beer Temperature Guide

.Lighter-coloured beers are generally best served cold. At the warmest end are the big, dark beers like Quadrupels, Imperial Stouts and Barley Wines. At cellar temperature are English-style beers and in the middle is just about everything else.

Very cold (0-4C/32-39F): Any beer you don't actually want to taste. Pale Lager, Malt Liquor, Canadian-style Golden Ale and Cream Ale, Low Alcohol, Canadian, American or Scandinavian-style Cider.

Cold (4-7C/39-45F): Hefeweizen, Kristalweizen, Kölsch, Premium Lager, Pilsner, Classic German Pilsner, Fruit Beer, brewpub-style Golden Ale, European Strong Lager, Berliner Weisse, Belgian White, American Dark Lager, sweetened Fruit Lambics and Gueuzes, Duvel-types

Cool (8-12C/45-54F): American Pale Ale, Amber Ale, California Common, Dunkelweizen, Sweet Stout, Stout, Dry Stout, Porter, English-style Golden Ale, unsweetened Fruit Lambics and Gueuzes, Faro, Belgian Ale, Bohemian Pilsner, Dunkel, Dortmunder/Helles, Vienna, Schwarzbier, Smoked, Altbier, Tripel, Irish Ale, French or Spanish-style Cider

Cellar (12-14C/54-57F): Bitter, Premium Bitter, Brown Ale, India Pale Ale, English Pale Ale, English Strong Ale, Old Ale, Saison, Unblended Lambic, Flemish Sour Ale, Bière de Garde, Baltic Porter, Abbey Dubbel, Belgian Strong Ale, Weizen Bock, Bock, Foreign Stout, Zwickel/Keller/Landbier, Scottish Ale, Scotch Ale, American Strong Ale, English-style Cider

Warm (14-16C/57-61F): Barley Wine, Abt/Quadrupel, Imperial Stout, Imperial/Double IPA, Doppelbock, Eisbock, Mead