

HOP TO IT

Standout beers and ales are brewing all over Washington.

IN WASHINGTON, wines may get a lot of publicity these days—and deservedly so—but the state's craft brewers also enjoy a robust reputation. Since local farmers are among the nation's largest producers of hops and barley, the microbrew movement has had fertile ground on which to develop. The late Bert Grant, whose Yakima brewery is (sadly) no longer operating, is considered a pioneer in the field. Today, more than 80 breweries and brewpubs in all parts of the state craft their own versions of traditional styles and design innovative variations. For a comprehensive current list, see www.washingtonbeer.com, and don't miss these signature brews as you please your palate. —MIKE GREENSTEIN

DEMING

Son of Frog, North Fork Brewery **BP**

A heavy dose of caramel and chocolate malts give this ale a sweet delivery and finish. Don't miss North Fork's Beer Shrine, a monument to suds on the Mt. Baker Scenic Highway. www.northforkbrewery.com

BELLINGHAM

Cabin Fever, Boundary Bay Brewing Co **BP**

A winter ale with a dark, red-brown color and a malty flavor, dry-hopped lightly with Cascade hops for a slightly spicy finish. A strong ale, it tastes smooth thanks to long cold conditioning. www.bbaybrewery.com

SILVERDALE

Bavarian Style Hefeweizen, Silver City Restaurant & Brewery **BP** A gold-medal winner at the North American Beer Awards, this tart, unfiltered wheat ale gets its clove, vanilla, and banana notes from Bavarian yeast. www.silvercitybrewery.com

MUKILTEO

Diamond Knot Golden Ale, Diamond Knot Brewery & Alehouse **BP** A microbrew for people who think they don't like microbrews. Its pale color and soft body, with a crisp finish, appeal to drinkers of lighter beers who want something beyond Bud. www.diamondknot.com

SEATTLE

Hale's Cream Ale, Hale's Brewery **BP**

The favorite ale of Fremont, the quirky Seattle neighborhood that proclaims itself "the center of the universe" during its June Solstice Celebration. This blondest of Hale's Dublin-style ales is, as its slogan proclaims, "smooth and creamy ... no bull!" www.halesales.com

The Immortal India Pale Ale, Elysian Brewing Company **BP**

Distinctly bitter but not overpowering, this satisfying Northwest interpretation of the classic English style is golden copper and loaded with hop flavor and aroma. In a crowded field of Washington IPAs, this one is a consistent standout. www.elysianbrewing.com

NORTHPORT

Smelter's Stout, Northern Ales **BP**

Tiny Northport was a mining boom town at the turn of the 20th century—hence the name of this thick, bitter imperial stout, which boasts a whopping 10 percent alcohol and looks as black as a moonless night. www.northernales.com

STEVENSON

Lightfoot Lager, Walking Man Brewing **BP**

Although Walking Man is known for strong ales at the other end of the bitterness scale, this German-style lager balances Northwest malt and Czech hops for a beer that's highly drinkable after a day hiking in the Gorge. www.walkingmanbrewing.com

SUNNYSIDE

Sunnyside Pale Ale, Snipes Mountain Brewing **BP**

This light amber "special best bitter," brewed crisp and clean with generous Yakima Valley hop character, has won multiple awards in national and international competitions. www.snipesmountain.com

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