

The amazing and expanding world of brews

Tips to help make the most of your beer journey
► DON TSE

There are now thousands of different beers available in Alberta, covering dozens of different styles and coming from dozens of different countries. There is so much choice, it can be intimidating to the uninitiated. Here are some tips to get you started on your good beer journey.

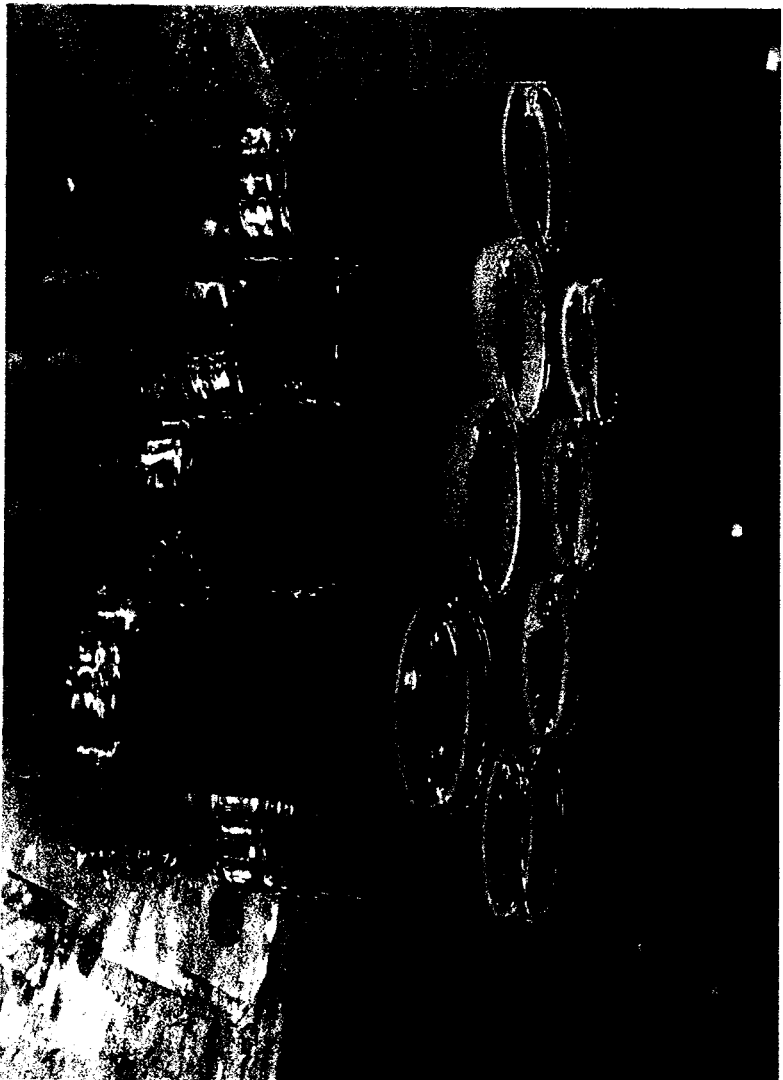
Order a taster tray — Sample sizes of different beers are a good way to try something new. Craft Beer Market (345 10 Ave. S.W.) offers more than 100 beers on tap. Thankfully, if you can't decide for yourself, they can make choices for you. Every week they select six different beers to showcase on a "flight." You get a few ounces of each of the six beers so you can determine what types and brewer-

ies you like. National (550 17 Ave. S.W.; 341 10 Ave. S.W.; and 180 Stewart Green S.W.) also offers flights, but you choose your own six from their lists. Even Wild Rose Brewery's taproom (4580 Queensway/Wood Dr. S.W.) offers a tasting flight — you get five ounces each of eight of their beers.

Beer Revolution (1080 8 St. S.W.) does not offer flights, but you can order each of their 24 beers in a size as small as eight ounces, which costs exactly half the price of 16 ounces so you can try more beers without taxing your wallet or your liver.

Buy a variety pack — Several breweries are now offering beers in variety packs. Wild Rose Brewery, for example, offers Anthology, which is a 12-pack containing three bottles each of four different beers. Big Rock comes out with seasonal variety packs, as do many other brewers. Like taster flights, variety packs are a great way to try different beers — and they're perfect for parties because they contain something for everyone.

Oak & Vine Wine and Spirits (1030 16 Ave. N.W.) even has a wall of single bottles from which you can mix and match to create your own variety six-pack. And, of course, many beers are available in single bottles on their own. If variety is the spice of life, beer is yours to really make yours.



CHRISTINE MOULD

Life spicy!

Read a book — The history of beer dates back to the beginning of civilization, and reading about it can be fascinating. To learn about the history of beer and different beers brewed around the world, read *The World Atlas of Beer* by Tim Webb and Stephen Beaumont. To learn about the chemistry, physiology and psychology of beer flavour, read *Tasting Beer* by Randy Mosher — my favourite beer book. Ever.

Attend a tasting — Liquor stores such as Willow Park Wines & Spirits (10801 Bonaventure Dr. S.E.), Kensington Wine Market (1257 Kensington Road N.W.), Zym Arts (1310 1 St. S.W.) and Zyn (1543 17 Ave. S.E.) offer organized beer tastings on an almost weekly basis. Beers are usually selected around a theme (such as winter beers or barbecue beers), or from a single brewery, specific country or beer style. Check their

websites for upcoming tastings.

Organize a bottle share — Have you ever wondered if that \$20 bottle of beer is worth it? A bottle share is a great way to taste beers you otherwise might not. Gather a few like-minded friends, each bringing a single bottle of a different beer to share. Taste each in turn and discuss the flavours and what you like and don't like about it. There are no right or wrong answers; just have fun. The focus doesn't have to be expensive beers, of course, although it is a good way to try some beers you might not otherwise.

Attend a beer festival — The Calgary International Beer Festival (May 2 and 3 at the BMO Centre at Stampede Park) is the largest, but there are other smaller beer festivals you can attend as well. Bottlescrew Bill's (140 10 Ave. S.W.) hosts an annual festival at the beginning of March in support of the The University of Alberta.

Park Wines & Spirits organizes Beer Bash each November as one of its annual charity events. Taste good beer and support a good cause.

Join a club — The Cowtown Yeast Wranglers (yeastwranglers.ca) is one of the largest homebrewing clubs in Canada. Even if you don't want to brew yourself, it's a fantastic way to learn more about how beer is made and where its flavours come from. Annual membership is a mere \$30. The newest beer club in town is reserved exclusively for women. Formed by women for women, Brew Bettes YYC hopes to have two events per month, generally simple social gatherings of beer-appreciating women (meetup.com/Brew-Bettes-YYC). You can attend one meeting for free to check it out, but after that, annual membership costs \$15. Contact brewbettesyyc@gmail.com for details.

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