

Beer Education Series: Blue Blaze Brewing

About Blue Blaze Brewing:

Paint stripes — called blazes — of different colors are used on the Appalachian Trail to serve as waypoints and indicate points of interest. Side trails that lead to water, relaxation and camaraderie are identified by a Blue Blaze. We named our brewery after the Blue Blaze as a source of inspiration to create refreshing and original beer while honoring the communal spirit of the Appalachian Trail. We brew unique interpretations of classic American, English, and German beers, using pesticide-free, locally-sourced ingredients, whenever available. We offer five flagship beers and a unique rotating selection of specialty and seasonal beers. Stop by our taproom and you will even find several options from some of our other favorite Charlotte craft breweries.

The 4 Beers We're Sampling:

1. **Carolina Thread Trail Pale Ale** [Pale Ale, 4.5%]: Calling all #Trailheads & #CLTbeer enthusiasts! We partnered with the Carolina Thread Trail to bring you the Carolina Thread Trail Pale Ale! This juicy beer is hazy, golden in color, and highly refreshing after a day outdoors. A portion of the profits donated to Carolina Thread Trail.

BJCP Analysis of Hazy Pale Ale:

Aroma: Usually moderate to strong hop aroma from dry hopping or late kettle additions of American hop varieties. A citrusy hop character is very common, but not required. Low to moderate maltiness supports the hop presentation, and may optionally show small amounts of specialty malt character (bready, toasty, biscuity). Fruity esters vary from moderate to none. No diacetyl. Dry hopping (if used) may add grassy notes, although this character should not be excessive.

Appearance: Pale golden to deep amber. Moderately large white to off-white head with good retention. Generally quite clear, although dry-hopped & hazy versions may have a very high degree of cloudiness to the beer.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body. Carbonation moderate to high. Overall smooth finish without astringency often associated with high hopping rates.

Taste: Usually a moderate to high hop flavor, often showing a citrusy American hop character. Low to moderately high clean malt character supports the hop presentation, and may optionally show small amounts of specialty malt character (bready, toasty, biscuity). The balance is typically towards the late hops and bitterness, but the malt presence can be substantial. Caramel flavors are usually restrained or absent. Fruity esters can be moderate to none. Moderate to high hop bitterness with a medium to dry finish. Hop flavor and bitterness often lingers into the finish. No diacetyl. Dry hopping (if used) may add grassy notes, although this character should not be excessive.

2. **S'mores Blonde Ale** [Blonde Ale, 4.5%]: Made with real cocoa nibs & vanilla beans, this S'mores Blonde Ale packs rich notes of chocolate & vanilla, while maintaining a medium body. The biscuit malt gives way to hints of lightly toasted graham cracker. We start with a Blonde Ale recipe, but with the infusion of cocoa nibs and biscuit malt the color shifts into amber territory. With just one sip you'll be taken back to memories of roasting marshmallows around a crackling campfire.

BJCP Analysis of Blonde Ale:

Aroma: Light to moderate malty aroma, generally neutral or grainy, possibly with a light bread or caramel note. Low to moderate fruitiness is optional, but acceptable. May have a low to medium hop aroma, and can reflect almost any hop variety although citrusy, floral, fruity, and spicy notes are common. Clean fermentation profile.

Appearance: Light yellow to deep gold in color. Clear to brilliant. Low to medium white head with fair to good retention.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body. Medium to high carbonation. Smooth without being heavy.

Taste: Initial soft maltiness, but can also have light character malt flavor (e.g., bread, toast, biscuit, wheat). Caramel flavors usually absent; if present, they are typically low-color caramel or honey notes. Low to medium fruity esters optional, but are welcome. Light to moderate hop flavor (any variety), but shouldn't be overly aggressive. Medium-low to medium bitterness, but the balance is normally towards the malt or even between malt and hops. Finishes medium-dry to slightly malty; an impression of sweetness is often an expression of lower bitterness than actual residual sweetness. Clean fermentation profile.

3. **Lean Too Doppelbock** [Gose, 9%]: Traditional winter-warmer German-style beer with a malt forward character. Lean Too has aromas and flavors of fresh and toasted Munich malt. The malty sweetness is balanced by the German noble hops.

BJCP Analysis of Doppelbock:

Aroma Very strong maltiness, possibly with light caramel notes, and up to a moderate alcohol aroma. Virtually no hop aroma. Dark versions have significant, rich Maillard products, deeply toasted malt, and possibly a slight chocolate-like aroma that should never be roasted or burnt. Moderately-low dark fruit, like plums, dark grapes, or fruit leather, is allowable. Pale versions have a rich and strong, often toasty, malt presence, possibly with a light floral, spicy, or herbal hop accent.

Appearance: Good clarity, with a large, creamy, persistent head. Dark versions are copper to dark brown in color, often with ruby highlights, and an off-white head. Pale versions are deep gold to light amber in color, with a white head.

Mouthfeel: Medium-full to full body. Moderate to moderately-low carbonation. Very smooth without harshness, astringency. A light alcohol warmth may be noted, but it should never burn.

Taste: Very rich and malty. Hop bitterness varies from moderate to moderately low but always allows malt to dominate the flavor. Faint hop flavor optional. Most examples are fairly malty-sweet on the palate, but should have an impression of attenuation in the finish. The impression of sweetness comes from low hopping, not from incomplete fermentation. Clean fermentation profile. Dark versions have malt and ester flavors similar to the aroma (same descriptors and intensities). Pale versions have a strong bready and toasty malt flavor, a light floral, spicy, or herbal hop flavor, and a drier finish.

4. **Walk This Way Gose** [Gose, 4.8%]: A Sour Gose infused with Salt and Lime.

BJCP Analysis of Gose:

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Aroma: Light to moderately fruity aroma of pome fruit. Light sourness, slightly sharp. Noticeable coriander, which can have an aromatic lemony quality, and an intensity up to moderate. Light bready, doughy, yeasty character like uncooked sourdough bread. The acidity and coriander can give a lively impression. The salt may be perceived as a very light, clean sea breeze character or just a general freshness.

Appearance: Unfiltered, with a moderate to full haze. Moderate to tall white head with tight bubbles and good retention. Effervescent.

Mouthfeel: High to very high carbonation. Effervescent. Medium-light to -full body. Salt may give a slightly tingly, mouthwatering quality.

Taste: Moderate to restrained but noticeable sourness, like a squeeze of lemon in iced tea. Moderate bready/doughy malt flavor. Light to moderate fruity character of pome fruit, stone fruit, or lemons. Light to moderate salt character; the salt should be noticeable (particularly in the initial taste) but not taste overtly salty. Low bitterness, no hop flavor. Dry, fully-attenuated finish, with acidity not hops balancing the malt. Acidity can be more noticeable.

Dropping Some Beer Knowledge:

– Malts: Base vs Specialty:

- Base Malt: The larger percentage of a grain bill used to make a beer. These malts provide enzymes to convert malt starches into sugars. Provides extra enzymes to convert specialty malts/adjuncts without enough enzymes of their own to convert into sugars. Includes: Pale Malt, Pilsner Malt, Vienna Malt, Munich Malt, Rye Malt, & Wheat Malt. 2-Row vs 6-Row: Differentiates based on the formation of corns on the barley stalk rows.
- Specialty Malt: Smaller percentage of a grain bill used to make a beer. These malts are cracked & steeped to release the sugars and flavor compounds. The color of a beer typically comes more from the Specialty Malts. Includes: Roasted Malts, Chocolate Malt, Crystal/Caramel Malts, Smoked/Peated Malts, Acidulated Hop

– Oils, Acids, and Regions:

- Hop Oils: Main source of flavor and aroma from hops; provide non-bitter tastes/aromas for hops.
 - Myrcene: natural organic compound that is classified as a hydrocarbon. In thyme, bay, parsley, lemongrass, cannabis. Used in the perfume industry.
 - Humulene: named after the scientific name for hops, *Humulus lupulus*, it's an isomer of Caryophyllene. Key part of hops that gives the "hoppy" aroma. It's been found to possess anti-inflammatory properties, and is being studied.
 - Caryophyllene: one of the oils that help to give black pepper its spiciness. Gives a strong dry wood, pepper, earthy flavor, and an herbal character. This compound has been seen to reduce inflammation & been in anti-cancer studies. Used in the perfume industry.
- Bittering: During longer boil times hop oils evaporate, so they're added at beginning of boil to impart bitterness.
- Aroma: During shorter boil times and dry hopping, hop oils don't evaporate as much, so get the non-bitter aspects of the hops during shorter boil times and/or flameout/dry-hopping additions.
- Alpha Acid: Basis of bittering; quick breakdown: Humulone, Cohumulone, Adhumulone, Posthumulone, Prehumulone.
- Beta Acid: Slow breakdown: Lupulone, Colupulone, Adlupulone.
- Noble Hops [original Hops, Central Europe]: Terrnanger, Spalt, Hallertauer, Saaz; *Spalt, Styrian Goldings, Perle, Hersbrucker*

In Honor of Blue Blaze Brewing's Hiking Theme:

- **Lake Norman State Park:** Lake Shore Trail | 5 miles (Troutman, NC): Lake Norman grew out of a Duke Power Company power project on the Catawba River begun in 1959 and completed in 1964; the park formed in 1962, while the lake was still filling. Among the recreational benefits resulting from the new Lake Norman was the opportunity to take a long lakeshore hike. Actually, only about half of the Lake Shore trail subscribes to its name, and technically the water it buddies up to is Hicks Creek before it becomes part of the lake. While most trails aren't ideal for summer hikes, this one is, passing near the park's swimming area.
- **Crowders Mountain State Park: Pinnacle Trail** (including Turnback, Fern and Lake trails) | 4 miles (Kings Mountain, NC): Need a quick-fix peak experience? The 1,705-foot Kings Pinnacle is a short drive and, at 4 miles, a relatively short hike. From the Visitors Center the first mile or so is a mellow meander through lowland hardwoods. Then it's a half-mile climb up this monodnock comprised of kyanite-quartzite (a fact you can toss out on a group hike). The summit is a narrow, spiky ridge that affords great views, especially to the south, north and west, and includes unusual foliage, including dwarf Virginia pine and a few specimens of the blighted American chestnut. Return on the Turnback, Fern and Lake trails through more lowland hardwoods.
- **Crowders Mountain State Park: Crowders and Rocktop trails** | 5 miles (Kings Mountain, NC): As "100 Classic Hikes in North Carolina" notes, "this is a classic 'eat-your-broccoli-and-I-promise-you-something-really-good-for-desert' kind of trail." The broccoli: a nondescript hike from the Visitor Center east on Crowders Mountain Trail. The trail crosses Sparrow Springs Road, then continues along the base of Crowders Mountain before a rigorous climb up the mountain's north flank. There's a notorious stair climb (gain 360 feet in four-tenths of a mile), then its frolic time atop Crowders Mountain's rocky ridgeline. The return along Rocktop Trail includes more boulder passages.
- **Evergreen Nature Preserve** | 2 miles (Charlotte, NC): Looking for a good trail to introduce yourself — or a reluctant friend — to the great outdoors? Something not too long, not too challenging, not too wild? Then check out the Evergreen Nature Preserve, which at just 77 acres isn't big enough to get lost in, and being just three miles from the center of Charlotte, makes for a quick escape. Although small, you'll find a nice sampling of the types of things you seek in the woods: an upland hardwood forest, a couple of small tributaries and a glade or two. A good place to break in your boots.
- **Latta Plantation Nature Preserve:** Hill, Cove, Split Rock trails loop | 4.2 miles (Charlotte, NC): It's hard to pick favorites among the 16 miles of trail at Latta Plantation; that's why we've strung together a series of interconnected loops involving three trails. The Hill Trail is a logical starting point, departing the nature center off Sample Road. Logical, too, in that it passes one of the truly unique portions of this one-time cotton plantation: a Piedmont Prairie. Time was, such prairies were a common sight in the Piedmont, though their origins

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remain a mystery. Prairie grasses such as little bluestem, Indian grass and switch grass, and wildflowers such as prairie anemone, Georgia aster, tall larkspur and the smooth coneflowers inhabit the prairie today as they did hundreds of years ago. The only thing missing from yesteryear are the bison. Another plus for this hike: brushes with Mountain Island Lake.

- **Reedy Creek Park and Nature Center** | 10 miles (Charlotte, NC): The 10 miles of trail at Reedy Creek Park serve two functions. Trail on the north side link the park's various amenities: dog park with ball fields with picnic facilities with playgrounds and camping. Trail on the park's south side, emanating from the nature center, explores the more pristine parts of the park. Head out on the southern leg of the Umbrella Trail and quickly pick up the Big Oak Trail (which might have also been named Big Rock Trail) and you quickly escape into maturing Piedmont forest. A good destination is the Robinson Rockhouse Ruins, a decaying example of what constituted elite living in Charlotte in the late 1700s. A return on the Sierra Loop, Sassafras and Dragonfly trails offers more rolling Piedmont exploring.

- **RibbonWalk Nature Preserve** | 3 miles (Charlotte, NC): RibbonWalk is a great example of carving out an unexpected place to explore in an urban area. The three miles of trail on this modest 188-acre natural area offer a big escape. At first, that escape comes along a small creek that runs through a tight young forest of hardwoods, pines and cedars; later, you escape through a stand of beech trees that date back 150 to 200 years. To date, 106 herbaceous plant species, 78 species of woody plants, 53 species of birds and 24 species of butterflies have been documented at the preserve. You won't get a good aerobic workout here, but with so much to see that's not really a priority.

- **Rural Hill Nature Preserve** | 2.5 miles (Mountain Island Lake, NC): Even though Rural Hill is in the heart of the Piedmont, you're to be forgiven if a hike here feels like a ramble through the Scottish highlands. Not because you'll be traipsing through bogs and over hills barren of all but short grasses. Rather, because you'll be exploring the grounds of the former Davidson plantation, begun in 1760 by Scottish immigrants. Today, the preserve protects 487 acres on Mountain Island Lake (which only dates back to 1924). What you will find are some structures dating back to the Davidson days, and a healthy and diverse bird population.

Thank you for joining Charlotte Beer Babes for the 2024 Beer Ed Series!

Check us out on our Facebook Group, Facebook Page, Meetup Page, Instagram, Twitter, and Website!

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