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Searches for Mulled Beer Surge 126% in UK as Festive Drinkers Seek New Holiday Flavors

Stouts and porters lead the trend as British consumers embrace adventurous seasonal beverages beyond traditional mulled wine and cider.

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A new trend is emerging in the United Kingdom as mulled beer gains popularity among festive drink enthusiasts. Traditionally, mulled wine and cider have been the go-to warm beverages during the holiday season, but recent data from Beavertown, a brewery owned by Heineken, shows that searches for “mulled beer” have increased by 126% in the past month. The brewery attributes this surge to a growing curiosity among British consumers for more adventurous seasonal drinks.

The rise of mulled beer appears to be linked to the increasing popularity of dark beers such as stouts and porters. Brands like Guinness have seen significant growth in recent years, and their rich, malty profiles make them suitable bases for mulling. Sam Millard, head of innovation at Beavertown, describes mulled beer as a “fun, alternative festive drink” that offers a unique experience compared to the more familiar mulled wine. According to Millard, stouts and porters provide a robust foundation for infusing festive spices and flavors.

Millard emphasizes that one of the main appeals of mulled beer is its simplicity and versatility. It can be easily prepared at home, allowing people to experiment with different types of beer and spice combinations. The key to a successful mulled beer, he says, is choosing the right base. Beers with a rich, malty character or sweet brown ales work best. These styles are full-flavored and not overly bitter, which helps balance the added spices.

He cautions against using hoppy beers like IPAs for mulling because their bitterness can clash with traditional mulling spices. Instead, Millard recommends selecting beers that are low in hops but high in flavor—those with notes of chocolate, nuts, honey, or fruit are particularly well-suited. He advises tasting the beer before mulling; if there is any noticeable bitterness, it’s better to choose another option.

To prepare mulled beer, Millard suggests starting with a stout or porter ale or any beer that is low in hops and has some natural sweetness. Spices such as cinnamon sticks, star anise, ginger, and vanilla pods can be added to create a warming aroma and flavor profile. For lighter brown ales, ginger can add a spicy kick that balances sweetness.

Garnishes also play a role in enhancing both aroma and presentation. Orange or lemon peels and dried fruits can be added along with spices before gently heating the mixture. Millard stresses the importance of avoiding boiling the beer; instead, it should be simmered at a low heat for about 10 minutes. Boiling can introduce harsh flavors and increase bitterness.

If using carbonated beers, Millard recommends letting them sit until flat before heating since carbonation affects flavor perception and will dissipate during simmering anyway. After simmering for 10 minutes—enough time for flavors to infuse without over-reducing—the drink is ready to serve.

For those seeking additional depth or sweetness in their mulled beer, ingredients like honey or brown sugar can be added after tasting. For a richer cocktail experience, a splash of brandy, rum, or whisky may also be included.

The growing interest in mulled beer reflects broader trends in the UK beverage scene where consumers are increasingly open to experimenting with new flavors and traditions during the holiday season. As more people look for creative ways to enjoy classic winter drinks at home, mulled beer is poised to become a staple alongside its wine and cider counterparts this year.