

FAYETTEVILLE ALE TRAIL  
Puts the Spotlight on 24 Arkansas Breweries

THE BEER IN REVIEW  
THE BEST BEER & BREWERIES OF 2023

# The Beer Connoisseur®

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**100**  
**TOP-RATED**  
**BEERS**  
of 2023

**THE BEST**  
**BREWERIES**  
of 2023

**CONSUMER TRENDS**  
The Bud Light Debacle,  
Hard Seltzers, Cheladas  
and More!

**#1**  
Rated Beer  
of 2023



**WINTER 2024**  
ISSUE #70 • JANUARY / FEBRUARY

# TOP 100 BEERS OF 2023



## OFFICIAL REVIEW



**E**ach year, we collect the highest-scoring beers evaluated in the Official Review and compile them in a list of the finest examples. 2023 was a spectacular year for brewing, and we've collected the best of the best in the world of beer for you to delve into.

While hazy IPAs have long been the most popular style in the beer world, 2023 was the first time that our Official Review was absolutely overtaken by them. As such, our Top 100 Beers of 2023 story features a staggering number of hazy IPAs – an impressive number of which were rated World Class scores of 96 or above.

A whopping 12 beers achieved our vaunted World Class rating, with five of them being IPAs (hazy or otherwise). Beyond the massive number of IPAs in this year's Top 100, you'll find our highest-scoring cider ever, a bevy of ever-popular barrel-aged imperial stouts, a collection of delectable monastic ales and much, much more. These are just a few of the multitude of beer styles found within, so read on to explore the Top 100 Beers of 2023.

Cheers!

The Editors & Judges

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### ABOUT THE OFFICIAL REVIEW

The *Official Review* is conducted in a single-blind tasting format that adheres to the Beer Judge Certification Program 2021 Style Guidelines. This method provides the best opportunity to rely on facts and to avoid favoritism, ensuring a level playing field for all brewers. It serves both the industry and the consumer to have unbiased and objective scores from qualified experts.

In effort to provide the most credible evaluations, *The Beer Connoisseur* hand-selects judges with a minimum BJCP ranking of "National" or Master Cicerone®. Judges are required to work with an assistant that handles beer prior to evaluation, and breweries are not allowed to solicit judges directly.

In the single-blind tasting format, judges are presented with a chilled, properly poured beer and given its style category. Scoring is then done on the following basis using a 100-point scale: Aroma (24 points), Appearance (6 points), Flavor (40 points), Mouthfeel (10 points) and Overall Impression (20 points).

#### The score breakdown is as follows:

- 100 to 96: World Class – You need this beer in your life.
- 95 to 91: Exceptional – Don't hesitate.
- 90 to 86: Very Good – A brew to savor.
- 85 to 75: Average – Somewhat unimpressive.
- 74 and below: Not Recommended – Just walk away.

#1

# Classic Hazy Double IPA

Garage Brewing Co.  
Murrieta | California

**RATING: 99**  
by Nelson Crowle

Aroma: 24 / 24  
Appearance: 6 / 6  
Flavor: 40 / 40  
Mouthfeel: 9 / 10  
Overall Impression: 20 / 20

## Brewer's Description

This hazy double IPA has a huge aroma of intense fruit flavors up-front including peach, apricot, passion fruit, lemon and melon. Other tropical flavors carry over into an explosion of juicy deliciousness. Bitterness is present but intentionally subdued and smooth. A true classic!

## Statistics

Style: Hazy IPA

Style Family: Family: IPA

Availability: Limited Release

ABV: 7.5%

Served at: 45°

Hops: Mosaic, Nelson Sauvin, Citra

Malts: Weyermann Cara Foam, Weyermann

Munich Type 1, Simpson Premium English

Caramalt, Rahr Two-Row

## Contact

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*Classic Hazy Double IPA  
by Garage Brewing Co.  
was judged as a Hazy IPA.  
(2021 BJCP Category 21C)*

There is a big mango tropical aroma up-front and lots of West Coast grapefruit, lemon and low pine notes in the nose. The aroma is bright, fresh and exceptionally vibrant. There is a bready and moderately grainy malt nose that nicely supports the big hop notes.

The first sip contains huge tropical mango and guava notes, as well as a hint of pineapple. Lower tones of citrus follow along closely, leaning towards tangerine and hints of nectarine. Support from freshly cooked bread dough and a hint of oatmeal round out this beer's terrific flavor.

As the beer warms up, oatmeal becomes more prominent. There is also an interesting hay element along with notable grassiness and an herbaceous character, all of which add intrigue and complexity to an already scintillating brew.

This was an amazing and complex beer – one of the best this judge has ever had the privilege to sample. As the beer sits a bit more, that herbaceous note continues to develop, only adding to the complexity and intrigue of this World Class beer.

Drink this with any protein and be prepared to enjoy one of the best food and beer pairings you'll ever experience. Of course, drinking it on its own would also work, as this is the best hazy IPA I've ever had.



## BREWER Q&A

*Garage Brewing Co. Founder & Tinkerer Lou Kashmere Talks  
Classic Hazy Double IPA*

### Who was responsible for this beer's recipe?

Myself, by analyzing other IPA recipes that our brewing team uses and then revising the grain, hops and length of time being dry-hopped.

### What sets this beer apart from other examples within the style?

Everything kind of lives harmoniously – it's not too hoppy, bitter or malty. This beer focuses on balancing all aspects equally.

### What makes this beer truly World Class?

It just all came together, including the aroma, mouthfeel and complementing flavors.

### What is your favorite aspect of this beer (flavor, aroma, mouthfeel, etc.)?

The incredibly intriguing aroma, terrific flavor and overall complexity.

### Where does this beer's name come from?

My wife's 1957 T-bird. It's a classic!

### Is this your "desert island beer?"

Sure is.

### Can you describe this beer in 10 words or less?

"Best in class!"

### What's a good food pairing for this beer?

I think it's best to drink without food! Any food pairing will compromise the true taste of this nearly flawless brew.



LOU KASHMERE - FOUNDER & TINKERER

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# THE BEST BREWERIES OF 2023

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Each year, we acknowledge the breweries that collectively produced the highest-rated beers as evaluated in our *Official Review*. 2023 delivered no shortage of high-quality brews ranging from hopped-up hazy IPAs to rich and roasty barrel-aged stouts alongside many other offerings from breweries around the world. Read on to explore 2023's best breweries!

## How We Award

We look at the **top three highest-scoring beers** (as rated by our judging panel) for each brewery in the calendar year.

We then consider **how many of the three** place into the **100 to 96: World Class** category and the **95 to 91: Exceptional** category. For example, a brewery with two World Class beers and one Exceptional would rate higher than a brewery with a single higher-scoring World

Class beer and two Exceptional beers.

The brewery with the **most World Class beers** followed by the **most Exceptional beers** is awarded the Brewery of the Year.

If two or more breweries have the same number of World Class and Exceptional beers, then the brewery with the **highest point total** wins.

In the event of a tie, a **fourth reviewed beer** is counted as a tiebreaker.

If a fourth beer was not reviewed, we look at the highest score total among the brewery's **two top-scoring beers**.

*Read on and raise a glass to this year's winners!*

## GARAGE BREWING CO..

1 World Class Beer  
2 Exceptional Beers  
Total Score: 288

### Highest-scoring beers:

Classic Hazy Double IPA – Rated 99  
Ruby's Red – Rated 95  
Prickly Pear Hef – Rated 94



Our first runner-up for Brewery of the Year 2023 is **Garage Brewing Co.** of Murrieta, California. Founded in 2013 with a name that honors where the craft brewing industry originated (in brewers' garages), Garage had a tremendous year in our Official Review in 2023.

Garage's top-scoring beer was a true masterpiece: **Classic Hazy Double IPA** achieved a rating of 99 – one of only six scores of 99 that we have ever had the privilege to evaluate in our Official Review! Its name certainly serves as an indicator, as this one is destined to become a "classic" in both the hazy IPA and double IPA styles. Our judge Nelson Crowle was effusive in his praise for this tremendous brew: "This was an amazing and complex beer – one of the best this judge has ever had the privilege to sample. As the beer sits a bit more, that herbaceous note continues to develop, only adding to its complexity and intrigue. Drink this with any protein – Thai chicken, brisket with heavy rub, butter and garlic scallops – and be prepared to enjoy one of the best food and beer pairings you'll ever experience. Of course, drinking it on its own would also work, as this is the best hazy IPA I've ever had."

The brewery's second high scorer was **Ruby's Red**, an Irish red ale that clocked in at 6.1% ABV. This smooth, easy-drinking, well-balanced and fairly sweet red ale was notable for being a near-perfect example of its style. Irish reds are not that commonplace anymore, so finding a top-tier version is sure to make fans of the style rejoice.

Last but far from least, Garage's final high-scoring brew was **Prickly Pear Hef**, a wheat ale that was brewed with prickly pear. This famed cactus fruit was a perfect accompaniment to the beer's underlying style, and its lightly perfumy and sweetly fruity aromas and flavors were especially noteworthy.



## HAZY IPA

## FRUIT BEER



## IRISH RED ALE

