

# NATION'S *Restaurant News*

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# TOP 100

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DESPITE THE  
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ECONOMY?**

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## Seasonal beer sales heat up with weather

There's no question that seasonal beers are red hot. This broad category, which includes everything from winter, summer, Easter, Christmas and even Hanukkah brews, is so popular that it now outsells all other styles of craft beer, including pilsners, pale ales, stouts and India Pale Ales.

And now, as the weather heats up, it's time for summer beers to shine.

The style and flavor of summer beers can vary widely, but they generally are crisp and refreshing, often with lower alcohol levels to allow for easy drinking on steamy days. Operators nationwide are presenting a range of warm-weather choices to make the most of this lucrative season.

"The summer beer seasonal program is the second biggest [for us], right behind Christmas beers," said John Lane of



**Stephen Beaumont**

short in the Midwest, where its restaurants operate. But even bars and restaurants in warmer climates find customers are looking for a different type of drink when the mercury rises.

"It's hot, and they want refreshing ales, not high-gravity brews," said Keith Schlabs, partner and beer guru for the Dallas-based, 14-unit Flying Saucer chain of beer bars.

To quench that thirst, Schlabs pointed to some of the same beer styles as Lane, including hefeweizens — another name for German-style wheat beers — which he notes sell well year-round but see a big push in summer months.

"There are plenty of [hefeweizens] to choose from these days, so it is very important for my team to pick the right breweries," said Schlabs. "We search locally first and then search for U.S. brands



Seasonal beers are a large part of the business at the Winking Lizard, a 14-unit chain in Ohio, which features a seasonal tap that changes monthly and several other offerings this summer.

the Winking Lizard, a bar chain with 14 units in Ohio.

The chain features seasonal beers in a variety of ways. There's a seasonal tap handle that rotates monthly, several higher-profile seasonal offerings and a Glass of the Month feature in which patrons buy the beer and keep the glass. There's variety among the beers themselves, too.

"I consider Belgian-style Wits, German Weissbier, saisons and light pilsners to be summer seasonals," Lane said.

He added that the summer beer program is likely a big hit at the Winking Lizard because the season itself is so

before going to imports. That said, there are some great German options that we allow full-time handles because their quality is just spot on."

Schlabs also added one other style to the seasonal mix: the German specialty known as kölsch, a blonde beer native to Cologne that possesses characteristics of both ale and lager.

"[It's] refreshing and crisp for hot months," said Schlabs, adding that it is also "a sessionable [for lower alcohol] beer style that helps us wean the masses off of the commercial brands they find at sports bars everywhere." ■

## BEVERAGE DIGEST

### Mind the way you tend bar

Equal parts besotted memoir, mixology handbook and innovative recipe guide, the new manual for bartenders by Gaz Regan is worthy of consideration by anyone who takes their drinks — and the service thereof — seriously.

Regan has literally spent his life behind the bar, and his observations, conjectures and hearty recommendations are, or at least should be, the stuff of gospel. Beyond the drinks themselves, Regan addresses the manner in which a skilled bartender conducts his or her business, something oft-forgotten in establishments of all sorts. It's a breath of fresh air when he writes what should be the first commandment of bartending: "As far as possible, try to make sure that everyone who comes into your bar leaves feeling better than they did when they came in."

A large part of Regan's book centers around what he calls "mindful bartending," which the author describes as "an approach to the job that entails being totally aware of everything you are doing, being cognizant of everything that is going on around you and tuning in to all of your guests' wants and needs."

It's something that even the fiercest skeptic of mindfulness would have a hard time dismissing and is alone worth the price of admission to this manual.



**Author and bartender**  
Gaz Regan touts "mindful bartending" in his manual for mixologists.

**BEAUMONT'S  
Beer  
Pick**

### Narragansett Summer Ale

Like the other summer beers addressed here, the Narragansett Summer Ale is tailor made for hot weather and sunny days. The 'Gansett Summer has a soft, citrusy aroma and is crisply fruity, with underpinnings of citrus supporting slightly grapey maltiness. It is also lower in strength at 4.2 percent alcohol by volume, allowing for enjoyment without the deleterious effects of a higher-strength IPA.

The history of Narragansett beer dates back to the late 1800s, although this revivalist version has been around for only a few years, not even long enough to have its own brewery built. (The beer is contract brewed in Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York.) It achieved its greatest fame in the post-World War II era through an advertising campaign centered around the catch phrase, "Hi Neighbor. Have a 'Gansett!'"

