

## DRINK

## GETTING AHEAD ON STOUT

By LAWRENCE MARCUS

A proper Irish stout is dark, creamy, just slightly bitter — and almost impossible to find.

"It's a bad traveler," says Chris Doyle, who has poured Guinness for 28 years at the Irish landmark Tom Bergin's Tavern. And when it gets old, "it gets a sour taste, like vinegar."

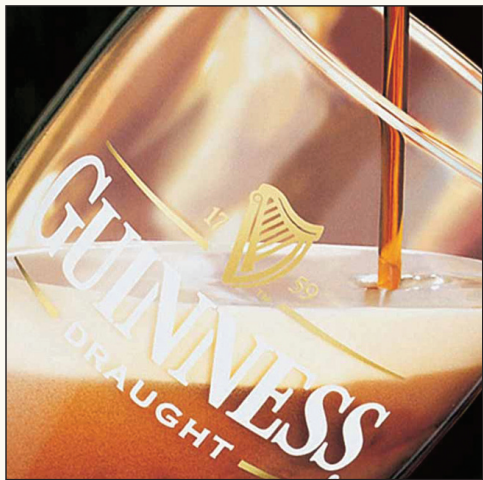
For a beer with a name that means "strong," Irish stout is remarkably fickle. Beyond staleness (Guinness is shipped from Dublin, after all), other hazards can muddle a pint.

Too cold? Tastes dull. Soapy glass? Won't foam. Pumped through dirty draft lines? You don't want to know.

And then there's the pouring problem. With its thick, foamy head, a good pour is a two-step process that allows it to settle. Elapsed time: About four minutes.

For some impatient Americans, that's about four minutes too many. The result? Guinness foam monsters. "You'd never get away with that in Ireland," says Doyle.

Draft Guinness is a tough game, but



some say it isn't worth playing. Compared to other styles, like the Russian imperial stout, they're "low-alcohol, low-malt beers," says Sang Yoon, owner of Father's Office in Santa Monica. "They're all susceptible to heat and light infection."

In fact, Yoon has a word for the famously strong-tasting beers: "They're weak." (Imperial stouts range from 8-12 percent alcohol; Irish ones clock in around 4 percent.)

However, an Irish stout with a passport isn't the same thing as one on its home turf. Beer destined for the U.S. gets extra hops, which acts as a preservative but also bitters the flavor.

Guinness can't be faulted for lack of trying. The company is rumored to have spent \$13 million developing the "rocket widget," a plastic rod that maintains the texture of its bottled brew.

Still, no one will mistake that beer for a fresh, well-poured draft.

So what do you have to do to get a really good stout?

Says Rob Nevera, manager of Tom Bergin's: "Buy a plane ticket and fly to Ireland."

**Variety Weekend spent the weekend in search of the perfect draft stout.**

**BEER: Guinness Irish Stout (Ireland)**

**WHERE:** Anywhere with shamrocks up for St. Patrick's Day (and many bars without)

**NOTES:** A dark, coffee-like brew with a dense, white head and a pleasantly bitter palate. Creamy mouthfeel and low carbonation with a crucial, balancing acidity.

**BEER: Murphy's Irish Stout (Ireland)**

**WHERE:** Library Alehouse in Santa Monica, Lucky Baldwin's in Pasadena, The Yard House in Pasadena

**NOTES:** More complex than Guinness. All the typical coffee and cream, but with notes of dark chocolate and raspberry.

**BEER: Young's Double Chocolate Stout (England)**

**WHERE:** The Yard House

**NOTES:** Just like the name says: dark chocolate on the nose, salty milk chocolate on the palate. Bitter coffee undertones mesh well with the soft mouthfeel.

**BEER: Young's Oatmeal Stout (England)**

**WHERE:** Father's Office in Santa Monica  
**NOTES:** Sweet, creamy and heavy with just a touch of bitterness. Coffee with cream and sugar.

**BEER: Barney Flats Oatmeal Stout**

(Anderson Valley Brewing Co., Mendocino)

**WHERE:** Library Alehouse

**NOTES:** According to the brewer, it's what Irish beer should taste like. Sweet, with just a touch of bitterness, but thinner and fizzier than the other stouts.

**BEER: Old Rasputin Imperial Stout**

(North Coast Brewery, Chicago)

**WHERE:** Father's Office

**NOTES:** Incredibly strong and complex. A base of coffee with maple, pecan and spice notes. Highly recommended, but take note: It's a meal.

Tasting panel included writer Andrew Barker and 55 Degrees Las Vegas sommelier Jeremiah Henderson.

**A Guinness book of records**

Our panel found remarkable variations in draft Guinness. Lesson learned: A Guinness is worth waiting for or it's not worth anything at all.

**BEST:** Our bartender at **Library Alehouse** executed a textbook two-step pour and the beer tasted remarkably pure and fresh. Served cool, but not cold; this amplified the creaminess.

At **Tom Bergin's Tavern**, our four-minute Guinness came with a shamrock drawn in its perfect, quarter-inch head.

**WORST:** Guinness at **Molly Malone's** had a brown, cottage cheese-textured head, and its nose and palate were dominated by a smoky, metallic note. Green beer without the coloring.

At **Lucky Baldwin's**, we got a quick pour, a low head, and a sour, briny beer. We thought there had been a mix-up, but a second pint confirmed the problem.

# Urban L.A.: home sweet second home

By ALISON MANHEIM

Even Cher is tired of fighting traffic.

Or maybe she just wants to skip the drive home altogether. Regardless, **GO HOME** with her recent purchase in Sierra Towers, she's in the crop of second-home buyers taking root in Los Angeles' urban core.

"At \$2,000 per square foot, West Hollywood's Sierra Towers is one of the most expensive buildings in Los Angeles," says broker Russ Filice of Sotheby's International Realty, who lives (and sells) in the building.

Then again, price is hardly the point. Filice reports that many of the building's residents are even third- and fourth-home owners from, among other places, Malibu, Santa Barbara and New York City.

Kor Development is converting the landmark 1927 Broadway Hollywood at Hollywood and Vine into 96 luxury loft condominiums with interior finishes by Kelly Wearstler. Cher is among those who purchased one of the building's upscale crash pads.

"The majority of our buyers are local to L.A.," says Kimberly Lucero, Kor's VP of sales and marketing. "While some buyers will use their unit as their primary residence, we've also seen young entertainment-industry buyers who work or play in Hollywood and plan to use their unit as a second home. They're looking to save the hour or hour and a half it takes to commute to Malibu."

Other part-time residents of the building need to be in Los Angeles regularly for business or social engagements and don't want to fight traffic each time, says Filice.

Tom Cody, principal of the South Group, is courting pied-a-terre buyers as well as primary homebuyers at Luma, Elleven and Evo, his new trio of condominium properties in Downtown Los Angeles.

"Historically, there haven't been many pied-a-terre options in downtown Los Angeles because of the physical environment," Cody says.

Developers believe the area's growing list of cultural attractions — from Staples Center to Disney Hall to the Broadway Bar — will spur buyer interest in weekend turnkey homes.

However, not everyone is sold on the pied-a-terre concept.

"I would discourage it in part to prevent speculators from buying in, as we've seen in Las Vegas," says Mel Kimman of Metro Modern, developers of The Hollywood, a 54-unit condominium project on Yucca Street.

Besides, he points out, the point of a pied-a-terre is it's not your real home. "We want to create a community of people who live, work and

## PIED-A-TERRE POSSIBILITIES

**Broadway Hollywood**

Hollywood/Hollywood and Vine Adaptive reuse of a 1927 Classical Revival building with interior finishes by Kelly Wearstler

Interior Design, designer of the Viceroy Hotels.

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE CLUB):** .6 miles

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE AIRPORT):** 17.4 miles

**LISTING PRICE:** From \$1.5 to \$1.7 million

**CONTACT:** Kor Atlas, (213) 488-0600; koratlas.com

**Evo**

Downtown/11<sup>th</sup> and Grand

New construction project will have 311 luxury condos plus five two-story, ground level townhomes of 730 to 3,500 square feet in a 23-story building offering panoramic views of Los Angeles.

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE CLUB):** 8.1 miles

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE AIRPORT):** 16.8 miles

**LISTING PRICE:** From the \$400,000s to over \$3 million,

**CONTACT:** The South Group, (213) 622-5400; evo-south.com

**Sierra Towers**

9255 Doheny Road/West Hollywood One-bedroom, 1.5 bathroom

condominium in a mid-century, 32-story high-rise. Sophisticated, modern unit has floor-to-ceiling windows and is fully furnished (with four plasma-screen TVs). Building amenities include gym, pool, spa, ballroom and caterer's kitchen and 24-hour security and valet parking.

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE CLUB):** 3.7 miles

**DISTANCE TO LAX (THE AIRPORT):** 13.4 miles

**LISTING PRICE:** \$2.6 million

**CONTACT:** Russell Filice, Sothebys International Realty, (310) 888-3787; sierratowersales.com

