

### History of California Common

- The only indigenous beer style to U.S.
- The style began the craft brewing movement in the U.S.

### 1849 California gold rush

- Thirsty miners with lure of gold and quick riches. Types of people who migrated.
- “Selling picks and shovels”, German brewers follow migration west to supply miners with beer.

### Brewers used adaptive brewing methods under primitive conditions

- Beer styles don't just happen, they are result of brewers adapting to local conditions
- Use of lager yeast, familiar to German brewers and becoming popular in the rest of the country. The great lager revolution was sweeping the country. German brewers expected to use lager yeast for their beers.
- Temperatures too high for lagering, no ice transportation from Sierra Nevadas, no mechanical refrigeration
- Shallow fermenting pans produce less off flavors

### How Steam Beer got it's name

- High carbonation due to krausening, causing “steam” to escape when bung was removed. The procedure was to remove the bung the night before putting the keg on line, the first rush of carbon dioxide (40 to 70 psi) had the look and sound of steam escaping from a boiler. The process was called “steaming” the beer.
- Shallow fermenting pans allowed “steam” to rise off wort that was cooling

### Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and pre-prohibition

- Lager beers take over the higher end of the beer market
- Steam beer left as cheapest swill that a saloon was likely to sell
- 1893 magazine calls it “not a connoisseur's drink”, it was the inexpensive beer of the working class.
- Most understood that a typical steam beer drinker was a creature utterly without taste or refinement.
- Steam beer five cents, bottled lager beer fifteen cents.
- Pre-Prohibition “steam beer”, after prohibition “California common”

### The most famous story in the craft brewing industry

- Steam beer sales decline gradually until only one brewery produced the style, Anchor Brewing of San Francisco
- The start of the craft brewing revolution can be credited to the courage of Fritz Maytag, heir to the appliance company, who bought the ailing brewery in 1965 and trademarked the style “steam beer”
- Maytag's ten year quest to return the brewery to respectability provided a model for other small and struggling brewers.
- OTOH, Maytag did a disservice to the craft brewing industry by trade marking the “steam beer” name. Other brewers are unable to communicate to the consumer that their beer is brewed in the “steam style”, which will inhibit diversity and destine the style as an obscure specialty.

## Brewing steam beer

To brew a beer similar to Anchor Steam, it's best to focus on a fairly simple recipe. Domestic two-row or pale ale malt plus about 10% of a mid-color crystal malt would be a good grain bill. Follow that with Northern Brewer hops and California Common yeast from White Labs or Wyeast, ferment around the mid 60's and you are all set.

### 7B. California Common Beer

**Aroma:** Typically showcases the signature Northern Brewer hops (with woody, rustic or minty qualities) in moderate to high strength. Light fruitiness acceptable. Low to moderate caramel and/or toasty malt aromatics support the hops. No diacetyl.

**Appearance:** Medium amber to light copper color. Generally clear. Moderate off-white head with good retention.

**Flavor:** Moderately malty with a pronounced hop bitterness. The malt character is usually toasty (not roasted) and caramelly. Low to moderately high hop flavor, usually showing Northern Brewer qualities (woody, rustic, minty). Finish fairly dry and crisp, with a lingering hop bitterness and a firm, grainy malt flavor. Light fruity esters are acceptable, but otherwise clean. No diacetyl.

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-bodied. Medium to medium-high carbonation.

**Overall Impression:** A lightly fruity beer with firm, grainy maltiness, interesting toasty and caramel flavors, and showcasing the signature Northern Brewer varietal hop character.

**History:** American West Coast original. Large shallow open fermenters (coolships) were traditionally used to compensate for the absence of refrigeration and to take advantage of the cool ambient temperatures in the San Francisco Bay area. Fermented with a lager yeast, but one that was selected to thrive at the cool end of normal ale fermentation temperatures.

**Comments:** This style is narrowly defined around the prototypical Anchor Steam example. Superficially similar to an American pale or amber ale, yet differs in that the hop flavor/aroma is woody/minty rather than citrusy, malt flavors are toasty and caramelly, the hopping is always assertive, and a warm-fermented lager yeast is used.

**Ingredients:** Pale ale malt, American hops (usually Northern Brewer, rather than citrusy varieties), small amounts of toasted malt and/or crystal malts. Lager yeast, however some strains (often with the mention of "California" in the name) work better than others at the warmer fermentation temperatures (55 to 60°F) used. Note that some German yeast strains produce inappropriate sulfury character. Water should have relatively low sulfate and low to moderate carbonate levels.

**Vital Statistics:** OG: 1.048 – 1.054

IBUs: 30 – 45 FG: 1.011 – 1.014

SRM: 10 – 14 ABV: 4.5 – 5.5%

**Commercial Examples:** Anchor Steam, Southampton Steam Beer, Flying Dog Old Scratch Amber Lager

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should be able to brew. The current home-  
brewed examples tend to emulate Anchor  
Steam Beer, and a broader exploration of the  
style could help brewers to better under-  
stand what it must have been like during the  
San Francisco gold rush years.

As for commercial brewers, creativity is  
in order not only in the brewhouse but in the  
marketing department as well. Alternative ter-  
minology must be found that skirts Anchor's  
monopoly of the steam moniker while clearly

communicating to the consumer that the  
product is brewed in the pre-Prohibition  
"steam-style." Without this, the style is des-  
tined to become an obscure specialty akin  
to German steinbier. Already, Anchor Steam  
Beer looms as a monolith that hampers the  
view of the broader character and history of  
the style. As this happens, diversity is lost in  
the contemporary selection of drinks; but  
more important, a part of the American  
brewing heritage is lost as well.

### *Key Success Factors in Brewing California Common Beer*

- Formulate the base of the recipe using either two-row malt, pale ale malt, or extract. The extract can be used alone or as a supplement to a minimash. The base malts should account for about 85 percent of the grist.
- Include crystal malt for 5 to 20 percent of the grist. You may wish to include one, or at most two, of the following: Munich, Vienna, toasted, or chocolate malt to constitute 9 percent, 9 percent, 6 percent, or 2 percent of the grist, respectively.
- Use an infusion-mash program with a saccharification rest in the range from 150 to 154 °F (66 to 68 °C).
- Boil for one to two hours, making three to four hop additions.
- Hop primarily with Northern Brewer and Cascade hops. Other aroma varieties may occasionally be added.
- Hop to achieve a bitterness between 30 and 45 IBU, or a BU:GU ratio of 0.80 to 0.90.
- Add 0.10-ounce of hops per gallon (0.5-ounce for 5 gallons) between ten and thirty minutes before the end of the boil for hop flavor.
- Add 0.15-ounce of hops per gallon (0.75-ounce for 5 gallons) during the last nine minutes of the boil for hop flavor. (Alternatively, this addition can be steeped after the boil.)
- Dry hopping with 0.15-ounce of hops per gallon (0.75-ounce for 5 gallons) is practiced in some cases.
- Select a clean medium- to high-attenuation yeast based upon your ability to control fermentation. For temperatures in the range of 50 to 55 °F (10 to 13 °C), use Pilsen or Bavarian lager yeast; in the range of 60 to 65 °F (16 to 18 °C), use California lager yeast; and in the range of 65 to 68 °F (18 to 20 °C), use American ale yeast.
- Ferment according to the appropriate temperature for your yeast.
- Following fermentation, condition the beer for two to four weeks at approximately 50 °F (10 °C).
- For an authentic touch, krausen the beer during the conditioning rest so that it is both conditioned and carbonated when the rest is complete.

## style recipes

### Uncommon Common

(5 gallons/19 L, all-grain)

OG = 1.054 (13.3 °P)

FG = 1.016 (4.1 °P)

IBU = 41 SRM = 11 ABV = 5%

*Anchor Brewing Company has always been very generous to homebrewers. This recipe makes a beer similar in flavor to Anchor Steam, but a bit bigger in mouthfeel, hops and malt flavors. If you want a beer a bit drier and more like Anchor Steam, eliminate the Munich, Victory and pale chocolate malts.*

#### Ingredients

- 9 lb. (4.1 kg) Great Western domestic two-row malt (or similar)
- 17.6 oz. (500 g) Durst Munich malt (or similar)
- 14.1 oz. (400 g) Great Western crystal malt 40 °L (or similar)
- 7 oz. (200 g) Briess Victory malt 28 °L (or similar)
- 1.75 oz. (50 g) Crisp pale chocolate malt 200 °L (or similar)
- 5 AAU Northern Brewer hops (0.77 oz./22 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (60 min.)
- 8 AAU Northern Brewer hops (1.23 oz./35 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (15 min.)
- 8 AAU Northern Brewer hops (1.23 oz./35 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (1 min.)
- White Labs WLP810 (San Francisco Lager) or Wyeast 2112 (California Lager) yeast

#### Step by Step

Mill the grains and dough-in targeting a mash of around 1.5 quarts of water to 1 pound of grain (a liquor-to-grist ratio of about 3:1 by weight) and a temperature of 150 °F (66 °C). Hold the mash at 150 °F (66 °C) until enzymatic conversion is complete. Infuse the mash with near boiling water while stirring or with a recirculating mash system raise the temperature to mash out at 168 °F (76 °C). Sparge slowly with 170 °F (77 °C) water, collecting wort until the pre-boil kettle volume is around 5.9 gallons (22.3 L) and the

gravity is 1.046 (11.4 °P).

The total wort boil time is 60 minutes. Add the bittering hops as soon as the wort starts boiling. Add the second hop addition and Irish moss or other finings with 15 minutes left. The last hop addition goes in 1 minute before the end of the boil. Chill the wort rapidly to 62 °F (17 °C), let the break material settle, rack to the fermenter, pitch the yeast and aerate thoroughly. The proper pitch rate is 2.5 packages of liquid yeast or 1 package of liquid yeast in a 3-liter starter.

Ferment at 62 °F (17 °C) until the beer attenuates fully. With healthy yeast, fermentation should be complete within a week, but do not rush it. Rack to a keg and force carbonate or rack to a bottling bucket, add priming sugar, and bottle. Target a carbonation level of 2.5 to 3 volumes.

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### Uncommon Common

(5 gallons/19 L,  
extract with grains)

OG = 1.054 (13.3 °P)

FG = 1.016 (4.1 °P)

IBU = 41 SRM = 11 ABV = 5%

#### Ingredients

- 5.5 lb. (2.5 kg) light liquid malt extract
- 1 lb. (440 g) Munich liquid malt extract
- 14.1 oz. (400 g) Great Western crystal malt 40 °L (or similar)
- 7 oz. (200 g) Briess Victory malt 28 °L (or similar)
- 1.75 oz. (50 g) Crisp pale chocolate malt 200 °L (or similar)
- 5 AAU Northern Brewer hops (0.77 oz./22 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (60 min.)
- 8 AAU Northern Brewer hops (1.23 oz./35 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (15 min.)
- 8 AAU Northern Brewer hops (1.23 oz./35 g of 6.5% alpha acids) (1 min.)
- White Labs WLP810 (San Francisco Lager) or Wyeast 2112 (California Lager) yeast

#### Step by Step

Most Munich liquid malt extract (LME)

is sold as a blend of Munich and Pilsner or two-row malts in different percentages. I specify 100% Munich LME in my recipe so you will know how much of your blend to use for your brew. When using a blend, replace the Munich extract in the recipe and enough of the two-row extract to match the percentage of the blend. If you want to use 100% Munich extract, the only current supplier I am aware of is Weyermann. If you cannot get fresh liquid malt extract, it is better to use an appropriate amount of dried malt extract (DME) instead.

Mill or coarsely crack the specialty malt and place loosely in a grain bag. Avoid packing the grains too tightly in the bag, using more bags if needed. Steep the bag in about 1 gallon (~4 liters) of water at roughly 170 °F (77 °C) for about 30 minutes. Lift the grain bag out of the steeping liquid and rinse with warm water. Allow the bags to drip into the kettle for 15 minutes while you add the malt extract. Do not squeeze the bags. Add enough water to the steeping liquor and malt extract to make a pre-boil volume of 5.9 gallons (22.3 L) and a gravity of 1.046 (11.4 °P). Stir thoroughly and bring to a boil.

The total wort boil time is 60 minutes. Add the bittering hops as soon as the wort starts boiling. Add the second hop addition and Irish moss or other finings with 15 minutes left. The last hop addition goes in 1 minute before the end of the boil. Chill the wort rapidly to 62 °F (17 °C), let the break material settle, rack to the fermenter, pitch the yeast and aerate thoroughly. The proper pitch rate is 2.5 packages of liquid yeast or 1 package of liquid yeast in a 3-liter starter.

Ferment at 62 °F (17 °C) until the beer attenuates fully. With healthy yeast, fermentation should be complete within a week, but do not rush it. Rack to a keg and force carbonate or rack to a bottling bucket, add priming sugar, and bottle. Target a carbonation level of 2.5 to 3 volumes.

# Anchor Steam Beer

*Anchor Brewing Co., San Francisco, California, U.S.A.*

Steam beer is one of the few beer styles to have originated in the United States. The use of lager yeast gives Anchor Steam the smoothness of a lager with the fruitiness of an ale. The full-bodied beer has high carbonation with a creamy off-white head, a deep amber color, and a fruity, citrus hop aroma with some malt. It has a clean, smooth, slightly bitter flavor with a refreshing finish.

Yield: 5 gallons (18.9 L)

Original gravity: 1.051–1.052

Final gravity: 1.012–1.013

IBU 40

SRM 18

5% alcohol by volume

Crush and steep in ½ gallon (1.9 L) 150°F (65.5°C) water for 20 minutes:

**14 oz. (.4 kg) 80°L US crystal malt**

Strain the grain water into your brew pot. Sparge the grains with ½ gallon (1.9 L) water at 150°F (65.5°C). Add water to the brew pot for 1.5 gallons (5.7 L) total volume. Bring the water to a boil, remove the pot from the stove, and add:

**4 lb. (1.8 kg) Alexander's pale malt syrup**

**2.75 lb. (1.25 kg) M&F light DME**

**1.25 oz. (35 g) Northern Brewer @ 8% AA (10 HBU)**  
(bittering hop)

Add water until total volume in the brew pot is 2.5 gallons (9 L). Boil for 45 minutes then add:

**½ oz. (14 g) Northern Brewer (flavor hop)**

**1 tsp. (5 ml) Irish moss**

After 59 minutes of the boil add:

**½ oz. (14 g) Northern Brewer (aroma hop)**

Boil for 1 minute, remove pot from the stove and cool for 15 minutes.

Strain the cooled wort into the primary fermenter and add cold water to obtain 5 gallons (18.9 L). When the wort temperature is under 80°F (26.6°C), pitch your yeast.

**1st choice: Wyeast's 2112 California lager yeast**  
(Ferment at 60–66°F [16–19°C])

**2nd choice: Wyeast's 2565 Kölsch yeast**  
(Ferment at 60–66°F [16–19°C])

Ferment in the primary fermenter 5–7 days or until fermentation slows, then siphon into the secondary fermenter. Bottle when fermentation is complete with:

**1¼ cup (300 ml) M&F extra-light DME**



*Serve in a pub mug at 50°F (10°C).*

## Alternate Methods

**Mini-mash Method:** Mash 2.5 lb. (1.1 kg) US 2-row pale malt and the specialty grain at 122°F (50°C) for 30 minutes and at 150°F (65.5°C) for 60 minutes.

Then follow the extract recipe omitting 2 lb. (.9 kg) DME at the beginning of the boil.

**All-grain Method:** Mash 9 lb. (4.1 kg) US 2-row pale malt with the specialty grain at 122°F (50°C) for 30 minutes and at 150°F (65.5°C) for 90 minutes.

Add 7 HBU (30% less than the extract recipe) of bittering hops for 60 minutes of the boil. Add the flavor hops and Irish moss for the last 15 minutes of the boil and the aroma hops for the last 1 minute.

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Ferment in  
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complete w  
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