

Cheers for vegan beers – the New Zealand vegan beer list

By David Hagan

With summer here and the festive season just around the corner, what better time to bring you New Zealand's most comprehensive list of beers suitable for vegans? We've compiled the list below so that you can make sure that the drinks you're enjoying are fully free of animal products. Have a read of the information about the issues and then check the list to see if your favourite New Zealand beers are included. Cheers!

Why do we need a vegan beer list?

Not everyone may be aware that when it comes to beer, vegans need to be well informed to make sure they're not choosing a brew which makes use of animal products. Animal products are sometimes used both in the ingredients and also in the beer-making process. Animal ingredients in beer can include honey or dairy products. Animal products used in the brewing process include isinglass (taken from fishes' swim bladders) which is sometimes used to clarify or filter the beer in a process called fining; gelatine is also sometimes used as a fining agent.

Unlike wines, which generally indicate on the bottle if they've used an animal derived product (egg, dairy or fish) in the fining process, beer bottles give no clues as to whether or not the brewers have used isinglass or similar substances. So a little research is required, the product of our research is this first attempt to list which beers brewed in New Zealand are suitable for vegans and which aren't. While there are other vegan beer lists on the internet this is, to our knowledge, the most comprehensive and up to date specifically focused on New Zealand beer.

What's the scope of the list?

The list only includes beers brewed in New Zealand. This means that in addition to the well-known local brands it also includes some foreign brands which are brewed under license in New Zealand breweries. It does not include the many imported beers which are also available on our supermarket and bottle shop shelves – information on these beers can be found by checking out international vegan beer lists such as www.barnivore.com. As a general note if you enjoy drinking imported British or British-style "real ales" it is particularly important to check up as these beers frequently make use of isinglass. Also as a general rule imported German beers tend to be suitable for vegans because they are brewed in accordance with purity laws dating from the 16th century which dictate how the brew should be produced.

What's the overall situation on vegan beer in New Zealand?

Our research has shown that when it comes to vegan beer in New Zealand there's good news and bad news, and then there's more good news. First good news - the majority of the beers produced by the three biggest brewers in New Zealand (DB, Lion Nathan and Independent Liquor) are suitable for vegans. These big breweries produce all of the most recognised New Zealand beer brands (as well as locally brewing a number of very well-known foreign brands such as Heineken, Becks and Stella Artois). The list shows that the vast majority of these beers are suitable for vegans, the significant exceptions being Tui, Monteiths, DB Bitter, DB Draught, Export Gold and Flame (all from DB Breweries) all of which may use isinglass depending on where they are produced in the country. The fact that these beers are brewed in some locations without isinglass shows it is not essential and could easily be phased out altogether. Lion Nathan brewed beers are all suitable for vegans with the exception of Guinness and Kilkeny. All of the beers brewed by Independent Liquor are suitable for vegans.

Now the bad news, while the most popular beers made in New Zealand are mainly vegan, the two biggest breweries that make them are owned by corporations involved in the dairy industry. DB Breweries was acquired by Asia Pacific Breweries in 2004. Asia Pacific is a joint venture between Heineken International and Fraser and Neave, a Singapore based company which, in addition to lots of other activities, produces milk and various other dairy products. Lion Nathan is a subsidiary of Lion Nathan National Foods - Australia's largest dairy food company (which is itself wholly owned by the Japanese Kirin Holdings Company Limited). For some not drinking these products

on account of the activities of the companies that own the breweries may be a step too far, but we include this information just to help fully inform people's choices.

Now the next bit of good news, in addition to the beers produced by the big corporate breweries New Zealand has a wealth of microbreweries scattered throughout the land, most of which offer a fantastic range of fabulous beers suitable for vegans. Some of these beers will be available in your local supermarket or bottle shop, or you can check each company's website to order direct from the brewers. Buying these beers supports small local independent breweries, and gives you a chance to sample a whole range of new flavours – give them a try and who knows you may find you prefer them to the big brands!

Disclaimer

The list is divided into two sections – one for the big corporate breweries that produce the best-known brands and one for the microbreweries. The lists are correct as of December 2010, and are based on the responses given by each brewery to a request for information about their use of animal ingredients or animal products in their brewing process. Things change and the list may well go out of date – if anyone becomes aware of any changes in any breweries' policies please contact us so we can update the list accordingly. Not every microbrewery we contacted responded, so if you have a favourite brew which isn't included on the list why not contact the brewer yourself to ask them if their beer is suitable for vegans and please let us know the answer so we can add them to the list. Remember it's important to ask them both about the ingredients they use and whether any animal products are used in the beer making process. The lists only cover beer brewed in New Zealand – for foreign brewed beers sold in New Zealand please refer to alternative vegan beer lists on the internet. However, with so many fantastic local beers suitable for vegans we're sure you'll be able to find something from the list below to enjoy. Cheers!

Vegan Beer list – the big breweries

Brewery	Suitable	Not suitable
DB www.dbbreweries.co.nz	Heineken Tiger Amstel Sol	DB Bitter DB Draught Flame Export Gold Monteiths Tui
Independent Liquor www.independentliquor.co.nz	NZ Pure Carlsberg Tuborg Kingfisher Haagen Ranfurly Lager New Zealand Lager Casa	None
Lion Nathan www.lion-nathan.com.au	Speights Lion Red Steinlager Mac's Canterbury Draught Light Ice Castlemaine Black Ice Rheineck Tasman Bitter Castlepoint	Guinness Kilkenny

	Greenstone Lager Gluoco Light Oranjeboom Stella Artois Becks	
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Vegan Beer list –microbreweries

Brewery	Suitable	Not suitable
Aotearoa Breweries, Kawerau www.mata.net.nz	MATA Artesain MATA Feijoa MATA Brown Boy MATA Black Bru MATA Blondie	MATA Manuka
Bennett's Beer, Wellington www.bennettsbeer.co.nz	Wellington Lager Classic Black Four Seasons Belgium Strong	None
Emerson Brewing Company, Dunedin www.emersons.co.nz	Dunkelweiss Weissbier Weizenbock	Pilsner 1812 India Pale Ale Bookbinder London Porter Old 95
EPIC Brewing Company, Auckland www.epicbeer.com	Epic Lager Epic Pale Ale Epic Armageddon IPA Epic Mayhem Epic Stout Epic Barrel Aged IPA Epic Portamarillo	None
Green Man Brewery, Dunedin www.greenmanbrewery.co.nz	Lager Premium Pils Keller Stout Strong IPA Tequila Beer Ginger Beer Krystal Weiss Cyclist And all of their seasonal beers (e.g. Celt, Dark Mild and Whisky Bock)	None
Hawkes Bay Independent Brewery (The Filter Room Ale and Cider House), Napier www.thefilterroom.co.nz	Pure Lager Kingston Cider Kingston Perry	Kingston Fusion Fat Ass Scrumpy Bollydooly Cider Red Cider Ginger Spin Amber Ale Pilsner Black Duck Porter Special Reserve
Invercargill Brewery	Cider	Stanley Green

www.invercargillbrewery.co.nz	Pitch Black (batches made from late 2010 only)	Wasp B. Man Boysenberry Smokin' Bishop Pitch Black (batches made before late 2010)
Mike's Organic Brewery, Taranaki www.organicbrewery.co.nz	Organic Premium Lager Organic Premium Ale Organic Premium Pilsner Strawberry Blonde Whisky Porter Double India Pale Ale	None
Moa Brewery, Blenheim www.moabeer.co.nz	Moa Original Moa Noir Moa Blanc Moa Harvest Moa 5 Hop Moa St Josephs Tripel Moa Wek Native Lager	Currently developing a honey beer
Peak Brewery, Wairarapa www.peak-brewery.co.nz	Mendip Bitter Cornhill Porter Alb Weiss Sollinger Bock Monkey Point IPA Drachenfels Lager	Girdwood Estate Mead
Renaissance Brewing, Blenheim www.renaissancebrewing.co.nz	Stonecutter Scotch Ale Elemental Porter Craftsman Stout Discovery Pale Ale Perfection Pale Ale Paradox Blonde Ale MPA Voyager Pale Ale Funkelryesen Rye Ale	None
Sprig and Fern Brewery, Nelson www.sprigandfern.co.nz	Fern Lager Fern Draught Fern Dark Best Bitter Blonde Doppelbock Ginger Lager Pale Ale Pilsner Porter Scotch Ale Tasman Lager	None
Steam Brewing Company, Auckland (Cock and Bull pubs) www.steambrewing.co.nz	All house beers: Blue Goose Lager Buxom Blonde Wheat Beer Classic Draught Dark Star Fuggles Best Bitter Monks Habit Abbey Ale	None
Sunshine Brewing Company, Gisborne	Gisborne Gold Reserve Ale	None

www.gisbornegold.co.nz	Gisborne Green Black Magic	
Three Boys Brewery, Christchurch www.threeboysbrewer.co.nz	Wheat beer	Pilsner Porter IPA
Tuatara Brewing, Wellington www.tuatara.co.nz	Pilsner Hefe Porter Ardennes Pale Ale Helles	None
Waiheke Island Brewery www.waihekebrewery.co.nz	Baroona Original Dark Ale Wheat Beer Malty	Non-alcoholic Ginger Beer
West Coast Brewing, Westport www.westcoastbrewing.com	Green Fern Lager West Coast Black West Coast Lager West Coast Draught West Coast Pale Ale And all their seasonal beers (e.g. Wheat, Bitter, Marzen, Oatmeal Stout)	None
Wigram Brewing Company, Christchurch www.wigrambrewing.co.nz	Dakota Dark Hefe Weizen Muncher Dunkel Bristol Best Bitter Bacvarian Pilsner Vienna Lager Spruce Beer	Harvard Honey Ale