

Beer Me!

Majorly overthought beer list BY SHANNON FINNELL

If you have a suds-lover or locavore on your list, if you want to buy an out-of-towner a "made in Eugene" gift or if you know broke college students and recent grads who consider microbrews a luxury, a stocking (Hirons, \$9.99) or basket full of the good stuff is an excellent consumable present.

Ninkasi's Sleighr (\$3.99) is arguably the most obvious starting point for a holiday brew basket. Dark, malty and with a hint of chocolate, the seasonal brew tastes a bit like a dessert lager and deliciously unlike a 7.2 percent alcohol-by-volume brew – the alcohol is well-camouflaged by other flavors.

Those who have tasted vanilla porters spoiled by an overpowering vanilla flavor will especially appreciate Hop Valley's Vanilla Infused Porter (VIP)

(\$4.29). Its vanilla flavor balances with the rest of the beer without fading into the background, while the chocolate and coffee flavors act as complements.

While pumpkin symbolizes non-gifty Halloween and Thanksgiving, Oakshire's Big Black Jack Imperial Chocolate Pumpkin Porter (\$6.99) packs a holiday taste suited to December, too. Its strong chocolate taste pairs with the subtler pumpkin to create a rich brew to sip late at night in front of the yule log. Bonus: It smells great.

More purposefully holiday seasonal, Oakshire's Ill-Tempered Gnome (\$4.99) tastes of caramel; it's a dark and malty winter delight, but the brewers didn't skimp on hops when devising this recipe, either.

Not every gift beer needs to be seasonal and

dark. Ninkasi's Total Domination IPA (\$3.99) was the company's first, and it's become symbolic of Eugene's microbrew industry. The hops combination in this sharp brew is its soul, which has led to its commercial success.

Hop Valley's Double D Blonde (\$4.29) rounds out these picks. Dark beers are fantastic in winter, but if your gift recipient is considering purchasing a tanning bed just to feel warm and dry, Double D Blonde is a refreshing reminder of summer. It's a great hoppy beer for people who feel "meh" about hops – the hops flavor is well-balanced, and it makes "refreshing" feel like a flavor.

Pick up these brews in local grocery stores or visit the breweries themselves for gifts like T-shirts and bumper stickers. GG



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