

## ACCESSORIES

# Want to elevate your beer experience? Reach for a glass

These glassware, each designed to serve specific brews, add a bit of sophistication – and lots of aroma – to any drinking session

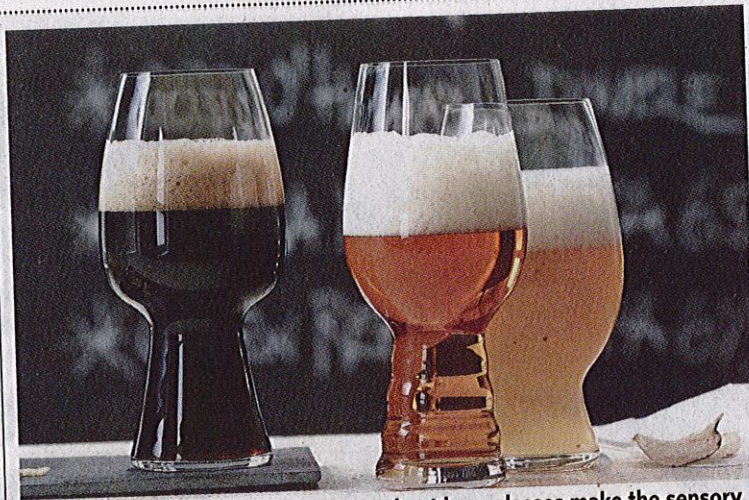
BEN JOHNSON

As craft beer becomes increasingly popular, so too does the interest in (and the market for) glassware designed to serve specific styles of brew. Leading the charge is Spiegelau, an offshoot of Riedel and its famous wine glasses. Based in Germany, the company recently introduced three uniquely shaped glasses designed in collaboration with heavyweight breweries such as Oregon's Rogue brewery and Bell's Brewery out of Michigan.

I love beer, but I'm generally happy drinking it from any clean-ish glass in the cupboard. I decided to put Spiegelau's glasses to the test, enjoying an excellent stout (St. Ambrose Oatmeal), IPA (Nickel Brook Headstock) and wheat beer (Side Launch Wheat) in both the fancy new glasses and my usual drinking vessel, a trusty Mason jar.

### The Stout glass, \$40 for four

The large bowl of this glass has convex sides that essentially



Spiegelau's stout, IPA and American wheat beer glasses make the sensory experience of drinking more intense than regular glasses.

“target” aromas to your nose as you drink, while the narrower base creates a “shelf” over which the beer pours as you tip the glass, to ensure it retains some head as you drink. In short, the glass really does make a difference. The difference in aromas was just short of extraordinary: While the Mason jar gave off

expected roasted malt and darkly sweet scents, the Spiegelau glass delivered a stout perfume on steroids, full of deep roasted malt, chocolate, coffee and hearty oats.

### The IPA glass, \$40 for four

The first glass in the series, the

IPA glass is ribbed for your pleasure (or, technically, to “preserve a frothy head”). The stem of the glass is designed to agitate and aerate the beer with each sip, while a “nucleation” at the bottom of the glass is essentially an etching that aids carbonation. The narrower opening helps focus the citrusy, grassy smells of a good, hop-forward beer. I ended up pouring the beer from the Mason jar into this clearly superior glass – it won't make a bad IPA good, but it will take your appreciation of a great IPA to another level.

### The American Wheat Beer glass, \$40 for four

Spiegelau claims that the big bowl of this glass acts like “smell reservoir,” while the “stark, angular shape and open base creates a dramatic visual ... as beer is poured.” While I didn't see the promised “cascading effect” as I poured, I will admit that simply looking at this artfully rendered glass cued my taste buds that beer would taste better

sipped from it rather than from my lowly jar. The taste didn't change much between glasses, but a striking difference in aroma again stood out. While you still get some bright citrus and coriander-spice aroma drinking Side Launch Wheat from a Mason jar, the Spiegelau glass beefed up the presence of the breadly, peppery, almost-juicy-Fruit-gum notes that really make this beer great.

### THE VERDICT

The most noticeable effect delivered by these glasses is the spectacular showcase of complex aromas. The thin, laser-cut glass rims helped spread flavours across my tongue and are simply more sophisticated than the chunky rim of a jar. Whether or not it was mostly in my head, drinking from these glasses did make beer seem more special – they elevated my sensory experience, I believed the beer would taste better, and then it did. I guess it's time to put pickles, not beer, into my Mason jars.