



Photo Illustration by Damon Lee/DN

Lincoln beer drinkers aren't following national trends. Although ice beers are popular throughout the country, they are decreasingly in demand locally. Some Lincoln bartenders said they thought the special brew was just a fad.

Ice beer craze thaws out in Lincoln

By Charles Isom
Staff Reporter

Ice beer is a hot item in the United States right now, but local interest in the brews seems to have cooled down, according to some Lincoln bars and liquor stores.

Ice beer is especially made by freezing during the brewing process so that ice crystals form. These crystals can be left in the beverage or removed, causing the beer to taste different and have different alcohol content.

Ice beers were introduced in this country from Canada almost a year ago and have continued to grow in national popularity ever since, said Sandy Carson of Stroh's Brewery in Detroit.

The fact that there are over 40 different brands available from almost all the major distributors seems to prove its popularity. Everything from regular ice beers to malt ice beverages to light ice beer has been introduced.

These beers make up a good share of the total beer shipped, 5.8 percent nationally according to Nielsen figures. This is the highest mark these beers have held, and they show no sign of slowing down, Carson said. However, for some reason, sales

in the Omaha/Lincoln area have been on the decline since April.

According to Nielsen figures provided by Stroh's, ice products hit their peak in the Omaha/Lincoln area in April at 5.3 percent. Since then they have dropped dramatically to their lowest point of 3.4 percent in July before starting a slow growth to the current 3.6 percent.

Carson said she didn't understand the decline in the Midwest.

"I don't know why they aren't selling well in some areas. It could be the combination of distribution, media exposure and which beers are currently selling strong. Or it could be any one of those alone," she said.

Tommy Mausbach, manager of the Brass Rail Bar, 1406 O St., said that he, too, wasn't sure why the ice brands don't sell very well.

"For example we'll order 12 cases of Miller Lite as opposed to two cases of Miller Ice. The only ice beer that seems to be holding its own is Icehouse," he said. "I don't see this (ice beers) as being a continuous thing."

Marcia Levering, bartender/manager of Iguana's, 1426 O St., echoed Mausbach's statements.

"There was a big deal made when these beers were introduced. We sold a lot at the beginning, especially Bud Ice. Then everything died off real

fast," she said. "It's probably just a fad."

It's not just bars that have noticed the lack of sales for the ice varieties. The liquor stores around town have also noticed the lack of mass sales promised by the breweries. Local liquor stores have had poor sales for the most part.

"The ice brands are not very popular at all. Out of everything we stock they probably make up less than 1 percent, if that. They sold hot at first, but then died," said Daryl Bahm, owner of Herm's Liquor, 1644 P. St.

"New items generally sell good for awhile but then the newness wears off and sales start to slack. It's the same thing as Miller Dry or wine coolers," he said.

Jim Mumgaard, co-owner of Mum's Liquor, 841 N. 27th St., had a more positive outlook despite experiencing similar poor results.

He said that when the ice products first came out they did well, especially Bud Ice. But they lost some of their popularity during the summer. He said he was looking for sales to increase now that the students are coming back.

"I'll wait and see before I start calling this a trend. Sometimes it just takes a little longer for stuff to get going."

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