

British Beer Fest Aims to Teach Moscow About Cask Ale

By [Alexander Stirling](#)

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Sanctions have been imposed against British cheese but not beer so Muscovites can try 20 different types of ale at Papa's Bar and Grill May 22-24.

Traditional British cask beer will hit the pubs of Moscow by the barrel load as part of the capital's first ever British Beer Festival, taking place next week.

According to event organizer Yury Shulakov, the purpose of the event is to celebrate "the uniqueness and supreme quality of British cask ale."

Starting May 18, beer enthusiasts can try more than 20 varieties of British ale at pubs that are partners of the festival, but festival events will take place May 22-24 at Papa's Bar and Grill in central Moscow.

Shulakov is undeterred by the downturn in the overall Russian beer market, noting that cask ale is unlike the beer most consumers think of.

"You get the most variety of styles and tastes with cask ale, also, and there is a demand for new and interesting beverages," said Shulakov, who is also the director of the company responsible for the festival, Britannia Travel.

Cask ale is unfiltered and unpasteurized beer that goes through a second fermentation while stored in a barrel. Unlike beers that are served from a keg, cask ale is served from the barrel in which it was stored using a hand pump and without additional pressure from carbon dioxide or nitrogen.

Because the unique characteristics of cask ale are unlikely to be familiar to many Russian beer enthusiasts, Shulakov sees the event as an educational experience as well as a marketing opportunity.

The festival is bringing in several British beer experts who will explain the particular characteristics of British brews to festival guests. "We are having over the heads of Northern English microbreweries, who will come and give lectures on the various options of drinks on sale," Shulakov said.

Consumers aren't the only audience Shulakov is hoping to attract.

Since cask ale's particular properties require different serving techniques than keg beer, master classes for bartenders will also be part of the weekend. "Pub managers from northern England will come and teach professional classes to Russian barmen on the etiquette of serving these sort of beers."

The bartender classes will help Shulakov with his other goal for the festival — to "make British cask beer regularly available throughout the year in Moscow."

The event will also be a celebration of British pub culture. Pub games, English food and music will be part of the three-day festival. British-themed souvenirs will also be available for sale and there will be a costume contest.



British Beer Festival

A Dartmoor Brewery worker with a drink that will be on offer next week.

Papa's Bar & Grill, an American-style bar, will get a makeover for the weekend to make it look more like a typical British local. Burgers and wings will be off the menu. "The head chef at the restaurant recently went to England to take a month-long culinary course, so the menu will be mainly comprised of British food," Shulakov said.

"We will introduce British popular culture without the Russianized versions. If you look at most English pubs in Moscow, they have a very Russian cover of famous British hits. They are often terrible imitations. We are trying to do it the proper way," Shulakov said.

Different events and classes will be offered on each day of the festival, although a detailed schedule is not currently available online.

"Hopefully we can get enough support and attention for the festival not to become a one-off event. We want to show people that they can get some of the best beers in the world in Moscow. Cask ale is the best in the world. It is the most natural beer with the largest selection of styles and tastes. We want to create demand for these products, which will allow us to persuade the main breweries not to be cautious about dispatching more cask ale to Russia."

The British beer festival includes an early bird ticket that allows tickets for the whole weekend to be bought for 1500 rubles, as opposed to 1000 rubles a day, something that Shulakov sees as beneficial to Russians. "Russians can learn something from the British in this respect. We normally do things last minute. We are trying to encourage Muscovites to plan ahead."

The early bird tickets were supposed to stop on April 30 but the beer festival website was still

selling them Thursday. The 1,500 ruble tickets give the buyer three pints over the weekend plus access to master classes, concerts and the rest of the entertainment program.

With Moscow warming up and preparing itself for the summer months, the beer festival looks likely to be a popular event and a way to bring Russian and Britain closer. "We see the festival as two countries working together to create an exciting event. It's our own answer to bringing in some positive thinking," said Shulakov.

The British Beer Festival will take place May 22-24 at Papa's Bar & Grill, 10 Nikolskaya Street. 495-755-9554. Metro Lubyanka. For more information visit bbf.moscow.

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