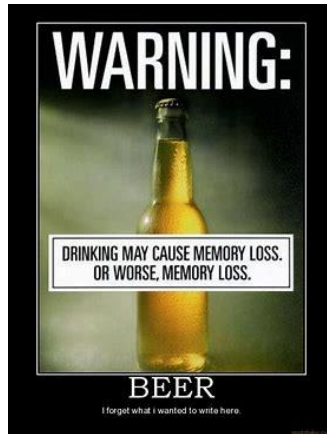


TTIPS VOL. 06/23 – INSIGHTS - Beers and Cheers -



INTRODUCTION

Last week's article was "*Beers and Gears,*" and lightly chronicled one rider's journey to quick drinking alcohol for one month – *Dry January*. What do you think? Did you decide to take up the challenge? If so, you may be longing for that cold, frosty brew at the end of your day, or perhaps thinking about the soothing glass of fermented grape before dinner.

Well, for you beer drinkers who decided on abstinence, don't fret. You still can get partial satisfaction if you crave the taste of beer, even without the alcohol. You cans still tip a glass at the end of the day without the downside. Really? Yep, it turns out that non-alcoholic beer is not only an alternative to the high-octane version, it's also a healthy substitute. WHO KNEW?

That's why this article is named "*Beers and Cheers.*" Read on fellow cyclists, read on.....

Skip the sports drinks, non-alcoholic beer may be as good as, or even better, for post cycling recovery.

Carbs, sodium and polyphenols: why non-alcoholic beer makes a good post-ride option.

By Anne-Marie Rooke

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Dry January may be over but you may want to keep stocking those nonalcoholic beers — for fitness sake. A recent [Washington Post article](#) argued that if you leave out the alcohol, beer may serve you better than a regular sport drink.

While a cold pint of beer after a long day in the saddle is certainly enjoyable, we all like to ignore that beer and other alcoholic drinks have long been associated with adverse effects on performance and fitness. They tend to be high in sugars and calories, are a known mild diuretic that can leave you dehydrated, impair reaction time and balance, can disrupt sleeping patterns and may slow down muscle growth and how well you recover after a workout. All in all, alcohol certainly isn't performance enhancing and most pro cyclists rarely drink.

Nonalcoholic beer —or simply called NA beer— on the other hand may actually do you good. When not masked by the negative effects of alcohol, beer —rich in polyphenols, — carbs, sodium and potassium — is actually linked with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and considered a decent post-workout hydrator.

HYDRATION BENEFITS

The Washington Post article points to a 2016 study in which male athletes drank nonalcoholic beer 45 minutes before a hard workout. The athletes' metrics afterward were similar to drinking water, but with a better ratio of sodium to potassium.

Drinking the nonalcoholic beer “could help maintain electrolyte homeostasis during exercise,” the researchers concluded.

Similarly, a 2021 systematic review on beer consumption related to endurance sports also considered light beer (containing less than 4% alcohol) to be a decent post-workout recovery aid because beer contains carbohydrates and sodium, and water does not.

David Nieman, a professor of biology and human performance at Appalachian State University, suggests that NA beer can aid metabolic recovery, better perhaps than sports drinks “After long and vigorous exercise bouts, nonalcoholic beer provides water, polyphenols and carbohydrates” — all of which are natural. “One goal of my research group is to show that sports drinks can be replaced with healthier alternatives. Nonalcoholic beer would fall into that category,” Nieman says.

At 50 to 90 calories, a can of nonalcoholic beer also tends to have fewer calories than sports drinks like Gatorade or Powerade.

LESS INFLAMMATION AND FEWER COLDS

The polyphenols Nieman mentioned are also credited for beer’s potential anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

In a 2012 marathon study involving 277 Munich marathon runners, half the runners were asked to drink 2 to 3 NA beers daily for three weeks before and two weeks after the race, while the other half of the sample group drank a similarly tasting placebo drink.

Blood samples were taken before and after the race and the runners were asked to report any symptoms of a cold or other respiratory infection, which are common after a marathon endeavor.

Not only were those who consumed the NA beer 3.25 times less likely to develop respiratory issues, they also had lower inflammation and a generally improved immune response. These benefits were credited to the beer polyphenols, which are natural chemicals found in plants with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

Most beer, including the alcoholic variety, is rich in polyphenols but the alcohol in regular beer counteracts any beneficial effects from the polyphenols.

“None of this research suggests, though, that exercisers should start glugging nonalcoholic beer,” the article warns. Instead, it may serve as an encouragement to swap full-alcoholic beer with a nonalcoholic beer post-ride.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cycling Weekly's North American Editor, Anne-Marije Rook is old school. She holds a degree in journalism and started out as a newspaper reporter — in print! She can even be seen bringing a pen and notepad to the press conference.

Originally from The Netherlands, she grew up a bike commuter and didn't find bike racing until her early twenties when living in Seattle, Washington. Strengthened by the many miles spent darting around Seattle's hilly streets on a steel single speed, Rook's progression in the sport was a quick one. As she competed at the elite level, her journalism career followed, and soon she became a full-time cycling journalist.

Okay riders, the good news just keeps rolling in. If you see me in the parking lot after the next ride guzzling a NA beer, don't judge. That's it for now, remember.....

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl