

Home Imbrewment

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Edition

The official newsletter of the Hampton Roads Brewing and Tasting Society

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The President's Corner - *Sammy Samoluk*

Thanks go out to Will and Johnna Walker for hosting the March meeting. There was plenty of hospitality, plenty of Belgian beer to go around, and a lot of homebrew to sample.

Thanks as well to our unofficial 'sponsor,' **Virginia Beach Homebrew Hobbies**, who generously donated grain, hops and yeast for the club raffle. Rich Sens gave us everything but water to make fine beer.

Congratulations to both Tom Byrnes and Rich Sens for the outstanding beers they brewed for the competition. Each entry truly captured some of the unique flavors of Belgium, and showcased the talents of veteran homebrewers in a category that requires knowledge and skill. Track these guys down and learn about some advanced techniques. Read more about the competition in Competition Corner.

We covered a lot of ground in the executive meeting, in addition to the competition. A brief synopsis is posted on the Discussion Board page of our web site. One topic we discussed was the concept of a "Progressive Brew." There is a separate post on the web Discussion Board covering this.

This month is Extr-action Month, in which we hope to get everyone into the action by featuring extract beers only. I think Chris Jones gets the credit for suggesting this category, and I like it for two reasons. First, it reinforces to all club members that extract brewing is an integral part of this hobby, that the club values it, and it may get some extract brewers to submit for competition some beers they otherwise might not have. The second thing it does is to broaden the pool of potential entries for the April competition. You see, with club elections in February, the club competition schedule for the year didn't get published until the March newsletter. This timeline would have given folks about five weeks to brew a batch of beer for competition--a challenge at best. With the Extract Beer competition, you can submit anything you had on the shelf long before the competition schedule was set.

To prevent this situation from happening again next year, I proposed at the executive meeting that this year's club officers set the BOTM schedule for two months after the next election. Those present concurred, and Tom Byrnes posted his proposals on the web Discussion Board for your comments.

Let me beat the drum one more time for **club logo** submissions. We will vote on the various proposals at the May general meeting. Please give it some thought.

Keep on brewing, and I'll see you at the meeting.

Competition Connection - *Tom Byrnes*

This month's contest featured two tasty Belgian Ales. Both were excellent examples of this difficult style to brew. Both were also available at the meeting for the club to sample. Congratulations to our winners:

First Place: **Tom Byrnes** - Belgian Strong Golden Ale

Second Place: **Rich Sens** - Belgian Specialty Ale

Thanks to all of the judges who participated in the contest. New members are also invited to come to the judging meetings. Don't be intimidated by the word judge, as these sessions are also a learning experience. Not only will you develop a palate but the knowledge of the different beers styles will also help your brewing. Besides you get to drink great beer two Wednesday's in a row. So please come!!!

Our president has suggested that we extend the current BOTM schedule by two months. I have posted a message on the club web site discussion board to give your opinion as to what types of beer you want to feature. **Please give us some feedback.** By now your porters should be in the secondary getting ready for the May meeting. April would also be a good month to start your wheat beers for the June meeting. Ask our liberian for the book, *German Wheat Beers* by Eric Warner. This book provides insight into the history and brewing process of this unique style. It also includes a variety of recipes to help get you started. I have included three recipes copied from the club web site to provide ideas for recipe formulation. They can be found at the end of this newsletter.

I also wanted to take some space to welcome back **Mike Pensinger** who has been attending advanced training for several months. I believe he will be at the April meeting and will most likely be experiencing brewing withdrawals (BT's). If his wife Melissa hasn't raffled off all of his brewing equipment, we can look forward to some fun brewing sessions and the reemergence of the "Bald Headed Brews". Welcome back Mike, you have been missed!!! Mike is also in charge of the club recipe book, which you could support by sending him your recipes for posting.

This month's contest is called Extraction or extract in action. Most of us started as extract brewers prior to moving to all grain. The AHA is now pushing extract brewing featuring several articles in Zymurgy about the process and commercial and micro brewers, who use extract. Locally St. Georges and Legends. Unfortunately most people think of those canned kits using lots of sugar and making substandard beer. Others say that you need all grain for light color beers. Two of our club members have proved these theories wrong. It was only last year that Mike Pensinger placed in a local competition with a no boil beer and George Bach could make very light colored and clear beers with extract. Since 1995 the AHA has had 20 gold medal winners brewing extract beers. So like anything else, problems can be overcome with a little effort and a quality brewing process. Personally I like to do an occasional extract to remember what it's like to complete a beer in just 3 hours. In this journey back to most of our brewing roots, let's take a few paragraphs to explore what it takes to make a quality extract brew.

BEEF UP YOUR EXTRACT BREW

Keep it Clean: As they used to tell me in the Seminary, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". While I thought this was just an excuse for cheap labor, this saying can also be applied to brewing. It is important to keep our equipment and brewing areas clean and free of those nasty beasts that seek to spoil the fruits of our labor. Whether you use bleach, one-step, iodophor, it is important to sanitize everything your beer comes into contact with. I've had two brushes with the unwashed, which resulted in the destruction of my beer. The first was when my cat marked my fermentor, my beer developed pustules on the top and put off quite a stench. I lost some mead because I relied solely on the dishwasher to sterilize my bottles. To avoid these kind of painful experiences pay attention to sanitation. Oh yeah, invest in a turkey baster as a siphon started rather than putting the tube in your mouth. If you must suck, gargle with vodka or grain alcohol prior to starting.

Malt Matters: Choose your malt based on the style you are brewing. Some malts ferment out completely while others contain dextrin's that are unfermentable but contribute to mouth feel and body. For example my extract beers improved greatly when I combined Muton and Fison with Laaglander extracts in equal portions. The first extract fermented completely providing alcohol but leaving my beer rather thin in body. The latter improved the texture but left me wanting for more in the potency department. Putting them together gave me the best of both worlds and a balanced beer. In choosing malt pay attention to the labels and select malts with a high percentage of quality ingredients (pure malted barley). Some brands use adjuncts like sugar, rice and corn affecting the flavor. When buying liquid extract watch out for swollen cans and expired dates. Old extract darkens with time making brewing the lighter colored beers difficult. My favorite extract names are: Muton & Fison (British), Coopers (Australian), Laaglander (Dutch), Briess and Premier (American). There are also extracts that are prehopped to simulate specific styles. One company called Wort Work boasts "we do the mashing so you don't have to" Premier also makes a good American rice beer. As the quality of extract has improved over the years, kits are becoming popular. While these ingredients are good, your beer will be better if you follow a recipe using the kit as base malt rather than following the directions on the can. Sugar is controversial because it can contribute a cidery flavor to the beer. Most brewers will tell you to substitute Dry Malt Extract for Sugar. However it should be noted that sugar is a necessary ingredient for certain beer styles. Belgian beers use candi sugar and substituting malt will not give you the authentic taste. The toffee taste of a British bitter or pale is sugar like Lyles Golden or Demerara sugar. The use of sugar in British beers has been well documented by CAMARA and in the writing of Prost and Wheeler.

Supplementation: Add grains to your brewing process. Steeping specialty grains for 30 minutes will add flavor and complexity to your brews. I insert my grain bag into the cold water and let it steep until the water reaches 169 degrees. Also hop according to the style and beef up prehopped worts. This step adds so little time to the process and yields a dramatic difference in flavor. The September 2000 issue of BYO did an interview with John Maier, the founder and brewer of Rogue Ales. His advice is to overemphasize the specialty grains and hops. Instead of using these grains by the ounce he uses them by the pound. Taste his beers and judge for yourself.

Roll On: Good brewing needs to include a vigorous boil of at least one hour. While some brewers and extract makers advocate a lesser time, there are complex chemical changes in both the water and extract that take place during the boil. The quality of your beer could suffer by being skimpy here. If you can, boil all of the wort and force cool rather than boil a small amount and topping up with cold water.

Liquid Diet: Dry yeast is easy; just pour the packet into the beer and wait. The trick to using dry yeast is to rehydrate it with warm water or by making a starter. Liquid yeast is readily available and lets the brewer brew specific beer styles. The most common names are Wyeast, Yeast Labs and Whites Pitchable Yeast. Don't be fooled by the big XL packs, always make a starter!!! It doesn't take that long and will increase the number of yeast cells to start fermentation. When it comes to yeast the more the merrier. The quicker your beer starts to ferment that less time bacteria has to attack your brew. I typically pitch 1000 MI's in my ales. Sammy (our fearless

leader) pitches at least a quart. Some lager brewers pitch up to 1 gallon of starter. Speaking of Sammy he wrote a good article last year on making a yeast starter. Check it out on the web site under brewing techniques.

Give Me Oxygen: Now that you have a lot of yeast cells ready to explode, help them breath. Adding oxygen to your wort prior to pitching will dramatically shorten the lag time between pitching and fermentation. My personal time has been cut down from 24 to 48 hours to between 6 and 8 hours. Some brewers use an aquarium pump for at least 30 minutes while other use pure oxygen in two or three 30-second blasts. No matter which technique you use this one addition will improve the overall quality of your beer.

Keep Me Under Control: Temperature Control is essential to quality brewing. Each type of yeast has an optimum temperature for fermentation. Too high temperatures could result in off flavors, to low could result in sluggish or incomplete fermentation. Once again, John Maier says the main mistake ale brewers make is not to control their temperatures. Rogue Brewery ferments ales as low as 60 degrees. John also suggests fermenting at the low side of the temperature range to make a smoother beer with a fruity aroma. Cooler fermentation also allows the malt, hop and alcohol to come together for a balanced beer.

Free Advice: Sometimes you need a beer consultant to give you those little hints, tricks and tips that only experience can provide. I received an extract education from Kim at Brewmeister and my beers improved as a result. Local homebrew shops can provide a wealth of information. Both shops typically have beers in progress. So next time you go to Virginia Beach Homebrew or Wine and Cake ask questions. The Web also provides good information. There are many sites on the topic too numerous to mention. Curt provides our club URL (<http://groups.hamptonroads.com/hrbts>) in every newsletter and has links to get you started. Finally our club Brew events is also a good time to learn from other members.

Following these steps will make it difficult to impossible to tell the difference between an extract and an all grain beer. If good brewing procedures are used with a high quality extract and a balanced recipe, the finished beer will be as good as an all grain recipe. Can you hear the wails of all grain brewers off in the distance?

2001 US Open Competition

Announcing the 2001 US Open homebrew competition in Charlotte, NC on April 28. We expect this competition to follow tradition and be one of the premier Southeastern competitions. We are looking for entries and judges and stewards. For an entry packet, please access <http://hbd.org/cbm>. Note that the entry packet currently lists April 15th as the day in the title, but this is incorrect and will be fixed shortly. All interested in judging please contact John Mitchell at jlitch@infi.net, or (704) 868-8198.

In order to minimize delays on the day of the competition, a \$1 additional fee was imposed for preregistered beers dropped off on the day of the competition. In order to show our appreciation for out-of-town judges and stewards, this fee will be waived for those who bring their own preregistered beer on the day of the competition. It will not be waived for entries these people bring for other entrants not volunteering at the competition.

John Mitchell
Carolina Brewmasters

About the HRB&TS

The Hampton Roads Brewing and Tasting Society is dedicated to promoting the enjoyment of homebrewing. The annual dues are \$15 per individual and \$20 per family. Members are encouraged to support the responsible enjoyment of beer and observe the beverage laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Persons attending HRB&TS meetings and events are solely liable for actions attendant to their participation. HRB&TS Maintains a NO SMOKING policy at all meetings so that members may better enjoy fine beers. Smoking is permitted during restaurant meetings in designated smoking areas.

Visit the HRB&TS on-line at:
<http://groups.hamptonroads.com/hrbts>

The Meeting Place

- Diane Catanzaro

The German Pantry !!!

The general meeting on Wednesday, April 4th will be at the German Pantry, 5329 Virginia Beach Boulevard in Norfolk (near Military Highway.) The meeting time begins at 7:30 pm. This is always a great meeting location, due to the warm hospitality of Gisele and the rest of the German Pantry "family". The selection of German beers is one of the best in the area, and the German food is the real deal! They will be preparing two dinner entree choices that evening. One is goulash (beef tips) and spatzel, which comes with a green salad (or you can substitute homemade potato salad or saurkraut). The other entree is pork with cream gravy and spatzel. They will also have knockwurst, bratwurst, the full sandwich menu, the German cheeses, salads, etc. The food is delicious and the price is right. If you want to get a head start on dinner (and a German ale) join us there around **7 pm**.

The German Pantry requests that we each spend a \$5.00 minimum, or at least buy a beer, to help pay for staffing the additional hours they will stay open to host our club. I think that this is very fair, because they will stay open late just for us. The German Pantry has always been a good friend to the HRB&TS.

On a sad note, the venerable Hanni will not be able to join us because she has been ill. If you bring a get well card for Hanni, Gisele will see that she gets them. It will be nice for Hanni to know that club members are thinking of her. I also heard that there is a donation fund for her medicine, which is very expensive. I will miss her German-freestyle hip hop dance moves. Hopefully she will be back on her feet and shaking her popo before long.

Editor's Notes - Curt Aasen

We welcome all news items, original articles, business notices, and letters to the editor. Submittals for publication in the Home Imbrowment must be send it to us as an e-mail or an e-mail attachment in any version of MS-Word or Wordperfect to HRBTS@att.net.

May Deadline: Saturday, April 21

Upcoming Beers of the Month

April: Extr-Action	September: California Common *
May: Porter	October: Octoberfest
June: Mead	November: Mild/ Pale Ale **
July: Wheat Beers *	December: Strange Brew
August: Dead Theme Ale	January: Holiday Ales
	February: Barley Wine

* Winner goes to AHA Club Only Contest

** AHA Contest is for Mild Ale only

Extract Brewing and the Fork in the Road *by Sammy Samoluk*

By and large, most of us start our brewing journey with cans of syrup on the stovetop. I enjoyed extract brewing on the stovetop for more than a decade, but when schedule, living space, budget, and accumulated knowledge finally aligned like celestial bodies for a monumental event, it was time to make the next big leap in the homebrewing obsession. The realization I came to, however, was that the next big leap was not necessarily forward, because I was at a fork in the road. I saw the next big investment as one of three choices: the full-wort boil, temperature control, or kegging. I figured that at some time in the future I would attempt all-grain brewing, but my next few choices would support the advancement of my extract brewing. These choices were not to be taken lightly, because I know it would be some time before the next leap forward, and each offered a capability I desired. And coincidentally, regardless of which path I would take, the toll would be about \$160-\$175. But, I was spurred on by the wisdom of Yogi Berra, who once said, “When you get to a fork in the road, take it.”

The Full-Wort Boil. This option for me implied a kettle of at least 10 gallons, a dedicated burner, and an immersion chiller. This equipment would allow me to skip a few steps I had grown tired of. First, I had gotten into the habit of pre-boiling and chilling the water I added to my concentrated wort. That would no longer be necessary. Second, I could eliminate some of the messy and potentially hazardous steps of lifting a hot pot off the stove, putting it into an ice bath, and pouring the cumbersome pot into the fermentor. I figured I would reduce or eliminate boilovers, and increase hop utilization. All-in-all, however, I liked this option because it seemed to me to be closer to “traditional” brewing methods employed brewers in centuries past. Plus, it would get me out of the kitchen and into my domain: the back yard. I figured the investment to be as follows: kettle, welded nipple, and ball valve, \$60; Cajun Cooker and propane bottle, \$80; immersion chiller, \$35; total investment, \$175. The drawbacks were that I’d still be cleaning lots of bottles, I’d still be constrained to ales only, and I was effectively shut out of brewing during the hottest months of the year.

Temperature Control. In order to ferment at a controlled temperature, I needed a refrigerator or freezer, plus some sort of temperature control device. This equipment would allow me to brew year-round, and open up a whole new category of beers for me to brew. I figured I could get a decent used freezer for around \$100, and a temperature controller for around \$60. I was dying to lager my own beer. Most importantly, however, I felt that my beer would be better if I could keep my fermenters at a constant temperature that was optimal for each yeast strain used.

Kegging. I had grown tired of cleaning and handling bottles. For about \$165, I could get a complete CO2 setup with one reconditioned Cornelius keg. Oh, the time I would save. Of course, I’d be kegging only ales made in my kitchen. I was confident that if I spent less time bottling, I’d brew more often. If I brewed more often, some of my beers might actually survive long enough to properly age and condition. Therefore kegging, I reasoned, could lead to more and better beer with less effort.

What to do, what to do. Three viable options, all around the same price, each promising to make the process more enjoyable with the potential to improve my beer. I settled on the full-wort boil option as my first major upgrade. The lure of the great outdoors, my wife’s unreasonable disdain for the wonderful aroma of boiling wort, and the eventual necessity for the full boil in order to move to all-grain drove my decision. The year was 1994. I took an intermediate step toward kegging with mini-kegs in 1996. I got my first dedicated chest freezer and external thermostat in 1998 for \$160, followed closely by my first all-grain batch later that year. Then, I kegged my first batch in 1999.

If I had it to do over again, I would have gone to a kegging system or at least a mini-keg system much earlier than I did. Having packed up and moved every two or three years throughout the 80’s and 90’s, a cornelius keg system would have actually decreased the amount of gear that followed me around the country, when I consider the cases of bottles I retained. The only other thing I’d do differently is to skip the tiny chest freezer I bought as a trial, and go for the full size one from the start. The bottom line, however, is that there are a few good ways to take extract brewing to a higher level without committing to all-grain brewing.

Wonderful Wheat Beer

By Nancy Beach

This won the 1993 HRB&TS Club Wheat beer contest.

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 lb Wander English dry malt extract
- 3 lb Ireks wheat malt extract
- 1 oz Hallertau hops - boil - 30 min
- 1 oz Hallertau hops - finish - at end of boil Yeast Lab Weizen yeast

OG = 1.052

FG = 1.012

NOTE: Boil Wander and Ireks extract for one hour. Add the boil hops after 30 min., and the finish at the end of the boil when you turn off the heat. Cool to 70 degrees F, then pitch yeast.

R Squared, American Honey Wheat Ale

By Bill Bunning

This recipe took 1st in American Wheat in the 1994 Emerald Coast Brewfest and 1995 TRUB VII. A great transition beer for those new to micro or homebrews.

For 5 1/2 gallons:

- 3 lbs wheat malt
- 3 lbs DWC pale ale malt
- 1/2 lb DWC aromatic malt
- 1/2 lb carapils malt
- 2 1/2 lbs clover honey
- 1/2 oz Northern Brewer 7.5 alpha
- 1 oz Fuggles 4.5 alpha
- 1 tsp gypsum
- Yeast Lab Canadian Ale Yeast

Mash grains in a 2-step infusion mash. Add gypsum to strike water. 122 degrees for 30 minutes and 152 degrees until conversion. Mash out at 170 degrees. Sparge. Bring to boil and add honey. Add Northern Brewer for 60 minutes. Add 1/2 oz Fuggles at 15 minutes and 1/2 oz Fuggles at knock out. Chill and pitch yeast starter.

Primary - 1 week.

Secondary - 2 weeks.

OG - 1.053

FG - 1.012

Whoa! Wheat Beer

By CJ Jones

Summertime is the perfect time to brew up a wheat beer, because they are very drinkable, and go well with almost any food that you put on your grill.

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 lb William's Weizenmalt
- Wheat beer yeast (liquid, I used Williams)
- 1 oz Hallertau Mittlefreuh hops (Boston Beer Co.), 4.7 AAU - boil - 50 min
- 1 oz Tettnanger, 4.0 AAU - finish - 5 min
- 1-cup corn sugar, for priming

Brewed: 6/6/95; OG = 1.038

Secondary: 6/17/95

Bottled: 7/10/95; FG = 1.008

NOTE: Could've bottled sooner, but I've been busy, eh? Bottled half of the batch as a wheat beer; then added 2 oz of apricot flavoring from William's to the remaining half batch, then bottled it; ended up with half wheat, and half apricot wheat; I didn't want to miss out on the Summer 1995 craze, fruited wheat beers.