



The Wort Alert

*December 2006
Volume 18, Issue 12*

Newsletter for Hop Barley and the Alers Homebrew Club Boulder, CO
<http://hopbarley.org>

President Steve Skidmore

The First Runnings from El Presidente!

Thanks to all the Alers that braved the weather and got out for our November meeting. It was a light turn out but that just meant that there was more of that great stew and other grub to go around.

We had our December business meeting at my place on the 12th of December and then moved on to Proto's for some pizza. We hope that many of you will be able to contribute to these business meetings in the future – we would like your input. **We plan to have future business meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month and welcome as many members to attend that can.**

Our next meeting for December will be our last at the Depot before moving on to the Boulder Outlook Hotel for now. This is a pot-luck kind of thing with the club providing a deli platter. We do not have a speaker or other structured program for our Christmas meeting, but we are planning to do a “bomber exchange.” If you want to participate just bring with you a special bottle of something to swap during the gift exchange.

I hope you all have a Merry Christmas. Looking forward to seeing you on the 26th!

Wassail!



Vice President(s) Corner

By Dan Rabin

Style of the Month: Belgian Strong Ales

Belgian Strong Ales are big, complex, distinctive brews, that redefined my idea of what beer was supposed to taste like. Because of their unique character, they're especially rewarding to design and brew. Within BJCP guidelines, Belgian Strong Ales include five styles; the lighter-colored Belgian Blond Ales, Golden Strong Ales and Tripels, and the darker-hued Dubbels and Dark Strong Ales.

While there are certain characteristics that define these styles (read the guidelines for specifics), there is considerable latitude as to how you achieve these traits. That's what makes these beers exciting to homebrew.

If you're considering brewing one of these styles – and you definitely should be – pick up a copy of *Brew Like a Monk*, by Stan Hieronymus. It's an interesting, approachable text packed with useful brewing information.

Two characteristics important to the styles are their complexity - derived largely from Belgian yeast strains (more on this below) - and an alcohol presence ranging from moderate to ass-kicking. It's amusing that in the BJCP style guidelines, the only occurrence of the word "dangerous" appears in the description for Belgian dark strong ales. Age will be kind to these beers, especially when bottle-conditioned.

Below are some general rules and suggestions that will, hopefully, help you concoct an awesome Belgian strong ale. As a homebrewer, however, don't be afraid to break the rules if you think it will benefit your beer. If your homebrew no longer fits the style parameters, relax, enjoy your brew, and enter it for competition in the catch-all Belgian Specialty Beer category.

Yeast

What makes a Belgian ale "Belgian?" More than anything, it's the yeast. Both White Labs and Wyeast produce a variety of Belgian yeast strains for homebrewing. Read their descriptions and select one you think will produce the qualities you're looking for. Better yet, split a batch and pitch a different yeast in each half. Because these are high-gravity beers, you'll have better results pitching a lot of yeast. Make a starter and, if possible, step it up once or twice. Be aware that that these yeasts will behave differently, and produce different flavor profiles, at different temperatures. Don't shy away from fermenting these beers at warm temperatures.

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Malt

The lighter beers - blonds, goldens and tripels - have simple grain bills. Pilsner malt is commonly used as the base malt along with small quantities of light-colored specialty malts such as Munich, light crystal or wheat.

For dubbels and dark strong ales, specialty grains such as aromatic, special “B,” chocolate or other grains can be used for color and complexity. Extract brewers should start with light malt extract and steep some specialty grains to add interest.

Hops

Hop character shouldn't dominate these beers, so use restraint with the fragrant flowers. Tripels may have a more pronounced bitterness than the other styles. Noble hops, English hops and Styrian Goldings are the typical varieties used. Citrusy or grassy American hops are considered inappropriate.

Other

Candi sugar, or other sugars, are often added to the brewpot to boost gravity, lighten body and add flavor and color. Spices are seldom used and, if added, shouldn't be prominent.

Below is an all-grain recipe for a Belgian blond ale I concocted not long ago. It was inspired by a summer visit to Paris. The weather was hot and humid and after hours of exploring the city on foot, a liquid refreshment break was badly needed. Fortunately, many of the sidewalk cafés had Leffe, a 6.6% Belgian blond ale, on draught. It really hit the spot.

This recipe produces a pale beer that's slightly sweet yet refreshing, with an intriguing fruity-spicy character. It has enough fortification to induce a pleasant attitude adjustment yet drinkable enough to quaff several pints. It goes well with cheese and a fresh baguette, as well as seafood, fowl and pasta with white sauce. I'll bring some to the December meeting for you to sample.

Left Bank Belgian Blond Ale

Ingredients for 5 gallons:

12 lbs. Weyermann pilsner malt
1.5 lbs. malted wheat
1.5 oz. Tettnanger whole hops (3.8%) 60 minutes
0.5 oz. Tettnanger whole hops (3.8%) 15 minutes
White Labs WLP570 Golden Ale Yeast

Procedure:

Mash grains at 148° F for 60 minutes
Boil 75 minutes
Primary fermentation: 13 days at 68° F
Secondary fermentation: 17 days at 65° F
ABV 6.5%

18th Annual Reggale and Dredhop

Competition is March 3, 2007 at the Falling Rock Tap House

Entries are due February 12 – 23.

We need you to Brew and enter

Hop Barley members will have their first entry paid for. So, no excuses! Start brewing now. Don't forget the National Homebrew Competition is coming up as well.

We need Volunteers

Please let us know what you can do to help.

We need Donations

Please start asking your contacts for prize donations

Events Calendar

Who's Doing What and When

Month	December	January *	February
Day	12/26/2006	1/23/2007	2/27/2007
Red Group	Relax	Food	Setup/Cleanup
Blue Group	Food	Setup/Cleanup	Beer
Green Group	Setup/Cleanup	Beer	Relax
Orange Group	Beer	Relax	Food

** For January every group is asked to bring a session beer*

One brew per group will be reimbursed. Save your receipts.

HBA Club Meeting – (Will change to Outlook Hotel in January)

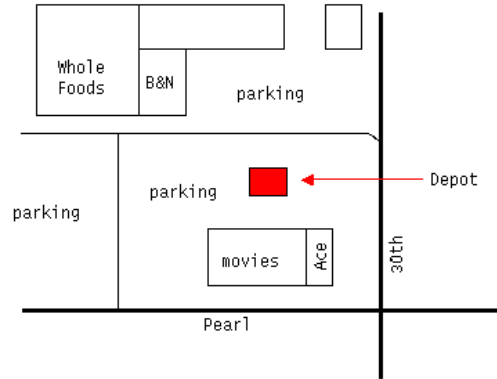
December 26th, 2006
(fourth Tuesday monthly)
7PM at the Depot (Pearl and 30th)

Holiday Meeting

Bring a dish/dessert to share

Bring something from your barchives

**Bomber Exchange: Bring a nice
homebrew or commercial
beer/mead to exchange**



Upcoming Beer Styles

December Belgian Strong Ale, BJCP category 18

January Low Gravity/Session Beers (OG < 1.045)*

Categories accepted for this competition include: 1. A, B, D (Light Lagers); 2. A, B, C (Pilsners); 4. A (Dark American Lager); 6. A, B, C, D (Light Hybrid Beers); 8. A, B (English Pale Ales); 9. A, B, C, D (Scottish and Irish Ales); 10. A, B, C (American Ale); 11. A, B, C (English Brown Ale); 12. A (Porter); 13. A, B (Stout); 15. A, B (German Wheat and Rye); 16. A (Belgian and French Ale); 17. A, C, D, E, F (Sour Ale); 20. (Fruit Beer); 21. A, B (Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer); 22. B, C (Smoke-Flavored & Wood Aged Beers).

February Scottish Ale*

March Stout

April Extract*

* Indicates Club-Only-Competition Style

Remember that What's Brewin' provides free ingredients to the monthly color group responsible for beer. Go into the store and get your stuff. Tell them that it's for HBA group brew and they will take care of the rest.

The club also sponsors an all-grain and an extract brew from club members each month. The brew should be the style for that month. Bring in a receipt and you will be reimbursed. It is that easy.

First Friday Out

January 5th

Redfish Brewery

Boulder, CO <http://www.redfishbrewhouse.com/>

Twisted Friday

January 19th

Twisted Pine Brewing Co. 3201 Walnut Rd. Boulder, CO 80301

Great monthly get-together. **\$1 off Pints for Alers.** – Peanuts and pretzels abound. <http://beeradvocate.com/beer/profile/23>

Upcoming Beer Events

January 2nd Mountain Sun Stout Competition entries due

Contact Brian Hutchinson at the Mountain Sun for more details B88hutch@hotmail.com

January 2-22 MEADLLENNIUM 2007 Entries Due

Competition is January 27 <http://www.cfhb.org/mead/>

January 5-6 Big Beers, Belgians & Barleywines Festival, Vail, CO

www.bigbeersfestival.com Book your hotel room now!

January 26th Winter Brew Fest 6-9PM at the Oriental Theater, Denver

http://www.theorientaltheater.com/welcome/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=124&Itemid=63

February 9-10 International Mead Fest, Lakewood

<http://meadfest.com/>

March 3 18th Annual Reggale and Dredhop Competition, Denver

At the Falling Rock Tap House

Entries due: Feb. 12 – 23

June 21-23 National Homebrewers Conference, Denver

<http://beertown.org/events/hbc/index.html>