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Newsletter

of the Houston Homebrewer's Guild

March, 1983 Volume 1 Number 2

March H H G Meeting

The Houston Homebrewers' Guild will meet on St. Patrick's day, March 17, at DeFalco's (5611 Morningside, Houston, TX (713)-523-8154). The in-formalities will begin around 7:30 pm and last until 10 or 10:30 when we will have to disband and send Jan home (Scott will be "researching" the science of brewing in some British pub). Green beers and stouts will be the "theme" beers of the meeting. Color your beers green and bring your stouts, or go out and pay an arm and a leg for a six-pack of Tooth's Sheaf! This meeting promises to be a good start for your St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

Legislative Alert!

The Homebrewing Bill has been put on the agenda of the State House. For those of you who are unaware of the legal status of homebrewing in Texas: it is illegal (wine-making is legal, however). The purpose of this bill is to legalize homebrewing in Texas. Though you need not worry about your home being raided during a brewing session, homebrew shops in the State could have their stock of brewing supplies confiscated at any time by the TABC. This has not happened yet but at least one shop has been threatened with confiscation.

It goes without saying that this state of affairs has stifled the advancement of homebrewing in Texas. If you are interested in helping get this bill passed by the Legislature contact Scott or Jan and/or come to the April HHG meeting. Your help will be much needed and appreciated!

April H H G Meeting

The April HHG meeting will be held at DeFalco's on April 17, 1983. The theme beer type will be amber beers (Some examples of amber beers are Bass IPA, Anchor Steam, Samuel Smith Pale Ale and Coor's George Killian's Red). The festivities will start at 7:30 pm, as usual. Bring along some of these or other beers so we can do some comparative tastings.

We will also hear from Scott about the HWBTA Convention and his ramblings from one pub crawl to in the U. K. (that is assuming that he has not turned "Peculier").

P U B C R A W L!!!

HHG is planning a Houston-area pub crawl for sometime in late May or early June. We are going to rent a British double-decker bus and spend four or five hours touring between several of the better beer drinking establishments in Houston. We are thinking of visiting Richmond Arms, The Ale House and other establishments.

We estimate that it will cost each person \$10-15 (maybe less), depending on the number of crawlers we have. Let us know if you are interested enough in this idea to fork over hard cash and if you know of any good beer drinking establishments in the area that we are unaware of. We will need to have a firm head count by the first week in May so that we can reserve the bus and contact the various pubs involved to warn them of the coming onslaught of enthusiasts.

The Fifth Annual HWBTA Home Beer Competition

The Home Wine and Beer Trade Association held its annual competition on February 11 and 12, 1983, at the Rivermont Hotel, Memphis, Tennessee. HHG was well represented with six entries and one judge (Scott Birdwell).

The first round of judging was held on Friday, the eleventh, to "weed out" the good stuff from the original 135 entries. Yours truly made the mistake of volunteering to be a judge in the Pale Ale category. Shortly thereafter, I learned that this was the category with the greatest number of entries: 31. WHEW! We had to taste and score thirty-one beers in one session. Talk about over stimulated taste buds! Needless to say, this took a couple of hours (maybe longer, gosh after a couple of beers, who's counting?). We narrowed the field down to nine, which were scored in the second round the next afternoon. Two ales emerged as being obviously superior to the rest. After much deliberation we awarded First Place and Best of Class to Nancy Vineyard's Pale Ale. Actually it was not too difficult, Nancy's brew was the best balanced ale in the category. This much was evident even in the first round. I later discovered from Nancy's husband, Byron Burch (also a judge in the competition) that this was a malt extract recipe. Surprise! Surprise!

Later that evening, we all converged for the moment of truth: the Best of Show judging. In this round the judges tasted and scored each of the "Best of Class" winners. Oh, boy! Another nine beers to taste! Sitting on the panel of judges were Pat Baker (author of The New Brewer's Handbook), Charlie Papazian (Zymurgy editor and author of Joy of Brewing), Craig Dowland (1982 Best of Show winner), and yours truly. First let me say that there were some really nice brews in the final round. All four of us agreed, however, that Nancy's Pale Ale and the Barley Wine entry were tops. It took us another 5-10 minutes to decide that the Barley Wine was Best of Show. This was unusual in that this is the first time that a barley wine has been

awarded top honors. It was luscious and could definitely warm up a cold body on a frigid winter night. Yum! Yum! Congratulations to Mr. Zelek of the Cap & Cork Shop of Wyandotte, Michigan.

OK, brewers, its time to gear up for the American Homebrewers' Association competition this summer (see the new Zymurgy for details).

Late flash! Tom Blackwell took a red ribbon in the barley wine category and George Clarkson and Randy Hobby took a white ribbon in the stout category.

-- Scott Birdwell

Contribute to YOUR Newsletter!

We are anxious to hear from our readers! Next time you are by DeFalco's tell Scott or Jan what you think of the Newsletter or give them or George your comments over the phone. We also need literary contributions from our readers. If you have some ideas, techniques, recipes, etc., that you would like to share with others put them down on paper (perhaps in the form of an article) and send them to George or Scott. We are anxious to get our hands on more material to put in print.

We have decided that it is a good idea to get together sometime during the second week of each month to plan and compose the Newsletter. If you are interested in helping with this contact George or Scott and we will let you know the time and place (that is, as soon as we know ourselves).

How to Contact Us

Those of you who want to contact us with suggestions, contributions, ideas, etc., may do so through the following addresses and phone numbers:

Scott Birdwell or Jan Andrews
DeFalco's Wine Cellars
5611 Morningside
Houston, TX
713-523-8154

and

George R. Clarkson
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Making Ale Mead

Unique among the various classes of drink is ale mead. Using honey as its sole source of fermentables, it may validly claim the title of mead, yet its alcohol content is more in the range of ale. It also shares many ingredients and brewing techniques with ales, yet contains no grain of any kind. Ale mead is an interesting and unique addition to your collection of recipes.

The method for brewing ale mead is essentially identical to that of making beer from extract. The fermentable materials are dissolved in water, boiled with hops (or other flavoring ingredients), fermented with brewing yeast, and conditioned in bottles. Importantly, for those of us who like to sample the fruits of our efforts soon after the work, ale mead is aged like beer (weeks or months) instead of the years required for most "regular" meads.

The basic recipe for one gallon of ale mead is as follows:

1 pound	Honey
	water
	Hops (see below)
1 tsp.	Citric Acid
1 tsp.	"Super Ferment" (yeast nutrient)
1/4 tsp.	Yeast

Dissolve honey in one gallon of hot water. Heat until boiling, add hops, and boil for 40 minutes. Add remaining hops and continue boiling for five minutes. Force cool to room temperature as quickly as possible. Add citric acid, yeast nutrients, and water to bring volume to one gallon. Add yeast, then ferment, bottle, and condition as you would ale.

The recipe above leaves several unanswered questions, such as the type of honey that should be used. This matter is left to the discretion of the brewer. You should keep in mind the assumption that "the best honey makes the best

mead". In any case, select a natural honey with no additives or preservatives.

Similarly, the recipe leaves the quantity and type of hops unspecified. This matter is also left to the brewer, but should be selected carefully since most of the flavor of the brew will come from this ingredient. Fuggles are a good choice, as would be any "fruity" hop. Using pellets, measure the hops by counting pellets, about twentyfour for the first boil and eight near the end. Other flavoring ingredients (such as ginger) may be used in place of hops for interesting variations.

The flavor of Ale Mead is light and delicate so a lager-type yeast is recommended. This type of yeast tends to contribute less to the flavor of the finished product. Depending upon the type of honey and hops used, however, an ale yeast may produce excellent results.

Ale mead should be fermented at a cool room temperature (depending on the type of yeast). The citric acid and nutrients are essential to fermentation, which will be slow to start, and will last from four to eight weeks. A fermentation lock should be used during the entire process; racking into a secondary vessel is advisable after the brew is completely clear (after about four weeks). The final gravity will be zero or lower!

The brew should be bottled, normally using about 1/4 cup of corn sugar per gallon for conditioning. Ale mead should be sparkling like dry champagne, will not form a "head" like beer and should be aged at least eight weeks after bottling.

Ale mead allows a great deal of room for experimentation with types of honey, hops, yeast and nutrients. Because of this, it is an excellent way for both new and experienced brewers to evaluate the flavoring qualities of various ingredients. For more information, refer to Making Mead, by Byron Acton and Peter Duncan, Amateur Winemaker, 1980, SBN 900841 07 9.

-- Larry Bristol