



THE FOAM RANGERS Newsletter Urquell

Better Late Than Never!

August 2011 - Volume 31 Pints - Issue 8

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St. Arnold Further Extends Kölsch Beer Series!

By Bev Blackwood

Following the recent announcement of the brand new Santo, a "black Kölsch" from Houston's Saint Arnold Brewing Company, it has been revealed they will extend their lineup of Kölsch variants with new additions. The original Fancy Lawnmower Beer will remain a staple, as will Weedwacker, which is the same wort fermented with Hefewiezen yeast.

Joining Santo will be Santo En Fuego, where the Kölsch style is brewed with Bavarian Rauch malt. The smoky, almost bacony flavor is touted by founder Brock Wagner as "Going great with Barbecue and roasted meats." Soon to follow will be the new Hedge Trimmer, which is a "light" version of the classic Fancy Lawnmower. It will clock in at only 2.8% ABV, but still carries



Santo En Fuego, the new Smoked Kölsch debuts soon!

the pleasantly malty and grainy character of the Lawnmower with just a touch of hops to balance.

Further additions to the series are anticipated, such as Lawn Tractor, at the opposite end of the spectrum, an Imperial Kölsch. It clocks in at a hefty 9.5% ABV and is to be offered in the traditional 12 ounce bottles as well as in 40 oz. screw tops.

Out (of) The Wazoo

By Kyle Jones, Grand Wazoo



A look ahead

Some of our members remember what the homebrewing scene looked like 25 years ago, and it wasn't pretty. Things have improved exponentially since that time, the popularity of homebrewing has boomed in the meantime, and homebrewers have benefited from an increase in ingredient availability as a result. But the question on my mind lately has been: What does the future of homebrewing look like 25 years down the road? In particular, what are the

biggest threats to homebrewing in the next 25 years?

Rising ingredient prices owing to biofuel demand

Already we have seen the price of corn and other grains skyrocket in response to rising demand for ethanol and government subsidies for biofuel substrates. If these policies continue, we will continue to see prices rise and perhaps even see agricultural products that are not attractive biofuel substrates squeezed into smaller and smaller farming acreage. This would be bad for both homebrewers and small breweries. As the world population continues to grow at an unsustainable rate and former third world countries build massive economies, several things will happen. Fuel will become scarce, conflicts will begin to occur over not only fuel but also food,

(Continued on Page 8)

August Meeting:
Friday,
August 19th
7:00 p.m.
at
DeFalco's

The Brewsletter Urquell
Official Organ of the
Foam Rangers Homebrew Club.

Grand Wazoo:
 Kyle "You Can Call Me Al" Jones
 wazoo@foamrangers.com

Secondary Fermenter:
 Jaime "Make It So" Robles
 secondary@foamrangers.com

Scrivener:
 Jaime "Military Time" Ortiz
 scrivener@foamrangers.com

Purser:
 Sharon "Cashbox" Hayes
 purser@foamrangers.com

Competition Coordinator:
 Bev "Just Win Baby" Blackwood II
 competitions@foamrangers.com

Bozo Head of Special Events:
 Scott "Movin' On Up" Birdwell
 stupidtoad@foamrangers.com

Was Waz:
 Doak "Number One" Procter
 waswaz@foamrangers.com

**Brewsletter Staff and
 Other Slaves:**

Editor:
 Bev "Tardy Boy" Blackwood II
 editor@foamrangers.com

Food God:
 Erik "No More Wieners" Ribeiro

Extra Article By:
 Buck Wyckoff

Extra Photos By:
 Abisha Cresswell
 Jaime Ortiz
 Paul Porter
 Charie Procter

Webmaster:
 Beto Zuniga
 webmaster@foamrangers.com

Mail Guru and Unix Geek:
 David Cato
 otac@crunchyfrog.net

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If you missed the pub crawl, you missed a great time (as Jaime's article attests.) I apologize for this edition being late. Something about a full schedule, home renovations and over 600 photos to comb through made this edition a little more labor intensive than usual. I do consider it worth doing and hopefully you do too!



By Jaime Ortiz,
 Scrivener

**Austin Pub Crawl:
 Minute-by-minute!**

0705 Wake up time! Did I really get up this early on a Saturday morning to go drink beer? Yes I did!

0800 Secondary Jaime (aka. Waz for the day) says it's time to go! But we wait.....



0815 Rolland shows up late. But he brings 2 kegs of homebrew, so all is forgiven!

0820 We are on the road!

0830 Sean begins to play his collection of B movies.

0930 Beer fest! It's funnier after you have had a few morning beers while riding a bus full of drunks.

1030 Lots of drinking and use of the toilet.

1100 Arrive at Jester King! Let's drink. My favorite, the Wytchmaker IPA.



1130 Sean drops his beer glass. Broken glass and delicious beer all over the floor. This was our first, of many, party fouls by the Foam Rangers today....

BAR TREK - THE NEXT

1145 Tour of the brewery. Our favorite part, the cellar! Lots of wine and whiskey barrels filled with slow aging and souring beer. A homebrewers dream!



1250 They tap a firkin of barrel aged Commercial Suicide. Wow! That is funky and sour!

1300 On the road....

1315 Arrive at Thirsty Planet. Do we want to drink? Yes. Are we hungry? Absolutely!

1332 MMMpanadas!!!!!! Frikin delicious! Shouldn't they be a contestant at the next Great Food Truck Race?



1400 The grand tour! It's freaking hot in here!!! Mike and Waz for the day get frisky up at the Brew House.



1415 Lots of beer to taste. Several foamies actually complaining that they won't be able to drink all 4 pints before the bus leaves. Slackers! On a related note, a Foamie might have lost their MMMpanada all over

INEBRINATION! WII PUB CRAWL

the floor...

1450 Waz for the day says it's time to bail before we are not invited back. A nice tip is left at the bar!

1515 Arrive at Draughhouse. More beer!!!!!! Really????? I'm getting too old for this.

1530 A couple of people decided to start ordering pitchers. Exactly what we all needed, mass quantities of beer.



1700 Arrive at Black Star??? I really don't remember what time it was. Things are starting to get blurry...

1730 We want food!!! Long line, but worth the wait. And of course, more beer!!!!!!

1830 Time to head home. I hope we didn't leave someone behind. Lot's of red shirts staggering to the bus....



1900 Nap Time!!!!

2115 What's up with this ridiculous traffic jam?

2140 Home safe. Thanks for the trip! Let do it again next year!



**What's with all the pictures?
Can't we drink in peace?**



**Funny, it doesn't look like a
Jeffries Tube...**



**Who's a friendly little
alien lifeform?**

Beer of the Month

Calendar



January 20th, 2012

Porter & Stout



February 17th, 2012

Barleywine & Holiday Beer



March 16th, 2012

Belgian Ales & Lambics



April 20th, 2012

Homebrew!



May 18th, 2012

Bocks, Dark Lagers, Dunkel



June 15th, 2012

Wheat, Wit, Fruit & Rye



July 20th, 2012

Homebrew!



August 19th, 2011

Pale Ale, Bitter & Steam



September 16th, 2011

Oktoberfest & Smoked



October 20th - 22nd, 2011

Dixie Cup XXVII



November 18th, 2011

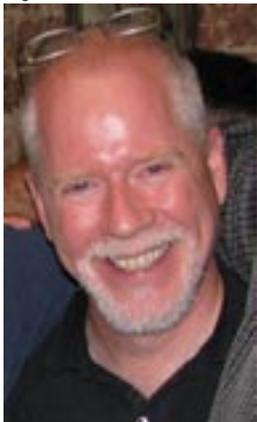
I.P.A. & Ambers



December 4th, 2011

Homebrewer's Xmas Party

Rendezbrew Wins Inspire Dixie Cup Hopes



By Bev Blackwood II, Competition Coordinator

The Foam Rangers did very well at Lunar Rendezbrew, scoring 35 points and

coming in second to the Austin Zealots, who scored 55. It was far and away our strongest showing at a major competition, although the 21 points won at Big Batch were certainly a higher percentage of the available points. It was also sufficient to put us in second place overall in the Lone Star Circuit, with 86 points. However, the Austin Zealots, barring a major meltdown, will remain Lone Star Circuit champions, with a whopping 218 points.

The greatest risk to the Foam Rangers now is losing the Dixie Cup to the Zealots, which is a real danger. If you're not brewing for Dixie Cup, you should be!

Highlights of our Rendezbrew wins are the emergence of Jimmy Paige, Andrew Sheridan and Will Holobowicz as the JAWZ team. With this one event they moved into third place with 8 points, although they have a long way to catch up to Keith & Pam Bradley from the Zealots, who have 37 points so far.

Foam Ranger Rendezbrew results:

- 2nd, Light Lager - Will Holobowicz
- 2nd, Light Hybrid Beer - JAWZ
- 1st, Light Hybrid Beer - JAWZ
- 1st, English Pale Ale - Scott Fertak
- 3rd, American Amber & Brown Ale Scott Fertak
- 3rd, English Brown Ale - Will Holobowicz
- 2nd, English Brown Ale - JAWZ
- 1st, English Brown Ale - Paul Porter **(SWEEP!)**
- 2nd, Porter - Scott Fertak - I know her
- 3rd, Stout - Bev Blackwood II
- 1st, Stout - David Rogers
- 3rd, Strong Ale - David Rogers
- 2nd, Fruit Beer- Rolland Pate
- 2nd, Spice/Herb/Vegetable - James Wolfe
- 3rd, Specialty Beer - JAWZ
- 1st, Specialty Beer - Bev Blackwood II
- 3rd, Trad. Mead - Bev Blackwood II
- 2nd, American Black Ale- Will Holobowicz
- 2nd, White Wine - Rolland Pate
- 3rd, Red Wine - Rolland Pate

An excellent showing, which will hopefully bode well for the club as we head into the Limbo Challenge, the Cactus Challenge and of course... Dixie Cup! There is still time to get a final couple of batches before the entry deadline (September 30th, in case you were wondering!) If you can't manage an entry, please find another way to help us make the Dixie Cup a success!

Lone Star Circuit Current Standings

Individual

- Mark Schoppe - Zealots - 79
- Jeff Oberlin - Mashtronauts - 27
- David Rogers - Foam Rangers - 21**

Team

- Bradley & Bradley - Zealots - 37
- Darity & Darity - NTHB - 10
- JAWZ - Foam Rangers - 8**

Club

- Austin Zealots - 218
- Foam Rangers - 86**
- Bay Area Mashtronauts - 83

Got E-mail?

By Dave Cato
List owner

In the example that follows, LISTNAME should be one of these mailing list names:

- foam-rangers**
- foam-rangers-announce**

Replace LISTNAME with the *actual name* of the list when subscribing!

To subscribe to one (or more) of these lists, send the single line:

subscribe LISTNAME

in the body of an e-mail message, in *plain text* (make sure the message is not sent in HTML or RTF format) to:

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You should receive a reply from the server requesting that you complete the subscription, by sending another message back to majordomo@crunchyfrog.net.

Once your subscription is confirmed, you will receive a reply with the guidelines for the list you subscribed to, including instructions for unsubscribing in the future.

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EARLY ENTRY DEADLINE
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LATE ENTRY DEADLINE
9/30/2011

WWW.LONESTARCIRCUIT.COM



**By Jaime Robles
Secondary Fermenter**

With commands ranging from "Beer me up, Scotty", "Condition

RED!" to "barleywine speed!" and "hardly know'er" and with Sean's trusty towel, 31 brave drinkergalactic voyagers courageously traveled to the western boundaries of Houstonia to conquer the race known as the HippieAustinites. I can proudly claim that the Bar Trek mission was successfully accomplished. We didn't want to go back there anyway. This was just training for the real deal – The Dixie Cup Pub Crawl.

OK, enough ridiculous jibber jabber. I'll leave that to the Wazoo. Time to shine the spotlight on today's main event – pale ales. We will be sampling the iconic bitter ales from both America and the Old World and some others that we don't get to see in our local shelves.

The all-knowing BJCP groups the British pales into 3 substyles under category 8: Ordinary Bitter, Special Bitter and Extra Special Bitter. As you probably already figured it out, they are arranged in order of strength and bitterness. The Ordinary Bitter is the most sessionable with an ABV topping out at 3.8%ABV but still having a noticeable malt character but decidedly staying bitter. You've probably ordered a Boddington's at some point (yeah, admit it) so you know what I'm talking about. If not, then you will tonight. You'll survive. Around here, we are more acquainted with the Special Bitter and Extra Special Bitter style since it is more prevalent at our local watering holes. The malt flavors of caramel and fruity esters are more evident and the hops start to appear more in bitterness and aroma. Typical descriptors for both of these (with varying degrees) include copper-colored, fruity, noble

Pale Ales & Pub Crawls, El Capitan Leads The Way!

hop aroma, caramel, a hint of diacetyl, medium body, and low carbonation. British bitters are all about emphasizing drinkability, especially during long philosophical discussions. In my opinion, these beers are best enjoyed out of a cask and at a slightly warmer temperature. I feel that this brings out the richness of the malt as well as the boldness of the hop flavors and aromatics.

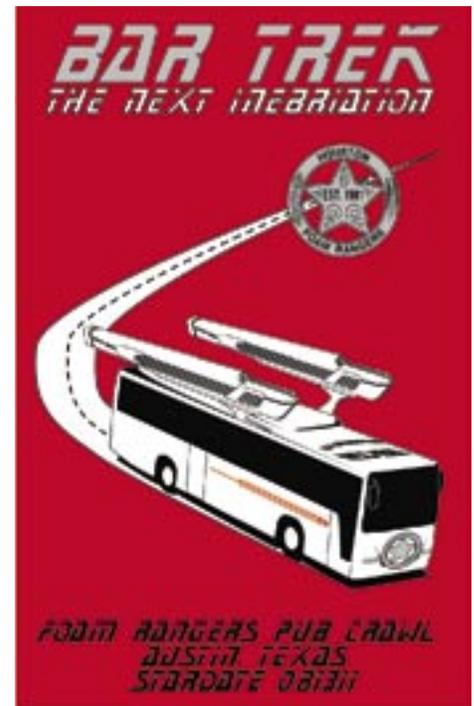
The American pale ale is an adaptation of the English bitter but with cleaner, less malty and a hoppier presence. As opposed to British pales that emphasize early hop bitterness, American-style examples are more aggressive in the middle and late hopping for a bigger hop burst. There is still some degree of maltiness found, usually from the use of lower level Crystal malts, but it is not as prominent. The color tends to be lighter, somewhere in the pale gold range, and a lighter body. The iconic descriptor is citrusy flavor and aroma from the liberal use of American hops. Cascades have of course been the go-to hops for this style but most mid to high AA hops such as Centennial and Simcoe will do in this style. But be mindful of keeping the IBUs at a max of about 50 or else it just becomes too harsh and the malt will just not be able to hold the beer up. Tonight, we will get to try the BJCP-approved examples such as Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Stone Pale Ale, and Deschutes Mirror Pond along with some other crazier ones like Firestone-Walker's Pale 31. This last one is a pale ale aged in barrels awarded with a silver medal during the 2010 GABF.

And now, stay tuned for a word from our sponsors:

"It is that time of the year again, folks. We are six weeks away from the Dixie Cup entry deadline and you know what that means, right?!?! Time to fire up them burners and start cranking out some beers that will help us keep the Dixie Cup here, on our home turf. Many out there will try their hardest to pry this zymurological masterpiece from our StarSan burned hands, but we will not allow it. The Cup shines best here in Houston. Help us keep it here. Get your beer lineup ready and get a-brewing!"

Now we return to our regularly scheduled program.

-El Capitan





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So sweet...
So inno... oh...
Oh... My...
Never mind!

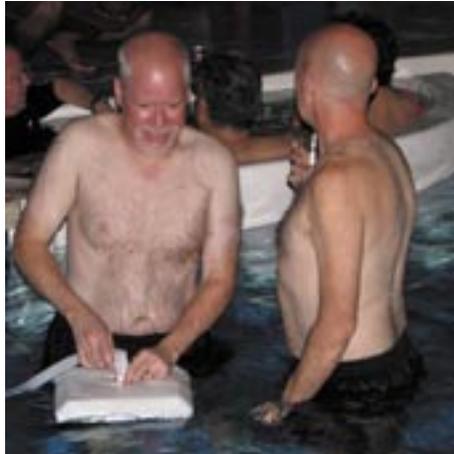
I hate it when it squirts in
my face like that!



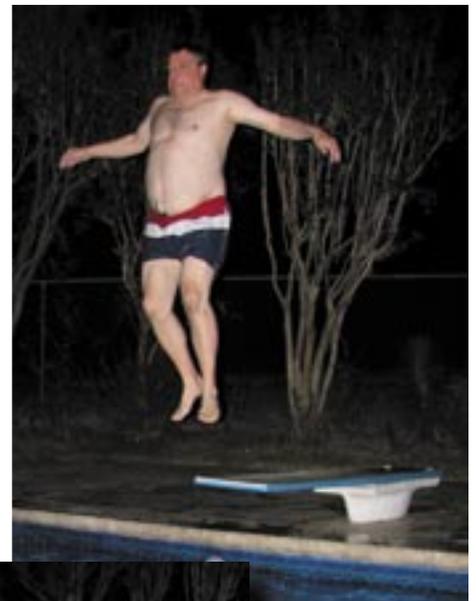
Insert joke about old
guys playing with hose...



We sure are a
friendly club...



Foam Ranger Foto Pages!



I believe
I can fly...
...Glub!



Being the host does have
its perks!

Melissa goes off
the deep end...

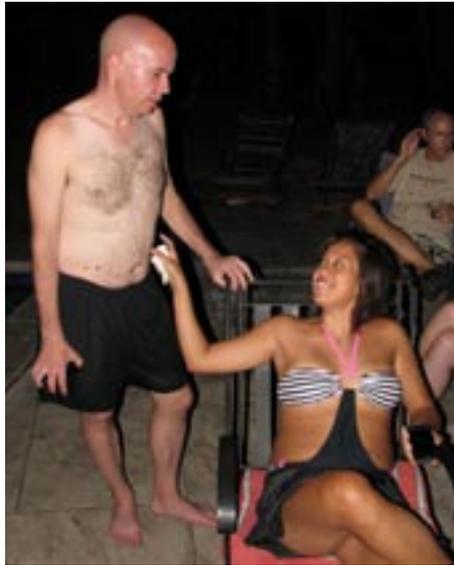


Jaime's "best" side...



...although not a very clean one, it seems!

I got lucky at last year's pool party, can you help me make it two in a row?



Oh.. You meant THAT kind of wiener...



Any more "wiener" jokes and yours will be on the menu!

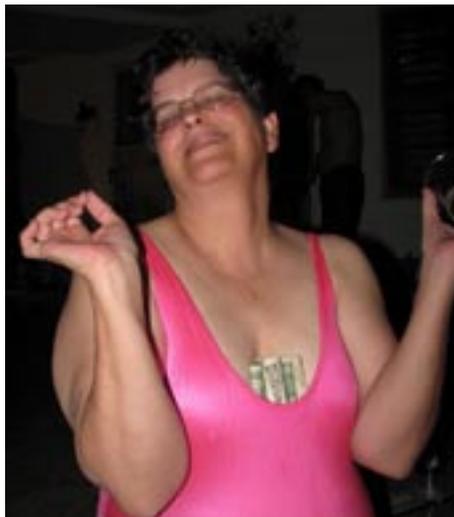


Enjoying the view?



Foam Ranger Foto Pages!

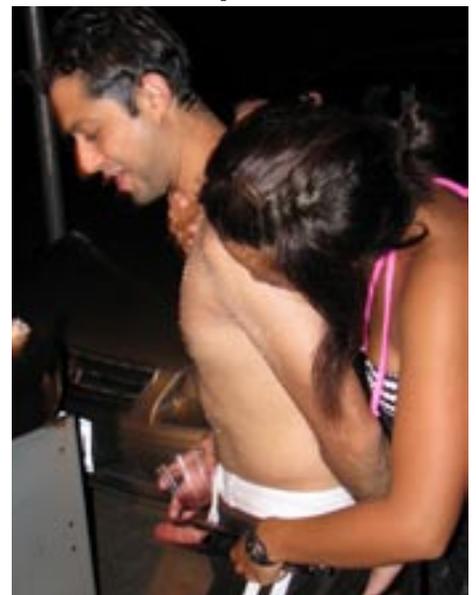
Who needs a cashbox when you have cleavage?



Look! Up in the sky!
It's a bird! It's a plane!
It's Super Waz!



Apparently that beer was a bit too cold...



Jaime gets an extension.

This Month in Foam Ranger History

Recycled from the 2006 August Brewsletter and featuring new research.

25 Years Ago:

In the Brewsletter:

No Brewsletter available

At the Meeting:

Held at the Gingerman in the Rice Village. Secondary Fermenter Brad Kraus explained the difference between "weisse" and "weizen" beers. Anchor Wheat (not then available in Houston) Hoegaarden White, Paulaner Hefe Weizen, Spaten Club Weisse and Sailer Weisse were served..

Other Events:

None Noted

20 Years Ago:

In the Brewsletter:

Grand Wazoo Lou Carannante encourages the club membership to keep the noise down during the business and technical presentation portions of club meetings. A centerfold map of pubs in the Houston area is included. Recipes from Dixie Cup award winners, ranting and ravings by editor John Donaldson, Chris Todd's Dixie Cup planning status report, along with Sean Markham's "galloping Suds Sucker" column covering McGonigel's Mucky Duck fill out the issue.

At the Meeting:

Held at Sean Lamb's house. Beer of the month was light lagers. A technical presentation on filtering beer was given by Steve Daniel.

Other Events:

A Foam Ranger club members only homebrew competition was held on August 11. It was organized by Chris Todd, and garnered 50 entries, and was held at the Palace of the Wazoo. Best of Show was won by Lou Carannante and Ron Kline's strong ale. A "Foam in Dome" baseball game

outing was held to see the Astros and the Expos.

15 Years Ago:

In the Brewsletter:

Waz Wes Woods pens "Counter Pressure Bottle Filling or Painting Your House With Beer," a Texas alcohol law round up and a historical article on how to make good beer.

At the Meeting:

The meeting was held at the Oddfellows Lodge in the Heights. with Brown and Old ales as the Beer of the Month.

Other Events:

A big Dixie Cup Brew-In was held at DeFalco's on August 18th. Lots of Rangers, new and old, participated.

10 Years Ago:

In the Brewsletter:

Grand Wazoo Bev Blackwood draws a blank when it comes to a column, but eventually gets around to a tribute to the late Dave Slamen, who always loved competitions and Dixie Cup. There was also an announcement of a trip to see the Brewers play the Astros with Dave Slamen's kids benefiting. Jimmy Paige extolls the virtues of Bitters and Pale Ales, listing the excellent range of beers to be offered at the meeting. There are also all grain recipes for English Pale Ale and American Pale Ale. The Foam Ranger membership directory makes its debut. T-Bob wraps up his series on visiting Belgium. An article on yeast strains by Dr. Chris White is reprinted, as well as a whole page of "Odds & Sods."

At the Meeting:

Grand Wazoo Bev promoted the Cactus Challenge pack & ship, tried to sell the last few tickets to the Astros vs. Brewers game and tht the Foam Rangers won the Shuttle trophy from Rendezbrew for the keg competition. Some event called the Dixie Cup was mentioned regularly for some reason.

Other Events:

None Noted

5 Years Ago:

In the Brewsletter:

Numerous photos of scantily clad women vie for your attention with articles of dubious quality. Allegedly, Steve Moore gets arrested and the J&J Brew Crew is investigated. Wazoo Rob Kolacny appeals for everyone to brew for Dixie Cup and talks about the Austin pub crawl in September. Competition Coordinator Scott DeWalt recounts the club's extensive winnings at Lunar Rendezbrew. Ancient history is recounted, while recent history is strangely absent. Secondary T-Bob regales us with the history and subtleties of Pale Ales and Bitters.

At the Meeting:

There was one, but due to the time constraints of the Brewsletter Editor's new job at Saint Arnold, they never got to the September Brewsletter... Since there wasn't one. (Although it's also noted that there's no extant copy of the Scrivener's notes either. While the rest of the officers did have columns submitted...)

Other Events:

None noted.

(Wazoo - continued from page 1)

and food production will become the number one priority, at the expense of other uses of the same raw ingredients, such as brewing beer or distilling.

We as homebrewers can be caretakers of the future of homebrewing by using our power as voters to work towards change in these areas. We can also do our part to work towards sustainable rates of population growth.

Demand from mega breweries for specific products

Already we have seen the proliferation of higher and higher alpha acid hops throughout the market, but thankfully not at the expense of our favorite aroma and flavor hops - yet. Mega breweries have incentives to minimize their use of hop matter, in terms of both flavor (or more appropriately lack thereof) and efficiency. Their demand

(Continued from previous page)

for higher alpha acid hops has been a driving force behind the appearance of many of these new varieties. In fact, many mega breweries use hop extract in lieu of hops for its advantages in terms of efficiency and in some cases (think the High Life) prevention of off flavors in beer packaged in marketing-friendly clear bottles.

I'm pretty sure most homebrewers do their part to take care of the future of homebrewing in this case by supporting craft brewers who still demand the aroma and flavor hops that we all love, and therefore provide incentives for growers to continue growing these hops.

Rising energy costs and water shortages

While it is doubtful that these factors could spell the decline of homebrewing, they could certainly make it a more expensive hobby than it already is. We use energy in every step of the process, from the production of raw ingredients to their transportation to mashing and boiling to fermentation temperature control and finally into the kegerator, not to mention all the water we heat in the process. My electric bill in the spring and fall, when I do not use A/C or heat, averages about \$65/month (Spark green energy), a large part of which is consumed by my modest setup, including a mini-fridge kegerator, a medium sized chest freezer, an old fridge, and a small chest freezer used as a fermentation chamber. This doesn't even count the propane I use when I make beer or the natural gas I use to heat water for brewing and cleaning.

Homebrewers are also prolific users of water. Those of us who are all grain brewers use 12 or so gallons of water to make 5 gallons of beer, along with 5 gallons for sanitizing, 5 for cleaning, and 15 or 20 for chilling. Water usage for cleaning and sanitizing continues throughout the process.

Increasing utility rates are one concern, but prices would rise even faster with tiered rates implemented to address shortages, in which case prices might increase drastically beyond "typical" usage. Also, don't let your neighbors see you brewing this weekend lest they report you to the

city for "watering your lawn" on the wrong day.

Colony collapse disorder

Those of us who make mead should be concerned about colony collapse disorder (CCD). Bees are of course the source of honey, and if the drastic die off of bees continues, honey supplies will dwindle and costs will increase significantly, and certain varieties of honey may no longer be available in quantities sufficient for meadmaking. A continued disappearance of bees would also lead to greater stress on food production systems, potentially exacerbating some of the shortages discussed earlier in this column. Several causes have been proposed for CCD, including biotic, fungal, viral, and environment causes. The leading theories include malnutrition owing to a loss of plant diversity and detrimental effects of the pesticides used so rampantly in commercial agriculture. We as homebrewers should do our part to set in motion changes that will ensure healthy bee populations by reducing pesticide overuse and taking care of our environment to maintain what plant diversity we still have left.

New taxes

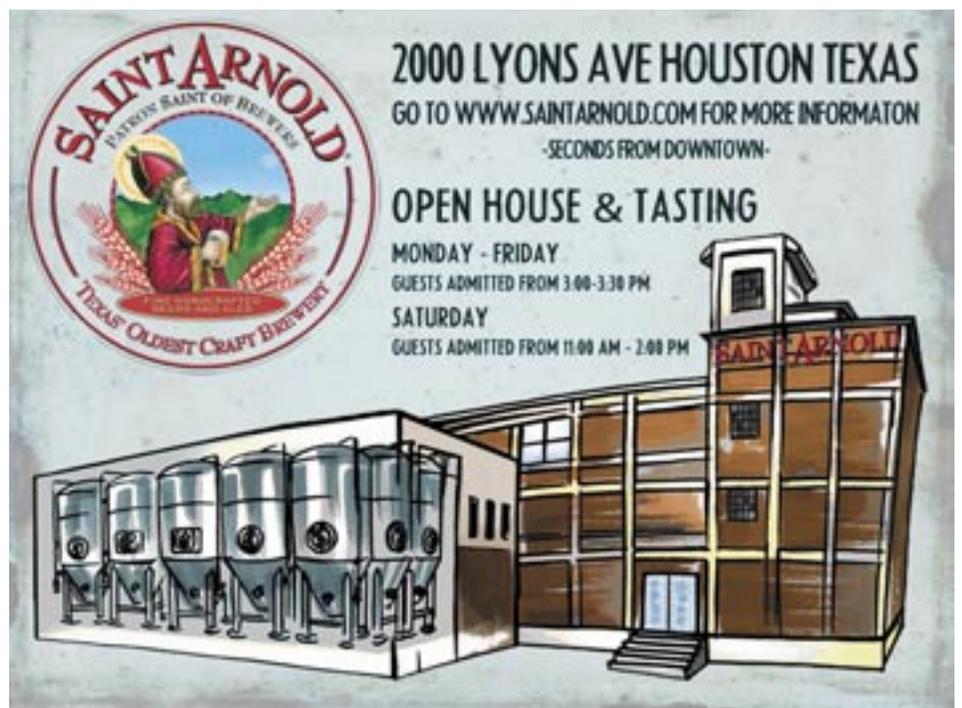
Granted, this is the most far-fetched scenario, but governmental influence could bring paperwork and taxes to home production of alcohol. As the

popularity of homebrewing continues to increase, and more homebrew is produced, homebrewing may become an attractive tax base.

Granted, it would be impractical for the government to tax individual homebrewers, however, taxes could be levied at the point of purchase - the homebrew store - on ingredients destined to be transformed into alcohol.

We as homebrewers should use our sway as voters to install in office those who will continue to support homebrewing and our interests with no governmental interference.

I write these things not to be alarmist but simply to point out that things have not always been this good, and they may not continue to be good into the future unless we as homebrewers use our knowledge, connections, dollars, and votes to safeguard and protect our hobby and to support those that indirectly contribute to the continued success of homebrewing. And because I needed a column. Finally, we should all be good stewards of the planet that provides our raw ingredients and sustains life, even if it requires a few lifestyle modifications that we might find inconvenient initially.



Buck Goes To B. Nektar!

By Buck Wyckoff

After searching in vain for the B. Nektar Meadery on Jarvis Street in Detroit, I called Brad Dahlhofer, one of the partners (the others being his wife Kerri & Paul Zimmerman), who guided me into an all-terrain parking lot surrounded by dowdy looking industrial shops. Detroit isn't much on lipstick and mascara. Beauty is found on the inside.

W: So this is the operation, huh?

B: This is it. In all it's glory. We're trying to make a mead today, but we're having trouble getting the bungs out of these lids that came in. Always something to figure out.

W: On the honey barrels?

B: Yeah.

W: These blue ones?

B: No, those are our primary fermentors. These ones out here.

W: Oh, the steel barrels?

B: Yeah. We're like, stripping them out. They're just not turning. And we've got kind of a cheap honey drum wrench. There's always some problem.

W: You don't use an industrial can opener I guess.

B: Well, we don't want to take the whole top off. We want to put it in buckets to weight everything out. We're still kind of doing it homebrew style, you know. There's not a lot of difference between this and the way we used to do it.

W: So it's very crafty.

B: It's all very hands on. There's no industrial pumps with measuring devices and things like that. It's all just homebrew style.

W: I see wooden barrels over there. Is that the bourbon barrel....?

B: The bourbon barrel aged, yeah.

W: Did you say you use the same bourbon barrels Founders KBS does?

B: Yeah, yeah.

W: And where do the bourbon barrels come from?

B: Heaven Hill. They're the Elijah Craig barrels.

W: Is that a Michigan....?

B: No, no. It's bourbon, so it's got to be down in Kentucky.

W: So when it's called bourbon....?

B: It legally has to be from Kentucky. It has to be aged in oak for two years minimum. It has to be American oak. It has to be toasted American oak.

And you can only use the barrel once. There's all those laws about it, so it's why they sell all the barrels. Actually, they used to all go to Scotland. Most scotch is actually aged in American used bourbon barrels.

W: I got homebrew friends that are into bourbons and scotches. They probably know that already. I didn't realize it had those kinda rules.

B: Yeah. I didn't either until I really started getting into it. So we get the barrels from a guy who has contacts down there. It's like, the choice barrels, you know?

W: Yeah.

B: But we can really only use the barrel one time to make the bourbon barrel mead. Right now, we've got some other things going on in those barrels. We got one called Mièl de Garde. It's like a bière de garde, but a mead. We got a bourbon barrel cyser going on in there right now. It's some new barrels that we haven't used before.

W: I've never heard of a bourbon barrel aged mead. That's new to me.

B: Yeah, I didn't know of any before we did it either, but since we did it, starting to see other meaderies around the country pop up with some. Although I hear they're not aging them nearly as long as we did.

W: How long do you age them?

B: A year, in the barrel.

W: Okay. So some serious aging.

B: Nine months to a year. We just kind of blended a couple of different barrels together. Some we brought out after nine months. But the rest was like, twelve months.

W: I started making mead in '86. And I was new to homebrewing and I made it really pretty light. It was kind of a beer type recipe. Before too long I dove into really heavy duty sack type

mead recipes. I did well with them. It's not everybody's cup of tea.

B: When you say heavy duty sack meads, what....?

W: Four pounds of honey per gallon.

B: And what kind of alcohol?

W: Well, I guess as much as the yeast will tolerate. I was getting 12 to 13%

B: So then by your standards, everything we do is a sack mead.

W: Well....

B: Cause they're all 14 to 15%.

W: Well, when I think of sack mead....yeah, there's a lot of alcohol in it....I'm not sure what really defines it. It's high in alcohol, but also really, really sweet too. At least mine are.

Some people don't like them for that reason, but I visited the Acoustic Meadery in Traverse City and he makes an extremely light beverage. And it's tasty. You don't so sparkling. You do still only?

B: Well, we've done others, but our focus is on still.

W: You're known for the heavier stuff.

B: Yeah. We're known for the big styles and higher alcohol. Right now, to just make a living making mead, which is (chuckling) already a challenge in itself, we decided to focus on one particular thing right now. We've done the sparkling. We've done stuff like that, but we're not going to keep going in that direction

for right now. (Loud banging rings out as stubborn bungs are assaulted.) Just the still bottles, but who knows, we might eventually do six packs of those.

W: Do you think what you are doing now better

differentiates yourself in the market place amongst beer and wine? Maybe you think the sparkling didn't really work out for you?

B: No, it wasn't based on that.

W: Personal preference?

B: No. Based on equipment we actually had. To do sparkling you need brite tanks or you need to bottle condition it, which means riddling, which means you're disgorging, which
(Continued on next page)



Brad, Paul & The Fun Czar, Not having fun...

(Continued from previous page)

means you got dry ice involved....a lot more space....it's a whole nother process.

W: It's exponentially more complicated to do sparkling.

B: It's more complicated. There's more risk involved with over-

carbonating or under-carbonating, so quality control becomes a thing. It's just something we said, you know, we already have these great recipes, let's just keep trying to expand it out into different new markets.

W: You just ferment it. Age it. Keep it simple.

B: Yeah....well, we do everything BUT keep it simple. I

mean, we have a new mead out every month. We're doing collaborations with coffee roasters. We're doing crazy things like fermenting and aging meads on *brettanomyces* and like, *bacillus*.

W: What's that? Ber....

B: *Brettanomyces*. The funky.....think sour beers.

W: Okay. Like Belgian yeast type things?

B: Yeah. You get some crazy, funky, sour beer that tastes like horse blanket. We get crazy.

W: Well, what I found interesting, that you mentioned on the phone.....my recipes, I use around four pounds per gallon honey and I found I can't even hardly drink them until a year or two goes by, but you were talking about having yours ready for market in three months or something?

B: Yeah, some of them even finish faster. Not to say they don't improve with age, but when you pour it out of the tank and you try it and you're like, "Would I drink a glass of that?" Yeah! Okay, it's ready.

W: I was thinking, maybe you guys are brewing in a way....I don't know if it's the ingredients or the yeast, or methods that maybe allow it to be more drinkable sooner than mine are.

B: Well, we mainly pay attention to

all the different variables. I mean, just like homebrewing. You got to look at temperature. You've got to look at how much yeast you pitch. Is there enough oxygen in the wort when you pitch your yeast? There's all these little things you pay attention to. Mead's no different, you know? We sing to it. We

play it music.

W: Give it a massage.

B: It likes soft lighting. (Mutual snickering.) It likes some of the crazier bands.

W: Keeps the yeast aggressive.

B: Yeah, exactly. It loves punk rock.

W: You said you primary in those blue barrels?

B: Yeah, we primary in the blue barrels, for no other reason than we

couldn't figure out how we can mix up a batch in these big tanks. Have you ever tried stirring up honey in a 265 gallon tank?

W: I've done it in a five gallon kettle and it's....

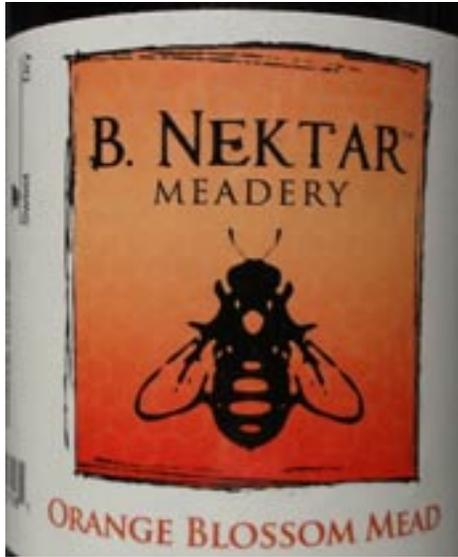
B: Yeah, that can be hard, right? So imagine doing it in a 1000 liter tank. It's not that easy. So we really started doing it in these blue drums out of necessity.

W: What, you got like a big drill bit thing?

B: Yeah, exactly. We're still using homebrewing equipment for that. Like you get a drill bit.... the mix paddles.

W: Like you use for paint and stuff.

B: But we use the homebrew ones. They make them for homebrew. Usually for wine making, degassing wines and stuff like that. And we just mix it all up in those 55 gallon drums. They're high density polyethylene, which is the same material they use to make the fermenting buckets for homebrewing. As far as we're concerned, it's just a big fermenting bucket. And it only spends two to four weeks in there anyway. We're going to get the primary fermentation out of there and after that's done, we transfer it to these vessels (pointing to the large stainless vessels).



W: Is there anything fermenting now, 'cause I don't see like an air lock type thing?

B: No, we don't use air locks. We let the CO2 just push it out. Some people would say it's open fermentation. It's not exactly open fermentation.

W: So you just leave these open.

B: We leave them loose. When there's no air pressure, there's enough weight on there to keep 'em closed enough.

W: You got it in there when it's still fermenting, so it's under positive pressure. Nothing's going in.

B: Yeah. Like day zero, when you pitch the yeast, there's no positive pressure, but we pitch so much yeast our lag's pretty short. There's not really a lot that's going to take hold in there.

W: So you say you're a couple of weeks in here?

B: You'll get a full fermentation in about seven to fourteen days. After that, if we're going to do any oak or vanilla beans and cinnamon sticks, like that stuff will go into these primaries. From there we'll fine it, rack it, transfer it. Six of those 55 gallon drums, we don't fill them all they way to the top, but six of those drums will equal one of these 1000 liter tanks.

W: Right.

B: So everything starts off as six separate batches and you have six different gravities. You're watching different ones to see like, is it going as fast as the other ones and there's always a slight variation, but by the time you blend it all back in the tank, it's pretty consistent. So we'll call those six drums one batch, but we track each drum as we ferment and as we're tracking things like pH, specific gravity....we track all six within the batch so we know if there's a problem drum.

W: You might hold a drum or keep it out of the mix if it isn't.....?

B: Well, we've never really done that. It's really more for deciding how to handle it. We could be using, say, a yeast that has higher nutrient requirements and so, for whatever reason, maybe we didn't add enough nutrients to that particular drum. So we might have to add a little more nutrients to it.

W: Do all the drums have the same
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thing going on or do you mix some things?

W: No. We try to keep them the same. We don't intentionally do anything different. Brewing beer is very hands on up front: the mash, the boil, cooling it down, getting it in the fermentor. But once it gets in the fermentor, beer, you pretty much leave it alone. Mead's the opposite. Everyone will tell you, "Oh, making mead's easy," or "I got into making mead because I didn't want to take the time to brew beer." Well, to make good mead, you were asking how we were able to do it in three months, well it's because we pamper this mead from the time we pitch the yeast. So it's kind of the opposite of beer brewing. It still takes us a solid day to make a batch, but we're in here every day after we pitch the yeast taking care of it and guiding it. Think of it as a guidance counselor. We're guiding it in the right direction. Making sure it goes where we want it to go. And we got a lot of things we can do to make sure it goes in the right direction. Temperature being one of them. pH is another one.

W: So you're monitoring it and doing things to make adjustments in the primary. Then you blend it 7 to 14 days later into the finishing tanks. Do you monitor it and pamper it then also or at that point just leave it alone?

B: No. Everything is done in the primaries. Then when it gets in the secondaries, it's good. It's ready to age for awhile.

W: Then it spends a couple of months there or whatever?

B: It will move from tank to tank. We generally like to filter only once and we only like to do it around one micron, which is enough to pull out the sediment, but not enough to strip out flavor and aromas.

W: Okay. So you'll let it sit for a couple of months or whatever in the secondary and then filter it over into a second one.

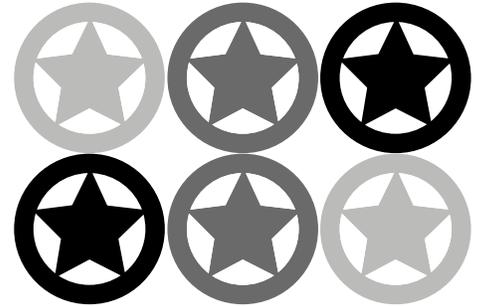
B: We'll filter it over into a tertiary which is essentially our bottling tank. That back corner tank is a variable capacity conical bottom, so we can get a full drain out of it, 'cause they'll still be some sediment that gets left behind. And this one is our bottling tank over here. It will drain all the way

from the bottom. You're looking at our bottling line right there (we chuckle as he points to the steel rolling table in front of the secondaries).

W: Yeah. I saw online, you guys got a lot of varieties. You got like a dozen, er....?

B: Oh, yeah. I don't even know how many we've commercially done. We've got four that we have out all the time: two traditionals, a wildflower mead and an orange blossom mead.

To "bee" continued... Next month!



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