

The WIZARDS Newsletter

October - December, 2007

WIZARD's Club News

Upcoming Club Meetings

Club meetings this quarter will be January 15, February 19, and March 18 all at Deja Brew in Shrewsbury. Check our web page, call Strange Brew or call Deja Brew for directions.

Upcoming Events Web Site Update

Check out the web page <http://www.brewbeer.org/wizupcoming.htm> - it now contains the full calendar of events for 2007 along with the event coordinator for each activity! You can see what we plan to do at each meeting and who to talk to about helping out where you can. The calendar will also give you plenty of notice about the Quarterly Brewing Styles so that you can brew on the club's schedule. Finally, you'll note a few spots where volunteers are still needed...

Club Meeting Minutes and Upcoming Events

The following are the combined minutes for the October through December 2007 club meetings:

Does your beer cut the mustard? Here is one way to help you find out. Vik will be hosting a beer palate training seminar at the March meeting in preparation for our annual homebrew competition judging. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about evaluating your beer. Vik will be "altering" some beer to help us learn what it means to be phenolic, skunked, boozy and who knows what else?

The 2007 calendar of events, including the quarterly beer styles, was set. Refer to the upcoming events page at <http://www.brewbeer.org/wizupcoming.htm>. As a special note, the style for February was set as Ordinary Bitter. This is a quick and easy beer so you still have plenty of time to get one in!

Carl has volunteered to look into club memberships cards - as long as we ask him again in some time later in the year.

Upcoming club activities are always posted on the club's website at <http://www.brewbeer.org/wizupcoming.htm>. Additional details will be published in the newsletter as they become available and provided via email to the club's egroups email list.

Wizards 10th Annual Home Competition

Time to break out your best for the 10th Annual Wizards Home Brew Competition! The competition is a great way to improve your beers and if you're lucky you might even gain a few

bragging rights! Complete details are available on the website at <http://www.brewbeer.org/competition.htm>.

Not only is the competition a chance for you to get some written feedback on your beers, its a great way to get involved with the club and learn a little bit in the process. Competition judging will be held at the April meeting. All members are encouraged to attend and participate. Starting in February we'll start preparing the club for the competition judging with an "Intro to Judging" session and then we'll hold a more detailed practice run at the March meeting that will include Vik's palate training seminar.

This year's entry deadline is April 8th so get brewing!

Your Choice - Yeast Experiment for the May Meeting

I, like most of you, always use liquid yeast. But I've always wondered whether this was necessary. Some years ago I did a somewhat controlled experiment (read about in the [March 1999 Newsletter](#)) and liquid yeast came out on top. But then again a lot has changed since then. There has been quite a change in the availability of dry yeasts since 1999. This led me to propose the next big club event "Your Choice - Yeast Experiment" which will be held at the May meeting.

The idea is pretty straight forward. Brew one beer using two different yeasts and compare the results. All club members are invited to participate in this event. Complete details follow:

- Brew any style beer you want, extract or all-grain, anywhere or anyway you want.
- Split the brew in half and ferment 1/2 with a liquid yeast and 1/2 with a dry yeast.
- Try to use a similar style liquid and dry yeast (ie, English Ale) and don't use the cheapest dry yeast (ie, Red Star).
- Ferment and age under identical conditions. Carbonate and bottle under identical conditions.
- Blind tastings comparing the liquid and dry yeast brews will be conducted at the May meeting.
- As an added incentive to participate, the club and Strange Brew are providing the yeasts for this activity. Just mention this promotion at the store when you shop.

I will be presenting more information at the February Club Meeting when we talk about the 2nd Quarterly Style. Start thinking about what you want to do. It should be interesting to see what happens.

Topics for the Club's Next Business Meeting

1. Review calendar of events
2. Push/coordinate annual homebrew competition

And whatever happened to these almost forgotten items?

1. The Jack Daniel's Barrel Project
2. Greg's ingredient poll (see below)
3. Club Sponsorship
4. Beer Crawls
5. Club only competition

The club is STILL considering some beer crawls. We are currently looking for interest and organizers. Some possible suggestions include:

- Portland, ME
- Portsmouth, NH
- Wachusett Brewery

Dues

Dues for 2007/2008 are now due. Dues are still a bargain at \$12/year and cover most, if not all, of our club activities. Dues pay our nominal expenses like buying the pretzels and cups for meetings. The biggest way your dues are spent is at club functions where the club finds some way to treat everyone in attendance like buying the pizza at our holiday party this past December or buying the appetizers on the annual pub crawl.

Newsletter

As always, articles and suggestions for the newsletter are both welcomed and encouraged and should be sent directly to [Bill](#).

🍺🍺🍺 *Special Bonus Feature* 🍺🍺🍺



Tips for the New Brewer by Jeremy Cagle

Join Jeremy on an interesting, fact-filled and often entertaining journey as he takes us through his tips for the new brewer.

[Click Here](#)

🍺🍺🍺 *WIZARD's Recent Events* 🍺🍺🍺

September Meeting - Cider Night

Once again September brought us the widely anticipated cider night. Jeremy brought a cider from 2002, one from 2005 and a five year old New England Barrel Cider. Bill also brought his NE Barrel Cider of the same vintage (note, it was awful but at least I took some consolation when Jean-Luc asked if could have a bottle to use for salad dressing). Dave brought a 2002 cold aged cider, Don brought a 1990 vintage and Greg brought Ray's 2007. And to add a little excitement, Ben brought 2006 Perry in addition to a 2001 cider. Are you noticing a trend here? There is not much new cider making going on. So if you're interested in reviving this club tradition, start by taking a look at the cider guidelines in our [October 2002 Newsletter](#).

Western MA Pub Crawl

by Mike Reilly

OK, so it didn't start off particularly well: the promised 12-passenger rental van devolved in some rather messy negotiations to a Ford Edge (SUV) and a Dodge Charger. Vik, Bill, Darja, Harry and Deb took the Charger; Mike Reilly, Mike Hetzel, and Dave and Steve DeVries took the Edge. We ended up starting out about an hour late. Would the rest of the tour go as poorly?

1. Opa-Opa Steakhouse: At the first stop, we gratefully piled out of the cars (Reilly, Hetzel and the DeVries Brothers in the Edge managed to lag behind by about 5-10 minutes to fix a minor cosmetic problem with the Edge) and into the restaurant, where half the table ordered samplers (a good deal, if one is going for variety), and all had a good, solid lunch to sustain us. This was where knowing people in high places helps: Dave Thompson had laid the groundwork for our tour; we met Peter, the restaurant manager, who kindly gave us a tour of the brew-house, and even took some drinks (quite a few, actually – thanks Dave T!!) off our bill. Beers tasted included the following:

- Marshall Brown Ale: Many people had this beer, and it seemed to be the standout beer of this stop: “It’s good!”; “Nice malt...”; “Excellent!”; Steve DeVries gave it 9/10: “Two thumbs up! Earthy, smooth...”
- Southampton Porter: “Lots of roastiness, but thin mouthfeel”; “...nice, subtle roasty flavor...easy drinking”; “Not robust”; Steve gave it 7/10: “A little smoky, smooth. Less complex than the Brown...”
- Red Rock Amber: “Nice malt”; “Smooth, well balanced”; 8/10 from Steve: “mild, smooth...”
- American Wheat: Darja said it was “Not as good as Bill’s”
- Opa-Opa Lager: “Tastes like Bud, without the corn, but better”; Bill said it was “Very Bud-like, but very nice”
- Raspberry Wheat: Darja really liked this one: “2 thumbs up, perfect raspberry taste”
- King Oak Milk Stout: I’m guessing it was a sweet beer: Bill liked its “sweet, smooth, slight coffee roast”; Dave DeVries agreed, calling it “Sweet...” and “Smooth...”; Steve DeVries gave it 6/10: “No hops, very sweet like Beamish...”
- Adonis Gold: Bill and Dave liked its: “...crisp, bitterness...subtle, yet definitely present...” and “Clean Hop, some malt...”; Darja and Steve agreed that it was “Hoppy...”, with Steve giving it 6/10, noting it was “a bit sour...”
- Honesty 47 Pale Ale: Dave and Steve both liked it: “clean, crisp, light hop finish” and “very nice hops, malty...”

- Buckwheat IPA: Bill thought the “...hops overtake [the] malt...”, but it was still “nice...”



Opening Time



Sampling Away at the Opa-Opa

2. Moan & Dove: Next on the list was Moan & Dove, in Amherst. Once again the Edge crew arrived late (having made a solemn promise, en route, to be certain to beat the Charger to the next one), but made up for lost time. The M&D was very dark, which seemed off-putting to some, but desirable to others, offered only bar munchies for eats, and had a limited, chalkboard beer menu – but what a selection!

- Mönshof Black Pilsner: Despite the name (too descriptive?), this was a simple schwarzbier. Several people had this, and all liked it: “Dark malt, clean finish”. Dave said he liked the fact that the roasted flavor came without the usual bitterness.
- Allagash Dubbel: Vik had this – its one of his faves. The keg kicked at the moment of pouring so the barkeep let him have the half-filled glass gratis. I’m sure that helped his opinion of it...
- Schlenkerla Märzen: OK, this was a black mark against this bar. This was listed only as a “Märzen”, and Mike H. purchased this one with the idea that he was getting a genuine German Märzen. It is not immediately obvious that the Schlenkerla brewery (located in Bamberg, Germany) uses copious amounts of smoked malt in ALL of its products. In truth, it tasted like wood ash from a fireplace (yeah. Ask me how I know, some time). When Mike H. took it back, thinking he was mistakenly poured a Rauchbier, or that the serving lines had some funky weird stuff in them, he was told that, no, it was a Märzen. Actual descriptions are: “Too smoky”, “No like”, and “Some sourness”. Having paid for it, Mike H., with Mike R’s help, suffered through it to the bitter end, sharing restorative draughts from a glass of the Mönshof schwarzbier (see above).
- Mojo Double IPA: Darja had this one: “Like very much! Very hoppy”
- Guinness: Steve’s comment was brief and to the point: “Brilliant!”

- Anderson Valley Poleeko Pale Ale: “Less hoppy version of a West Coast Pale Ale”, “Could use a little more malt.”
- DeRanke XX Bitter: A Belgian Bitter? OK, we bit, and tried a glass: “Hoppy, like an IPA, but not like a typical IPA” Huh? Well, what that meant was that it may have been a little overly hopped for a bitter, and the hops used were more Continental European, rather than English, American, etc. Still, it was good.
- Harviestoun Old Engine Oil: An English-made Old Ale, this one elicited comments like “[unusually] well balanced, but a lot of body”
- Young's Double Chocolate Stout: More folks had this than any other single beer at M&D. However, folks were left unimpressed: “...wisps of cocoa...”, “...too much!”, and “oily”. It seemed to be a decent dessert beer, but not for simply sipping.

3. People's Pint: OK, with the advantage of our “Seekrut Weppin” (Mike H., who knows the area well) the Edge beat the Charger to the Pint, and managed to find a parking spot directly across the street - Yeah! This place was CROWDED but, even still, serial beer-drinkers managed to find each other – we met up with another couple whom we had last seen at Opa-Opa! Many pictures were taken. It was here that the decision was made to bag McNeill’s but hit the Gardner Ale House on the northerly, inbound leg of our Crawl...

In general, this was the standout stop of the entire Crawl; we spent an estimated 2 hours here (way longer than the pre-crawl estimate of 60 min.), drank more beers here than anywhere else, and Mike H. wolfed down the Ploughman’s Lunch (and boy, was the Ploughman ticked that he did that!). Overall, having three excellent beers on cask put this one at the top of the list.

- Brake shoe Porter (cask):
- ESB (cask): Dave said: “Love it! Fabulous!” Hari, too, though it was “Excellent!”, and Vik described it as “Excellent malt character, well balanced, with English hops”
- Farmer Brown: This one took Steve by surprise, being “sweet, compared with Guinness”.
- Slippery Slope (a braggot-style): This was not well liked. Deb said “Ick. Has a medicinal flavor”. Darja said “Thumbs down!”, and Mike R. concurred, but Mike H. (or was it Hari – they don’t look a thing alike, but this was pretty late into the crawl and my notes are becoming less thorough...) sampled a larger volume (all others sampled it as part of a multi-small-unit sampler) and felt it grew on him over time...
- Provider Pale Ale: Darja liked it, but Bill said “A little thin, but a otherwise a standard Pale Ale”
- Oatmeal Stout (cask): Mike H. said “Excellent. Well-balanced, and the roastiness lingers.”
- Scotch Ale: I think I was rendered speechless when I tasted this one: all I have in my notes is: “Wow. Sweet malt with a hint of hops.”
- Blonde Ale: Pretty standard. Deb and Dave said (pretty much in chorus) “Same as what I have on tap in my kitchen”
- Imperial Porter: Dave again: “Delicious! Dangerously so! (it hides the alcohol well)”



The club and Dave's brother Steve at the People's Pint



The club, Steve and some bar hoppers we met at Opa-Opa

4. Gardner Ale House: Last stop of the night; arrived there at about 9 pm (the crew of the Edge again beat the Charger – we had by now made up completely for the first two stops!). We were all beat, but we had enough energy to order supper and a few last beers (as at the Pint, we ended up spending more time there than originally called for). The beer here was the least expensive out of all the stops on this crawl, but supper almost didn't come for Dave and Deb: their pizza ended up on the floor, upside down, as it was being delivered... Bill tried his flame-thrower impression, ordering the buffalo chicken tenders not knowing that it seems to only come one way: ultra-giga-super-duper-wicked-mega-hot; we sat there wondering whether to sacrifice our beers should his head suddenly burst into flame (luckily, we didn't have to make that terrible choice).

- Chair City Pale Ale: Mike R and Dave agreed that it was on the hoppy end of the Pale Ale range, almost IPA-like (seemed a lot like the Anderson Valley Poleeko Pale Ale that we had tried back at the M&D).
- Facelift IPA: Both Dave and Hari stated that this beer was all about the hops "Overpowering hops" was a common comment.
- Summer's End: Dave and Bill agreed that it was "light, crisp, a good recommendation for a Bud drinker", but Dave went on to say that it was "not as good as my blonde ale."
- Naked Stout: Steve said that it was "clean, light, not overwhelming." Dave and Hari agreed, and added "good roastiness that lingers. A great stout... (and there my notes trail off into incomprehensibility. I guess we'll have to go back again to complete our evaluation)
- Lagunitas Censored (a "guest beer"): There were two guest beers on tap at that time we visited. Censored was the one that drew the most interest (Dave and Vik). Vik was especially appreciative: "fantastic balance of malt, hops! Extraordinary!"

With only a minor setback for the crew of the Charger, we all arrived back at our starting point in one piece (at around 11:30 pm, or was it midnight?), split up into our various vehicles and headed for home.

Did the rest of the tour go as poorly as we feared at the beginning? Definitely not! We'll be back – we left way too many good places untouched behind us to simply walk away...

[editor's note - Thanks to Mike for organizing this event and providing the article shown above! All who went have echoed my sentiments as to what a great job Mike did.]

November Meeting - Project Simco

November finally came and after months of planning, Project Simco became a reality. The idea was pretty simple - club members were encouraged to brew any beer, any style they want as long as they exclusively use Simco hops, again in any amount they want. In the end Project Simco was probably the club's most successful club meeting ever. Eighteen club members attended to sample and enjoy a total of twelve home brewed and one commercially brewed beers.

Project Simco resulted in one American Pale Ale (Greg), two Amber Ales (Don & Bill), two Red Ales (Mike H and Carl), two IPAs (Ben & Jeremy), one gluten free beer (Brian), one stout (Mike R), one Simco triple (Vik), one Barleywine (Ken) and one beer simply called beer (Damase). After sampling a quick Best of Show vote was taken with Mike Reilly coming out the landslide winner for his Simco Stout. Congrats to him.

Thanks go out to Greg for coordinating Project Simco. It just goes to show what we can do with a little bit of organization and help! Thanks also go out to Brian at Strange Brew who donated the hops for all participants. As always, please continue to give him your business.

Holiday Party

Small turnout this year - great time had by all.



Comments, questions or information on the WIZARD's to [Bill](#)