

The WIZARDS Newsletter

April - June, 2000

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WIZARD's Upcoming Events

Club Meeting Themes

As announced last month, the April meeting theme beer will be Phil's Jewel in the Crown IPA. The idea is everyone will brew the same recipe using their own equipment, thus enabling us to see what differences the various setups have on the finished product. The recipe is available in the club's [recipe library](#) for both all-grain and extract formats. Additional notes were provided in last month's newsletter. But, if you haven't brewed it by now, its certainly too late!

The June meeting theme beer will be Hefeweizen. Brew any recipe in any way you want and bring it our June meeting. For this tasting, we'll be evaluating the various beers using the BJCP scoring sheets and methods. This will be a great opportunity for everyone to participate in the judging process and get some valuable judging experience.

The July meeting theme beer will be "the beers from National Homebrew Day at the Horseshoe Pub." Try to save a bottle or two for this one!

Upcoming Trips & Outings

The annual Boston Pub Crawl will be held on Earth Day. Plans for this year call for visiting Back Bay Brewing or the Sunset Grill, Northeast Brewing, John Harvard's and dinner at Redbones. Meet at 12 noon at the Alewife T stop. More details will be added to the newsletter after the May meeting when we finalize the day's agenda.

National Homebrew Day and Competition

Sponsored by Strangebrew, Dejabrew and the Horseshoe Pub

On National Homebrew Day, Saturday May 6th, the W.I.Z.A.R.D.s will host a day of brewing demonstrations at the Horseshoe Pub in Hudson, Ma from 10:00 Am to 6:00 PM. This will feature all-grain and extract brewing demonstrations put on by our club members. The AHA theme beer is American Pale Ale but the recipe is not yet available. The club isn't making any recommendation on what to brew so its up to each participating brewer to make their own decision.

WIZARD's Club Business

[The Wizards New Web Site](#)

The all new [Wizard's Homepage](http://www.strangebrew.net/wizards/) (<http://www.strangebrew.net/wizards/>) has made it's debut. Its still under construction so keep looking for new and exciting updates.

Club members are *still* being encouraged to send [Bill](#) their favorite recipe so that it can be added to the library. Don't worry about formatting for web pages if you don't want, I will be happy to take care of it.

Election of Officers

The clubs annual election of officers will be held in May. Officers to be elected include the president, vice-president, treasurer, editor and webmaster. Additional details can be found on the [club rules](#) section of the club's web page.

Dues

Dues are due again this coming June - please make plans to fork over twelve big ones at the June meeting. Dues help the club in many ways. 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 Christmas Ales at our holiday party this past December. Remember, bring your twelve bucks to the June meeting.

Newsletter

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

Upcoming Meetings

Club meetings this quarter will be April 12, May 10 and June 14, all scheduled for the Vinotech Warehouse.

WIZARD's Recent Events

February Big Beer Night Sponsored in part by Strangebrew

The highlight of the February meeting was the tasting of the big beers brewed during the club's fall brew day held at Rich and Suzanne's house in October. The various beer tasted, along with the club's tasting notes, are shown below:

Beer	OG	Brewer	Tasting Notes
Barleywine	1115	Greg/Russ	A sweet, strong taste made us think this barleywine could use a little more aging.

Barleywine	1085	Rich	This was actually a two year old barleywine (Rich didn't brew that day). For a beer Rich said was undrinkable the first six months, this one was quite good.
Barleywine	N/A	Brian	This was an extract barleywine which the club was looking forward to trying, but unfortunately, it was not available for the tasting.
Doppleweizenbock	??	Aventinas	Aventinas defines this style and is the meter stick by which all others are measured. It was darker in color with more banana clove taste than the homebrews but otherwise quite similar. Best head of the three.
Doppleweizenbock	1074	Phil	Lighter in color than the Aventinas. Good carbonation and head. (see note below)
Doppleweizenbock	1074	Bill	Same color and very similar taste as Phil's with a sweeter, warmer taste with more hints of clove. Good carbonation but no head retention. (see note below)
Doppleweizenbock	??	Scott	Not available - not so big
Small Beer	N/A	Greg/Russ	This was the 2nd runnings from their barleywine. It was a little hard to appreciate after the big beers.
Cherry Stout	N/A	John	Not available - not so big

Note: The Doppleweizenbocks brewed by Phil and Bill were the result of Phil questioning the decoction versus infusion mashing techniques they each used. While this style of beer is typically brewed with a decoction mash, much like Phil did, Bill's was made using a step infusion mash. Phil did his standard double decoction mash and Bill used a protein rest followed by a single infusion. The recipes used by both were similar; the only changes being Bill substituted two pounds of melanoidan malt for an equal amount of Munich malt and grains were scaled for the differing efficiencies of their respective brewing systems. The same yeast starter was used for both beers. In the end, the club's tasting indicated it was extremely hard to tell one mash type from the other and both beers were given the thumbs up rating. It would appear the use of melanoidan malt in the infusion mash was a viable alternative to the double decoction mash.

March Club Meeting - Start Thinking About Your Oktoberfest!

Phil gave a chat - see the [March Special Edition Newsletter](#) for all the details, including color photos of the brewing process. Phil was also kind enough to provide us tasting samples of his Oktoberfest and Sam Adams Oktoberfest. We also got a taste of his dopplebock which was brewed using the same techniques as the Oktoberfest.

The McNeils Trip

This February the club made their annual pilgrimage to McNeill's Brewery in Vermont. Starting at O'Connor's in Worcester (no one knows if they had a few beers there or not), the club piled into Phil's mini-van for the trip up north. Many of the beers were sampled but this reporter wasn't there and hasn't a clue which ones. This same reporter has heard some stories about Scott's friend but these haven't been confirmed either. Hopefully someone who actually went on the trip will send Bill something intelligent to put here before too many people read it.



2000 Wizards Homebrew Competition

Sponsored by Strangebrew, Dejabrew and the Horseshoe Pub

Judging for the 2000 Strangebrew/Wizards/Dejabrew/Horseshoe Pub Homebrew Competition was held in early April at Dejabrew in Shrewsbury. Brett and Drew, both BJCP judges from the Boston Wort Processors, led the evaluation team. The other judges were Brian from Strangebrew, Ray from Dejabrew and Phil, Rich and Bill from the WIZARDS. Greg and Bob did the stewarding. The winning beer will be announced on May 6, National Homebrew Day, at the Horseshoe Pub in Hudson, MA. Ray at Dejabrew has made a commercial version of the winning beer which will be put on tap at the Horseshoe Pub this May. It will first be available on National Homebrew Day and, depending on sales, will remain on tap for up to one year.

Boston Wort Processors Boston Homebrew Competition

Kudos to Bill on his first place (and MCAB qualifier) Hillside Pale Ale and his second place London Porter. Kudos to Brett for his second place Eisbock and second place Cyser Mead. Complete results are available from the [The Mighty Boston Wort Processors'](#) web site.

Club Samplings

Homebrew tastings over the last few months have included Greg's pale ale, mild, stout and Belgian triple, Bill's mild, porter and Hillside Pale Ale, Scott's brown and Jewel in the Crown IPA, Bruce's cherry-wheat, Phil's ESB, Sleeping Alligator Doppelbock and Pilsner, Russ' Blue Ball Porter. Commercial tastings have included Big Foot 200 (4/5), Ipswich Oatmeal Stout (3/5) and Caffrey's Widget Ale (2.5/5). Note, numbers in parenthesis, where available, show our rating on the five point scale with one being "it stinks" and five being "give me more."

Russ brought us the Blue Ball Porter at the January meeting. Even though everyone else brought their porter to the December meeting, we took the time to enjoy Russ's beer and offer a few constructive comments. First, let's start with the name. For the longest time, many of us thought it was called Blue Bowl Porter but this was cleared up at the meeting. It seems the beer was named when Phil's son threw a "blue ball" into the brew kettle and not after a roadside facility. Phew. Once we got past the name thing, the club found a very smooth and enjoyable porter. Some thought it could use a little more roasted taste but otherwise we all declared it an outstanding beer.

The Other Stuff - Hints & Ideas

Back Bay to Stop Brewing by Bill Nevits

This past weekend, Darja and I had the chance to visit the Back Bay Brewing Company, one of our favorite brew-pubs. As always, the beer was excellent. Unfortunately, the rest of the news was not. The usual cask bitter wasn't on tap; instead we were treated to a cask version of their Freedom Trail IPA which was so good it reminded me of being in England. Darja had the Northernlight Amber Ale which she also reported to be quite good. While the amber hadn't changed much since the last time we were there, we were surprised to see it named after a dot com company. We were also a little surprised to see corporate sponsors on the beer menu. Maybe it has something to do with next week's marathon?

The sad news is we were able to confirm Back Bay will stop brewing in the near future. Current plans call for brewing to stop sometime in June or, at the latest, in July. According to the manager on duty, they feel "the crest of the brewpub industry has been reached" and its time to focus on other things. Instead of the usual Back Bay line-up, expect to see up to a dozen domestic and imported beers on tap. Since the brewery is owned by the same people as the Commonwealth Brewing Company, we can also expect to see a Commonwealth Ale to be at least one of the dozen! Rumor has it, Todd Mott, the head brewer may be moving to his own place in Quincy sometime last this year.

Now the only question remaining is, will they change their name?

Try Some Biscuit by Brett Schneider

I like to use biscuit malt in a few recipes I brew to add some creamy toasty mouthfeel, and I think it supports the beer with a bit more body. The summer beer I brew uses about 15% biscuit, with more or less equal parts Munich malt and flaked rye. The rest is base malt and I prefer PILS so I can cold condition after a warm ferment with an English ale yeast.

Technically, biscuit (from DWC - 23L) is a unique malt that's lightly roasted, lending the subtle properties of black and chocolate malts. Used at the rate of 3 to 15 %, it is designed to improve the bread & biscuits, or toasted flavor and aroma characteristics to Lagers and Ales.

I find a low gravity summer beer, with biscuit and rye and high alpha west coast hops at about 20 IBU, when cold conditioned gives a great brew to drink a bit colder than a typical ale. The low gravity makes it available in quantity for quenching your thirst.

Brewing Big by Greg Guyton

Back in 1993 when I made my first batch of home brewed beer I thought five U.S. gallons was a lot of beer. Neither that opinion nor that batch lasted long. For me a large part of the enjoyment of making your own beer is sharing the fruits of your labor with friends and family. This coupled with my own consumption presented a problem, I would run out of home brew long before I had a chance to brew more. This may not be an issue for you, if your current batch size is sufficient to your needs, great! (Disclaimer: If you are experiencing problems with your brewing or your sanitation procedures, address those issues before considering scaling up your equipment.)

As I see it, there are three ways to resolve this problem.

- A. Brew more often.
- B. Brew larger batches.
- C. Drink less.

Ok, let's dispense with option C right now, it's really not much of an alternative anyway. Option A provides a choice for some, but requires a proportional increase in time and effort in brewing as well as cleaning, sanitizing and the myriad of other tasks involved. I found that as much as I wanted to brew more, it was not always possible due to other demands on my time. Another option available under A is to setup two or more separate mashes or extract boils simultaneously in order to achieve the required volume, followed by multiple boils in the case of all grain. This is very labor and time intensive and would, perhaps, require additional equipment. The process of elimination leaves us with option B.

Brew larger batches (AKA Increasing your brew length)

Brew length is the term for the final volume of beer. In my opinion, increasing the brew length is of greater benefit to the all grain brewer due to the extended process time necessary in the all grain method. This does not mean that extract brewers do not realize a benefit from brewing larger batches. Indeed, the shorter brew time associated with the extract brewing processes allows the brewer to choose and experiment with several different ways to increase brew length.

Ok, first we need to make a few decisions here.

Build Vs. buy

There are complete commercial systems available if you want to part with \$800.00 to \$1800.00. You may be thinking "I don't want to spend a small fortune on brewing equipment when what I use now works fine" I could not agree more. When I was in the planning stages of building my home brewery I was inspired by an article I read in a 1997 issue of Brewing Techniques

magazine, written by Randy Mosher entitled "The Buckapound Brewery - The Frugal Brewer's Guide to an Advanced Home Brewery". The gist of the article is, if you take your time and keep your eyes open and do most of the work yourself you can assemble a great system for a fraction of the cost of most commercially available brewing systems.

Personally I get a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction brewing with equipment that I built myself.

Bigger brewing vessels

Let's concentrate on between 10 and 15 gallon batches. Let's face it, there are lots of good container options at this volume range and it's still manageable for one person to make a batch in a reasonable amount of time. I have seen much larger systems but they are not very practical when it comes to dedicated space and energy requirements. There are many vessels in this range well suited for use as hot liquor tanks, mash tuns or mash / lauter tuns. We can separate them into the two most popular approaches.

1. Insulated coolers

Coolers are light, durable and hold temperature extremely well. In most cases they already have some kind of spigot installed in them which makes them easier to convert for use as a brewing vessel. They are well suited for single infusion, step infusion (by the addition of boiling water) and decoction mashing schedules. The one shortfall that I can see is they can not be direct heated so they can only be used for a mash/lauter tun or as a hot liquor tank and not a boil kettle. The two types are as follows.

a. Cylindrical (Rubbermaid/Gott)

This is a very popular option as they come in a 10-gallon size and will hold around 25 pounds of grain. They can be fitted with several commercial lautering options including "Phil's Phalse Bottom" (Listermann Manufacturing Company) and the "EASYMASHER[®]" (Jack Schmidling Productions Inc.) as well as any configuration home made copper manifold. These coolers can be found in many retail outlets as well as online and generally cost between \$45.00 and \$55.00

b. Rectangular

Rectangular coolers are also a good choice and are generally far less expensive (\$12.00 to \$25.00), but copper manifolds seem to be the best option for a lautering due to the large bottom surface area of the cooler.

1. Metal containers

With metal vessels you have the advantage of heating the vessel directly so that they can be used as a kettle as well as mash/lauter tun and hot liquor tank. They work well with all mash schedules.

a. Stock pots

Stockpots of various sizes are available in both aluminum and stainless steel. Aluminum is a less expensive material although much more care must be taken when cleaning aluminum pots, as they are less durable and more prone to pitting. Stainless steel stockpots are extremely durable. Stockpots can be fitted with several lautering options including perforated metal false bottoms, the "EASYMASHER ®" (Jack Schmidling Productions Inc.) and copper manifolds. The major problem with pots of this type is they are very expensive. Usually a pot large enough to boil 10 gallons of wort will cost from \$80.00 to \$120.00 for aluminum and \$150.00 to \$200.00 for stainless steel

b. Converted kegs

In my opinion, legally obtained, used, stainless steel commercial brewery kegs are an excellent alternative. All steel, straight-sided kegs are the best choice. The most common sizes are 13.4 gallon (50 liters) and 15.5 gallon (US half barrel). Many home brew suppliers (Strange Brew 197 Main Street Marlboro Ma. 01752) and specialized "keg reconditioning companies" have a supply of quality kegs in various degrees of conversion, depending how much work you want to do yourself. If you don't feel comfortable converting a keg yourself, check around with the members of the local homebrew club (Hint, hint) you may just find a valuable resource. There are many stainless steel and copper false bottoms commercially available. Copper manifolds and the "EASYMASHER ®" (Jack Schmidling Productions Inc.) also work well in these kegs.

Heat source

Brewing larger batches means the kitchen stove may no longer be up to the task. Well, lets face it, not everybody loves the smells' brewing inevitably creates, so perhaps it's time to move the operation into the great outdoors. This is when it's nice to have a well ventilated, yet covered outdoor area to work in. For me this is my brewery / workshop. (My wife affectionately refers to it as the garage) My propane burner is one of my favorite pieces of brewing equipment **Warning: The use and or storage of propane and propane accessories indoors may result in serious personal injury and or death! Please read and understand all safety instructions included with any such equipment.**

Stir things up

The mash for a mid to high gravity 5 gallon batch of beer, can be stirred with an ordinary kitchen spoon. The same cannot be said for a 10 or 15 gallon batch. You will need something a bit more serious. Large stainless steel spoons and hard wood mash rakes are available. You can also fashion your own wooden mash paddle just make sure your use a "hardwood" like oak or ash. If you are a bit more adventurous, a mash mixer may be a nice accessory to have. This could be something as simple as a "savonious rotor" mixer (This is shaft-mounted rotor used by sheet rock installers to mix spackling compound.) driven with a hand-held drill, to much more elaborate configurations with electric gear motors and shaft mounted mixing propellers.

Fermenter space

Obviously if you are making more wort you need more fermenter space. You can buy more buckets or carboys and split up your wort (a great way to experiment with several yeast strains by the way) or look for larger fermenters. I use a 54-liter glass demijohn as my primary and it works nicely and was less expensive than two smaller carboys. The downside is it's very heavy when full. I also plan to look into using ½ barrel sanke kegs as a fermenter.

Support your brewery

Obviously there are some unique challenges associated here but necessity is the mother of invention. First you have increased the scale of your equipment so a simple **lifting of these containers when full is definitely not advisable especially when they are hot**. The thing to do is set up your system so that you can lift them onto a stable and sturdy support structure when they are cool and empty and fill and heat them in place. There are a number of ways to do this and it's going to be unique to each individual system so I will not go into particulars. Another thing to consider is to choose or design your system to fit your available space. You may want your system to be a quasi-permanent fixture in your home, others will want more portability.

Wrap up

I chose to make the upgrade to a 10-gallon system at the same time I made the jump to all grain brewing. (The first mash I did was a small 3-gallon batch on my old electric range just to get the basics down, but I did not set up a 5-gallon system.) I can make a 5-gallon batch in my 10-gallon system and I do periodically, when I want to experiment with a beer style or I'm brewing a very high gravity beer. More often than not I make 10-gallons at a time.

If you're interested in brewing larger batches, do some research and figure out what best suits your needs and your budget and make the jump.

Further reading:

<http://www.brewingtechniques.com/library/backissues/issue6.6/depiero.html>

The Buckapound Brewery - The Frugal Brewer's Guide to an Advanced Home Brewery
Story and pictures by Randy Mosher Republished from Brewing Techniques'
November/December 1997 issue.

<http://www.brewingtechniques.com/library/backissues/issue5.5/mosher.html>

A Three-Tiered Gravity-Flow Brewing System by Bob Caplan
Republished from Brewing Techniques' March/April 1994.

<http://www.brewingtechniques.com/library/backissues/issue2.2/caplan.html>

A compact 10-gallon home brewery on wheels by Vance Sabbe

<http://www.concentric.net/~vsabbe/portabrew.htm>

Information on RIMS with photos etc. by Dion Hollenbeck
<http://hbd.org/hollen/RIMSpics.html>

Feature Sites

Here are this issue's feature web sites! Everyone is encouraged to [reccomend](#) a site for future issues.

- <http://www.nerax.org/> to find out about the NERAX Real Ale Festival being held May 3-7 in Cambridge, MA.
- <http://www.brewinbeagle.com> for the real ale fan!
- <http://www.wyeastlab.com/> to see Wyeast's home page with various hints and ideas for improving your beers and probably more than you'd ever want to know about Wyeast!



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