
The WIZARDs' Homebrew News

Worcester Incorporated Zymurgists Advancing Real Draughts

March, 1997

Upcoming Meetings:

March 12 - 7:00 p.m. Phil's House, Grafton, MA

April 9 - 7:00 p.m. T.B.D.

Calendar of Events:

March 22 - 1:00 p.m. Tour Wachusett Brewing Co., Westminster, MA

April 26 - 12:00 noon Boston Brewpub Crawl

For more information: Call Phil at (508) 839-2320, send e-mail to WizBrew@aol.com, or check out our website at <http://www.home-brew.com/wizards> (ed. note - original text changed to current web site address).

News:

Temporary Meeting Location

Our meeting location has been moved to Phil's house in Grafton while we look for a new site. If you need directions to the meeting, call the information number above or send an e-mail. At our February meeting we identified a number of potential meeting sites. Our first choice is to stay with Main Street if it reopens soon (see article below). If it does not reopen within the next month, we will start to contact sites on our alternate list. Our goal is to stay in a central location, preferably in or near Worcester.

Main Street Brewing Company News

First the bad news. For those who aren't up to date on the old Main Street, the brewpub closed its doors on January 30. The brewpub had filed Chapter 11 last fall, and their attempts to reorganize the business and restructure the debt were unsuccessful. The brewpub was placed in Chapter 7 liquidation status by the bankruptcy court and closed down.

Now for the good news. A group of six investors has acquired an 89% interest in the property at 244 Main Street, has had the brewpub converted back to Chapter 11 reorganization status, and has proposed an aggressive plan to reopen by March 14. Rumor has it that grain has been ordered and that brewing has already commenced. The investors plan to reopen as an Irish brewpub

featuring Irish beer, food, and entertainment. The new owners also operate two South Boston Irish Pub/Restaurants and a hotel in Mullingar, West Meath County, Ireland. The plans at this time are to keep the Main Street name, and to distribute their beer in Worcester, Connecticut, and on Long Island. Apparently the Irish brewpub motif could be short lived as the bankruptcy judge is accepting alternate reorganization plans up to March 15. At least one alternate proposal is expected from Moon Penny LLC, who bought the mortgage note on the property from the Bank of Boston. More news is sure to follow . . .

McNeill's Brewery Trip

Our February outing was a big success. We met at O'Connor's in Worcester to carpool to Brattleboro, VT, to McNeill's brewery. McNeill's was the favorite of our club members last April at the Worcester Brewers' Festival, and this trip lived up to expectations. The high points of the trip were the Alt (a winner at the 1995 Great American Beer Festival), and a two year old Buck Snort barley wine. We also sampled the Firehouse Amber, Big Nose Blonde, Special Bitter, and Dead Horse I.P.A. McNeill's no longer gives scheduled tours, but we did spot one of the brewers hauling out spent grain and requested an impromptu tour of the brewhouse. The brewhouse, which is one rickety flight of wooden stairs below the bar, was amazingly simple and compact. A testament to quality ingredients and attention to detail being the key ingredients to a great beer! A very sparse menu of deli sandwiches at McNeill's prompted a tasting break for lunch at the Latchis Grille/Windham Brewery, one block away. While the food was good, the beer seemed to lack the body and flavor found at McNeill's. We sampled an I.P.A. and a Ruby Brown Ale, two of the four styles on tap. Our recommendation is to go and have lunch and wash it down with a beer, but do your serious tasting at McNeill's. By popular demand, another trip to McNeill's later this year is already in the planning stages.

Wachusett Brewing Company Tour

We will meet at the Wachusett Brewing Company in Westminister, MA for a tour at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday March 22. Wachusett is located at 175 State Road East in Westminister. Please call Wachusett at (508) 874-9965 if you need directions. Hope to see you there!

Boston Brewpub Crawl

Our Boston brewpub crawl is scheduled for April 26. Please come to our March meeting to help plan this event. Our crawl last July visited Mass Bay Brewing (Harpoon), Cambridge Brewing, Back Bay, and John Harvard's, and was a great time. Where would everyone like to go this time? Commonwealth seems to be one of the front runners -- come to the next meeting to get your favorite on the itinerary.

AHA Club Only Competition

We are competing in the 1997 American Homebrew Association club only competition. This competition consists of six individual competitions scheduled throughout the year. Each competition features a different beer style -- a schedule is provided below to help you plan your brewing. Each AHA club is limited to one entry per style. The month before each entry deadline on the meeting date listed below, club members will bring in their homebrew for a club tasting. A portion of the club meeting will be reserved for a short discussion of the subject beer style, and a blind tasting and judging. The winning brew will be sent to the AHA as our club entry. This project will give everyone a chance to learn about the various beer styles, get practice tasting and

critiquing beers, and will allow direct feedback from the club to those brewers who bring in an entry. The Hail to Ale and Luscious Lager contests are over, but there are four more to go, so get brewing! The remaining 1997 schedule is:

Bock is Best -- April 9 -- Bock
Extract Extravaganza -- July 9 -- Any Style Extract Beer (must be 75% extract)
Weiss is Nice -- September 10 -- German Wheat Beer
Bitter Mania -- November 12 -- English Bitter

The beer styles listed above are the official AHA style categories. A full listing will be provided at the next meeting, or look in the Winter 1996 Zymurgy.

Scores are back from the Hail to Ale contest. Our club entry was Phil's Jewel In The Crown I.P.A., which received a score of 28 on a 50 point scale, which rates the beer as good. The main comment was oxidation, which was consistent with the fact the beer was bottled in June 1996. Congratulations to Shekhar and Paula Nimkar of the Boston Wort Processors who took first place with their Amer-Ind Ale.

Homebrew Contest Schedule

For more information, call the contact person listed below, or come to the next meeting.

May 3 -- 1997 Green Mountain Homebrew Competition, Essex Junction, VT. Entries due April 18. Contact Dave Gannon at (802) 879-1304 or dgannon@zoo.uvm.edu.

May 17-18 -- AHA National Homebrew Competition, first round. Entries due April 28-May 9. Contact Caroline Duncker at (303) 447-0816 x116 or caroline@aob.org.

Hop Rhizomes

If you are interested in growing hops, this is the time of year to start planning. Many local homebrew supply shops are taking orders for hops rhizomes, the root portion of the plant used to propagate new plants. Any 4-6 inch piece of the root with a few bud nodules on it will get you started. Properly cared for, a few plants can take over your yard within a few years, so plan ahead. Hops need something to climb on, plenty of sun, plenty of water, and plenty of space. Several club members grow hops, so bring your questions to the next meeting. Varieties available at most homebrew supply stores may be limited. If you are looking for more a complete list, Freshops in Philomath, OR offers Cascade, Centennial, Chinook, Fuggles, Hallertauer, Kent Golding, Liberty, Mt. Hood, Northern Brewer, Nugget, Perle, Saaz, Tettanager, Willamette, and Ultra. Call (800) 460-6925 for more information, or check out their web site at <http://www.peak.org/~freshops>.

Features:

Tip Of The Month

The November/December 1996 issue of Brewing Techniques featured an interesting article on yeast starters. Two statements to preface this discussion are if you don't use liquid yeast you should consider this as one of the easiest ways to improve your beer, and if you use liquid yeast


you should use a starter solution to increase the number of yeast cells you are pitching into your wort. Using liquid yeast allows a wider selection of yeast strains which you can match to the beer style being brewed. Increasing the number of cells will reduce the lag time between pitching and active fermentation, reducing the chance that wild yeast strains may take hold during the lag time, introducing off flavors to your beer. Conventional instructions for making a starter solution are to boil 1/3 c. of dried malt extract in 1 pint of water (~1.020 specific gravity), cool to room temperature, pour into a 22 oz. bottle or 1/2 gallon growler, add the yeast, and seal with an airlock. In the case of a Wyeast package, break the inner seal the day before making the starter. Make the starter two days before you plan to pitch the yeast, and pay particular attention to sanitation during this process. The Brewing Techniques article offers two additional pointers which you may want to consider. To prevent a shock to the yeast when pitching, make the starter at the expected fermentation temperature, and bring the starter up to the same specific gravity as the wort you plan to ferment.

The first suggestion is easy enough to incorporate. Just make the starter solution under the same conditions you plan to ferment the beer. Of course this assumes that you pitch your yeast at the final fermentation temperature. Many brewers make a starter at room temperature, pitch the yeast into a room temperature wort, and then slowly decrease the fermentation temperature to the target temperature after active fermentation has begun. If you can cool the wort quickly to the final fermentation temperature, then it probably makes sense to do so, and to make the starter at this same temperature. However, if you can't cool the work quickly enough (my wort chiller cools quickly to about 75°F, but gets very inefficient below this temperature), it probably makes more sense to pitch a room temperature starter into a room temperature wort, and then continue cooling down to the final fermentation temperature.

The second suggestion seems to be more interesting since most brewers do use a 1.020 specific gravity starter and pitch it into a wort ranging anywhere from 1.040 to 1.075 or maybe even higher. After the yeast has settled out of suspension, pour off some of the liquid above the yeast, and add back a slightly higher gravity wort. Repeat this process 2-3 times over the two days prior to pitching, building up the gravity to wherever it needs to be to match the wort you brew. This sounds to me like a lot of extra work, so the big question is what do you get for this extra effort? If I try it, I'll let you know. If anyone else tries this out, please let us know.

Meeting Minutes - February:

The WIZARDS met on February 13 at Phil's House in Grafton. Five members attended. Discussion focused on potential meeting sites, and a list of potential sites was developed. Members agreed a central location such as Worcester is ideal, and that Main Street is still our first choice if it reopens soon. Plans for the upcoming trip to McNeill's in Brattleboro, VT were discussed. Several members indicated they would not be able to attend. However, it was decided that rather than postpone the trip, a second trip to McNeill's will be planned later this year. Impromptu discussions were held on hop gardening and yeast culturing while sampling was conducted of Russ' Porter, Dave's Scotch Ale and Country Ale, and Phil's Pilsener. Phil's Pilsener will be sent as the WIZARDS entry in the AHA Luscious Lager Club Only Competition.



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