

The WIZARDS Newsletter

January - March, 2000

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WIZARD's Upcoming Events

February Big Beer Night Sponsored in part by Strangebrew

This is one of the days we've been waiting for. The February meeting will be the follow-up day to our Big Beer Brewing Day held on October 2 at Rich Granger's house. Seven brewers made the trip to Rich's house so we should have up to seven new beers to try. I seem to recall a cherry stout, a barley wine (and accompanying small beer), three weizen doppelbocks and a few others.

The club would like to thank Rich and Suzanne for hosting this years fall event. The day went relatively incident free although Phil did complain about a bit of a stuck run-off. As a special treat, Phil brought some bitter which was served using Bill's hand-pump. The pump proved to be quite a popular toy and will undoubtedly reappear at future club functions. Our local beer writer Dean showed up with some Gueze from his recent trip to Belgium which was interesting but not especially tasty. After a hard day of brewing, our hosts treated us to a steak tip dinner which we washed down with the final beers of the night.

March Club Meeting - Start Thinking About Your Octoberfest!

In preparation for this year's Octoberfest celebration and tasting, Phil will give a talk on brewing Octoberfests. Hopefully we will be able to have more than one homebrewed Octoberfest for the fall tasting.

April Club Meeting Theme

By popular club vote, 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 are as follows:

- Use the recipe, same hop style, same malt, same yeast.
- Shoot for an OG of 1.054.
- Use Maris Otter Pale Malt.
- It is rumored that Brian may be out of 60L crystal. If this is the case, use one pound of 40L crystal instead.
- You can adjust for your efficiency but must leave the grain ratio intact.

- You can adjust hops using the AA% method, but the only hop adjustment allowed is that the weight of the boiling hops can be adjusted based on alpha content of the hops to get 10 HBU.
- The type of hops, and the weight of the other hop additions cannot be changed.

That's about it. Time to start brewing and, remember, plan to bring your finished products to the April meeting.

Upcoming Trips & Outings

The annual Febrewary trip McNeils has been scheduled for the last Saturday of the month. This is always a poorly attended but exceptional trip. Hopefully the year 2000 will bring renewed enthusiasm to our annual outings! Contact Phil for more details.

The annual Boston Pub Crawl will be held on Earth Day (note, this needs to be discussed - Earth Day is April 22, which is the day immediately before Easter and very close to Passover). Watch for more details in the next newsletter.

National Homebrew Day and Competition Sponsored by Strangebrew, Dejabrew and the Horseshoe Pub

On National Homebrew Day, which we think will be the first Saturday in May, the W.I.Z.A.R.D.s will host a day of brewing demonstrations at the Horseshoe Pub in Hudson, Ma. This will feature all-grain and extract brewing demonstrations put on by our club members. Watch for more details in the next newsletter.

Brian announced the competition the dates for the 2000 Strangebrew/Wizards/Dejabrew/Horseshoe Pub Homebrew Contest. Much like last year, the wining brew will put on tap at the Horseshoe Pub for the Club's National Homebrew Day promotion in May. Look to Brian at Strangebrew for more details. The entry deadline will be February 1; you may enter any AHA category; categories may (and most likely will) be collapsed at the discretion of the sponsor; entries should be dropped off at Strangebrew or Dejabrew. Additional details will be made available on Strangebrew's Website at <http://www.strangebrew.net/newstuf.htm>

WIZARD's Club Business

Chuck heads to Florida

Chuck finally made the big move and headed to his new winter home in Florida for the winter. The car was packed - one bag of clothes, one keg of beer and all his homebrewing supplies - and we saw him off after the December meeting. He tells us he's coming back sometime in the spring, so till then have a good one!

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.

I've started to update the [recipe library](#) with some new offerings. This month I've added Bill's Dark Mild and Phil's Barley Wine. Club members are 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.

Dues

It is now past the due date for June 1999 through May 2000 dues, however, the good news is I believe are members are paid up! Expect official membership cards any day now. Greg's design has been approved and we're now looking to laminate.

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 January 12, February 9 and March 8, all scheduled for the Vinotech Warehouse.

WIZARD's Recent Events

Phil versus the Big Guys - October Meeting

Phil triumphed at the club's annual Oktoberfest tasting for the second year in a row. This year's offerings included Phil's, Sam Adams, Harpoon, Paulaner, Hacker Pschor and Wachusett Oktoberfest beers. Each of the beers was included in a blind tasting by our eleven judges, who rated each one on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being highest). The resulting scores and tasting notes are summarized below:

Phil's	48
Hacker-Pschor	43
Paulaner	42
Sam Adam's	37
Harpoon	34
Wachusett	24

- The German samples had the most malt aroma and flavor, which some loved and some thought was out of balance.
- Phil's had the best head retention, had good malt aroma at first but it faded with time. It scored close to or equal to the German samples with those who loved the malt, and scored higher than the German samples with those who preferred the balance. So while not a unanimous selection, it did have the highest overall score.
- The Harpoon and the Sam Adam's were good beers, no one loved them, no one hated them.

- The Wachusett was lacking malt, and had a fruity taste as perhaps suggested by the name, Oktoberfest Style Ale.





Be sure to attend the March meeting for Phil's talk on brewing an Oktoberfest. This will be the time of year to start thinking about brewing our own for next year's tasting. Will someone be able to unseat Phil as king of the hill? will one of the commercial beers surprise us next year? or will Phil make it three in a row?

Porter Night - December Meeting

Our first porter night was held at the December meeting. Although the event was planned at the last minute, four brewers managed to make a porter. Unfortunately, Russ's wasn't ready in time, so we only had three for the tasting. We started with Greg's porter. Although tasty, it wasn't what he expected and a little off the style. Greg attributed this to the use of too much brown malt (8# brown, 11 # pale) in his recipe which he felt didn't convert and ferment out as desired. Damase's Jalapeno Porter hit the mark he was shooting for - nice and hot. His recipe called for adding two fresh Jalapenos to the last fifteen minutes of the boil and three more as a dry hop in the secondary. It didn't matter too much about the rest of the ingredients as the only thing you could taste was the pepper. Bill brought a porter which was brewed to a recipe for an 1850 London Porter. He was paid the ultimate compliment when Chuck declared "I like it."

Holiday Party

The club's first ever holiday party was held December 22 at the Horseshoe Pub in Hudson. Six members and some wives attended the inaugural event. What started as a few beers on a Monday night ended up closing the place. At Rich's suggestion, the club surveyed the available holiday/winter beers and bought a four beer sampler for all those in attendance. The sampled beers and their ratings are shown below:

Sierra Nevada Celebration Ale	
Tremont Winter Ale	
Nutfield Winter Ale	
Paper City Wee Heavy	

All agreed it was a fine way to start the holiday season and unanimously agreed this should become an annual event.

Club Samplings

Homebrew tastings over the last few months have included Phil's Oktoberfest, Maibock and Barleywine, Brian's Christmas beer (4/5), Bill's weizen beer (4/5), weizen doppelbock and pale ale and Greg's stout. Commercial tastings have included Post Road Pumpkin Ale (1.5/5) , Wachusett Black Shack Porter, Spaten Oktoberfest (4/5) and Thomas Hardy Ale (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."

The Other Stuff - Hints & Ideas

Quote of the Quarter

When America asked for Europe's tired and poor, we didn't mean their beer!

Jim Koch, quoted in the Samuel Adams Beer Calendar.

Brewing Better Beer Without Buying A Restaurant or, Improving Your Extract Beers Incrementally by Scott Tringali

Okay, so you've brewed five, maybe ten, maybe more, batches of decent extract homebrew. You follow the kit recipes to the letter, are squeaky clean, read Papazian, and steep your specialty grains just right before brewing. They taste good; in fact, you have one or two after work each day. But something still isn't just right-you aren't ready to stop buying your beloved Sierra Nevada Pale Ale or Guinness just yet. They just don't seem to be getting any better. You've reached the intermediate brewer's plateau. What do you do?

Well, you've heard of all-grain brewing. You might even know a couple of folks who do seemingly immensely complicated things for 10 hours straight on a Saturday. They talk about lowering the pH of their sparge to get a couple more points of efficiency and other such obscure things. Homebrewing is supposed to be fun, you don't want to become obsessed, buy a few tons of equipment or lose all of your free time.

The good news is you don't. The simplest changes make the biggest difference.

These are my personal experiences going from brewing "okay" beer, to beer that I truly enjoy drinking. My advice is to heed this advice in the order presented here, because they are listed in order of largest impact to lowest. You could adopt them all at once, but if you're like me, you don't want to change everything at once. Changing things one at a time is a great way to learn their effects on the finished product.

One last word of advice: taste and smell everything ingredient at all steps along the way. Taste and smell the hops, some grain, the yeast. Do it when dry, before boiling, before pitching, before secondary, before bottling, and various times after. Your subconscious mind will pick up on things that you don't notice, which helps build intuition and ultimately, better beer.

Get Wet or, Use Liquid Yeast

You might think that most of the flavor comes from adjusting the grains, and the yeast just makes the alcohol. One Packet Of Dry Ale Yeast, heck, it's even last on the list. Must not be

important. Wrong! It is responsible for more flavor than you think. It has a huge impact in the quality of your beer.

Take a raisin. Soak it in water for a while, and eat it. Now, eat a grape. Do they taste the same? I don't think so. Now, I'm not saying yeast are the same as grapes, but the drying process does disturb the flavor somewhat.

If you're an extract kit-brewer, you might not even know that liquid yeast exist. That's problem with following kit recipes to the letter: they only serve as an introduction to brewing. Liquid yeast simply produces cleaner flavors. Isn't that what you want?

In addition, you can get certain flavors appropriate for style. Ever think that the spicy, banana-clove flavor of a German wheat beer is due to the wheat? No. It's a special strain of yeast that produces those unique esters. Using liquid yeasts, like when you first tried specialty grains, can open a whole world of new flavors to your brewing palette.

Resist the urge to save \$3. Get the liquid yeast. Read the instructions, and make a starter. Try it, make up your own mind, but try it. If you're really concerned about price, you can reuse yeast from your fermenter, or easier, from the bottle.

Chill Out or, Keep Your Temperature Cool & Consistent

Since you are now convinced to use liquid yeast, you should know that yeast are best when they are consistent. Once you make the leap to liquid yeast, it's easier to realize the huge flavor difference between different strains. Now, different strains work best at different temperatures, but all work best at consistent ones. Learn what the best fermentation range is, and do everything possible to keep it there.

Your fermenter should have a plastic, flat thermometer attached to it. Now, you aren't likely to ever need to heat it, because you probably keep your place at 60-70F. During the winter, for ales, this is fine. Liquids change temperature much more slowly than air, so minor fluctuations won't hurt.

The problem you are likely to have is heat during the summer, when it could be 90° during the day, 65° at night. These wild swings can really pose problems in your beer. If you have the most expensive piece of homebrewing equipment—a basement—then you have an ideal place to keep your beer. If you need to cool it further, there are various tricks that will buy you a few degrees here and there before resorting to a fridge, but putting in the basement should get you in the right ballpark.

Scale (the Verb, not the Noun) or, Don't Measure Hops by Weight

One day, I decided to plug a few recipes into a brewing calculator, and got a nasty surprise—I was underhopping all my beers! The calculator measures the bitterness extracted from the hops and compares it against the normal range for that style. All my beers were way below the "minimum". Why? Well, the actual AA%, the prime contributor of bitterness, of the hops as

bought was way below what the recipe expects. Loosely speaking, if your recipe wants 1 oz of 10% AA hops, and you buy 1oz at 5%, you're putting in half the amount of bitterness. Once again, following the kits to the letter led me astray.

The solution is to scale it exactly: divide the expected versus AA%, then multiply the expected amount of hops by that factor:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{actual amount} &= (\text{expected AA\%} / \text{actual AA\%}) * \text{expected amount} \\ &= (10\% / 5\%) * 1 \text{ oz} \\ &= 2 * 1 \text{ oz} \\ &= 2.0 \text{ oz} \end{aligned}$$

This method isn't perfect, but it's close enough, and much better than nothing. Don't make a Pale Ale without it.

Faster, Bigger, Harder or, Boil Vigorously

Typical extract recipes call for a concentrated boil. That is, you boil a gallon or two of concentrated wort, and then mix with three or so gallons of cold water in the fermenter.

A better way is to boil the entire batch at once. In addition, try using whole (plug or leaf) hops instead of pellets, and boil vigorously-no wimpy little bubbles allowed. Don't be afraid of a boilover. (But still be vigilant!)

By doing this, you gain a few benefits. One, your hop utilization will be better, because hops bitter the beer better when it is less concentrated. Two, you are less likely to caramelize your wort because of the lower concentration of sugar. Three, the physical action of a strong boil plus the collision of the whole hops causes much more protein (hot-break and cold-break, or trub) to precipitate out of the wort. This gives you better flavor, clearer beer, and less sediment in the glass.

You might have trouble getting a large volume of liquid to a rolling boil on your stove. A lid can help, but don't cover it once it's boiling. The steam needs to escape to drive off undesired flavors, such as dimethyl-sulfide or DMS. Prop the lid up with a close pin. This allows the steam to escape and allows you enjoy a faster boil.

Now you've got a problem: a pot of boiling, unconcentrated wort, and nothing to cool it with. No, don't leave it to cool overnight! Instead, invest in an immersion chiller. This baby will usually take your wort down to pitchable temperature in about 15 minutes, all for \$30 or so. Even cheaper, buy some flexible copper tubing and build your own.

What? You say your pot isn't big enough to handle five gallons of a rockin' boil? Read on.

Size Doesn't Matter or, Try A Small All-Grain Batch

What? You've tried everything, and you're still not getting the flavor you're looking for? Maybe you want to go all-grain, but have nightmares about buying gargantuan industrial burners, pots and stirring implements. After all, it takes a lot of equipment to boil five gallons at once.

Relax: do a small batch first. 2 to 3 gallons is perfect: it's easier to handle, you'll be done quicker, and I bet you already have all the equipment you need. You can mash in a picnic cooler or in the oven, and sparge with a pasta strainer. You can boil the entire batch, and get it really rolling.

The great thing about this is it's just as easy as doing a partial-mash, except for you get the full flavor of all-grain. After a few all-grain batches, you'll know exactly what equipment you need for scaling up to five or ten gallon batches, and cease to be scared or bewildered by those guys who have what amounts to a small restaurant in their basement.

Hey, you just might never go back to extract.

Boston Wort Processors Boston Homebrew Competition

It is with great pleasure that [The Mighty Boston Wort Processors](#) announce the sixth annual Boston Homebrew Competition. This is always a good local competition which can use our support! Last year over 300 beers were judged in the best of show contest and the Wizards had one red ribbon awarded for their only entry. As has been the case since its founding, this year's contest again will be part of the New England Homebrewer of the Year series and, for the 3rd year in a row, serve as the northeast region Qualifying Event for the Masters Championship of Amateur Brewing ([MCAB](#)).

The competition will be held on Saturday February 19. The entry deadline is February 10 and Strangebrew is a local drop-off point. Additional details can be found on the club's web page at <http://www.wort.org/>.

Feature Sites

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

- <http://www.realbeer.com/hops> to see Glenn Tinseth's Hop Page and learn how to calculate Bitternewss Units (BU) for your beer!
- http://www.realbeer.com/hops/bcalc_js.html to use Glenn Tinseth's online BU calculator.
- <http://www.camra.org.uk> for the homepage of Great Britian's Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).



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