



# Somethings Brewn'

Home-Brewed News and Views

#2  2007

## When Brew Days Go Bad:

It was bound to happen. I've heard all of my brew buddies talk about it in the past but I really couldn't relate. Of course, I'm speaking of a bad brew day. I should have realized early on though that the deck was quickly stacking against me. All the ominous signs and portents were appearing, yet ignored beginning with the brew date itself. I had picked my birthday as a great day to take off work and brew up a batch. All was ready, grains crushed, yeast previously started and at the peak of activity and recipe honed to a very sharp edge. I had all the equipment laid out with nothing left to do but brew. I should have never answered the phone! Off to work which, of course, put off the brew for a couple of more days. What can a guy do but shrug it off, restart the yeast and wait for another session later on? Finally, again, brew day. Or brew day plus two depending on how you look at things. Again all was ready as before. Brew pot and ingredients all lined up like soldiers at attention. All that was left was to pull out the trusty old turkey fryer and get things boiling. I hooked up the propane tank and lit the fire. Turned to grab the pot and the flame went dead. Note to self...always keep a spare tank of propane! A quick trip to the local convenience mart yielded a fresh full tank of gas and only cut into the brew day by a few minutes. No real big deal. Hooking up the tank I failed to notice that on the western horizon dark clouds were beginning to build. The first part of the brew session went as normal. I mashed my grain, this was a partial-mash recipe so no big hill for a climber. I collected the runnings and filled the brew pot to an even six gallons. With the temps in the brew pot steadily starting to climb I switched my attention to measuring out the hop additions. I was using one ounce of leaf hops for the bittering so started to fill the bowl of my scale from a two ounce bag. Just then a gust of wind came up and blew the scale over scattering hops in all directions. Damn. I picked up the scale and bowl, went into the house, then measured the bittering hops in a no-wind zone. With all the hops measured and tucked away safely in their loose-knit hop bags I switched my attention back to the brew pot. The water came to boil in a reasonable time and, with flame extinguished, added the remainder of the extracts. relighting the flame I set back to wait on the boil. After a few minutes Mother Nature called so I made a mad dash into the house. As I made my way back to the pot I was just in time to see the first stages of a boil-over. I was quick to shut down the heat but not quick enough to keep the outside of the pot and a portion of the patio from becoming covered in sweet wort. Cursing my Tiny Bladder Syndrome I set back to the task at hand. No more minor catastrophes presented themselves through the rest of the brew. I moved the pot into the kitchen and began the chilling process. As I was picking up the mess outside I finally noticed the swirling mass of darkness nearly on top of me. Hey, Come on, it's Spring right? Rain happens. No worry. The wort cooled slowly but finally reached desired temps. I pitched the yeast at the same time the first rumbles of deep bass thunder vibrated against the house. Time to carry the pitched wort into my cool basement.

Halfway to the basement the wind dramatically picked up and the tornado sirens began to wail. Hey guys, at least I was already in the basement right? I set the carboy in place then raced upstairs. I did the first thing any normal mid-westerner would do in this situation and ran outside to watch the storm. I could hear the weatherman in the background instructing all to quickly head to the basement for their own safety! Mary and I naturally ignored him and watched the storm pass south of town, momentarily catching a quick glimpse of the funnel cloud. Needless to say, a very exciting ending to a worse than normal brew day. I'm keeping my fingers crossed this beer turns out!



**GALESBURG  
HOMEBREWERS  
ASSOCIATION**



**Macomb  
Worthogs**



**Burlington  
Makers  
of  
Beer**



**10% discount to local club members on any amount every day**

With Spring comes one of the area's biggest brew fests, and, one of the best forums for the local homebrew clubs to strut their stuff. May I present the Peoria International Beer Festival! This year the 'Fest was held on April 21st at the Exposition Gardens in Peoria, IL. There were five of the regional clubs participating this year all helping spread the ever glorious homebrew gospel to the unsuspecting masses. The 'Fest is always a blast for all involved and goes a long way pushing the Hobby of Homebrew. We hope to see as many of our friends as possible at this event next year so mark your calendar with a bold red pen for the third Saturday in April.

### **Galesburg Homebrewers Association:**

GHA meets the second Saturday of each month at 2:00 PM. Recently we have been holding our meetings upstairs of the Cornerstone Building (just above *Somethings Brewn*'). Our thanks go out to Connie Mylar for letting us use the space. Hope to see you next meeting.

### **Mississippi Unquenchable Grail Zymurgists:**

MUGZ meets on the last Sunday of every month. The gathering place is at *Bent River* in Moline at 2:00 PM. May 5th they will be doing a **Big Brew**, an American Homebrewers Association event, to celebrate the anniversary of the repeal of the Volstead Act (Prohibition). If you are interested in seeing vast varieties of homebrewing techniques then be sure to stop by *Bent River Brewing Company*. **Big Brew** should get underway around noon.

### **Homebrewers of Peoria:**

The big news was the HOPs bus trip to Chicago. All who attended had a great time by all accounts. The high point of the trip seemed to be the *Map Room*. I've been to this tavern in the past and can attest to it being one of the best beer bars ever. If you would like to find out more about HOPs then be sure to attend one of their meetings. HOPs meet every second Tuesday of the month at *Chef John's Wine Bar and Grill* in Dunlap. Meetings start around 6:30 PM.

### **Macomb Worthogs:**

The Worthogs have been fairly busy recently having a booth at the Beerfest, naturally stocked with great brews. A couple of long absent members have taken up the homebrewing cause again filling out the ranks at recent club meetings. If interested in attending a Worthog meeting they gather in the back of Sullivan Taylor's Coffee House on the Square. Show up any fourth Saturday of the month around 3 PM to find them there.

### **Burlington Makers of Beer:**

Our newest regional club the MOB have been very active for a bunch of upstarts! Besides participating at the Beerfest they have taken a couple of beer related trips and are planning their first Beer Barbeque to celebrate Prohibition's repeal. If you would like to join the fun MOB meets the first Saturday of each month at the Lost Duck in Fort Madison at 4:00 PM.

***I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The point is to bring them the real facts, and beer***

**Abraham Lincoln**

## Corn in Your Brew:



Let's face it. If you are reading this newsletter then chances are good you are a Midwesterner. And, although we Midwesterners are a diverse sort of people, we all have one thing in common. On any given summer day during any of our travels as we gaze out the car window we see corn. Everywhere. As far as the eye can see. Forest Green waves of grain. It has become such a large amount of our landscape we barely notice it. And, as brewers, We also probably aren't seeing the potential of all the green and yellow surrounding us. I mean, come on, even the most novice of brewers know that corn has been fermented for almost as long as Man has known about fermentables. And also, as Midwesterners, we know that corn is cheap, especially compared with that other great fermentable grain, barley. Our forefathers discovered this fact quite quickly and used corn in some of their earliest attempts at beer making. It is no wonder that the Big Beer Makers in this country consider the use of corn as an inexpensive way to get beer to the masses at the lowest possible cost. Most use corn quite liberally. OK, so it is a given, corn is a widely used adjunct in the creation of commercial beers. But, as homebrewers, we tend to frown on the use of any type of non-barley adjunct. When we reach for the corn our brew brain screams give me barley or give me death. You know what I mean, damn the torpedoes full brew ahead. We brew real beer not mass produced swill right? But maybe we should take a breath, step back, and take a look at what corn can do for our beer. OK, those in the front row please put your hands down. most of us brewers have at least a partial answer to that question. And the answer is...the use of corn in any fermented beverage will

lighten the body and increase the alcohol level. And, although this works great for any brown bagged 40 ounce bottle of Malt Liquor out there it can also be used to good effect in our small homebrewed batches. Plus, let us not overlook the more subtle qualities that corn can bring to our beer. Used in higher percentages corn brings a unique sweetness and flavor to a brew. Case in point consider a Cream Ale. Some of the best versions of this style such as Genesee and Little Kings have a very subtle yet distinct flavor of corn hidden behind their smooth creaminess. Corn isn't necessarily bad. And, with the flaked corn available at our local homebrew shops, it is relatively easy to obtain and use. A quick thirty minute steep in 150 degree water will add a subtle corn complexity to any style beer. For the full-grainers out there up to two pounds can be added to the mash with your base malts for a five gallon batch. And, if your still not convinced, don't even try to make a Common American Pilsner without a bit of corn in the recipe. So the next time you formulate a recipe and decide that you want a lighter bodied brew don't hesitate. Reach for the corn. Chances are you won't regret it.

## Which Yeast is Which?

The homebrew community lately had a lot to talk about as far as dry yeast strains go. Fermentis, the American division of the French Lasaffre Group released, to much fanfare, the Safale US-56 dry yeast. This yeast was the first dry duplication of the much used and adored Chico strain. This yeast strain is the same as Wyeast 1056 and Whitelabs WLP001 California. The Chico strain is famous for it's clean, fairly neutral flavors. It is probably the most commonly used yeast strain in America. Of course the release of a pure Chico raised the hackles of the big liquid yeast producers, especially Wyeast. Wyeast contends that by Fermentis calling their product US-56 it violates their right to the name of 1056. Although confusing it does make a somewhat distorted sense to me, and apparently to Fermentis as well. They temporarily pulled the US-56 packages and has now released it as Safale US-05. Same Chico strain, just a different package. So remember, US-56 is out and Safale US-05 is in. So much for confusion!



## **There's Something Wrong With My Wine** **Part Two:**

As promised from last issue let's carry on with a few more problems that might show up in your winemaking. The ultimate question one must ask is do I or don't I dump the batch. Most wine can be saved if caught early. Some, you just have to bid a fair adieu. Adios. Check it off as a lesson learned. One thing to always keep in mind. Good sanitation practices will alleviate nearly every fault listed from last issue, below, and any other faults that I can't think of right now. Cleanliness is truly right up there next to godliness, especially in the case of winemaking. Sulphites can only do so much after all!

### **Funny Smells:**

I'm sure we've all had this one. A couple of the first wines I did smelled like rotten eggs as they fermented. I was ready to pitch them down the toilet just to get them out of my house. After a couple of days of steady fermentation the smell went away. Those wines came out just fine. The offensive smells were from the fermentation process, that's all. Sure glad I didn't end up dumping them. That would have been a lot of good wine down the drain. Some odors though are more persistent. A sharp, almost soiled baby diaper smell usually indicates a severe contamination of some sort. If this smell ever occurs first, make sure it doesn't go away with additional fermentation. If the odor persists your wine just moved to the top of the heap as a candidate for dumping.

### **Wine Ropes:**

Have you ever been to a Chinese restaurant and taken a look at the egg drop soup? The stringy white floating particles in the soup is about the best description I can give to what this wine ailment looks like. The string-like particles are nothing more than colonies of harmless lactic bacteria floating around in your wine. Of course, nobody really wants to see them stringing along in a newly bottled Chardonnay or hanging around in your best clear bottled Chianti. These ropes can be eliminated from the wine, more often than not, by adding a couple of Campden tablets and gently stirring the wine. Filtering will usually also strain these offensive looking colonies from your prized wine.

### **Flowers of Wine:**

I can't say I've ever seen this one. I can't really find much info on any internet searches either. I give you what I have and hope it never shows up in any of your wines. Basically, they are small floating colonies of yeast that resemble a sprinkling of white flowers on the top of your fermenting wine. These are not the kinds of yeast we want in the wine. The small flower-like colonies indicate more of their kind running rampant, and causing all sorts of nasty off-flavors, in the wine. A couple of the sources suggest that a good dose of sulphites and filtering can clear away this rare wine-related problem but, my guess anyway, is kiss that batch goodbye.

**Good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used**

**William Shakespeare from "Othello"**

For a five gallon batch.

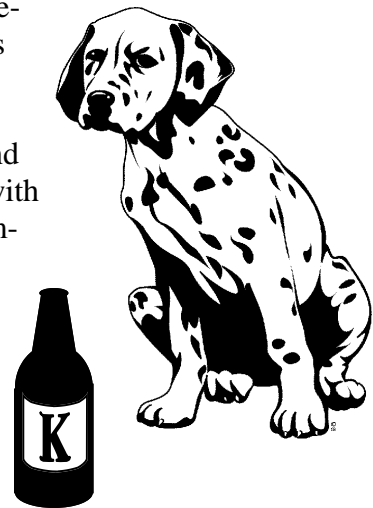
4#	Alexander's Pale Malt Extract
1#	Muntons Extra Light DME
1#	Flaked Corn
1#	Vienna Malt
.75#	Munich Malt
.25#	10L Crystal
.75 oz	Liberty Hop Pellets, 60m
1 oz	Liberty Hop Pellets, 5m
1 Tbsp	Irish Moss
1 Tube	Whitelabs WLP008 East Coast Ale yeast
.75 Cups	Priming Sugar

## Simple Cream Ale Recipe:

Mash grains and corn between 150 and 160 degrees F. for thirty minutes in two gallons of water. Drain into brew pot and sparge grains with one gallon of 170 degree F. water. Add water up to the five and a half gallon mark then bring to boil. Remove pot from heat and add your extracts. Bring back to boil then add boiling hops. Boil for forty-five minutes then add Irish Moss. Boil for ten more minutes then add aroma hops. After boil has reached sixty minutes take pot from heat. Cool to below seventy degrees F. then pitch yeast. Ferment for a week then transfer to secondary. Transfer for a week then bottle or keg. This beer will improve with cold-conditioning.

## Leave it to the Dutch!

Has anybody ever heard of Kwispelbier? I'm not sure you would want to down a bottle of this one on a hot afternoon. A small brewery in the Netherlands has begun to produce a beer designed especially for dogs. It is a non-alcoholic brew made from meat extracts and barley. The owner of a pet shop in the Netherlands, Ms Gerrie Berendsen, commissioned a small brewery to come up with a beer that only man's best friend could appreciate. Although safe for human consumption the cost of Kwispelbier is somewhat prohibitive. A bottle of this tail wagging concoction costs four times the amount of a bottle of Heineken. That pet would have to be some best friend! Ms Berendsen said that after a good day of hunting in Austria she always enjoyed sitting on her porch and sipping a beer or two. As she always takes her dogs on the hunt with her she figured that they had earned a little liquid enjoyment themselves. She commissioned the small brewery of Schelde to produce the pooch potion. The beer is appropriately named. Kwispel stands for 'wagging a tail' in Dutch. I guess this shows us all that some beer, truly has, gone to the dogs.



***I love everything that is old:  
old friends, old times, old manners, old books  
and old wines.***

Oliver Goldsmith

# Some things



# Brewn'

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Good riddance to Old Man Winter! Man, it was a cold one. Now we can all let our thoughts turn to Spring. And, of course, what better way to welcome the season then by raising a glass! May the soft winds of Spring shake the cold from your bones and the warming sun thaw your face into a smile. Fare thee well cruel Winter the season of youth is upon us!