

The Beginners Brewpot

by Richard Grzelak

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The Seasons Of Beer

One of the truly great things about beer is the vast variety of styles that are available. For competition purposes, almost thirty styles have been identified, however, there are so many variations within those categories, that finding the perfect beer is much like questing after the holy grail. Pity upon the poor souls who have tried nothing but American Style Lager.

Fortunately, because beer has been so essential to the growth of civilization, traditions have developed as to what styles are appropriate at different times of the year. While by no means complete, this month we will discuss the major styles associated with the various seasons. Keep in mind that although the beers discussed below are thought to be appropriate for a given season, this does not mean that they can not be enjoyed at other times of the year.

In Spring, Bock beers are traditionally brought to market by the brewer. Ranging in color from golden to nearly black, these beers tend to be Malty, sweet, and hoppy, but not bitter. Bock beers have been available for export at least 700 years according to records found in a warehouse in Hamburg.

The style is thought to have originated in the German town of Einbeck, and the name is itself a corruption of the town's name. Over the years many variations within the style have developed, and there are now four identified subcategories: Pale, Dark, Doppel, and Wheat. Doppelbocks are generally available year round, but are best in early spring because of their high gravity and innate, almost cloying sweetness. In general, the German versions of the style tend to be much more hearty than those produced in the United States.

In summer, cooler and lighter beers are favored, particularly wheat beers and pilseners. Summer too, is a time to enjoy fruit beers, such as Lambics. These beers are most refreshing when served at cool temperatures even though Lambics and wheat beers are top fermented.

Berliner Weisse, sometimes called the champagne of the north differs from other wheat beers in that it is produced with a bacteria, *Lactobacillus deibrukil*, making it slightly tart. Although quite pleasant by itself, it often flavored with raspberry syrup, or extract of woodruff. Berliner Weisse is characterized by a high degree of carbonation, pale color, and fruity tartness. Fairly low in alcohol, it is one of the most quenching styles of beer. These beers have a low hop rate, having only about five units of bitterness.

The other wheat beers do not have the lacto bacteria present,

and range in style from pale to doppelbock. The wheat contributes a spicy, clove-like presence. The beer is further divided into two main groups, with or without yeast (crystal or mit hefe). Those with yeast are becoming increasingly popular. Weisse Beer is most often served in a tall vase-like glass, usually with a twist of lemon.

Lambics and Belgian White Beers are very special variations of the wheat beer style. In addition to the wheat, fruit, usually cherries, raspberries, or peaches are added to the wort, making the final product wine-like. Belgian white beers differ from their German cousins in that the wheat used in the beer is unmalted. The result is a beer that is bright, sweet, and almost opaque.

Summer too, is a time to enjoy American Lagers. These beers tend to be light and crisp, and are particularly satisfying after a hard days work.

In late August, and throughout the fall, heavier beers once again become increasingly in vogue. This is the time of year when Octoberfest and Marzen beers are brought to market. These beers, typically sweet and malt, are variations on the style originally produced in Vienna. They tend to be heavy bodied, amber in color, and the taste of caramel is obviously present.

Octoberfest beers were originally produced in celebration of the marriage of the crown prince of Bavaria in 1610. The people of Munich, knowing a good thing when they saw it, soon converted that celebration into an annual sixteen day beer festival. Marzen beer, beer that was originally brewed in late spring, and aged over the summer, is the base on which Octoberfest beers are modeled. As such, although these beers are fairly strong and hearty, they tend to be weaker variations of their Viennese archetype.

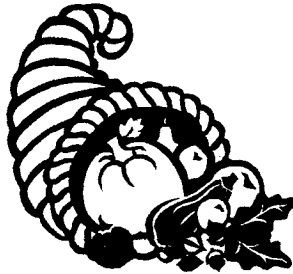
In recent years, many microbrewers often use late fall to bring out specialty beers, such as those based upon pumpkins or cherries. Again, as a chill comes into the air, heavier, high gravity beers are favored. In late fall, scotch ales are appropriate.

Whereas Spring and Fall beers tend to be lagers, top fermenting beers dominate the winter and Summer beers. In early December, the holiday ales start to appear. These beers tend to be of high gravity, and are often spiced. Old Ales, Barley wines, and Imperial Stouts all make excellent winter beers.

Barley wines are distinguished from old ales in that they are the stronger of the two styles. They may vary considerably within the style, ranging from light to dark, and from vinous, sweet, and estery to dry, hoppy, and bitter.

Old ales, on the other hand tend to be on the Malty side. Many of the old ales are quite idiosyncratic, and have very little in common with each other. As with barley wines, they tend to age well, however, they tend not to be as potent as are barley wines.

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President	Dean Halonen	Email: woodill@execpc.com
Vice President	Matt Kuspa	3248 E. Waterford
Treasurer	Mark Goerke	529-0207
Editor	Rich Grzelak	Email: rgrzelak@execpc.com

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Brewpot Continued

Imperial Stout, originally developed for export to Czarist Russia, is a strong, black beer, that often has a slightly vinous character. There is nothing subtle about these beers, and they will overpower almost any food. These beers work best served after dinner, and make a good substitute for espresso.

Christmas ales are often spiced variations of the standard beer produced by the brewery on a year round basis. In many cases, the recipe for the holiday beer is changed from year to year allowing for the brewmaster to display creative examples of the art. This is what makes the holiday beers so special. All winter beers make excellent nightcaps, and are best enjoyed on cold, blustery days.

Many other styles could be categorized as seasonal, but those described above are traditionally ascribed to the various seasons. Please keep in mind that heavier, malty beers are best in the cooler months, and lighter, dryer beers are most enjoyable in the warmer months.



Officer Nominations To Be Taken

In addition to a tour of the RWS Brewery, the November meeting of the Beer Barons will include nominations to fill the officers positions for next year.

The term of each position is from January to December, and each position has the following duties:

President: Conducts the monthly meeting and oversees special events such as the annual picnic or the Christmas party..

Vice-President: Obtains speakers, coordinates special events, and fills in for the president in the event that position needs to be filled.

Treasurer: Maintains membership lists, and manages the money.

Newsletter Editor: Prepares the newsletter

An officer is limited to two consecutive one-year terms, and upon expiration of his or her term, serves as an advisor to the new officers.

Generally speaking, the duties of each position take no more than about five hours a month, and most take substantially less.

Miller To Try Plastic Bottles

First, it was the wooden cask, and much later the church-key type can opener. Now it appears that the glass bottle may become a thing of the past if tests being conducted by Miller Brewing of consumer acceptance of plastic bottles prove successful.

The bottles are stronger and lighter than glass, stay cold for just about as long, and have the same shelf life. They do not appear to affect the taste of the beer, although many beer drinkers may have some problems with the aesthetics of using plastic rather than glass.

Basic Barley Wine

Ingredients (for 5 Gallons):

10-12 Pounds	dry pale malt extract
1/2 pound	honey
1 Pound	Crystal Malt (optional)
1 pound dry	light malt extract
1-1/2 pounds	corn sugar (optional)
2 ounces	Chinook boiling hops (12.2 alpha)
2 ounces	Cascade boiling hops (5.5 alpha)
2 teaspoon	Irish moss (Optional)
2 ounces	Fuggles hops (finish)
Champagne yeast	

Procedure:

- 1.) Boil malt, boiling hops, and corn sugar in 1-1/2 gallons water for about 1 hour.
- 2.) Add Irish Moss during last thirty minutes of boil
- 3.) During last 5 minutes of boil, add about 1/2 of the aromatic hops.
- 4.) Upon completion of boil, add remaining 3 1/2 gallons of cold, filtered water to fermenter.
- 5.) Pitch prepared yeast solution, then add remaining aromatic hops to wort.
- 6.) After completion of primary fermentation, move beer to secondary, and age about six months.

Note: This beer is based on a recipe that I found on the Internet some-time ago.

Although I am generally not in favor of using corn sugar in a recipe, this recipe will produce a beer sufficiently high in gravity to allow for the inherent wineyness that the corn sugar can add. If you wish to avoid this, use malt only.

If you prefer a traditional British style Barley wine, such as **Old Nick**, consider using an ale yeast in addition to the champagne yeast, preferably, one which will produce some esters. On the other hand, if you prefer an American style Barley wine, such as **Old Foghorn**, or **Sierra Nevada**, you may want to consider eliminating the Fuggles, and using Cascade hops.

This beer, although drinkable in about three months, will steadily improve for about a year, and should be ready for consumption in time for the holidays next year.

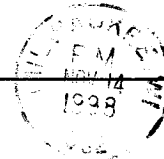
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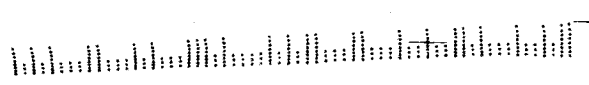
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Beer Barons of Milwaukee
P.O. Box 27012
Milwaukee, WI 53217



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