

February
1999

BARON MIND

A Monthly
Publication of
the Beer Barons
of Milwaukee
Dedicated to
the Education
and Enjoyment
of Fermented
Malt Beverages

From the Presidents Desk...

Hi, fellow Beer Barons;

Hope all of you are having as nice a month as I am. I just returned from Las Vegas from a Business Trip. I wished if only to gamble and drink a few micro brews, but it wasn't a vacation. So you play by different rules.

With all of the adult pleasures on my mind, I thought of our club and how we as club members can bring in new members with very little effort. It's advertising !

Maybe a casino sign, or a dog on a beer wagon pulled by horses. Maybe you're one of the people who likes a frog pitching your brew. Or a Great Dane dancing with you. Forget about the last one, we all know someone like that one time or another. It's advertising !

Recently I was invited to a fund raiser Party in which club members brought brew and wine from home as one of the functions of this club. I brought homebrew. I had no label on my brew, but put it side by side with two East Side Micro Brews. I watched from a distance

for adventurous drinkers. Very few consumers tried the unlabeled brew. So about two hours after the party started, I coaxed a few members into trying the unlabeled brew. To my surprise, I left with only a quarter of my homebrew for the trip home. I guess a mistake on my part, but that's the price we pay to convert people into trying something new.

It's our duty as Beer consumers to open the eyes of non-believers to try a Beer or Ale other than that of a Macro style.

So in closing, keep brewing and enjoying the finer things in life.

Esprit De Boire
Be With You

Larry Tischer



Upcoming Events



Meetings

February 24th: Stouts; Yeast Culturing

March 24th: Bocks

April 28th: To be Determined

Tastings & Competitions

March 6th, The Drunk Monk Challenge Homebrew Competition, Downers Grove, IL (630)393-7303 (entries due 2/28)

March 14th, Cream City Beer Show, Serb Hall, Milwaukee

March 21st, Blessing of the Bock, Clarion Hotel Conference Center, 5311 S. Howell, Milwaukee 12:00 – 4:30 \$30

February Meeting

The February monthly meeting will be held at Clifford's, 10448 W. Forest Home Ave., Hales Corners, at 7:30 PM on February 24th. As usual, a \$5.00 meeting fee will be assessed. The speaker will be Dean Halonen, past president, discussing Yeast Culturing for Homebrewing. The featured beer style will be Stouts.

Membership Information:

The **Beer Baron's of Milwaukee** is open to anyone 21 years of age or older. Annual dues, which cover the cost of producing this newsletter, are \$10.00. In addition, we normally charge a \$5.00 fee for each meeting attended to cover the cost of the beer we taste that evening, however, additional fees may be required to cover the costs of special events. Dues may be paid at the monthly meeting, or a check may be sent to:

**Treasurer, Milwaukee Beer Barons,
P.O. Box 27012,
Milwaukee, WI 53217.**

This newsletter will be sent free to prospective members for 3 months. The date that appears on the address label of your newsletter is the date that your membership expires. We do not send reminders, so be sure to check the date on the label to see when its time to renew.

Accurate Measurements

By Dan Schlosser

A key element in the brewing process is taking measurements along the way. This can be as simple as just checking that the wort is cool enough to pitch the yeast, to as complex as recording every parameter of every batch that you make.

Good beer can be produced using very simple measuring techniques, but if you are trying to brew to a specific style, or if you are trying to brew a repeat of something that you really liked, then taking accurate readings of temperature, specific gravity, weight, and volume should be a regular part of your procedures.

Taking measurements is usually easy, but you need to be aware of the potential for problems. This was recently brought to my attention when I was trying to figure out why my most recent batches were not fermenting to the degree that I expected. It turns out that my thermometer was off by 4 to 5 degrees. I was mashing grains at a higher temp than I expected, which results in a higher percentage of sugars that do not readily ferment.

Another club member told me recently that he had discovered that his hydrometer was off a bit, leading to problems in hitting brewing targets.

One of the easiest ways to get an idea of the accuracy of your measuring tools is to simply compare readings from 2 instruments. If you have two thermometers and they give different readings, then you know that at least one of them has a problem. It is recommended that you check

readings from at least 2 points on the scale, one high and one low.

If your thermometer scale reads high enough, you can always check one data point by sticking it in boiling water.

One technique that I learned in photography class is to have one relatively expensive, highly accurate thermometer that is only used to check the calibration of your "everyday" thermometer.

It is easy to check a hydrometer for SG=1.000; just put it in water at the temperature specified in the data sheet that came with it (usually 60° or 70°). Clean water should give a reading of 1.000. However, passing this test that does not mean that you will get good readings at higher gravities. You should test at another point.

It is possible to create a solution of known gravity using water saturated with table salt. I ran across a description of how to do this at a site on the internet. I will bring copies of a print-out of the procedure to the February meeting if anyone is interested in the method.

Checking your scale can be done by weighing something of a known weight. Volume can be checked the same way, by comparing your containers to ones that you know to be accurate.

If there is enough interest, perhaps at a future meeting we could hold a "calibration clinic" where members could see if their measuring devices are accurate.

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No Sparge All-Grain

By Dan Schlosser

Sparging is often a less than exciting part of All-Grain brewing. The July/August 1998 issue of Brewing Techniques contained an article by Louis K. Bonham touting the benefits of all grain brewing without sparging the mash. It was suggested that skipping the sparge would result in a better tasting beer taking less time to brew, at the expense of having to use more grain.

I decided to give this technique a try.

For those who have never done an all-grain brew, sparging can simply be described as rinsing sugars from the mashed grains. Mashing is done by mixing water and grain and holding the mix at specific temperatures to convert the proteins and starches in the grain into various types of sugar. Once that conversion is complete, the sugars need to be drained from the mash and collected to form the wort.

Simply draining the liquid from the mash will not collect all of the sugars that have been converted. While draining these "first runnings" will result in the collection of a large percentage of the sugar, there will be some left behind. To get the maximum quantity of sugars, a slow rinse (the sparge) is performed. Water at approximately 170° is sprinkled onto the water at the top of the grain bed as the wort is slowly drained.

For a large scale brewer, extracting the maximum amount of sugar from the grain is a matter of economics. Commercial breweries cannot afford to leave much behind. However, for a small scale homebrewer the cost may not be as much of an issue; the time saved by skipping the sparge may be more important.

The idea of saving time while still doing an all-grain batch appealed to me, so I came up with a recipe for a simple ale to see if this method would work for me.

My first thought was to do a side by side brew, comparing a "no sparge" batch to one using my normal procedure. In the end, I decided to simply assume that the flavor benefits listed in the Brewing Techniques article were true, the most critical in my view being "a more intense, higher quality malt flavor". My main area of interest was to see how much more grain is required if the sparge is skipped.

I performed a 2 step infusion mash; this method resulted in a fair amount of liquid in the mash by the time I got to the mash-out point. Once the mash was done, I re-circulated until the wort was clean, and then I simply drained the lauter tun until the liquid stopped flowing. I then added water as

needed to the brewpot to get to my boil volume.

I have brewed 2 batches using this method. I found that I needed to increase my grain bill by about 28% to get the same Original Gravity without sparging all of the sugars out of the grain.

This increase in grain amounted to a couple of pounds of base malt in an ale of SG=1.043, a cost of about \$2.00. Skipping the sparge saved about an hour from the brewing process.

The first batch that I brewed was a simple ale meant to be an "every day drinker". This turned out OK, no problems related to the lack of sparge. The second batch was an Alt that just finished lagering. I just had my first glass of this the other day, and the malt comes through strong.

If anyone is interested in giving this method a try, I would recommend reading the cited article for a more complete explanation of the benefits. If you do try it, let us know how it works out.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This is my 2nd issue of Baron Mind. My intent is to put together a Newsletter each month that is both informative and interesting.

This is your club and your newsletter. If any of you have any ideas for stories, or would like to contribute something, please contact me (see phone number and e-mail address at the bottom of Page 2).

Any and all suggestions will be well received.

Seasonal Beers

The Winter seasonal brews are just about gone, and a good variety of Bocks are starting to show up in some places.

Many of the Winter Beers are of high gravity and will store well. Keep that in mind if you see any at close-out prices.



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