



# BARON MIND

The Monthly Publication of the Beer Barons of Milwaukee

NOVEMBER 2007 [www.beerbarons.org](http://www.beerbarons.org)

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

My time as president of our great club is winding down.

It is soon coming time for someone else to step up to take on this task. It is certainly nothing to be feared. If you are interested, I'd be happy to share my experiences with you. Our club has grown larger in the past few years, and there are many challenges ahead of us. I know there are many great people in this club that have made this growth possible. Now we need great people to manage this growth. It is rewarding to see the progress we have made with the World of Beer Festival, and it is also rewarding to see so many members at our meetings and functions. I have said this many times before, but it still rings true. Our club is only as great as the efforts of our members. Take the time to serve as an officer. Volunteer to help out with club functions.

Stay active, and this great club will only grow better.

**Auf Wiedersehen, Jason**

## BELGIAN BEER NIGHT

At the Beechwood trade show in October, VP Mike Rice began conversations with Ron Extract, of Shelton Brothers, importers of Belgian and Belgian-style beers, regarding our Belgian Beer Night. After conversations with Ron, and discussions with Specialty Beverage GM Dave Cartwright, it was agreed to bring in some Belgian & Belgian-style ales for the November meeting. Featured beers are (tentatively) **Noel des Geants**, Brasserie des Géants (Belgium); **Thiriez Extra**, Thiriez Brewery (France); **Jolly Pumpkin Bam Noire**, Jolly Pumpkin Artisan Ales, Dexter, Michigan (USA); **Barriquée**, Panil Birra Artigianale, Torrecchiara-Parma, (Italy); **De Ranke Pere Noel**, Brouwerij De Ranke, Dottignies/Dottenijs, (Belgium); **De La Senne X-mas Zinnebir** (St. Pieters brewery under contract for the De la Senne brewery, Belgium), and **Kerkom Winterkoninske**, Brouwerij Kerkom (Belgium). Tease info on these beers are located within this newsletter. Ron will be joining us Wednesday night, talking more about the beer selections as we savor these rare beers.

## ELECTIONS

At our November meeting, we will nominate officers for 2008. Jason Kloss has reached his term limit as President. Phil Rosanski has reached his term limit as Member at Large. All other officers can be nominated again. Any other club members whose dues are currently paid up can be nominated for any office. We will allow for last minute nominations at the December meeting as well. If you are interested in serving the club as an officer, speak up. The election will take place at the December meeting. All club members whose dues are paid, are eligible to vote for officers.



## TREASURER'S REPORT

<b>BEGINNING BALANCE</b> OCT 1, 2007	\$3446.16
<b>DEPOSITS:</b>	
- MEETING AND DUES	\$615.00
- MADISON BUS TRIP DEPOSITS	\$200.00
<b>TOTAL DEPOSITS</b>	<b>\$815.00</b>
<b>WITHDRAWALS:</b>	
- HOUSE OF HAMBURG OFFICERS MEETING	\$55.00
- J.KLOSS - SAM'S CLUB (PICNIC)	\$89.53
- LASER CUTTING PADDLE	\$47.52
- USPO (Newsletter)	\$102.50
- OFFICE DEPOT- (Mail Seals - Newsletter)	\$6.96
- DISCOUNT LIQUOR (Oktoberfest beer)	\$348.29
<b>TOTAL WITHDRAWALS</b>	<b>\$649.80</b>
<b>ENDING BALANCE</b> OCT 31, 2007	<b>\$3,611.36</b>

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## BEER BARONS CONSTITUTION CHANGE PROPOSALS

It is clear that we are no longer the loose association of beer lovers and home-brewers that decided to get together once a month to sample our favorite beverage; we are now a mature club, with a growing list of activities that reflect that maturity. Based upon conversations with several of our members, we believe that now is the time to re-examine our constitution and structure so that we may avert future problems. Several years ago, the club found itself in a similar situation, and we revised our constitution accordingly.

With that in mind, and knowing that no one person has all the answers, we offer the following ideas, some have been brought up in the past, and some of which were developed in conversation with other members, as a starting point for discussion:

1.) Because we are now more than just a simple home-brew club, but are actively promoting the hobby to the general community, we should consider contacting an attorney to establish a legal non-profit identity, making the club legal through registration with the IRS and whatever other steps are required. The primary concern here, of course, is one of liability, but, because of the increasingly larger amounts of money in our bank accounts, there are other considerations as well.

2) We should consider a structural change to reflect the way we have always operated. We suggest that our board of directors, consisting of the president, the former president, the vice-president, the treasurer, the newsletter editor, and two at-large members, remain essentially the same, and its relationship to the club be altered only slightly. It will continue to be responsible for planning the general meeting and overseeing any special projects approved by the general membership, but will also be answerable to the general membership. Functionally, the board of directors will act as sort of an executive committee, responsible for setting the direction of the club, as well as supervising its normal operations. The club may, at its discretion, instruct the Board of Directors to develop, vet, or implement that idea. The Board of directors must give status reports as directed by the general membership. The general membership, acting as a committee of the whole, would have final approval of all non-routine operational expenditures, as well as any special projects or commitments of any type. The Board of Directors meeting is the preferred venue for idea development but, any member may, at the general meeting, bring up new ideas for the club to consider. Further, in the interests of transparency, the Board of directors meeting should be held in a public place, and that notice of meeting place and time be listed in the newsletter published prior to that meeting. Because this is an official meeting, the board may, at its discretion spend up to \$50.00 to cover the costs of any refreshments incidental to that meeting.

3.) In fulfilling its mission, the board may, at its discretion, authorize such funds as it deems necessary for any normal, operational costs necessary for a club function. Normal operational costs should be defined to include beer, food, fees, insurance, newsletter printing, and raffle prizes. In addition, the board should have the ability to authorize the use of club funds for expenses that are incidental to a club function such as grain for a brewing exhibit, and flyer printing. Expenditures that are non-operational, as well as capital purchases in excess of \$500.00 should require approval of the club as a whole.

4.) Reinstating the constitutionally required treasurers report and requiring complete, timely, and standardized bookkeeping via a ledger book or checkbook format unless an accounting program is used. This does not preclude the use of a spreadsheet or other computer assisted means so long as the structure is similar and provides the same information as a ledger or checkbook would.

5.) There needs to be a means of recourse for the membership should any or all board members act in way considered not in the best interest or against the wishes of the membership. As it currently stands, the only means for removal is by the other officers. To this end there must be a means for the membership to remove officers during their term either individually or in whole. This could be considered a recall clause.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS By Jeff Kane

It appears the Secretary to News Letter Editor change we did took out the job description line “a) keep complete and accurate minutes of all general membership, Board and special meetings, and shall report the same to the general membership or on request”. I remember the discussion now. We decided that no one was keeping notes anyhow, so why have it in the bylaws. I think with the growth of the club that really needs to be put back or have a secretary position added to the board again.

I have one note from then that wasn't discussed yet. That is to have an “equipment manager or tapper VP” who would have responsibility for club owned hardware. I think with capitol purchases being made, getting a responsible person for this is a great idea!

**BEER BARON MEMBERSHIP,  
THIS IS YOUR CLUB, TOO. PLEASE ADD YOUR  
OPINIONS & OFFER YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS,  
AS WELL !**

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### MODIFYING HALF-BARREL KEGS (Continued from Page 7)

with a notch cut in the lower rim, and a drain tube welded into the domed bottom of the keg in an effort to keep from leaving too much wort behind. Not only is this a more difficult construction, but hot gases rushing up through the notch will cause excessive heating of the drain tube and valve. The siphon tube arrangement allows the kettle to drain completely, even though the valve and coupling are located well away from the heat source. The stainless ball valve on my kettle is connected to the welded-in coupling with a 2-in.-long stainless pipe nipple, and it remains cool enough to touch even after a long boil.

To install the 3/8-in. NPT (national pipe thread) coupling, I made a suitably-sized hole in the side of the keg, just above the bottom weld, using a bi-metal hole saw in an electric drill. Be sure to position the coupling such that it is not directly over one of the several drainage holes that are in the lower rim; hot gases escaping from below will increase heating of the coupling and valve. I made a jig to position the center line of the coupling such that it passes through and is perpendicular to the center line of the keg, and the coupling was welded in place from both sides. The interior weld was then ground smooth to facilitate cleaning.

Most people will take the keg to a welding shop to have the coupling welded in place, and the welder can likely take care of the entire installation. However, you can save a few dollars if you get everything ready ahead of time, paying only for the welding and finishing.

Stainless steels are tricky to weld, so it helps to find someone who is accustomed to working with them. Improperly made welds can crack and leak and present corrosion problems. The preferred method of welding is TIG (tungsten electrode, inert gas) using a 95% argon-5% carbon dioxide gas mixture, and 308L or 316 wire.  
**(CONTINUED in DECEMBER BARON MIND)**

# SHELTON BROTHERS

The best beers...imported by hand.

**Who are you guys?** We're just three brothers, and one good friend, who share a passion for well-crafted beers and an interest in traditional beer styles. Between us, we've hunted undiscovered beers on every continent (save Antarctica) and bagged thousands of 'em. It was brother Joel who first stumbled on the Cantillon Brewery in Brussels, where the beer is fermented with wild yeast borne on the open air. He became fast friends with the brewer and his family, and brought great quantities of their incredible lambic beer back home for the rest of us to enjoy. When we couldn't find Cantillon in any stores here, we were forced to import it ourselves. The best beers are brewed with a sense of place, a distinctive house character, and an appreciation for tradition, value, and/or the natural art of beer-making. Most often, this is expressed in breweries producing less than 5,000hl per year, though some brilliant exceptions exist, especially in Germany. Beer should have depth, texture, and nuance – it should sometimes even be a little rough around the edges. There are a few (very few) exceptions to every rule, but generally speaking, that means the following about a brewery's beers: Brewed in small batches using traditional methods, Unsweetened, Unpasteurized, Unfiltered / Bottle-conditioned, Little to no use of spices or adjuncts, Slow-fermented, Distinctive house yeast or yeasts and Dry as opposed to sweet.

There's no miracle to importing good beer – just hard work and a lot of travel. We specifically seek out unmanipulated beer, generally looking to small breweries with craftsmen taking seriously their passion for a natural, traditionally-made product.



## FEATURED BEERS...



\* **THIRIEZ EXTRA, Thiriez Brasserie, France – 4.5% ABV – Blonde Ale - Farmhouse Ale**

One rich and très hoppy golden ale. In France, this beer is called Les Frères de la Bière, or “The Friends of Beer,” a rich and très hoppy golden ale collaboration between brewers in England, France, and Belgium, in which Daniel Thiriez, the owner and brewer at Thiriez, is involved. It uses one hop varietal, a rather unusual hop grown in Kent called ‘Bramling Cross.’ The malt is from 2-row spring barley grown in France. With all those hops, you might even see Extra as a more traditional English IPA. Yet since Daniel is a little ‘Belgian-oriented,’ and uses a Belgian yeast that he obtained from the Belgian brewing school, the beer also has a good bit of the earthy, spicy character of a saison.

\* **JOLLY PUMPKIN BAM NOIRE, Jolly Pumpkin Brewery, Dexter, MI – 4.3% - Saison**

\* **DE LA SENNE X-MAS ZINNEBIR, contract brewed, St. Pieters brewery for De la Senne brewery**

\* **PANIL BARRIQUEE, Panil Birra Artigianale, Torrechiara-Parma, Italy – 8% - Sour Ale**

This is the version of Barriquée available only in North America that has been intentionally soured with lactobacillus bacteria. These complex, fruity-tasting beers, native to the Netherlands and Belgian Flanders, represent one of the oldest beer styles in the world. In their traditional form, these Sour Reds – also known as ‘Flemish Red’ or ‘Oud Bruin’ beers – are related to real lambic beers: a touch of wild yeast and bacteria coming from the wood give acidity, both lactic (sour) and acetic (vinegar). Barriquée is the only all-natural, traditionally-made example you will find today. This masterpiece is ‘triple-fermented,’ with primary fermentation in stainless steel. The deep earthy, sour character results from three months of maturation in cognac barrels from Bordeaux, followed by re-fermentation and further aging in the bottle. Barriquée is not pasteurized or filtered, and no sweeteners are added, so it is uncompromisingly dry and complex, and endlessly interesting.

\* **DE RANKE PERE NOEL, Brouwerij De Ranke, Dottignies/Dottenijs, Belgium – Trappist – 7%**

A fantastic Christmas beer, it has a fine balance of malt and hops, complex character, a refreshing dryness, and a gorgeous cellar aroma – but is distinguished by its festive copper color. The 1999 Père Noël was a bit of a departure, with a very appealing yeasty tartness that was not readily discernible in earlier years. Cloudy and light orange in color with a big persistent head. Spicy, grassy aroma. Sweet malt flavor with some peppery spiciness. Finishes with a fruity, citricy flavor. It has a great hop profile especially for a Belgian.

\* **KERKOM WINTERKONINSKE, Brouwerij Kerkom, Belgium – 8%**

All the Kerkom beers are unfiltered, unpasteurized and bottle-conditioned. Most of the hops are Belgian, grown in Poperinge. Marc uses a direct-fired brewkettle, a traditional method used by few Belgian breweries any more. See [www.brouwerijkerkom.be](http://www.brouwerijkerkom.be)

\* **NOEL DES GEANTS, Brasserie des Géants, (Giants' Brewery), Belgium**

“I’m dreaming of a GIANT Christmas...” so goes that old classic Irving Berlin tune... or something like that. Downing a few firkins of this brew is how the giants of Irchonwelz celebrate the holiday, or at least, that’s what the brewery tells us. The more ‘urchon-statured’ of us can get away with a few tulips full. This is a great holiday dinner beer, particularly with stuffing made with raisins, cranberry sauce, cloved and/or candied hams. Even the subtle, sweeter notes in turkey will do well with this brew. Expect a very complex nose giving off fruits (think cherry, strawberry & plum), toasted malts, caramel, raisins, chestnuts, dark chocolate, cinnamon and spices, among other things. As it warms, the profile will blossom—so let it get up there in temp, and enjoy the complexities. On the palate, many of the aromatic elements cited above come through, with a robust spiciness and firm bitterness. Finishes with a very protracted flavor arc—one to savor—featuring dryish, tea-leaf-like hops, dark chocolate, cinnamon and plum. Overall, a highly complex superbly balanced beer. Merry November!

# BREWING PUMPKIN BEER... IN A PUMPKIN

(4)



The manifold has slits cut into the bottom of each tube, allowing the sugar-rich wort to be drained off the spent grain. The tap is fit into a hole drilled into the tun. The thick walls of the pumpkin made it difficult to connect the manifold to the tap.



The initial hop addition is for bittering. More hops are added halfway through the boil for flavoring. A final addition at the end of the boil boosts the aroma. Boiling accomplishes a number of things: microorganisms in the wort are killed off, alpha acids and other components in the hops are drawn into the wort, and the volume of the wort is reduced.



Hot liquor is pumped into the “PUMPTUN.”



Such a pretty copper color. The starting gravity of the wort (i.e., the amount of sugars and particulate matter in the wort — water has a specific gravity of 1.000) was 1.042, making it a fairly light beer.



Crushed barley is mixed into the hot liquor, creating the mash.

The mash is complete, and now more hot liquor is added to the mash tun. This is done to draw more sugars out of the mash, increase the viscosity of the wort (to better the flow of the run off), and increase the volume of wort to be boiled.



This particular pumpkin fermenter holds approximately three gallons of wort. Once the wort is in the fermenter, beer yeast — specifically, Danstar’s Nottingham ale yeast — is pitched and the wort is aerated to increase the oxygen available to the yeast.



The tap was removed after the majority of the wort ran off. Some wort continued to run off. The visual effect is vaguely obscene.

A hydrometer reading showed that the gravity of the beer had fallen to ~1.010. Fermentation of the beer was, for all intents and purposes, complete. Good news! Regardless, to discontinue exposure to airborne bad-dies, the beer was siphoned into a glass carboy



## Brewing with a RIMS System by Mike Chaltry

Last month I gave you an overview of the RIMS and HERMS systems and their uses in homebrewing. This month I would like to concentrate on the RIMS system and the necessary elements that are needed to create one.

As I stated last month, RIMS stands for Recirculation Infusion Mash System. The challenge is to reach and maintain a constant temperature while mashing your grain for an all-grain recipe. As I also mentioned, mashing temps need to be fairly precise in order to achieve the various properties that you are trying to achieve in your beer, such as alcohol level, unfermentable sugars that give your beer body and flavor, ease of sparge and many other qualities.

With your basic infusion mash you start by heating up your water to a point where, after adding your grain, it will stabilize at your target temperature. If you miss, you can increase the temp with direct heat or you can decrease by adding cold water. When you want



to bump up to your next rest point, you either have to add direct heat or add more hot water. Using direct heat can scorch your mash unless you are there to stir constantly. Adding hot water can mess with the grain/water ratio in your mash, and unless you have a reliable chart or brewing program, is hit or miss.

What a RIMS system does differently is it recirculates your mash while adding inline heat to it through some kind of heating element (usually electric) thereby either maintaining a set temp while resting or increasing the temp during a bump. Let's take a look at how it does this.

The basic RIMS system consists of three vessels which can be hooked up in a tiered system (different levels), thereby using gravity as your friend, or on a level platform. The first vessel, starting from the top if using a tiered system, is the Hot Liquor Tank (HTL). This is where water (liquor) is heated and stored. The next vessel is the Mash or Lauter Tun. This is where the grain is mashed during the various rests and where the wort is recirculated during this time. The third vessel is the brew kettle which most of you should be familiar with and whose role doesn't change when upgrading to a RIMS system.

So the process starts with the grain getting added to hot liquor in the mash tun. This is then recirculated, using a pump, through a loop that includes a heating element. The nicer systems will have a controller that monitors the temp of the recirculating wort and turns the heating element on or off accordingly. Otherwise this is done by hand. When the mashing is completed, the wort is redirected to the brew kettle and brewing is completed normally with boiling, hop additions, blah, blah, blah.

That's pretty much the gist of it for a RIMS system. Next month we will take a look at the HERMS system and how it differs from the RIMS. The final month's article will include some final thoughts on both systems with pros and cons and some feedback from club members and the systems they use.

(5)

## ALLSOPPS ALE BRINGS \$500,000+



On the Internet-auction Ebay you can buy all that you want - from a box of matches up to islands. But sometimes something bought for the small sum is possible to sell at the same place for huge money. Such history has occurred this summer. One of the auction users with the name Petere92346 has decided to sell a bottle of beer. But it was not the ordinary beer, it was the ALLSOPP's ARCTIC ALE. It has been produced in 1852 by the legendary English Allsopp, which has stopped its existence in the middle of 20th century. The bottle was sealed and had a label signed by a hand of the brewer. The seller, most likely, did not even assume provisional cost of this bottle, therefore (was) thoughtlessly (un) concerned (as) to the description, having written only few sentences and having attached two photos. But his biggest mistake was wrong writing of the manufacturer's name. He wrote "Allsop", having passed the letter "p" in the end of the word. That's why potential buyers-collectors could not find this bottle in the search on the auction page.

Finally, on the 21st of June this year, the user with the name Collectordan has bought this bottle for \$304 dollars. The history could end on it, if the enterprising new bottle's owner has not exposed it repeatedly on sale with correct description, with a lot of photos and, the most important, with the correct name. As a result in August 12-that he has sold this bottle for \$503,300 dollars. Is it the American dream? May be. And may be not. As for me, I skeptically think about the fact that someone can receive half a million dollars so easy. But who knows, miracles happen.

A recent study found that the average American walks about 900 miles per year.  
Another study found Americans drink, on average, 22 gallons of beer a year. That means, on average, Americans get about 41 miles to the gallon.  
Kind Of Makes You Proud To Be American.

## **BARE BONES BASIC BREWING** by Bruce Buerger *Homebrew Using Basic Equipment!*

**Full -process Demo for the Beginner:  
Wort -boil, Racking, and Bottling.**

Thinking about giving Home Brewing a try? Maybe you gave it a try but it didn't turn out quite so well? Know someone who might be getting a Home Brew start up kit this holiday season? Tired of hearing about Home Brewing at Beer Barons meetings and wishing you could see how it's done?

We'll take you through the full process – making the wort, fermentation, and bottling. No super technical jargon, no advanced home made brewing equipment, and no complex beer recipes. We'll make simple ale without the geek speak and use equipment from a Home Brew shop starter kit. Bare bones basic – guaranteed.

When: January 19, 2008 @ 11 AM

Where: **House of Hamburg** - 5937 S. Howell Ave, Milwaukee, WI

Must RSVP at <http://www.beerbarons.org/brewu> to attend!

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## **THE ALL-GRAIN PARALLEL BREW** By Dan Schlosser

\*

The brewers have been selected for the All-Grain Parallel Brew.

We were looking for 5 volunteers, and that is exactly what we got. The brewers are ...

\* **Mike Chaltry**   \* **Jeff Davis**   \* **David Glazewski**  
\* **Kevin Meves**   \* **Jim Sowinski (w/ Darrell Smith)**

Ingredients will be handed out at the November meeting. Each brewer will make their batch of beer and have it ready to serve at the January meeting

The brewers utilize a variety of equipment. Some are using a form of infusion mashing, others use direct heat. Most are using propane cookers for the boil, while one is doing this on the stovetop. Most are fermenting in carboys at ambient temperatures, while one has a temp control system.

It should be interesting to see how these variables influence the final product.

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## **MIDWEST HOMEBREWERS OF THE YEAR**

**Top 10 as of November 12, 2007**

**NET SCORE, NAME, CITY & STATE, WINS  
and % of WINS (TO ENTRIES)**

44.3 Joe Formanek, Bollingbrook, IL - 19 Wins - 53%  
40.3 Sylvia & Zbig Banach, New Lenox, IL – 7 Wins – 88%  
23.8 Bill Gerds, Grand Blanc, MI – 13 Wins – 54%  
21.6 Gordon Strong, Beavercreek, OH – 7 Wins – 64% W  
20.0 Britt Weiser, Champaign, IL – 3 Wins – 100% Wins  
17.8 Rodney Kibzey, Lombard, IL-14 Wins- 34%  
17.0 Ed Seaman, Streamwood, IL – 12 Wins – 39%  
17.0 Susan Ruud & Ray Taylor, Harwood, ND – 11 Wins – 35%  
16.8 Mark Kuechler, Champaign, IL – 6 Wins – 60%  
16.7 Dustin Jundt, MI – 5 Wins-83%

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL  
HOMEBREW SHOP**

## **MIDWEST HOMEBREWERS COMPETITION CALENDAR**

\* **DECEMBER 8**

**St. Louis Brews 15th Annual**

**Hoppy Holidays Homebrew Competition**

Entry Deadline: Nov 30

**Annunciation Church**, Webster Groves, MO

[www.stlbrews.org](http://www.stlbrews.org)

\* **DECEMBER 18**

**Amber Waters Homebrew Contest**

**The Onion**, 212 3rd Ave., #445, Minneapolis, MN

(612) 370-1372

\* **JANUARY 12, 2008**

**Beer Barons BJCP Class**

**O'Keefe's House of Hamburg**,

5937 S. Howell, Milwaukee, WI

\* **JANUARY 19, 2008**

**Bare Bones Basing Brewing Class - 11 AM**

**O'Keefe's House of Hamburg**,

5937 S. Howell, Milwaukee, WI

\* **JANUARY 23 - 26, 2008**

**Upper Mississippi Mash-Out - St. Paul, MN**

Entries Accepted: Jan 1 - 12, 2008

**The Klub Haus** 1079 Rice St, St.Paul, MN

[www.mnbrewers.com/mashout](http://www.mnbrewers.com/mashout)

\* **FEBRUARY 9, 2008**

**Great Northern Brew-HaHa**

Entries Accepted: Jan 7 - 28, 2008

**Lake Superior Brewing Co.**,

2711 W. Superior St., Duluth, MN -

[www.northernalestars.org](http://www.northernalestars.org)

\* **FEBRUARY TBD**

**Babble Brewoff**

**Flatlanders Restaurant & Brewery**, Lincolnwood, IL

[www.babblehomebrewers.com](http://www.babblehomebrewers.com)

\* **MARCH 8, 2008**

**Urban Knaves of Grain**

**10th Annual Drunk Monk Challenge**

**America's Brewpub, Walter Payton's Roundhouse**

205 N. Broadway, Aurora, IL - [www.knaves.org](http://www.knaves.org)

\* **MARCH 29, 2008**

**BOSS Chicago Cup Challenge**

**Maple Tree Inn**, Blue Island, IL - [www.bossbeer.org](http://www.bossbeer.org)

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## **BJCP UPDATE** by Mike Schwartz

The last time we had the BJCP exam in July, 6 people, including Dave and Wendy Van der Wegen from the Beer Barons took the exam. Great news that all 6 people passed with scores of at least 60%! All were first-time takers. This is a very tough exam lasting 3 hours. For all 6 to pass the first time around is really a good reflection on them. They all deserve a round of applause.

We have another exam coming up January 12. We have 5 Beer Barons scheduled to take that exam as well as a couple people coming up from Racine and Chicago.

Let me know if you're interested in taking the challenge!

# OCTOBER - NOVEMBER BEER EVENTS CALENDAR

(7)

## \* NOVEMBER 23

Beer Barons Madison Roadtrip

## \* NOVEMBER 28

Beer Barons Meeting,  
featuring Belgian ales

Clifford's, Hales Corners, WI

## \* DECEMBER 8

Christmas & Holiday Beer Tasting - Noon  
Delilah's, 2771 N. Lincoln, Chicago, IL

## \* DECEMBER 19

Beer Barons' Holiday Party & Raffle

Clifford's, Hales Corners, WI

## 2008

## \* JANUARY 5

Minocqua Ice Cold Beer Fest

Minocqua, WI

www.minocquabrewingcompany.com

## \* JANUARY 19

Chicago Beer Society Brewpub Shootout - 1-5 PM

Irish Community Center, Chicago, IL

## \* JANUARY 23

Beer Barons' Meeting,

featuring Parallel Brew Tasting  
& Instrument Calibration

Clifford's, Hales Corners, WI

## \* FEBRUARY 9

10th Annual Food & Froth

7-10 PM - \$50 (\$45 Advance)

Milwaukee Public Museum,

800 W. Wells St., Milwaukee, WI

## \* FEBRUARY 10

Mid\*Winter Beer Fest

Milwaukee Ale House, Milwaukee, WI

## \* FEBRUARY 16

Muskego Beer & Liquor Beer Festival

6:30-9:30 PM - \$30 Advance

William's Supper Club,

S65 W17745 Janesville Rd., Muskego, WI

Reservations: (262) 679-0686

## \* FEBRUARY 27

Beer Barons' Meeting, featuring Winter Beers

Clifford's, Hales Corners, WI

## \* MARCH 10

Chicago Beer Society's Night of the Living Ale

Goose Island - Wrigleyville, Chicago, IL

More Details ?

Visit [www.sudswineandspirits.com](http://www.sudswineandspirits.com)

# Modifying Half-Barrel Kegs for Use as Brewing Vessels

By Martin P. Manning

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A well-modified half-barrel keg should be easy to make, easy to use and care for, and avoid the common pitfalls encountered in many designs. This article presents step-by-step instructions for making a system that has proven successful in all of these areas.

Without a doubt, the first choice for a brewing vessel in an advanced amateur system is a modified half-barrel keg, such as the ones that the large commercial brewers use to distribute their beer. They are constructed of high-quality stainless steel and are perfectly sized for brewing batches of 5-12 gal. They are readily available, and even when purchased new are much less expensive than a stainless steel stock pot of similar capacity, which is virtually the only off-the-shelf alternative.

In my opinion, the most desirable kegs are the cylindrical (straight-sided), single-valve (Sankey) type. They have larger top and bottom areas than the barrel-shaped variety and therefore provide easier access from the top and a larger area at the bottom for the heated surface (assuming that you plan to use an open flame at the bottom for a heat source). Also, with cylindrical kegs it is easier to make volume measurements.

## DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR MODIFIED HALF BARRELS

I have seen numerous schemes for converting half-barrels to kettles, each one a little different from the last. Before constructing my own, I gave some careful consideration to the design requirements, and I have yet to see a solution that I like better.

**Access:** To gain access to the inside, you have a choice of two options: cutting off the entire top, taking the keg's handles with it, or cutting a hole in the domed top. I strongly recommend the latter, unless the upper rim has been so damaged that making a 12-in. round hole in the top is impossible or unless you are height-limited when the keg is positioned on the heat source. You will need handles of some kind, so you might as well use the ones that come with the keg. I would not bother to cut the top rim down between the handles either, unless not doing so limits access because of a height restriction.

You can cut the top out using a reciprocating saw and a bimetal, 18-TPI (teeth/in.) blade. Get a variable-speed saw, and run it at minimum speed, cooling the blade frequently with spray lubricant as you go. Otherwise, you'll go through a lot of blades. Plasma cutting is also acceptable. If you use plasma, put enough water in the keg to cover the bottom before cutting. This will protect it from the hot discharge from the cutting process. Whichever method you use, you can smooth any rough edges around the opening using a sanding drum mounted on an electric drill.

With a round hole in the top, the usable volume is maximized and you can use a commercially made cover, which can be purchased from a restaurant supply dealer. I happened to have a 12-in. cover from an inexpensive stainless pot. I use it to minimize heat loss when heating water, to increase the vigor of the boil when brewing large batches, and just to keep dust out when the kettle is not in use.

**Drain system:** The drain system should provide easy disassembly and cleaning and require a minimum of tools and time. It is also important not to create areas where small volumes of wort are surrounded by heated surfaces. Excessive caramelization or even scorching and subsequent cleaning problems can result. Some kind of strainer or false bottom should be

included to prevent hops and trub from entering the plumbing downstream. The strainer should be situated such that the volume under it is minimized. Such an arrangement will ensure that the wort beneath it, which contacts the heated surface, is exchanged quickly. Finally, given that a valve of some sort will be close to the kettle, it should be protected from the heat source, both for operator safety and to prevent wort from accumulating inside and caramelizing or burning.

The drain system in my kettle uses an internal siphon tube drawing located on the side of the keg above the domed bottom, which requires only a simple weld to attach a threaded coupling. I have seen kettles

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