



# Malted Barley Appreciation Society

February 2003 Newsletter

## From the Editor's Disk

Considering people's efforts for setting up this year's Best of Brooklyn, I am not surprised that there was a dearth of submissions. Thankfully, George de Piro has submitted another fine article in a pinch. He is a virtual fount of brewing knowledge.

Please pass the word about the Best of Brooklyn. **We need more entries!!!** Entries will be accepted at the drop-off points until February 14th. And, the contest is taking place on Saturday, February 22nd, not the 23rd as advertised on some of the flyers.

Sam Michalowski, Ed.

### February's meeting, Wednesday, 12th, 2002: Mugs's Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue

Manny Calderon, Jr., from Oak Beverages will talk about introducing craft beer brands and other brands to the NYC market. He's their brand development manager, and has a long involvement with the beer scene in the area.



## Guest Column

### Better Brewing through Quality Control: The diacetyl test

George de Piro, MBAS

Diacetyl is a compound that gives beer a buttery flavor. Most professional brewers consider it a flaw indicative of poor brewing techniques. While butter may not be an offensive flavor, the issue is that the level of diacetyl above taste threshold is very difficult to control. It tends to increase with age, so that a beer leaving the brewery with a subtle hint of but-

ter may taste more like rancid movie theater popcorn to the imbibing public.

Fortunately, there is an easy test you can do at home to help control and reduce the diacetyl in your beer. It requires no fancy equipment at all, and takes only a few minutes to perform. Let's start with a quick primer about diacetyl.

Diacetyl is formed when alpha acetolactate (AAL) is oxidized. AAL is made by yeast, and is not detectable by humans in the concentrations normally occurring in beer. The more AAL the yeast make, the more diacetyl potential the beer will have.

Yeast can take up and metabolize diacetyl, thus reducing its concentration in beer below taste threshold, but they do not metabolize AAL. The idea of a diacetyl rest is to speed up the oxidation of AAL to diacetyl so that the yeast can metabolize it and the beer can get on with its life. Increasing the temperature of the beer will speed up these reactions.

You do not necessarily have to perform a diacetyl rest for every lager, and you may sometimes need one for an ale. How can one tell if the rest is needed?

Take two samples of the young beer into covered containers. 50 ml should be sufficient. Heat one sample to about 50C (140F or so; you need not be precise) for about 10 minutes (again, precision is not critical). Keep the other sample at cool room temperature.

Cool the sample in an ice bath to be about the same temperature as the unheated sample. Smell both.

Interpret results as follows:

1) If the unheated sample smells clean, but the

heated sample smells buttery, there is an appreciable amount of AAL in the beer and the batch can benefit from a diacetyl rest.

2) If both samples smell clean, the AAL has already oxidized to diacetyl which was then removed by the yeast and no further action is needed on your part. Note that if this beer later develops buttery flavors, it likely has a bacterial infection (*pediococcus*).

3) If both samples smell of diacetyl, the beer is either badly infected or the yeast have not yet taken up the diacetyl that has formed. If it has not diminished after a few days at warm fermentation temperatures (i.e., diacetyl rest has no effect), then krausen with fresh, active yeast.

If you do deem it necessary to give a cool fermenting beer a warm rest, do not worry about the temperature rising too quickly. Yeast do not really mind going from low to high temperatures (unless you cook them!). Yeast can be shocked into inactivity if they are chilled too quickly, though.

Please note that removing the yeast from the beer, or otherwise hindering its activity, will leave nothing in the beer capable of reducing the diacetyl as it forms. Such a beer will become buttery over time.



## LOCAL CONTESTS And SUCH

### Best of Brooklyn VI

The **Malted Barley Appreciation Society** will be hosting our sixth annual homebrew competition, Best of Brooklyn VI, at the Brooklyn Brewery on **February 22, 2003**. This BJCP sanctioned event will continue the tradition of providing quality judging and rewarding brewers with a prize for first, second, and third place in each category. Full details and drop-off locations can be found on the contest website at <http://hbd.org/mbas/bob2003.html>

**Entries are welcome before or on Friday, February 14th.**

If you are a judge for this year's contest, please arrive at the Brooklyn Brewery by 9:15 am. Breakfast and lunch will be served. If you would like to judge, you can register on the website.

### Ninth Annual BOSTON HOMEBREW COMPETITION (BHC9)

The Boston Wort Processors are pleased to formally announce the to be held on March 8th, 2003. The competition will again be held at the Watch City Brewing Company in Waltham, MA, just west of Boston. All BJCP Styles will be judged, including Cider and Mead. The Entry Deadline has been set as Friday February 21, 2003 and the entry fee is \$5.00 per entry. We will also need judge and steward support, so please come and help us out if you can! Email our Judge Coordinator, Francois Espourteille at [francois53@attbi.com](mailto:francois53@attbi.com) if you would like to judge or steward. All of the information one needs to enter the competition or to judge or steward in the competition can be found at: <http://www.wort.org/BHC/bhc.html>

**Three Rivers Alliance of Serious Homebrewers (TRASH) Thirteenth Annual Homebrew, Cider and Mead Competition**  
TRASH XIII will be held on March 29, 2003 beginning at 8:00 AM in the Pittsburgh Brewing Company's Ober Brau Haus, 3340 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15201. Complete details about the competition and the Judge Registration/Waiver Form can be found on the TRASH website at: <http://trashhomebrewers.org/competition.htm> Experienced and beginner judges are welcome. Please see the website for more details. Informal accommodations can be provided if you need to spend the night in Pittsburgh.

### MICHAEL JACKSON BEER APPRECIATION SOCIETY

The Fourth of Five Classes Leading to an MBA (Masters in Beer Appreciation) March 11 at the Brooklyn Brewery 6:30 pm start. A tasting of 10 specialty beers. Finger foods. \$30 in advance; \$40 at the door. 718-486-7422

