

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

January 2003 Newsletter

From the Editor's Disk

I am happy to say that I have brewed and bottled my second batch of beer. This time I did the old standby, an IPA. The recipe included 6 oz. of hops so it tasted pretty sharp upon bottling. I got a replacement hydrometer for the one that broke in the mail so I know the alcohol content: 5.1%. I hope to bring this to the next meeting. We'll see how it turns out.

Please spread the news about the Best of Brooklyn. It seems we got quite a late start this year. Information is included at the end of the newsletter. And as always, please keep the submissions rolling.

Sam Michalowski, Ed.

January Meeting

Eric Freberg, MBAS

December's meeting began with a discussion of our upcoming event, the sixth annual Best of Brooklyn homebrew competition. The festivities will once again be held at nearby Brooklyn Brewery, and Lucy Zachman has graciously agreed to organize the contest this time.

Another major event which took place at this month's meeting was the election of our new president, Andy Ager. Andy narrowly defeated runner-up H. Ross Perot in a close, but still unanimous, election. He will take the reigns during our January meeting. Good luck Andy!!

While waiting for our guest speaker to arrive, we decided to move straight to the homebrew tasting portion of the evening. Sad to say, there was but one offering, although it was a rather enjoyable first effort from Sam Michalowski, a Belgian style ale. Perhaps, knowing that our guest was Dan Shelton, of the extraordinary Shelton Broers importers, we were leery of comparisons to outstanding beers like those he's brought along for tasting at past meetings. Yeah, hey that's pretty good - that's my excuse!

Dan then showed up and I knew it was a good sign when he suggested I come out to the car to help bring in boxes of beer. Although he says 2002 was a rough year, including a lost shipment of Fantome, there were a few new and interesting things that they managed to bring in.



Dan started us off with EKU Pils, a classic German pilsener from Kulmbacher, the town holding the distinction of highest beer consumption per capita (god bless 'em).

Then from Hopback it was Thunderstorm, an English Wheat Ale which uses only one hop variety, Progress. Thunderstorm, like Summer Lightning from the same brewery, has been a winner of an international brewery award at the Great British Beer Festival. Then it was on to Rudolph's Revenge Winter Ale, a dark bitter from Cropton Brewery, the first female-owned brewery. This is a true hand crafted brew, the mash stirred with a wooden ladle. Even the bottles are hand labeled.

Next was XX Bitter, from De Ranke. This is one of the hoppiest Belgian beers you'll find, and the recent change of yeast has further accentuated the hop character. Previously they were using a yeast from Rodenbach, now they are actually using dry yeast. Pere Noel, also from De Ranke, was next, this one also had some hop presence from Hallertau and Brewer's Gold. Dan explained that De Ranke uses the brewing facility at Deca brewery, renting it for a few hours each Friday and Saturday (I wonder how they can brew in just a few hours...)



Moving right along, we sampled La Moneuse, a special winter Belgian ale from Blaugies, brewed by Marie Pourtois and husband Pierre Alex Carlier from what I can recall, in their 'garage brewery'.

Next was the Fantome seasonals, starting with Prin-temps followed with a nice caramel-y Autome, and then the strong Hiver (Winter), finally a Christmas beer which had a slight sourness to it.

We wrapped things up with some terrific Trappist beers including Rochefort 8 as well as a Blonde and a Brown from the newest one, Achel. Once again, an impressive lineup from a great importer and friend of the club. Thank you Dan!!

**January's meeting, Wednesday, 12th, 2002:
Mugs's Ale House, 125 Bedford Avenue**



Guest Column

Fresh Beer

George de Piro, MBAS

Many people, including beer distributors and retailers, treat beer as if it is an indestructible commodity rather than a delicate food item. It suffers in a hot warehouse for months before being shipped to a retail outlet. Once there, it is tortured on a warm, brightly lit shelf for weeks until somebody buys it. The beer arrives at the home of its new owner, praying for relief from its abused existence, but finds none. It is again subjected to high temperatures and bright light in the garage or back porch. The beer, unable to withstand further cruelty, dies without fulfilling its simple desire to please a palate.

Until the last decade, this was the common fate of most beer in the United States. The unfortunate consolidation of the American brewing industry that occurred after Prohibition forced consumers to choose from monotonous domestic beers that were usually past their prime or imported brews that were wretchedly stale. The reemergence of brewpubs in America has changed all that, giving consumers something they had missed for three generations: the taste of truly fresh beer.

Beer is a perishable food, and while it cannot harbor pathogenic organisms as it stales, its flavor becomes severely compromised. There are five things that cause beer to stale:

- * Warm temperatures
- * Motion
- * Time
- * Light
- * Oxygen

Warm temperatures will hasten the spoilage of beer, like any other food. The chemical reactions that occur during beer staling are accelerated by temperature. It is best to keep beer refrigerated at all times. A common myth is that cycling beer from cold to warm and back to cold temperatures will damage its flavor. This is only true in that warm temperatures are bad for beer. Keeping beer cool is always good for the preservation of its flavor.

Cycling the temperature can cause beers to become noticeably cloudy. Lightly filtered craft beers are most susceptible to this phenomena, but highly filtered beers are not immune. This haze does not affect the flavor of the beer, and is therefore not of much concern to the educated consumer.

Motion is damaging to beer flavor in much the same way as warmth. The staling reactions are accelerated by mixing of the beer. Motion and warmth together are truly deadly to beer flavor, which is why beers that are shipped overseas will never taste as good as they might in their home markets.

Time will age all things, and beer is no exception. While some beer styles will benefit from extended aging, the majority reach peak flavor about six weeks after brew day. There is little we can do to protect beer from time, other than accelerate it to near light speed to reap the benefits of time dilation. Drinking it while fresh is more technologically feasible at this point in time.

Light is the cause of one of the most common stale beer characteristics: skunking. When visible light (the kind that can be detected by the human eye) strikes beer, it reacts with the chemicals from the hops, rearranging them into the exact compound that skunks spray! Clear and green bottles offer no protection from light, and brown bottles offer only limited protection. That is why many popular import beers, packaged in green or clear glass, are skunked.

Oxygen is the last thing on the list of beer spoilers because it is usually only of concern to the brewer. Most of the chemical reactions that cause beer staling are greatly accelerated when oxygen is present in the package. Beer that has been exposed to air can become wretched in as little as four days if kept warm!

While many breweries go to great lengths to keep oxygen out of their beer, there are some bars that serve draft beer by pushing it out of the keg with compressed air rather than carbon dioxide. This is a very bad practice. Beer served in this manner will go flat overnight and stale very quickly.

The flavor transformation that occurs as a beer ages is dependent on the style of beer and the brewing techniques used to make it. Light-colored beers generally increase in vegetable and lipstick-like characteristics. Darker beers tend to develop sherry-like notes in place of their malt character. These changes are not appreciated in most beer styles.

Hop aroma and bitterness decrease with age regardless of beer color, and abusing the beer will only speed up this process. A general loss of liveliness occurs in the beer's flavor. Some of this can be attributed to a loss of hop character while the increase of stale-tasting compounds is also a factor.

Some beers develop buttery notes as they age. Many consumers do not mind this familiar flavor when it is present as a background note, but may be repulsed by this characteristic when it overwhelms the beer. Sometimes the brewery's procedures can hasten the development of rancid, buttery notes. Many English breweries use techniques that make beer especially unfit for travel. While these beers can taste wonderful at the source, they can upset distant consumers.

Brewpub brewers have a tremendous advantage over packaging breweries; we have total control over our beer from the time the ingredients are delivered to the moment it touches the consumer's lips. The beer at the Pump Station is kept cold, dark, and free of oxygen. It tastes as fresh as beer can possibly taste.



LOCAL CONTESTS

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>

The Boston Wort Processors are pleased to formally announce the Ninth Annual BOSTON HOME-BREW COMPETITION (BHC9) 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 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>

