

Malted Barley Appreciation Society

November, 2001 Newsletter

October Meeting

by Eric Freberg, President, MBAS

It's been an unusually warm autumn, and the Malted Barley Appreciation Society took full advantage of that fact by holding our October meeting in the lovely beer garden at Mug's.

"Our own" George DePiro, head brewer at CH Evans Brewing Company at the Albany Pump Station, was our guest speaker.

George has brewed an impressive 45 distinct styles of beer during his two-year tenure at the Pump Station, although the range of styles he's taking on has inevitably narrowed a bit this past year.



One of the beers that he brought along was in a 'Keggy', a device that's catching on in Germany. It's a rectangular, insulated, plastic coated container that has a built-in CO2 cartridge that can hold just enough gas to push out its contents, about 3 1/2 gallons. The brewpub typically owns the costly device that refills the CO2, and the customer just pays for the beer and leaves a deposit, as with an ordinary keg. The Keggy is more easily transported plus it eliminates the hassle of an external tap. In George's case, this could work not only for local customers, but also for us downstate types coming up for weekend ski trips to places like Killington or Gore Mountain.

Appropriately, this one was filled with Hefeweizen. Anyone who prefers the clove character, over the banana aromas and flavors that often dominate this style, would have been pleased. George intends to brew a stronger version for the winter.

We also tried an Amber, which was really a hybrid style – wheat malt was substituted for Pilsner malt, and California Common yeast was used, a lager yeast that's typically used at ale temperatures as in 'Steam' beer. It had a nice malt nose with some fruit on the palate.

**This Month's Guest Speakers
Tess and Mark Szamatulski**



**Maltose Express Homebrewing
Supplies of Monroe, CT**

Meetings are held at Mugs Ale House, on the corner of 10th St. and Bedford Ave in Brooklyn on the second Wednesday of each month. This month, the meeting will be on the 14th. Mugs is three blocks from the Bedford Ave stop on the L train.

Next was the Belgian Strong, a Tripel with some citrus and banana notes. Despite a potent 8 1/2% abv, the alcohol remained subdued. I won't go into too much detail since last month's newsletter featured George's article on this beer style.

The last beer of the night was American Brown, which had some nice caramel in the aroma but the real story here was hops. Several unique varieties were used, including Amarillo, which some club members found vaguely reminiscent of pine.

A final note, there was very little homebrew at this meeting – next month's guests are dedicated homebrewers with a supply shop and several books to their credit, so let's show them what we can do!

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Brewing in Beerland

by **Bill Coleman**

I am not a professional brewer, though I have written comic strips about them. I have been homebrewing beers for six years now, but in the last year, I have been extremely lucky on several occasions to play with the big toys that real brewers use.

First, I was extremely honored to be able to work with Tom Baker at Heavyweight Brewing in NJ to make the first two vintage batches of Old Salty Barleywine, for 2000 and 2001. The 2001 batch (which at 11% is about 2 percentage points higher than the previous version) should be appearing in December at better bars and stores in the area. It was a lot of fun to make this beer at Heavyweight, one of the most creative and unique breweries in the US.

As if that wasn't enough, I recently had a what I think must be a unique experience for an American homebrewer: I made a batch of commercial beer from one of my homebrew recipes at a brewery in Belgium—the Regenboog (Flemish for Rainbow) Brewery, in Assebroek, which is right outside of Brugge.

In case you're wondering how to come about, let me give a little background. Last year, while traveling with fellow beer fanatic Warren Becker in Brugge, we stopped in at a very nice cellar bar called De Zolder. While there, we noticed a sign for a mustard-flavored beer. As this sounded pretty unique, I ordered a bottle, and found it to be a very smooth wit-like beer, with subtle and unique spicing. A very craftsmanlike job! We also had a Dubbel which included dates, which was also very well-done. A brief conversation with the bar owner alerted us that the brewery was right outside the city. (Note: the Mustard beer is now being imported by B. United in large bottles. I recommend it highly!)

So the next day, we stopped at the brewery on the way out of town. It turns out that it is also a homebrew store! Anyway, we had a great visit with Johan Brandt, the brewer at Regenboog, who also has a printing press for his own labels; the brewery is basically a one-man operation. We picked up some beers to take home to the US. We also gave Johan a comic book of Salty Dog comic strips, and a bottle of Belgian-style strong dark homebrew I made.

I didn't think too much more about it, except to rave about the brewery's beers to friends, until Johan e-mailed me a couple of months later, and asked me to do a label for him! This was a shock. Apparently, he liked the artwork in the Salty Dog comic, and wanted me to do a cartoon label for one of his beers. This was quite an honor in itself, as there are almost as many talented cartoonists in Belgium as there are brewers! Anyway, I did a label for his Slee Dorn beer, a unique 5.4% beer with Sloe Fruit (a type of plum) in it.

After sending him the label, I half-jokingly suggested that I brew a batch of beer at his brewery in my next visit. As an immediate reply, he mentioned that his brewery was too small to have room for another brewer, and that maybe when he expanded I could



do it. So, I went about my business, and Warren and I proceeded with plans for another vacation in Belgium in the fall of 2001, which definitely included another visit to Regenboog. I wanted to get some more bottles of that Slee Dorn beer with my label on it, if nothing else!

A couple of months before we were set to leave, I got an email from Johan saying "when can you brew the beer?" That was a pleasant surprise. He mentioned that he wanted to brew a Christmas beer. These are a little different in Belgium. Usually called Kerstbiers, they do not usually have the kind of nutmeg and cinnamon spices associated with

wintertime beers in the US. This beer would be a strong, brown ale, with some spices, hopefully in the background. I worked up an adaption of a recipe I made as a homebrew batch, increasing the size to 160 liters (about 42 gallons), which is the size Johan works in. Like Heavyweight, he brews 2 batches in successive days, pitching the second on the first day's high-krausen batch, which makes good use of the yeast.

With some slight modifications on the recipe, the plans went ahead, and Johan also asked for another label from me, which I was happy to do, for a 10.5% pumpkin-flavored beer called Halloween!

Our plans went ahead, and on the appointed day, Friday, October 19, more than halfway through our vacation, Warren Becker and I arrived at the Regenboog Brewery at 7:00 in the morning. It was a little tough as we had been bar-hopping in Brugge the night before, but it was worth it! The grain was already ground the night before. So Warren and I took turns emptying plastic buckets of grain into the mash tun while Johan stirred and mixed in additional hot water to begin the mash.



As we got on with the day's brewing, I was impressed again with what Johan does at this brewery. The scale of the batch of beer we were making was only about 5 times larger than the batches of homebrew I make. On this scale, he still manages to make an amazing number of beers. At the 24 hours of Beer in Antwerp in 2000, Regenboog was one of the smallest breweries in terms of annual capacity (150 HL a year), but had more different beers there than any other brewery. At this year's festival, he has 10 different beers, which may be a record.

When the mash and sparge was done, it was time to move the grain, as the mash tun is also used as a

boiling pot. This was probably the biggest hassle of the setup, as you have to move a lot of hot, heavy, weight grain in a hurry. Johan mentioned that he was getting some new equipment next week which would allow him to mash and boil in separate containers, an more importantly, to make larger capacity batches. So, this was the last batch made in his original setup. Johan took a reading of the wort, and it turned out this would be the highest gravity beer he had ever made at his brewery, at approximately 11%. And that's a good thing!



Anyway, Warren and I loaded up a couple of wheelbarrels full of spent grain, and wheeled them back into Johan's backyard, where there is a huge caged menagerie of rabbits, ducks, and most importantly, a big pot-bellied pig, who was happy for the additional food.

The boil was accomplished with a propane-powered burner which looked suspiciously like the Cajun Cooker I use to homebrew, though on a somewhat larger scale.



Once the boil began and first hop addition was added, we had some time to sample some previous Regenboog beers as well as some lunch with Johan and his wife. It was always a pleasure to have the Mustard beer once again, and

also the Vuuve (a Wit beer imported in the US by B. United), the Smisje Dubble, and the Sleen Dorn. I had already had the Halloween beer at the Bottleje in Ostend earlier in the week and love its powerful flavors, though I think it needs additional aging. The tiny size of Johan's brewery precludes his saving beer in bulk for an extended time. This is a shame, as it ages beautifully; the bottle of 1996 Smisje Dubbel that he brought out for us was quite wonderful; mellow and well-rounded. I guess it's up to the purchaser to sit on the beers for the proper time.



Anyway, eventually the boil had neared completion, and the final hops, the candi sugar, and the spices were added. Once the boil was done, the beer was run through a heat exchanger to bring it down to yeast-pitching temperature. It took a little longer than usual (Johan said it was because there was so much hops), but eventually it was done. We helped clean up, and road off to continue our journey.

My one remaining task was to draw a label. The beer is scheduled to come out in December of this year. I do not yet know the name of the beer, but it should be labeled Kerstbier in some fashion. If you are able to get over to Belgium in the next few months, or if any bottles make it over here, my rec-

ommendation is to try it out, if you can, but also to definitely save some bottles until this time next year, or even later. At 11%, this will certainly do the beer some good!

Event Review

By BR Rolya

On September 30, Slow Food presented "America's Great Regional Breweries" at the Puck Building. Present were beers from 24 American craft brewers plus selections from local restaurants and food purveyors.

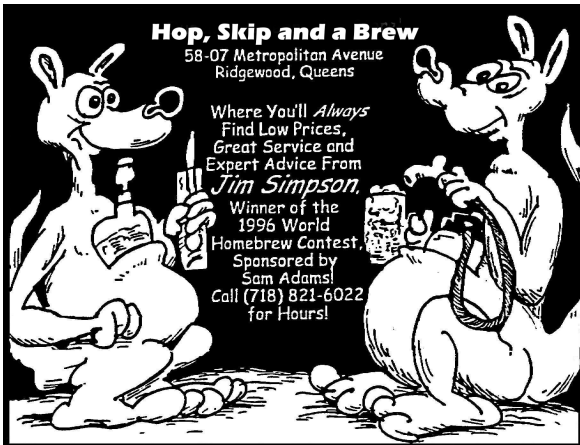
The overwhelming theme of the day was "American ales and lagers". Allegedly, breweries were encouraged to bring only one beer which meant that breweries with a diverse roster where unable to showcase their variety. In most cases, breweries tended towards the patriotic with American ambers and American pale ales making the biggest showing. I would have preferred more variety, especially from those breweries that are not distributed in New York City, but the afternoon was enjoyable nonetheless.

Starting with the large selection of ambers, I began the day with Fat Tire Amber from New Belgium Brewing of Colorado which was a decent amber with an appropriately round and malty profile. To my great dismay, the Alaskan Brewing Co. didn't bring their award-winning smoked porter but rather represented the brewery with Alaskan Amber. It was a flavorful beer - malty and full-bodied with a Germanic character, and one of the best examples of an amber at the event - but it got lost amid the others of the same style.

Anderson Valley's Boont Amber was very clean and balanced with a touch of alcohol in the finish. Goose Island (Chicago) chose to bring a tasty IPA which had a clean, floral hop aroma and big hop flavor with a nice malt character. Baltimore Brewing Co. bucked the patriotic trend with their De Groens Märzen. De Groens does a very good job at brewing traditional German-style beers and their märzen was *sehr gut*. Otter Creek's Copper Ale had a pleasant biscuity malt aroma, sweet malt flavor, and a bitter hop finish. Anchor Brewing, Sierra Nevada, and Stoudt's also contributed their malty wares. (I'm assuming that the reader doesn't need my impressions of these relatively common beers.)

After this malt extravaganza (punctuated, admittedly, by fine Maytag blue courtesy of Anchor, goat cheeses from Coach Farm Dairy, Guss's pickles,

Martin's pretzels (as found at the Union Square farmers' market), not to mention a selection of meats and a fine bean salad), one's palate was ready for a change of pace. And the first place to start was at the Brooklyn Brewery table where Garrett debuted his 2001 version of their Black Chocolate Stout. Although still young, it had a rich, roasty aroma and flavor. I found a hint of burnt toast in the flavor and the alcohol was still very much present but these characteristics should mellow with age.



Deschute's (Oregon) pleased me by bringing their excellent Black Butte Porter which was very balanced; the hearty yet not overwhelming roast character was complemented by the faintest flavor of smoke. Magic Hat brought their version of a smoked beer - Jinx - whose smoke character (in the flavor only) was very subtle and ephemeral but pleasing nonetheless. Dogfish Head's Raison d'Etre and Ommegang represented Belgian-style beers, as did Maine's Allagash whose refreshing white beer with its big coriander profile was a nice change and a favorite among the Malted Barley crew.

There were a few beers that I didn't sample because of lack of interest (bottled Long Island Iced Tea immediately comes to mind) but of the ones that I did try the only one to truly disappoint was Great Lakes Dortmunder Gold which, although it had good hop character and a crisp pilsner finish, was marred by an extreme butter aroma and flavor (and I have a hard time discerning diacetyl!).

Dessert was courtesy of Ciao Bello and their gelatos were a good palate cleanser between beers. Vanilla and blackberry were both perfect served with a splash of Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout.

The guest speaker at the event - straight off a plane from the GABF in Denver - was Michael Jackson who commended the Slow Food organization for

what they were doing to preserve the culture of eating distinctive regional foods and said that it was only natural to bring this philosophy to the appreciation of fine craft brews. This sentiment is already recognized by members of the MBAS and I'm sure that we'll continue to do our part to support the unique flavors of America's small breweries (along as they brew more than amber ales).



Contests, Festivals, and Other Goings On
November 18 - Great Brews of America Classic Beer Festival / homebrew competition- Resort at Split Rock, Lake Harmony PA

Blind Tiger Event Calendar

November 21, the 2nd Annual Monster Mash with 3 vintages of Brooklyn's Monster (1999, 2000, 2001) plus a special cask.

November 28 they will be tapping a keg of Aventinus Ice Bock. There are only 5 kegs available for the US and so this will be rather rare. [and rather strong! Ed.]

