

# Malted Barley Appreciation Society

October 2007 • Volume 14 • Number 10



Cheers! From the editor's desk. —Alan Rice

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Wed. Oct. 10, 7:30 p.m., Mugs Ale House.**

**Our guest will be Joe Lipa  
of Merchant du Vin.**

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## ITHACA BEER CO. Spirit of the Finger Lakes



Photo by Mike Lovullo

**BY ALAN RICE**

Jeff O'Neil from the Ithaca Beer Co. joined us at Mugs last month. He was in town to drop off his Great American Beer Festival entries with his friend Chris Sheehan at Chelsea Brewing. Jeff used to be Ithaca's "Chief Brewer," although now he is the "Lead Brewer," because IB is a collegial

place. But the nickname "Chief" stuck to Jeff, and he doesn't seem to mind it!

Jeff is originally from the Bay Area. His first noteworthy brewing gig was at the Jupiter brewpub in downtown Berkeley. Stop in at this great looking space for a fresh ale with your brick oven pizza.

Jeff then moved on to the Gordon Biersch Brewing Co.

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They are well known as the 19-year-old chain of brewpubs in the West, specializing in German style beers brewed with Weihenstephaner yeasts. They are one of the largest brewpub chains, and are now part of the largest such group, which includes Rock Bottom and Big River.

Ten years ago Gordon Biersch opened an 85,000 barrel capacity brewery in San Jose. Jeff brewed Pilsner, Golden Export, Märzen and Blonde Bock at this facility for distribution in bottles and kegs in CA, HI, AZ, and NV.

His last stop in California was at Drake's Brewing Co. in San Leandro. They are a well-respected micro that brews mostly British styles with a west coast interpretation. They vaulted into prominence at the GABF in 2002, when Drake's IPA beat 92 other entries to take the gold medal.

But Jeff had to watch his old team win the World Series after he helped get them there, because in 2002 he moved to Ithaca with his wife. Yes, they have lovely lakes, gorgeous gorges, and wonderful wine. And Cornell University attracts a lot of cultural activities. However, central NY is not northern CA, and Jeff regretted moving to a place with a ho-hum pace. But five years later, the town has really taken off. And with the strong and steady growth at Ithaca Beer, he is now happy that he made the move.

Dan Mitchell first got interested in opening a brewery in



1995. But that was when the first big shakeout in micros and brewpubs occurred. So he started out as a contact brewery, which is a good way to lower your risks. Interestingly, he went with Goose Island in Chicago, and not F.X. Matt in Utica. Dan was able to get used equipment cheap from a failed brewpub when he finally took the plunge in 1997. They started brewing for themselves at the end of 1998, and stopped contracting in 1999 when they installed their first bottling line.

Ithaca has seen excellent growth in its short life, ex-



Photo by Mike Lovullo



Photo by Carly Chamberlin

panding production by 30% a year for the last several years. Besides New York, they distribute in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and recently moved into parts of Pennsylvania. This is only 2 years after the came into NYC with Oak Distributors. The long-term plan is expansion into the

rest of New England and Ohio.

They are currently using about 42,000 pounds of base malt per month. So they purchased a 32-foot tall malt silo to hold bulk shipments. It is scheduled to be erected this month and should be on-line by the end of the year. Then, the only 50-pound bags that they'll have to open will contain specialty malt.

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Their brewery doubled in size three years ago. But even with the new silo, they will outgrow the building in another few years, and there is no room on the property for further expansion. They hope to find another spot in Ithaca, but they are also looking in Lansing, north of town.

Ithaca's core brands are standards such as Pale Ale and Nut Brown, but Apricot Wheat is their number one seller. Cascazilla Red Ale is quite popular with hop lovers. And yes, it has plenty of Cascade and other hops, and yes, it is a monster of a beer. But the locals know the real pun—the Cascadilla Gorge with its waterfalls runs through the south end of Cornell's campus.

The Finger Lakes is the second largest wine producing area in the country after Napa Valley. The many tourists in the region tend to check out the wineries and take home a memory. To get a slice of this business, and



also have fun brewing big beers, Ithaca Beer introduced the Excelsior series of specialty beers. Some jokers may point out that excelsior is shavings from soft wood used as packing material, and for stuffing cushions and Teddy bears. But IB beat you to the punch by putting the other definition right on the labels: ever upward, still higher, loftier, etc. And by the way, it's not excelsior, but "Excelsior!", with an exclamation point. Not a bad name. And it is the motto for New York State, as seen on our flag and seal.



The nicely shaped 750ml brown bottles have elegant labels, and all are color coded to match the beer style. Even the cap wrapper is the same color but in a different shade. This is sure to appeal to the wine crowd. Beer

geeks appreciate such touches, but we prefer to know what's inside, and I'll get to that shortly. The four beers came out in the spring. There were only about 2000 bottles of each and some kegs for special events. They were



brewed to drink fresh, but are 8-9% and bottle conditioned with the house yeast, so aging shouldn't be a problem. The release date is stamped on the label (like all beers should be). They even put the bottle number on it - for the wine snobs, I guess. At only \$9 at the brewery, they should snap them up.

After several months of bad weather, we had a perfect evening at Mugs for an outdoor tasting. Quite a few people who were out



Photos by Mike Lovullo

in the beer garden for dinner hung around when they saw the free beer come out. With the MBAS showing up in strong numbers, about 40 people were drawing samples from 4 bottles of each beer. That provided enough of a sample for the discussion, and to see if you liked it and wanted to purchase one. It was also enough if you just want to tick off a review on a beer rating website and gain all of the status that comes with such activities. But in my opinion a proper review requires a bit more of a taste. So I took one for the team and went shopping. Whole Foods in Chelsea still had a few left from the first delivery for \$9, the same price as the brewery. Jeff O'Neil re-supplied Bierkraft while he was in town, and they have ample stocks for \$11.

Jeff wanted each beer to have a twist. None would fit

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exactly in any style category. For the first one, he knew that he wanted to brew a Belgian—style strong pale wheat ale, but was not sure what direction to go. He decided that **White Gold** would contain both American and European malts and hops. And its a hybrid style with a bit of heat like a Duvel type strong ale, the color and mouth feel of Fin du Monde, and the subtle funkiness found in Moinette Blonde. They had a lot of domestic Pilsner malt left over from their stong run of Ithaca Pils. About one-third of the mash bill is French wheat. Three hundred pounds of Candi sugar (i.e. sucrose) was added to the kettle. Equal amounts of American Santium and European Saaz hops compliment the same Abbey yeast used by Westmalle and Wetvleteren.

I got a bit of lavender in the aroma, and the flavor was reminiscent of un-aged Orval. I had this beer fresh, and now the heat has mellowed. Unfortunately, my bottle was very low in carbonation. There was very little sediment in the bottle, so the conditioning yeast must not have been happy. I don't recall a problem with my sample at Mugs. But Jeff did say at the time that there was a bit of variability in the Excelsiors because these are new beers. And this was the first time he's used Krausening at IB, where a finished beer is carbonated in the bottle or keg with the addition of a small amount of active yeast. Hmm, I wonder if one of these is my bottle #438 : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luh-UYA4vJE>.

Belgium produces many great beers, but they have always used hops in balance. De Ranke XX Bitter and Popering's Hommel were the first hoppy Belgian beers. Then Houblon Chouffe and Urthel Hop It found instant popularity when they dry hopped their tripels with copi-

ous amounts of American hops such as Amarillo and Tomahawk. Soon, many American brewers picked up the style.

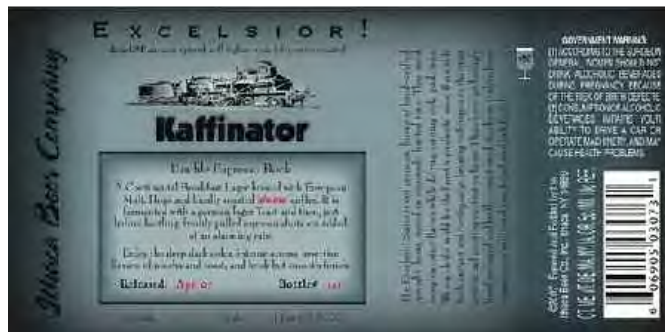
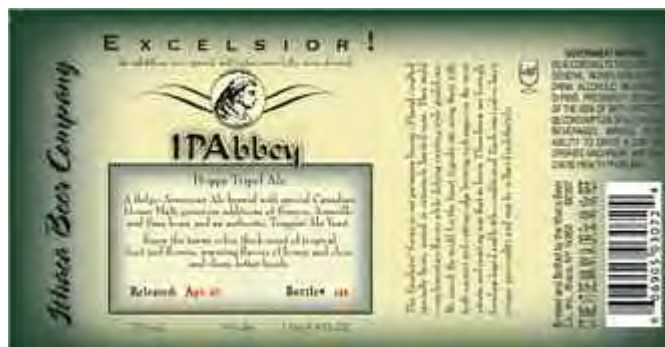
**IPAbbey** takes a different approach. Although the label says "Hoppy Tripel Ale", it is more like a DIPA. It was brewed during a snowstorm with the leftover Pilsner malt, ESB Pale malt, Canadian Honey malt and a bit of sugar. Pelletized Simcoe, Amarillo and Saaz hops are

added during first wort hopping and whirlpooling—they don't use a hopback. The same Trappist yeast put out about 9% abv. They dry hopped with a full bale each of whole leaf Simcoe and Amarillo, which left an oil slick in the tank. But only about half the hops were wet, which was fortunate because it could have been overkill. They got about 65 IBUs for their effort, but could go higher. Next time, they'll use half the hops in smaller bags and put in more steel weights.

The honey malt provides a medium amber color. This beer is low in carbonation compared to a tripel, but it's not bad for a DIPA. It was delicious fresh, with citrus, spice and bread. Now the hops have faded and a sherry sweetness has emerged. Honey and spiced cookie flavors predominate,

and it now seems more like a Belgian beer.

**Old Habit** could have been a barrel aged barley-wine. But the twist is that it is a strong rye ale, with a lot of rye. Domestic base malt and domestic Pale Ale malt form the base. British Rye Malt, British Crystal Rye Malt, domestic Rye Malt and German Chocolate Rye Malt fill out about 3/8 of the grain bill. That is a lot of rye, and it caused a serious mess. He tried to avoid this by using pre-milled malts. (These smelled and tasted fantastic out of the bag, like cookies and crackers.) The rye had no hulls



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and you could crush it with your fingers, so they added rice hulls to help the lauter. They mixed it constantly but it was still a sticky mess and it wouldn't drop, so they had to filter. It was a very long day, and next time they'll do two half batches.

About 1/3 of the ale was aged in George Dickel whisky barrels. (GD is the "other" Tennessee whisky.) The rule of thumb is 1 week for every alcohol percentage point, so the beer spent 9 weeks aging in wood during the secondary fermentation. That was about when they needed the tanks for new beers anyway, so out it went.

This beer sold out quickly and I could not find it in the city. But I really like barrel aged beers and I bought one when it was first released. I've been hanging on to it and this was the perfect time to dig it out from the closet.

The first thing you notice is the amazing color that I did not see in my sample outside that night at Mugs. It is brownish purple to dark ruby, with a dark tan head. The color is close to the dark magenta used on the label. (Unfortunately, the label is not available online for



me to illustrate here.) Swirling it in the glass leaves the legs dripping down the sides from the bourbon, and also releases vanilla and black cherry aromas. The flavor was similar to the aroma, but with more of a whiskey flavor. However, I found the booze to be very balanced with the beer flavors, not overdone like in some others where vanilla is overpowering. I could not taste the rye, per se, but the mouth feel was wonderful—very silky. This gave the impression of the sweetness you sometimes get in barrel-aged beers. But in fact, there was an oak dryness. The Centennial and Crystal hops left a bit of bitterness, but were not identifiable. Since I never had this when fresh, it did not matter to me. This was by far my favorite beer in the series.

Last up was the coffee beer. The normal modus operandi is to brew a porter or stout. The dark roasty malts with residual sugars compliment the coffee flavor. But once again, the fun was in doing something different. And again, the success of the Ithaca Pilsner meant that there was a lot

of clean lager yeast available. So Jeff decided to go with a malty lager, and doppelbock was the obvious choice. That style has famous names like Celebrator, Optimator, and Salvator, which led to **Excelsior! Kaffinator**.

German malts and Magnum hops to 44 IBUs were brewed with one pound per barrel of French-press style coffee, which was dunked right into the whirlpool. Gimme! Coffee, a local chain of espresso shops, was happy to join



Photos by Carly Chamberlin

the project. (They really like their exclamation points in Ithaca, don't they?) They have also branched out to Williamsburg, on Lorimer at Powers, very close to Barcade if you want to check them out. In addition, they added one quart per barrel of fresh espresso after the fermentation, pulled by baristas in double shots. Yup. I love coffee, but that's a lot of caffeine. I'm glad that I split this one.

As you'd expect, it pours a dark brown with a tan head that faded quickly due to the oils in the coffee. Coffee is the primary aroma, with a bit of caramel and chocolate. Surprisingly, the flavor was not dominant with coffee, as there was also brown sugar and figs. It is clearly a doppelbock, not a stout. If you are a java junky, jump on this one. But if coffee is not your cup of tea, take a pass.

# Bowling for Beers

PHOTOS BY PAMELA RICE

BY ALAN RICE

The Gutter is yet another spot in Williamsburg where you can get a good beer. The guys at Barcade brought us another unusually themed bar, this time combining beer and bowling (or vice versa). They like to play while they drink. We all knew that Paul Kermizian ([\[burg.com/localcolor/content.cfm?id=106\]\(http://www.bill-burg.com/localcolor/content.cfm?id=106\)\) liked beer and arcade games. But did you know that he is a long-time bowler, too?](http://www.bill-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

This place is the first new bowling alley in Brooklyn in about 50 years. A master craftsman built the lanes by hand. The very comfortable bar area is separated from the 8 lanes,

but you can look in through windows. Nice bathroom set-up, too.

It has a seventies decor and feels like it's been around for 30 years, but in a good way. However, it is new construction in a former factory building. It's located in an isolated area in the northwest corner of Williamsburg. But when the waterfront area is devel-

oped the bar will be packed with people not necessarily waiting to bowl. They are only a 5 minute walk from Mugs, and another 5 minutes to the recently opened Diamond, so check them out on your next pubcrawl. They have 12 taps, with a range of styles for all tastes. Unlike Barcade, the list won't change often. There should be some bottled beer, and they have a full bar.

The Gutter is located at 200 N. 14th St., [click here for their tap list](#). The Diamond is at 43 Franklin St., [click here for their tap list](#).





# Calendar

## Anniversary Week

**Thu. Oct. 11, 2pm-** **Barcade's 3rd Anniversary Celebration.** Early opening, free BBQ. Allagash Red Wine Tripel, Blue Point Cherry Imperial Stout (cask), Brooklyn Monster 2004, Dogfish Head Red and White, Hair of the Dog Fred 2005, Harpoon Wet Hop, Ithaca Kaffentator Doppelbock, Middle Ages 12th Anniversary, North Coast Brother Thelonious 2006, Sly Fox Grisette 2006, Southampton Espresso Stout, Thomas Hooker Oak Aged Liberator, Victory Saison, Weyerbacher 12th Anniversary, and a few more.



**Sat. Oct. 13, 11am-** **Mugs Ale House 15th Anniversary Celebration.** Very early opening, first 50 people receive a free t-shirt. Avery Lucky 13, Blue Point Imperial Stout (cask), Brooklyn Black Chocolate Stout 2005, Gales Millennium Ale, Great Divide Hercules Double IPA Cask, JW Lees Harvest Ale 2007, Mugs Whatisit? mystery beer, Okocim Porter, Rogue Anniversary Hop, Sam Adams Imperial Pils, Sierra Nevada Anniversary Ale, Sixpoint Mugs Anniversary Ale (a special Belgian Tripel), Smuttynose Gnome, Stone 9th Anniversary, Weyerbacher Twelve.

**Mon. Oct. 15, 7pm,** **dba's 13th Anniversary Celebration.** Featuring "Very Special Good Stuff" on tap. List TBA.



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# Calendar, continued

Click on event titles for a hot link to their website

**Wed. Oct. 10, My Big Fat German Beer Event, Blind Tiger.** Prof. Briem 1809 Berliner Weisse (bottles), Allgauer Cambonator, Ayinger Celebrator, Ayinger Oktoberfest, Ayinger Brau Weisse, Leipziger Gose, Brooklyner Schneider Hop Weisse, Schneider Edel-Weisse, Schneider Eisbock, Einbecker Pilsner, Ettal Dunkel, Reissdorf Kolsch Schlenkerla Helles, Schlenkerla Marzen, Weltenburger Asan, Kostritzer Schwarz Bier, Victory Moon

Glow Dunkel Weisse, Smuttynose Maibock, Sierra Vienna Lager, Southampton Oktoberfest.

**Thu. Oct. 11, Lagunitas Night at Hop Devil.** This caps off a full week of “Hoptoberfest” beers.

**Wed. Oct 17, Sixpoint Ales and Cheese Pairing,** Artisanal Premium Cheese Center, 500 W. 37th Street, \$60-\$75.

**Wed. Oct. 17, Brooklyn’s Brewmaster at Blind Tiger.** Garrett Oliver will be on hand with the largest collection of Brooklyn beers seen in quite a while. List TBA, but the 17 taps should cover pretty much all of them.

**Thu. Oct. 25, He-Brew Night at Barcade.** List TBA.

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## Debut Week

**Fri. Oct. 19,** 4-7pm and Sat. Oct. 20, Noon-6pm, **Captain**

**Lawrence Golden Delicious Debut, CL Brewery,** Pleasantville. Some of the second batch of Xtra Gold aged in Laird’s Apple Brandy barrels for 7 months, and was transformed into Golden Delicious American Style Tripel Ale – Oak Aged. The third batch of Xtra Gold Belgian Tripel, 10% and dry hopped with Amarillo, will also be released this weekend. They should make for an interesting comparison. You can also pick up Smoke From The Oak Bourbon Barrel, the third SFTO beer in a series of five, which debuted on Oct. 5. The Jim Beam barrels were used once for Nor’Easter, so the whiskey influence will be subdued. Xtra Gold and SFTO Bourbon will soon be in the usual beer stores in NYC. But only 80 cases of Golden Delicious were produced and it will likely sell out at the brewery within a few weeks.

**Sat. Oct. 20, Victory Baltic**



**Thunder Debut, The Drafting Room,** Exton, PA.

Tom Baker of Heavyweight brewed this 8.5% beer formerly known as Perkuno’s Hammer with Bill Covaleski

at Victory Brewing. Try it on tap and in bottles. This beer is primarily destined for bottling, but a few kegs will eventually show up in NYC. If you can make the trip out to PA, join Tom and Bill, and drink drafts of Heavyweight’s Perkuno’s

Hammer, Lunacy, and Baltus O.V.S., all from 2006; and fresh on tap from Victory their Harvest Ale and Harvest Pils. The Drafting Room will also have a few bottles of Heavyweight’s Biere d’Art, Black Ocean, Doug’s Colonial, Jakeldricka, and Slice of Bread, all from 2006, of course.

**Wed. Oct. 24, Ommegang Chocolate Indulgence Stout, NYC Debut,** Blind Tiger. This 7% ale was brewed with Belgian chocolate and Belgian yeast for Brewery Ommegang’s 10th Anniversary. The Blind Tiger is turning over 14 taps to Duvel Moortgat USA for the celebration, including Three Philosophers, Ommegeddon, Rodenbach Grand Cru, Maredsous 8, La Chouffe, and Houblon Chouffe. Look for 2 or 3 casks, too.



# Calendar, continued

**Fri. Oct. 26–Sat. Oct. 27, Fifth Annual Brewtopia World Beer Fest**, Pier 92 on the Hudson at 52nd St., \$50. Three sessions, great Hudson River views, live music, and about 50 breweries will be pouring beers.

**Mon. Oct. 29, 7pm, Anchor Brewing and Distilling at dba.** A special tasting of Anchor beers and Old Potrero whiskies. Appreciate malted barley in all of its manifestations.

**Fri. Nov. 2–Sun. Nov. 4, Thirteenth “Cask Head” Cask Ale Festival**, Brazenhead. Expect 25 casks to be pouring over the weekend, at least 10 at a time. Kelso Flemish Red, Kelso Hop Lager, Arcadia London Porter, Arcadia Hopmouth Double IPA, Weyerbacher Imperial Pumpkin, Sly Fox Chester County Brown Ale, Shmaltz He’Brew Lenny on Rye (TBC), Chelsea Hop Harvest, Chelsea Oat-

meal Stout, Cape Ann Fisherman’s Pumpkin Stout, Cape Ann Fisherman’s Navigator (TBC), Captain Lawrence Smoke From The Oak Bourbon, Mercury Ipswich Porter (TBC), Mercury Stone Cat IPA (TBC), Peak Organic Nut Brown Ale, Peak Organic Pale Ale, and Magic Hat Jinx (TBC). Working on Sixpoint, Brooklyn, Sierra Nevada, Victory, Lagunitas, Smuttynose, Blue Point, and possibly a couple of rare surprises not usually found in NYC...

**Sat. Nov. 17, Noon-8pm, MBAS Philly Pubcrawl.** Save the date. We’re working out the details, and we’ll send out an announcement soon.

**For up-to-the-minute event info, go to:**

<http://hbd.org/mbas/calendar.html>

For the latest **draft lists**, go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/new.html>

**For area beer bars**, go to: <http://hbd.org/mbas/beer.html>