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Amateur Brewer

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PORTLAND, OREGON

NEWSLETTER

The Amateur Brewer is published annually in June. The Amateur Brewer Newsletter is published four times a year in October, December, February and April.

Amateur Brewer NEWSLETTER no. 7-1, October 1980 (503)289-7596

BOOK REVIEWS

Line, Dave, Beer Kits and Brewing, 1980: Andover, Hants, England. 160pp., Illustrated.

If you've read Dave's Big Book of Brewing and his Brewing Beers Like Those You Buy, you might wonder what he could possibly do for an encore. Dave Line died suddenly this spring, of cancer, while this, his third book, was in the proof stage. The book is a suitable monument to his genius.

It is, I imagine, quite difficult for any Englishman to bridge the gap between U.S. and British taste in homebrewing, but in many ways this book does just that. There is even a chapter on North American Brewing practice! With a Steam Beer Recipe yet--Ah, the English, what'll they think of next?

We Americans owe a debt of gratitude to our Prohibition forebearers, U.S. Brewing companies and the English homebrewers. The first for showing us how not to do it, the second for making it necessary, and the English for moving us back on track. Dave Line's final encore adds finesse to the effort and will greatly enhance his memory.

If I were to criticise, I'd make two comments: rack to secondary sooner, and stay closer to natural ingredients.

Dave's major premise is stated succinctly when he tells us: "the more effort you put into selecting ingredients, storing them correctly and implementing the extra tasks for quality control on the process side, the better the beer will be."

I strongly recommend this book for one and all. A "must" for your library.

f.e.

CONGRATULATIONS FRED: Your book finally got reviewed, after selling 85,000 copies, after ten years of re-working it, after starting a whole generation of authors in brewing better beer (and writing about it), after getting most of the home brew suppliers to change from prohibition style home brewing recipes to all-malt beers, low sugar beers, refrigerator lagers, fresh hops, secondary fermentors. After all of those innovations and much more, we finally got our book (and the Amateur Brewer, too) reviewed in a national publication: YES--it was reviewed in the NEXT WHOLE EARTH CATALOGUE (Brand, Stewart, Ed., 1980 POINT, box 428, Sausalito CA 94966, 608pp., Illus., Our review p371. The NWEA is a whole winter's reading--purchase with care, you could get hung up for weeks on end. price \$12.50.

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AMATEUR BREWER INFORMATION SERVICE

P.O. BOX 546

PORTLAND, OR 97207

USA

What a wonderful surprise--we'd never been reviewed by anyone, not even the Home Wine and Beer Trade Journal (actually we did review Treatise in the Amateur Brewer). Do you want to know what they said about our Annual Quarterly? "This is allegedly a quarterly 'for the serious home brewer'. You'd have to be a patient home brewer, too. Editor Eckhardt's years get a little stretchy....But if you subscribe you get four issues anyhow--however long it takes. And it's worth waiting for...." (That's WHY I am changing the format--once a year is not often enough). Anyway, happiness is having your book (and your magazine) reviewed, and not one bad word.

FRED OPENS HIS MAIL BAG

I am sure that my mail is the most fascinating in captivity. I get the most wonderful compliments, the strangest stories, the wierdest questions, and of course dollar billses. Let me share some of it with you.

"Thanks to you I enjoy my first home brew....C.E., New York.

"I enjoy reading (your) Treatise....Thanks for taking the time to write it....R.C., Falls Church VA.

"Thanks for responding so quickly....J.D., Monterey CA (Yes, every once in a while we do answer our mail the day it arrives--it's not always slow).

This is one of my favorites, "I have purchased and read your latest edition of (Treatise), and have found it clear, concise and highly informative. Following your techniques and recipes I have produced and enjoyed many fine beers." C.T., Auburn AL.

Well, enough, I don't really want to bore you, but compliments are nice.

I got a phone call from a fellow in North Carolina, (8 am), and he was disappointed in the taste of his beer. After we talked a while I concluded that either he didn't LIKE the way home brew tasted, or that he had a nasty bug in his beer, but which? You can't taste beer over the telephone, so I did the next best thing, I directed him to Tom Keating, another fellow in North Carolina (about a hundred miles up the road), and told him to bring a bottle of his beer to Tom for an opinion. Tom Keating is President of the Blue Ridge Brewers, a beer club in that region. I haven't heard from either since, so I suppose everything worked out okay.

Then there's Pat Greaney in Alaska who writes me from time to time. His letters are always fascinating. In May he wrote:

"I was just reading thru the hop issue (AB #4) again for the fourteenth time and on p61 I came across one of my boyhood memories. A very fond memory that I've been trying to recapture for lo these many years. Right after I came home from helping (some of our allies) maintain their version of democracy. I...got a job....(and) fell into the habit of stopping in at the local for an afterwork libation. The Springdale Turn Hall of Holyoke, Mass. They were the only purveyors of a sublime kegged brew that I ever found. Kruger Cream Ale. A smooth heavy, highly malted brew that was black as the devil's heart, with a nutty-sweet palate and a beautiful head. A truly creamy texture and a taste I've never forgotten after 15 years. And dispensed at a paltry 25¢ per 12-oz glass.

"I loved it. I had to move away and when I got back it was gone. The barkeep told me that it only lasted as long as a few old men who remembered real beer. When I moved away and the older men passed on or were no longer able to get out, the Ale also passed on in favor of the lighter brews. A real shame." Do any of our readers know if this beer is still made and sold anywhere else? Pat is in the Airforce, and is President (Brewmaster) of an Alaskan beer club. I answered his letter promptly in September.

This from Anheuser-Busch: (May--before AB #7) Ladies and Gentlemen: We have not received any issues of the AMATEUR BREWER for 1980, nor have we received an invoice. Please reinstate our subscription and bill us as soon as possible. We would like all the issues for 1980 so that our holdings may be complete." They thought our Quarterly Annual was a Quarterly too--how 'bout that. I sent them No. 7 in July.

Frank Loos lives in Libertyville Illinois, and he wrote me, "I was glad to receive the #7 issue of the AB. It had seemed a long time since I had had the last issue, and I wondered a little about it, but we beer makers must be a patient lot. I was sorry to read that you were planning to wind it down after issue #10. I'll miss your friendly, informal, and informative publication." Good news, Frank, the Amateur Brewer will live on--I'm having too much fun to quit just now.

Lee Damkoehler of Wisconsin, whose labels grace both front and back covers of AB #7, dreams of opening his own brewery and collects Brewerania. (April 29 rec'd, May 2 Ansd). "I have put my idea of starting my own brewery on the back burner. But I still would like to have my own pilot set-up. He closed with a quote from Bickerdyke's Curiosities of Ale and Beer, 1889, recently re-published (1965 Spring Books, Westbook House, Fulham, Broadway, London, England.)

"And what this flood of deeper brown,
Which a white foam does also crown,
Less white than snow, more white than mortar?
Oh, My soul! Can this be Porter?"

MORE ON YEAST

John Goldfine in Maine writes to comment on Yeast (February). "I was surprised by your singling Vierka yeast for approval...(it) comes in a paper, not foil, packet....(it) has the very worst beer recipes printed on it that I've ever seen."

My comments were on p31, AB #6, "It would seem that the liquid yeasts produced by Edme (England), and Vierka (Germany) might be the only rational bottom yeasts available." The key word is LIQUID yeasts, as opposed to dry yeasts, which had been condemned earlier in the same article. The Edme yeast is now produced by Hoole Packing and Chemical Co., 26 Charles St., Hoole, Chester, Angletterre, England. Vierka I have not seen lately, so maybe it is no longer made in liquid form.

The real point of all this (Drum Roll--Trumpets): B-rrrrr-ooooom Ta DA! Announcing AMATEUR BREWER L, a fine Brewery yeast from one of America's finest breweries. I have used this yeast for years and there is no doubt in my mind about its high quality and great flocculating powers. You will find in Amateur Brewer L a yeast which will meet all of your demands and more. A genuine lager yeast. I have given this yeast away to be cultured, produced and marketed by the WINE Lab, 1200 Oak Av, St. Helena CA 94574. They will market it in their catalogue

of wine yeasts, at their regular prices. Yeast culturing is their business, so you can't get Amateur Brewer L from us, you must write to them (address above). The yeast is a little more expensive than the regular store-bought yeast you now use, but I believe it is worth it. We at Amateur Brewer will not receive any financial gain, but we relish the publicity: try to find a Home Fermentor Digest yeast, or a Zymurgy yeast! The liquid vials are available from WINE LAB in 1-oz or 2-oz vials, for \$3 or \$4, PLUS shipping which is \$2 for up to 4-oz total (four 1-oz vials, or two 2-oz vials) and \$3 for up to 8-oz shipping.

HOW TO USE AMATEUR BREWER L

Make your first beer with a good dry ale yeast, and save a quart or a liter of hot beer wort (taken immediately after you turn the stove off, ladle into a preheated bottle, cap tightly, and when cool, place in your refrigerator), to wait your next brew date. A couple of days before you plan to brew, take the bottle of beer wort out of the refrigerator, stand it in warm water to take the chill away, and when it reaches room temperature, open and decant the wort from its dregs (trub) into a half gallon or 1.5-liter wine bottle (sterilized, of course). Shake up the yeast vial, and pour the contents into the starter. Attach a fermentation lock with a wad of cotton instead of water, and stand at a temperature between 70 and 80°F (21-27°C) until it shows ferment. At that point brew your beer. If not, change the wad of cotton for water in the fermentation lock. When the starter has fermented out, cleared and settled, store in the refrigerator until you do make beer, but don't wait more than three weeks to use such a starter.

The availability of this new yeast will go a long way towards solving many people's yeast problems at least for a cold fermenting lager yeast.

BEER FOR YOUR GOOD HEALTH

It is common knowledge that wine has many beneficial medical effects. You may be sure that many of them are also attributable to beer. Beer is a food, a source of energy for work and body maintenance, and, in moderate quantities, has no deleterious effect on growth or development. Beer is high in vitamin-B and minerals and it can be an important dietary supplement for them. Because of the tranquilizing action of its alcohol, as well as that of the hops, and the appetite stimulating effect, beer may be useful to relieve tension and create conviviality in any gathering. Always in moderation, of course. I have known doctors who prescribe beer for pregnant ladies, and the best beer for this is good rich dark beer. European doctors are much in favor of this use of beer.

The New England Journal of Medicine published results of a 9-year study of nearly 8000 men in Honolulu. Dr. George Rhoads reported that of these men who drank beer or hard liquor (up to 3-4 beers a day), 50% fewer got heart attacks. There was a higher rate among those men who drank only one beer a day. These men were moderate drinkers. You say you haven't had your third beer yet, today? Incidentally there are more than 200 hospitals in 33 states that serve wine to patients regularly, with the approval of, or on their Doctor's orders. I wonder if any serve beer.

Fred Eckhardt
FRED ECKHARDT

P.S. I Just found out (from my favorite Dietetic Technician) that Portland's Providence Hospital and Medical center serves both beer & wine.