

TALK to your

BEER

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BEER IN THE WOOD?

Jack Riehl of Walla Walla, Washington wrote me (along with a nice article on hops for ABC#10--Nov '83): "I'm interested in beer from the wood. Can you write us an American version of Dave Line's treatment in his Big Book of Brewing (from ABIS \$5.25)? Are the wine barrels that are available suitable for beer? Should they be pitched or waxed? How about fining and priming procedures? Cleaning and sterilizing? If I take it on a picnic, must it have time to settle before pulling?"

I immediately went to my copy of Dave Line's Big Book of Brewing, to see what he had actually said about wood. Among other things he discusses how to bring a barrel of Stout (43-US gallons; 163.4-litres) to the missus from the local pub. "...such a stupid shape...one kick slightly off centre will cause the barrel to gyrate across the road at an alarming speed. Although ...it is a wonderful experience to watch the reflexes of passing motorists." He continues in a more practical vein. "...Draught beer requires a higher proportion of the slow fermenting dextrinous sugars to produce the essential cask conditioning." Among other requirements, he mentions a high OG (1050-1060--13-15⁰B). A fair amount of information on what beer to brew and how to do that, but Dave line, it seems, does not have a great deal to say about the wood itself. None of the British writers have much to say about the wood itself. The best current information is in Hough, Briggs, Stevens and Young, Malting and Brewing Science, vol II, Hopped Wort and Beer, 2nd Ed, 1982, London: Chapman & Hall, p688, "However wooden casks are rare, most casks being constructed of aluminium. The advantages of cask conditioned beers to the consumer is that they tend to be rich in flavour and low in carbon dioxide." Dave Line and others talk about cooperage and such, but nothing about the wood itself. We can't get the English wood casks here and that is where it is really at.

Then there's the matter of pitch, for example. No Englishman mentions it because it is that they don't pitch their vessels. Yet, not a single American author of the 19th century fails to mention that, and to carry on tediously about the requirements, and pitch formulas, etc., etc. Americans, it seems, have always pitched theirs, the English no. Now I'm not talking about the fermenting vessel, that's another whole ball-game. No, I'm talking dispensing vessel, of which there ain't hardly none of anymore in these United States. They are even rare in England as we have seen. Terry Foster tells us, (Dr. Foster's Book of Beer, available from him for about \$10: 96 Cornflower Dr., Milford Ct 06460), "The few remaining breweries and private individuals who still use wooden casks can only do so because the majority of brewers use other types of container...it will be the shortage of wood which will kill off the craft of caskmaking, rather than the lack of demand for its products." There remains the fact that the British are willing to have their beer stored in (oak only) casks which have not been pitched. This undoubtedly will give the beer a strong tannin addition, and seriously effect the flavor in an "oaky" manner. Americans have never been in favor of this, but the old writers (wahl-Henius, One Hundred Years, etc.) all speak kindly of the flavor nuances from the "pitch" lining of the dispensing casks. The Practical Brewer (1st Ed 1947) tells us that "pitch" is the "resin of coniferous trees...melted and boiled...(leaving a) residue known as colophony (which is) melted and mixed with resin oil (with) cottonseed oil and paraffin added...to make thinner coatings possible. Good pitch should be practically neutral on tasting. Pitch is used to coat all wood and some metal receptacles to prevent beer from contacting the wood or metal (and)...it serves to prevent absorption of beer into the pores of the wood...(and) prevents imparting any "woody" or foreign flavor to the beer. It is applied in a hot state by spraying...(after removing as much of the old pitch as possible.)" An old Falstaff Brewmaster told me that simple varnish would probably suffice. The beer dispensing cask itself (4- 22-gallons) is made of relatively thick oak.

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I don't believe a wine barrel will do the job, but you might experiment with the small paraffine lined Pine casks available from some suppliers such as Steinbarts. Wine & the People of Berkeley CA told me they still had a few of their 1979 consignment of 4-gallon wooden casks (pitched) originally from Okinawa. They're \$12.50 plus shipping.

In any case wood must be a dreadful bother, and I certainly do not recommend it. The cleaning and work that it takes to put one into use is legend. Not only that, but you should be aware that the end result is (must be) a British style beer, "Cask Conditioned Draught Beer" as Real Ale is known technically. Unless you know that you really take to this style of beer, you might be disappointed.

If you do decide to try beer-in-the-wood, then follow these procedures for preparing your cask for use. New casks contain large amounts of tannins, and it may take several batches to get them to a point where they are not ruining your beer with excessive tannin. Second hand casks may be much worse, you can't be sure until you try them.

1. Fill the cask with cold water, and keep it topped-up until the staves have come together and there is no leakage. If the thing doesn't seal by 48-hours, forget it. Empty the cask.

2. Refill the cask with hot water and about 2-lb of Soda Ash (Washing Soda, Sodium Carbonate) per 5-gallons volume and stand overnight. Empty again. If the cask is brand new, or screwed up excessively, repeat the Soda Ash treatment (above).

3. Fill with hot or boiling water and stand overnight. This rids the soda ash and reduces the tannin content. Do this as often as necessary until the water is color free, or very nearly so.

4. Sterilize the cask. Use an ounce of Potassium or Sodium bisulfite/US gallon, and add about 20% of the cask volume. Roll the barrel around for a couple of hours (intermittant) to completely charge all surfaces. I don't think chlorine is good here, but perhaps a chlorox bath (2T/USgal) might precede the sulfite one.

5. Finally, make a discardable beer in the cask, before you make any good beer.

6. Do you really want beer-in-the-wood? The above procedure is for oak barrels. I wouldn't use boiling water in the paraffined jobs.

Having done all of the forgoing, I'm not going to talk about the special qualities required of the beer to be cask conditioned, Dave Line (p192--Big Book) says it all and I have no such experience and won't try (his barrel preparation is different, however).

Finally, Jack, if you take the beer on a picnic, you needn't let it settle as it probably won't, rather drink it as beer should be drunk--out of a stone mug, clarity be damned! Better yet make your beer in a stainless steel container and forget the wood--you'll never miss it.

Jack Riehl lives not too far from the Washington State Univ Hop Research station

at Prosser, Washington and he grows about seven varieties of hops in his garden.

SPEAKING OF HOPS. In my hop issue (AB#4), which I recently went over for accuracy and pertinancy after 6-years in print, I again printed the two nurseries which sell hops. I called each one, and verified the information before reprinting it. Lo and behold, after all these years, it turns out that Weeks Berry Nursery in Salem OR does not sell retail, they later told me (too late).

BUT, in this era almost any nursery supply will order them for you, if they don't already have them in stock. Furthermore Great Fermentations (87 Larkspur, San Rafael, CA, 94901, (415) 459-2520 and Winemaker's Ltd, Box C-406, Westport MA, 02790 (617) 636-5154 each sell hop cuttings by mail order. Still furthermore, it is a little late to start hops if you have not already done so.

MUNICH BEER

Jack Riehl had some questions about Munich Malt which is now available from progressive and caring merchants (from Briess Malting). Do you use all Munich malt, or do you mix it with some proportion of pale malt? I understand that these beers are considered to be low hopped, yet the dark malts are supposed to inhibit hop flavor. Thus, do we use about the same amount of hops as for other beers and expect a little less of it to come through? Is potassium chloride helpful in these beers for palate-fulness? Then he requested an all grain recipe for Munich beer. How about that, the things I'm willing to do for an article!

Munich malt is a flavoring and coloring malt. The main fermentables come from pale malt as in all beer. Munich beers do have less hops (16 HBU, compared to Pilsner 25, Pale Ale 70, Stout 90), and higher salt content, so substituting Potassium Chloride would be quite all right.

ALL GRAIN MUNICH BEER

OG 1054 (13.3°B) 5-US gals (20 L)
1.5-lb Munich Malt (0.68kg)
¼-lb crystal or caramel malt (115gm)
1½-oz black patent malt (45-gm)
about 6-lb (2.9kg) pale 2-row malt (preferably european, not English or U.S. or Canadian).
1½-oz Hallertauer pellets (45-gm)
Mash with decoction style mash sequence if possible (Mashing Notebook or AB#5) or use an upward step infusion if you lack an adventurous spirit. Ferment as lager beer. (recipe from Wahl, A & Wahl, R, The Wahl Handybook of the American Brewing Industry 1937, Chicago Wahl Institute, 2 vols, v2.)

EXTRACT MUNICH BEER

OG 1054 (13.3°B) 5-US gals (20 L)
1½-lb Munich malt (0.68kg)
¼-lb crystal or caramel malt (115gm)
1½-oz black patent malt (45-gm)
3.5 lb pale malt extract, preferably

ASU

German or Danish (available some places) or good quality English malt extract, (1.6-kg) plus 2-lb (1.0-kg) good quality dry malt extract.

1½-oz Hallertauer pellets (45-gm). Mash the Munich & crystal by our abbreviated kettle mash. Steep at 155°F (68°C) for an hour or longer, (after grinding) separate the grains and add the malt extracts and boil with the hops in your usual manner. Add the black malt (whole kernel) in the last 30-min of boil. Ferment as lager beer.

Mr. Chas W Couse of Sussex NJ writes, "Please give me some information dealing with what I will call a cold mix or a boiling mix for making the wort."

I've never heard those terms used in that fashion before, but I imagine you mean preparing the wort by adding warm water as opposed to bringing it to a boil as part of the preparation. I used to tell folks it was OK not to boil the wort when using hop flavored malt extracts, but that it was better if you did. I no longer say that. Always boil the wort. There are good reasons, most important--sterility, and next ridding the wort of unusable proteins. It is an absolute imperative when using plain malt extracts which must be boiled with hops to incorporate their resins into the wort, and not a short boil either. You must boil such worts for over an hour (1:15 to 1:20 minimum).

Alan Toby (Wine & the People) wrote to say that the new edition of his booklet (Brewing All-Grain Beers, ABIS \$2) is out and computer dots have been banished to Siberia or wherever such creatures go to die. The new edition is typeset properly, and the book just that much more attractive. He also wrote--"I like your 'Five Ways' (to improve your beer Talk 9-00) very much--exactly the ways we (Wine & the People) are recommending. Seems like the times are ripe for the general standard for home brewing to move up another notch or two..." (Thanks Alan)

In Talk 9-1 I told you that my friend Vince Cottone of Seattle had told me he had had trouble using lager yeast in single stage ferment. I was wrong, he'd had trouble using flocculant ale yeasts, particularly the strain he'd gotten from Bay Ale Brewery in Vancouver BC. That yeast bubbled right out of the fermentor. If you have such problems try setting your fermentor level lower in the shoulder of the carboy. You can't use dry hops in the early stage either or you'll blow them out of the carboy. You really need the 1" ID tube, because you take risks when using anything less than that.

TAPPER GOES

Al Andrews finally hung up his shoes on this newsletter. "Well this is it! I have decided to hang-it-up with respect to THE TAPPER. I feel that I can better serve the home beer makers by increasing my writing activity." The Tapper was first published in the spring of '81.

Al Andrews' writing is certainly welcome on these pages. And so are you. We have a steady need for articles on any phase of beer-making. We are especially interested in your beer, your recipes, your equipment, your procedures and YOUR ideas. We need input. We are told regularly, and by a variety of readers that we are doing a good job, but the editor has a relatively narrow viewpoint (traditional beer). We have no desire to make this an elitist publication. All ideas are welcome (and have been so).

Our readers take their beer-making seriously (but with a definite sense of humor). They consider themselves fairly skilled in the brewing arts, but they are always looking for new ideas and procedures and recipes that will enhance their product. Your ideas or procedures may be just what they need. We welcome your input. We pay a modest sum on publication in our annuals, and on some occasions for articles in Talk. You won't get rich, but there are a few modest tax benefits involved.

BREWING SCIENCE SEMINAR

The University of California Davis is offering its annual Intensive Brewing Science for Practical Brewing. The course is aimed at "Brewing industry professionals who do not have formal training in brewing Science. It is of special interest to less experienced employees (who need such training)." If you are of reasonable intelligence and can read and understand semi-technical information you will get enough from this to be a great help in making better beer at home or in your (soon to be established) micro-brewery. Dr Michael Lewis and Dr James Hough will be co-instructors with visiting guest lecturer Dr Tom Young, Univ Birmingham (England) School of Malting and Brewing. More than you ever wanted to know about the subject of brewing! \$650 at UCD Aug 28 - Sept 2, 1983.

THE DOEMENS SCHOOL

Actually, what you should do is go to school in Germany. The Doemens school is located in Munich and Director Georg Zentgraf will be at the AHA conference in Boulder. If you really want to learn brewing you might want to talk to him or write to the school for their booklet. The school has its own experimental brewery and also a student pub. You'll never thirst at Doemens for knowledge OR beer! Address: Doemensschule Munchen E.V. Bayerische D-8032 Grafelfing Munchen, Stefanustrasse 8, W. Germany.



ANOTHER CALIFORNIA STEAM BEER

You may have thought that Steam Beer was always an all-malt beer, but here's a recipe adopted from Nugy, The Brewer's Manual, Practically Considered, 1948: Bayonne NJ, privately published. Nugy's book is really wonderful, jam-packed with fine information and it has a chart with 32 different recipes for making 100 barrels, 3100 USgals, 117.3-Hl) of such American/Canadian standby's of 1948 as Canadian Ale, Cream Ale, Stock Ale, Quebec Ale, Lager beer, Draft beer, Bock beer, Porter, Golden Beer and this Steam Beer recipe.

5-US gallons, 20-litre

Ingredients

- About 5-lbs, 11-oz at 1030 yield (2.6kg) Malt
- 2.5-lb corn grits or flaked maize (1.13kg)
- 2.0-oz domestic hops (clusters, fresh)(55gm)
- 3.1 w/w alcohol, OG 1048 (12°B)
- TG about 1018 (4.5°B).

Mash-in according to our instructions (Mashing Notebook, part II) for cereal grains, or use flaked maize by the method described there, or the system outlined in ABNL 8-2 by Jeff Jones. Ferment as outlined in the Steam Beer Recipe AB#8,p82. I have not made this particular recipe, but that shouldn't stop you from trying it.

NEW ALBION FAILS

The New Albion brewery in Sonoma closed its doors recently, leaving only two micro-breweries in California at this time, but with several preparing to open their doors. New Albion production was too small to allow it to compete in the market. Then, too, there were reports of spoiled batches of beer, and owner Jack Mc Auliffe was thought by some to be his own worst enemy. In any case I'm sure we haven't heard the last of Jack, especially now that we have the Brew Pub Law in California. Send me a stamped S.A.S.E. and an extra 10¢ stamp and I'll send you a copy of the California Law.

If your beer club has a newsletter get the editor to add us to the mailing list--we'll add your club to ours at no charge.

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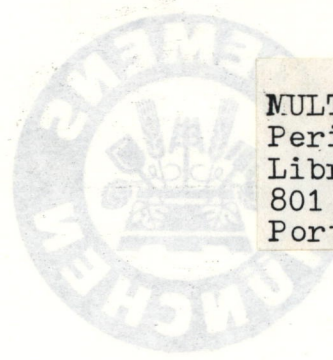
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