



The Cellar

The Official Newsletter of the Colonial Ale Smiths and Keggers

When it Rains, It Pours (Beer): 93.7 BobFM Hosting Bob's Colonial Home Brewing Contest in December

By Harrison Gibbs

Norfolk radio station 93.7BobFM is hosting another area homebrew contest in December. Sponsored by Samuel Adams, the contest mirrors the brewery's New England Competition held around the same time, according to Donna Agresto Seavey and event organizer working with the station and the competition's organizer. All the details are at www.937bobfm.com/bobscolonialhomebrew.shtml.

The prizes for this one are BIG! First and Second prizes winners in each category receive a trophy. The "Grand Champion – Knocked By Socks Off" (sp?) will win \$500 cash and a trip for two to Boston with a VIP tour of the Samuel Adams Brewery and a party for 10 friends. The rules do not specify whether the party for 10 friends is in Norfolk or Boston. The radio station will also have an awards party on December 16. it sounds like the awards will not be announced until then.

Only categories 1 through 23. However, that is everything but meads and ciders. Entries are only received between Tuesday December 11 and Friday December 14. Judging takes place December 14 and 15. With the small number of area judges, two days will permit more flights.

On-line registration is preferred and paper entry forms are available only at the radio station offices during normal business hours. Entry fees are \$5 per entry. If you enter online you will have to pay by credit or bank card or e-check by clicking the Paypal button on the website.

Some differences from the standard AHA/BJCP competition include requiring 4 bottles per entry and permitting 2 entries per category or subcategory. Cobrewers are not excluded from sending in their own entry.

Every CASK member should consider entering at least one category. Most of you have 4 bottles of one of your beers at home. Moreover, this competition will be in desperate need of judges so if you have some experience as a judge or steward consider signing up. Maybe CASK can rent a van for one or more days.

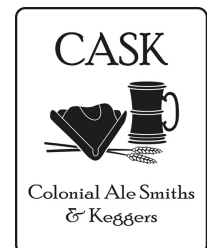
Special Offer from Coastal Wine

Coastal Wine is now offering a 25% discount to all CASK members who prepay and order beer by the six-pack or case. Note that this offer is not good for singles, only six-packs and cases.

This is an excellent opportunity to save a bunch of money on those beers you like to order in quantity. Anyone interested can contact Brian at beer@coastalwineconnection.com and he will fill you in on the pricing and payment options.

In this Issue of The Cellar:

The Cellarmaster.....	2
Tips for Brewing Belgian Ales.....	4
Growing Hops.....	6
The CASK Calendar of Club Events and Competitions.....	9





The Cellarmaster

By Steven Davis

“ CASK Conducts Blitz of the Hall of Fame”

For the past two years, CASK has discussed the possibility of conducting a homebrew competition, but has not been able to pull it off due to conflicts in schedules and personnel availability. Sometimes you just need to have things dropped in your lap to pull off the improbable.

It was in early August when the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame & Museum contacted yours truly asking me if CASK would be interested in organizing the 1st annual Virginia Sports Hall of Fame Beer Blitz homebrew competition on October 6th. The young ladies of the Hall knew that they wanted to hold a competition as a fundraiser

for their establishment, but just didn't have the expertise on what was necessary to set one up and make it happen. In addition, they wanted to hold the event at night, and open to the public, both quite unique to homebrew competitions, and unprecedented in my experience as a judge in the BJCP. My initial thought was that such an event could not be pulled off with just 2 months of preparation time, especially for a 1st annual competition which had no participation base or reputation to attract judges, stewards and entries. The challenge however, seemed too enticing to pass up. The bottom line was someone had to do it, and who better than CASK to tackle the obstacles head on.

The first task at hand was to assemble a team of highly motivated and talented individuals to fill the positions required by the BJCP for a competition. Since I had agreed to be the organizer, I figured who better than our previous CASK Presidents and current Club Competition Coordinator to fill the billets. Norm Schaeffler agreed to be the registrar, while Harrison Gibbs and Dave Bridges volunteered to fill the positions of judge and steward directors respectively. With such a talented group, I knew my job ahead would be much easier than I had anticipated.

The next challenge was to assemble a group of qualified judges and stewards, as well as arrange for enough entries to make the competition worthwhile. The VSHFM had requested that the competition be limited to 7 categories due to it being a first year event, therefore it was obvious that there was no time available for prospective brewers to actually brew their beers for the competition and it would be necessary to pick categories for which beers would already be finished and available. American Ales, IPAs, Stouts and Porters seemed like an obvious choices here. The Hall had also requested that Mead, Cider and fruit beers be included, so there would be “colorful” beers for the public to observe. In addition, with 7 categories, at least 14 judges and 7 stewards would be needed at a minimum to conduct the judging.

With such a short time available before the competition, it became readily apparent what would be necessary to make this event a success... begging and pleading. Sometimes the easiest way to appeal to people is to challenge their desire to be their best. I attempted this by contacting every homebrew club in Virginia and North Carolina and staking them to a “best club in the Mid-Atlantic” challenge. My hope and desire was that this would raise interest in an interstate event, however due to the time restraints this would never seem to materialize. With time running short, we would need to go for the more direct approach, challenge the local Virginia homebrew clubs to step up and help make this first annual event a competition people would be willing to enter again in the future. Virginia and Hampton Road's reputation were on the line, and failure was not an option.

As time would draw near, our friends at James River Homebrewers and Hampton Roads Brewing & Tasting Society really stepped up to the task. CASK members would also perform most admirably as we know they always do, and when the competition came to reality, there would be 20 judges, 9 stewards and 63 entries registered. These numbers not only surpassed our expectations, they actually exceeded our wildest dreams. For a first year competition only covering seven categories, these numbers were truly phenomenal. The other aspect that was so impressive was how many “first time” participants we picked up. These individuals included both brewers and non-brewers. Paired with many experienced judges, these newcomers would both gain valuable experience as well as exposure to a side of the hobby each said they thoroughly enjoyed and would love to participate in again.

As the event began on Saturday evening, it was obvious that we had too many entries in both the American Ale and IPA categories for just one flight, so tables and judges had to be shuffled last minute to allow two tables in each of those beer styles. It was at this time that we realized how lucky we were to have received the extra judges and stewards. We would be able to continue the event without unexpected delays.



As the evening carried on, there were many fantastic beers, mead & cider tasted and judged, and the public watch in amazement frequently questioning and commenting as to why they could not try the beers on the tables. Luckily HRB&TS and CASK had supplied a homebrew table for these thirsty individuals to frequent to both sample beers and ask questions about the hobby.

After the judging had completed, and the individual winners had been determined, the evening would end with a Best of Show round which would crown an overall winner for the competition. I guess after four straight years of CASK taking home the Dominion Cup from Richmond, it was only poetic justice that a member of James River Homebrewers, William Spiesberger would take home the 1st Annual Beer Blitz grand prize.

CASK would like to congratulate all of the winners of the Beer Blitz (listed below) and thank each brewer who entered beer in this inaugural event. We would also like to sincerely thank each and every member of the judging and stewarding staff for taking time out of their busy schedules to help make this 1st annual event a huge success. Additionally, we would like to extend a special thanks to Connie Bridges for volunteering to make our wonderful nametags and thank you cards. With the help of my wonderful staff, Norm Harrison and Dave, I believe the Blitz established itself as an event that people will enjoy participating in and entering for years to come. We can only hope the Hall of Fame will make this a regular event on their calendar, and invite CASK back to coordinate it. Cheers.

1st VSHFM Beer Blitz Results

October 6 2005

Sponsored by Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and Museum

63 Entries

Table 1 - American Ales (13 Entries)

Dave Bridges	Hoppy Pale Ale	10A	American Pale	1
Greg Nowicki	Brown Ale	10C	American Brown	2
Richard Pidgeon	APA Without a Name	10A	American Pale	3

Table 2 - Porters (5 Entries)

Diane Catanzaro, Chris Jones	Hey Porter!	12B	Robust Porter	1
Mike Price	Mike's Dark Brown Porter	12A	Brown Porter	2
JP Messier	Currituck Porter	12B	Robust Porter	3

Table 3 - Stouts (6 Entries)

Jeff Stuebben	IVAN's Brew	13F	Russian Imperial Stout	1
Douglas Boyd	Dry Stout	13A	Dry Stout	2
Diane Catanzaro, Chris Jones	Imperial Stout	13F	Russian Imperial Stout	3

Table 4 - IPA (15 Entries)

William Spiesberger	Smither's Revenge	14B	American IPA	1
Norman Schaeffler	Bay Lake IPA	14B	American IPA	2
Victor Perrotti	Burmese Daze	14B	American IPA	3
Ken Gillespie	Beer	14A	English IPA	HM



Table 5 - Fruit Beers (8 Entries)

Diane Catanzaro, Chris Jones	Apricot Hefe	20A	Fruit Beer	1
Douglas Boyd	Blackberry Stout	20A	Fruit Beer	2
Norman Schaeffler	Berry Berry Good to me ...	20A	Fruit Beer	3

Table 6 - Meads (11 Entries)

Tom Byrnes	Maple Maddness	26C	Open Category Mead	1
Harrison Gibbs	Bruno's Rose	25B	Pymment	2
Diane Catanzaro	Meadalicious	24C	Sweet Mead	3
JP Messier	Cocunut-Pineapple Mead	25C	Other Fruit Melomel	HM
Harrison Gibbs	Pysser	25C	Other Fruit Melomel	HM

Table 7 - Ciders (5 Entries)

Avery Gibbs	Cider C05	27A	Common Cider	1
Harrison Gibbs	Cider A05	27A	Common Cider	2
Bob Henderson	11 Month Cider	27B	English Cider	3

Best Of Show

William Spiesberger	Smither's Revenge	14B	American IPA	1
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Tips for Brewing Belgian Ales

By Harrison Gibbs

With the upcoming Winter Iron Brew requirement being Belgian Ales, I thought it might be helpful to review the literature and see what tips might be useful for a homebrewer. Here is what I found:

1. Don't be a slave to style. The number one rule with Belgian ales is that there are no rules, brewers brew what they want seeking quality over conformity. Even the strict monastic orders, adopted creative approaches to brewing. Focus on the uniqueness of the beer.

2. Yeast comes first. Most Belgian ales are yeast focused, with the malt and hops playing a supporting roles.

3. Liven up the yeast. Along with a wide variety of commercial Belgian yeast available from Wyeast and White Labs, try culturing yeast direct form the bottle. "American-Belgians" such as Allagash have not crossed the ocean in a container ship and usually fresher and more viable. However, some yeast in the bottom of a bottle from Belgium may also work. Furthermore, do not limit yourself to abbey ale strains for abbey ales. Try other kinds of Belgian yeast, including Belgian wheat yeast, witbier or Wyeast's Rosslare yeast in your next Belgian golden.

4. Use lots of yeast. To get high gravity beers to finish low, pitch more yeast than you would normally. You may want to regularly rouse the yeast in the fermenter to keep it from falling asleep. If your beer still finishes too high add a second yeast (same yeast or even High Gravity or Champagne?)

5. Make room for the yeast. Most Belgian yeast a active fermenters. They can quickly foam up and out of your fermenter. Make sure there is sufficient room or use a blow off tube.



6. Ferment warm. Belgian yeast strains are very temperature sensitive. Beers should generally be fermented above 65F to avoid stuck or slow fermentation. Most Belgian yeast perform best around 70-72F. Some saison ale yeast suggest higher temperatures. Save these for the summer. Adding another dose of healthy yeast 3 days before bottling will help ensure that the beer is fully fermented.

7. Keep it dry. Too often, brewers confuse high alcohol with malty sweetness. Belgian ales are nothing like bocks or barleywines. Low or high gravity, the impression of dryness should come through. This is not due to hops or the malt-hop balance, but from a low finishing gravity.

8. Start sweet with sugar. As Bill Schneller writes, sugar is not a dirty word in Belgian brewing. It is the best way to get the necessary low terminal gravity (see above). Although Belgian candy sugars made from beet sugar is traditional, corn sugar works just as well as is 4 times cheaper. Because it ferments completely, there is no need to worry about the flavors. Use sugar for 5 to 15 percent of the fermentables in beers over 1.060.

9. Use amber or dark candy sugars for flavor. Although amber and dark candy sugars are rated with a high SRM, they add little color to a beer. The dark sugars do add caramel and toffee notes ("rumminess") that are not found in light or clear sugars.

10. Use dark crystal not roast grains. Most Belgian ales rely on dark crystal malts like Special-B, Cara-Vienna, or Cara-Munich, instead of roasted grains for color. Even 4 oz. of black patent is noticeable.

11. Grain choice and mashing temperatures. Use lighter malts for your base such as Pale or Pils malt and build from there with your crystal malts. If using malt extract, always start with your lightest color. When mashing your grain, keep the saccharification temperature low, 146F instead of 150F, to produce a more fermentable wort.

12. Go beyond barley. Belgian brewers have a long tradition of using adjuncts other than the sugar discussed above. Belgian ales made with buckwheat, spelt and oats are available at some local hops. Try these or quinoa, corn, rice. Corn or rice can keep the color down on a Tripel.

13. Spice things up. Many Belgian ales are spiced or taste like they are. However, use a light touch. The rule is – if you can distinguish the spices, you have used too much. Think about what character you want and experiment with very small quantities. Good spices to try are coriander, orange peel, ginger root, licorice root, grains of paradise, fennel/anise seeds, lime leaves, and cardamom. But don't limit yourself to just these. A hint of black pepper or sweet nutmeg can give that special touch. Suggested levels are 1-2 tablespoons of coriander, 0.25-0.5 oz orange peel, and 1 inch of grated ginger root. Add spices to the last 10 minutes of the boil.

14. Try a Spice Potion. When adding spices, make a potion by soaking the bruised spices for a week in 1 oz vodka. Afterwards, strain the alcohol into the secondary. This will impart the spice flavor and aroma without risking infection and loss of delicate aromatics during primary fermentation.

Ommegang Clone (5 Gallons)

OG: 1.070 FG: 1.018

Ingredients:

11 lbs Pils Malt
0.5 lb Belgian Aromatic Malt
0.5 lb Biscuit Malt
1.5 lb Munich Malt
0.5 lb Cara-Munich
0.5 lb Special B
2 oz Chocolate malt
1 lb Dark Candy Sugar
2 oz Styrian Goldings Hops (5.2% AA) -60 minutes
1 oz Saaz Hops (3.7% AA) – 15 minutes
1 tsp Irish Moss
Wyeast Trappist Yeast, or any White Labs Belgian Abbey Yeast

Mash the grains at 146 F in a single step infusion. Sparge to 6.5 gallons, bring to a boil and add the candy sugar. Boil for 60 minutes with hops adds as stated above. Add Irish moss at 15 minutes. Cool and pitch the yeast at 70 F or 72 F. After a week in the primary transfer to the secondary.

If using extract, drop the Munich malt and steep the specialty grains for 30 minutes at 150 F. Substitute 9.5 lbs of light dry malt extract for the Pils and Munich malt.



15. **Hops are just another spice.** Like spices, hop use is subtle. Avoid high alpha hops. Citrusy American hops may also clash with the yeast.

16. **Get only oak flavor from oak chips.** If using oak chips for an Oud Bruin or Flanders Red, steam them for 15 minutes to remove impurities and sanitize.

17. **Don't let fruit cloud your beer.** If adding real fruit, try using pectic enzyme to break up the pectins (proteins that cause haze) into smaller molecules. This enables the beer to clear more easily.

Sources:

LEW BRYSON, *That Belgian Black Magic*, *Zymurgy*, Vo. 28, No. 1 p. 22 (January/February 2005)

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JEFF SPARROW, *Wild Brews: Culture and Craftsmanship in the Belgian Tradition*, Brewers Publications (2005)

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Growing Hops

By Ken Gillespie

For many years, brewers have used hops to enhance the bitterness, flavor, and aroma of beers. It has also been widely used as a preservative, most widely in IPA's. Most homebrewers become hopheads, so they tend to find it satisfying to watch the hardy plant grow in their backyard.

Site Selection

Since hops can grow up to a foot per day, to a total of 20-25 feet long, space is an obvious consideration. You also need plenty of sunlight, loamy well drained soil rich in nutrients, and a strong support system for the vines. Manure or commercial fertilizers can be used to enrich the soil. Space along fences, property lines, or houses are commonly used. Hops grow well in many climates providing 4 months without a frost.

Planting

Planting begins with Rhizomes, which look like a section of root with sprouts. They are planted after the threat of frost has past. Typically, they would be planted horizontally with the sprouts facing up. They should be spaced a minimum of 3 feet apart, or 6 feet for different hop varieties.

Care and feeding

Once the hops have sprouted and are about 1 foot long, choose the three strongest shoots, and wrap them around support you have provided. Now comes the hard part, as you must clip the other sprouts at ground level. This which will focus the nutrients on the chosen shoots. It is essential to continue to trim new shoots every few weeks as more appear.



During the first year the hops have a minimal root system, and short frequent waterings work best. Mulching the soil surface with organic matter is a great way to conserve moisture and control weeds. Typically the first year does not produce a significant crop of flowers, as the root structure is developing.

In subsequent years, less frequent, deep watering works well. Drip irrigation is a great method as it provides water to the roots. Excessive water to the leaves can cause problems to be discussed later. Commercial farms can get up to 2 pounds of dried flowers from a single mature plant, though mine have been much lower.

Diseases and pests

Downy mildew and Wilt are two diseases that can attack hops. Downy mildew appears early in the season when new shoots begin to grow. The affected shoots will look brittle or spiky, or curled underleaves, with a silvery top side, and black on the bottom. The infected leaves should be removed to prevent the mildew from spreading. The mildew needs moisture to germinate, which is why drip irrigation is a great method, allowing the leaves to remain relatively dry. Stripping the leaves from the lower 3 feet of the plant also helps to prevent infection and excessive moisture on the foliage. Fungicides are effective at controlling mildew.

Wilt is identified by dull green leaves alternating with yellow bands. The treatment is similar to mildew, including removal of the infected leaves, and fungicides.

Bugs

Several bugs can be pests, the most common of which is hop aphids. This is a translucent pale green bug. These are dangerous, as they multiply quickly, and unchecked they can destroy a hop yard. They are easily seen on the underside of leaves, appearing in cool weather, and once hatched, will spread throughout the vine. Organic insecticides work well, as do Diazanone and Malathion. Just remember that you must not harvest for at least 14 days after spraying the chemical insecticides. Interestingly, ladybugs are a natural alternative, as they are the aphid's natural predator. They are generally available at nursing or gardening shops. The trick is to get them to stay where you want them. By placing them in a refrigerator, they consume energy to keep warm. After a day, release them on an infected plant, and they will hungrily cure an aphid problem.

Spider mites are barely visible to the naked eye. They spin fine white webs under leaves, and leave small freckle spots on the upper leaves. They will consume leaves, and leave rust colored hop cones. They like sunlight, so they tend to start at the top of a vine and work down. The sprays for aphids generally work for mites.

Cucumber beetles are similar to ladybugs in size and shape, but vary in color. They are yellow green with black dots, and move through the vine like aphids. If the tips of vines and cones are damaged, it is generally the work of the cucumber beetle. Diazanone works well for this pest.

Harvest

Generally, harvest begins in August and goes into September. This varies by type of hop, some ripen earlier, some later. The cones on a plant tend to mature at different rates, due to a variation in the exposure to sunlight. Some growers try to harvest in several sessions for this reason. While that is ideal, most growers cut the vine down to make picking easier, and harvest all at one time.

So how do you know when to harvest? It's generally too early if :

- The cone is bright green
- It feels slightly damp to the touch, and the scales feel soft
- The cone has a grassy or vegetal odor
- If you squeeze a cone, it stays compressed

It's ready if:

- The cone feels papery and light
- It feels noticeably drier than a green cone
- It becomes lighter in color
- Your hands take up a hop aroma, and become slightly sticky from the yellow lupulin powder



Drying

Wait, you're still not done. The cones must be properly dried to optimize their qualities for storage. When harvested, the cones are about 70% water, and are typically dried to about 10% moisture. If left moist, they can become moldy, wilted, etc.

I have typically used a food dehydrator, as it has a blower, and temperature control. This has the advantage of providing even drying, and maintaining more moderate temperatures (less than 140 degrees F), which can cause browning. Other options include window screens, or homemade setups in the oven, which has obvious drawbacks.

They are ready for storage when they are springy to the touch, and the yellow lupulin powder falls out when you crush the cone in your hand. Also, the stem will break rather than bend. Typically, this would take 24-36 hours in a food dehydrator, or twice that using window screens.

Storage

Storage is important because hops begin to lose their oils and acids as soon as they are harvested. The store bought hops you brewed with last month were a year old, so it is important you minimize the decay whether they are purchased or homegrown. Exposure to oxygen, light, and warm temps all speed the deterioration process. Studies show that the rate of decay is cut in half for every 15C drop in temperature.

Ziplock bags work OK for moderate lengths of time, but barrier bags are better if you can find them. Store the hops in individual use quantities, so you don't need to open a large bag frequently. Remove the air from the bag, zip it, tape it, and store several smaller bags in a larger ziplock bag. Keep in the freezer, and avoid allowing them to thaw and refreeze.

Hopunion.com is a good web resource that provides growth info, susceptibility to diseases or pests, typical acid %, uses and substitutions, and stability in storage. Go to "download data book" option.

Since you don't have a good handle on the % alpha acid, they generally work best as flavor or aroma additions. Good luck and happy growing



Ales for Archaeology was a great success again this year. The club presented 14 different beers to the public and spread the word about what a great hobby homebrewing is. I was amazed at the number of people who came up and said that our beers were the best at the festival, better than the commercial brews assembled. And there some big names this year, St. George, Dogfish Head, and Stone to name a few.

(Pictures courtesy of Jeff Flamm)



The CASK Calendar of Club Events and Competitions

Plan your brewing year now and hit as many club-only and other competitions as possible.

October Pilsner (**Club-Only**)
November Winter/Christmas Beers
December Free-For-All

October 18, 2007: October Meeting of CASK 7:30 PM at the [Williamsburg AleWerks](#). **Style of the Month: Pilsner**

November 3, 2007: Teach A Friend to Homebrew Day The American Homebrewers Association (AHA) Teach a Friend to Homebrew Day is an international event to introduce people to the homebrewing hobby and establish relationships with local homebrew supply shops.

November 15, 2007: November Meeting of CASK 7:30 PM at the [Williamsburg AleWerks](#). **Style of the Month: Winter/Christmas Beers**

December 20, 2007: December Meeting of CASK 7:30 PM at a location to be determined. **Style of the Month: Free-for-All**