



The Cellar

The Official Newsletter of the Colonial Ale Smiths and Keggers

Are you ready for a Big Brew??

By Norman W. Schaeffler

There are two AHA-declared homebrewing holidays, Teach-A-Friend and National Homebrew Day. The first Saturday in May is National Homebrew Day, AKA Big Brew. This year, it is May 3 and homebrewers across the nation will be raising their glasses to toast in honor of Michael Jackson, the world renowned beer expert and beer hunter, who passed away last year. In his honor, one of this year's Big Brew recipes is for an Ordinary Bitter. This would be a great beer to brew for our Summer Party in July since the theme this year is English Ales. Drew Beechum of the Maltose Falcons, and the defending champion on "Jeopardy" this week, worked with the brewers at Fuller's in London to create the recipe for Chiswick Bitter. You can not get any more authentic than that. Coming in with a starting gravity of 1.040 and 33 IBU's it sounds like a great session beer. Although the four type of hops called for, UK Target, UK Northdown, UK Challenger, and East Kent Golding, may be hard to come by given the current hop situation. The AHA recognized this and has the following note on their website: "We have tried to stay true to the recipe provided to us by John Keeling of Fullers Brewery in London. Due to the hop shortage, some or all of the hops listed may not be available at your local shop. If any of these are unavailable, please feel free to substitute comparable hops. Ask your local homebrew supply shop owner for hop substitution recommendations. UK Target is a floral, fruity hop that is sometimes also herbal. The UK Northdown and UK Challenger both have spicy hop characteristics. East Kent Golding hops are a floral hop that is sometimes also spicy and/or grassy/earthy."

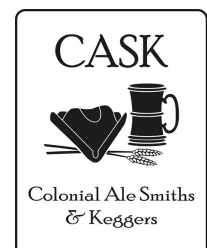


The current hop situation inspired the second Big Brew recipe this year, the "Fill in the Hop Blond Ale". This Blond Ale has a starting gravity of 1.051 and only 25 IBU's, making this recipe "hop shortage" friendly.

All-grain and extract versions of both recipes are on the AHA website, beertown.org. So fire up those kettles! It's going to be a big brew!

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10 Tips for Better Extract Brewing *By Harrison Gibbs*

Brewing beer from liquid or dry malt extract is not just for beginning homebrewers, it opens up (a can) of possibilities and ease that all grain brewing cannot. The use of malt extract allows for shorter brewing sessions, less cleanup, and consistent fermentation. The following tips provide some tips for better brewing with malt extract.

1. Use dry malt extract. Dry malt extract has a longer shelf life than liquid malt extracts. Liquid malt extract can become stale as it sits in the can, particularly when exposed to heat. The heating process used in liquid extracts results in a darker more caramel character that is better added through specialty grains. (See Number 3). The exception is using bulk liquid malt extract. Many homebrew shops purchase large drums of malt extract, which they can sell rapidly, keeping the time of the shelf to a minimum. Do not just take it home and store in the garage. That defeats the purpose of using the fresh stuff.

2. Used light or pale malt extract as your base. Just as all grain brewers start with a light pale and pils base malt, so too should extract brewers. If you start with a light malt base, you can build up color, body, and flavor from the use of specialty grains, exerting more control over the recipe and providing you areas to tinker later. Using a neutral base allows you to build any beer you want.

3. Use specialty grains. The addition of grains to your recipe adds character to the beer that you cannot get from extract alone. You do not need to mash the grains, but steep (not boil) the grains the mash water into which you will later dissolve your extract. The range of crystal malts provides the palette for your brewing brush. Other grains such as chocolate, black malt and roast barley are crucial. For example, small doses of roast barley can add color for a red ale, while large amounts of the stuff gives the stout its roast-burnt robustness. When using specialty malts a grain bag can be removed from the mash water. However, I recommend putting it into a second pot of 165F water to get more of the grain goodness from it. Try a metal strainer that you pour the mash water through.

4. Use Hop Pellets instead of whole. Hop pellets stay fresh longer than whole hops and fresh is critical for great hop bitterness, flavor and aroma. If you use pre-hopped extract try using some flavor or aroma hops to add more depth to your recipe. It is not necessary to strain hop pellets from your wort before you add it into the fermenter, but I do with a metal strainer as it makes the beer easier to transfer from the secondary to the primary. If using whole hops you will need to strain or use a hop bag. However, putting the hops in the hop bag reduces the level of hop oil extraction.

5. Boil more of your wort. If you have the space, use a full wort boil. That means boil all 5 to 6 gallons in a single pot. This provides greater control over the chemical processes that comes from boiling. You will get better hop extraction, richer used of the specialty grains and it reduces the darkening affect of boiling a thicker wort. If you cannot find or use a 30-quart pot, then use a 16 or 20-quart pot, adding a gallon plus water after your wort has cooled. If you have not already done so, invest in a turkey fryer. They usually come with a 7-gallon pot and being able to boil outside could save your marriage, or at least your kitchen stove.

6. Put the sugar back in. When I began home brewing, the use of any non-malt adjuncts was anathema. This was especially true for sugar. However, some beers require additional sugar because it is 100% fermentable and that is the only way to get your original gravity up and your final gravity down. This is important when brewing lighter ales like an English mild or ordinary. It is also required in most Belgian ales with their big full bodies and dry finish. This finish comes the higher dryer alcohol from using sugar. Swap out sugar and dry malt extract on a one-to-one ratio. Use 13 ounce of sugar for a pound of liquid malt extract. Rarely go over 10% of your fermentables from sugar, unless the recipe calls for it and it is a Belgian Ale, however, no more than 20%.

7. Cool things off. Hot wort carries a lot more heat than you realize and it can take a long time before everything is cool enough to add the yeast. The longer the wort sits without yeast the greater the chance for infection. Try using a cool water bath in a large sink or bathtub. Keep the water moving, and maybe add ice to the water. Remember to keep the lid on the wort during this time, so that a water splash will not lead to an infection. A wort chiller can be a handy tool and are not had to make from parts found at Home Depot. If you are already brewing outside with your new turkey fryer, cooling outside with a wort chiller and a hose is a great idea. I have also used ice-cold bottled water to bring down the last 10 to 20 degrees. Do not add it at first as the level of heat to be exchange is too high.



8. Beer is water. Beer is mainly water with some sugar and other compounds mixed in. If using good malt extract is important, so too is using good water. While most city water is OK for brewing, some water can have too much salt or iron that can harm your yeast. If you buy bottle water for brewing, use soft or even distilled water. If you need to add calcium, then you can. It is easier to add than subtract. If you carbon filter, you can avoid some of the problems with chlorine.

9. Use a starter or multiple packs of yeast. You need to ensure that you have enough yeast to do the job, a stable reasonable fermentation temperature, and adequate aeration. Either make a starter or use enough yeast from another source to make sure that you have enough yeast cells. Strained yeast creates off flavors. If using a good dry yeast from Fermtis or Danstar, add a second or third packet to your batch. That still is about the same as using one liquid yeast packet, which will usually need a starter.

10. Keep a journal. If you want to brew better beer, you need to know what you did with your previous brews. You can repeat the good things and avoid the bad.

The Kegerator Project

By Warren Haskell

I have been brewing off and on for about ten years, and I have happily just ended a three year exodus from a world with no homebrew. Being back in the area and back into homebrewing I decided to create the system I



The “Before” Shot - Ready to be transformed

have been thinking about since I closed down my previous operation. This is nothing fancy brew wise, just a Gott cooler system for all-grain brewing with no mechanization or automation. I am doing five gallon batches, but since I like a lot of gravity in my beers I got the 10 gallon system for my mashing. For serving my homebrew, I decided to take a different approach also. I do not bottle unless forced, and with my brew schedule back to 2-3 times a month I needed a good high-volume service system that could also carbonate and allow me to serve many different styles in different ways. I also wanted it to look presentable, since it will be indoors. Here is what I have created.

I preface this by saying that wood working is not really in my skill set, so many of the lines and cuts aren't that straight and not all the corners meet, but it is solid and sealed. I started with a chest freezer that I would estimate to be in the 7-10 cubic foot range, I don't really know, but it was in the shed being under-utilized and was the right price, so I used it.

I decided to do a top mounted collar since it seemed like the most straight forward and least damaging to the freezer. I removed the lid and built a frame to sit on top out of 2"x6" boards, many of the examples I looked at used 2"x4" but I decided that the extra height and interior space would be useful and no harder to build. The collar is not bolted to the freezer in any way. After building the collar I sheeted the front and 2 sides with thin plywood that goes about 1/2" below the freezer lip and I used a 1"x2" to brace the back, the collar is thus fully detachable vertically but unable to move horizontally, I sealed all of the joints and contact surfaces with silicone to make it tight but removable. I sheeted the top of the freezer as well and attached 1" corner molding to clean up the appearance a bit. A simple handle is bolted to the top to allow access since the original handle is covered with wood.



Dry-fitting the Collar

Onto the beverage equipment parts. I already had a 20#



CO₂ tank and purchased a double CO₂ regulator so that my dispensing and carbonating can be at different pressures, thus allowing me more freedom in service. To go with this I also went with a 2-way and a 4-way gas distributor. This allows for each line to be turned of and minimizes points where gas could leak. I was originally hoping that my freezer would hold 5-6 kegs but alas it does not, so I could have gone with 2 2-ways instead and had the same approximate result. I went with the 6 inch shank because it gives me the most options on any future projects if my freezer meets an untimely demise or I just decide to upgrade or downgrade. These shanks will fit any application but if I was buying just for this one I would have gone with the 3 inch. For faucets I went with the stainless Ventmatic Forward Seal Faucet, all parts throughout the system are stainless if it was available. In between the shanks and distributors is standard 1/4" gas line and 3/16" beverage line and all ball lock in and outs. Temperature is controlled by a Johnson Controls refrigerator thermostat.

As may be seen in the accompanying photographs I have not finished running all of the tubing, I also plan on sheeting the front and then mounting my drip tray, but time ran out before I needed to start carbonating, so it will have to wait for another weekend.



Suggested Links:

<http://www.west-point.org/users/usma1986/42894/kegerator.htm>

<http://www.homebrewadventures.com/articles/article08170301.shtml>

The Finished Exterior



The Finished Interior



The CASK Calendar of Club Events and Competitions

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

April	Extract Beers (Club-Only)
May	Lambics
June	California Common (Steam Beer)
July	Mead (Club-Only)
August	German Wheats
September	Imperial Anything (Club-Only)
October	European Light Lagers
November	Homemade Wine
December	Christmas/Spiced Beers

September 15, 2008: "Imperial Anything" Club-Only Competition (CASK Judging TBD): The entry due date and judging date are to be determined. (Sometime September - October) Hosted by Fred Bonjour and the Clinton River Association of Fermenting Trendsetters (C.R.A.F.T.) of Macomb Township, MI, this competition covers imperialized versions of all BJCP categories. The imperialization of the beer (ABV, IBU, etc.) must be stated on the entry form.

April 17, 2008: CASK April Meeting 7:30 PM

You can add items to the CASK calendar and keep your fellow club members informed about beer-related happenings in the area. Logon to the CASK Message Board to find out how!

May 15, 2008: CASK May Meeting 7:30 PM

May 30, 2008: Extract Beers Club-Only Competition (CASK Judging TBD): The entry due date and judging date are to be determined. Hosted by Jim Burzynski and the Urban Knaves of Grain of Naperville, IL, this competition covers all BJCP 2004 beer styles (Categories 1-23). Extract must make up more than 50% of the fermentables.

June 19, 2008: CASK June Meeting 7:30 PM

August 2, 2008: Mead Club-Only Competition (CASK Judging in July): Entries are due 7/25/08 and judging will be held 8/2/08. Hosted by Al Boyce and the Minnesota Homebrewers Association of Edina, MN, this competition covers BJCP Categories 24, 25, 26 mead styles.