



The Cellar

The Official Newsletter of the Colonial Ale Smiths and Keggers

CASK prepares for 3rd Annual “Blitz” on Hampton

By Steven Davis

As Autumn comes to an end and everyone anxiously anticipates the upcoming holidays, once again CASK and new comer St. George Brewing Company team together to facilitate the Virginia Beer Blitz homebrew competition. This is the 3rd Annual for this event, which came off last year again with resoundingly positive results and reviews. With that type of continued success, how could we not decide to continue this annual ritual?

The event is scheduled to be held at the St. George Brewing Company in Hampton on December 12th starting at 9:00 am, with judges and stewards arriving beginning at 8:00 am. The competition this year will cover all 28 BJCP categories, including Cider & Mead, and will follow the 2008 BJCP guidelines. A potentially high 300+ entry turnout is anticipated following last year’s event where 121 entries were received.

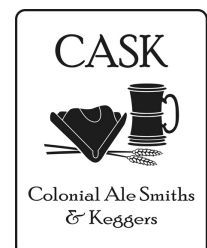
The key to a successful competition will once again fall on the homebrewers and their friends and families who volunteer to help pull it off. With a full 28 category event, we are in desperate need of judges, stewards and volunteers throughout the day. With morning and afternoon rounds scheduled the competition will most likely finish up around 4:30-5:00 pm, which will conveniently lend itself to planning a nice dinner at one of the nearby beer friendly restaurants.



CASK looks forward to seeing everyone at the competition, and plans for a successful continuation of what we hope will continue to be a successful event for many years to come. Cheers.

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Fall Crawl 2009

By Warren Haskell, Photos by Greg Nowicki and Jeff Flamm

On a brisk Saturday morning, at the absurdly early hour of 8:00 am, 12 members of our club set out on the second CASK cross-state pub crawl. The ride was smooth, at least compared to the last one, and the weather beautiful, but we were just here for the beer anyways, and of course cider and wine.



First stop landed us at Albemarle Ciderworks (<http://www.albemarlecideworks.com/>) where the computers were a little out of whack but everything else was excellent. The day happened to be the annual Apple Festival so in addition to crisp hard cider we were also treated to live music, various local vendors, and an assortment of apple products. It would have been a nice place to spend an afternoon if we didn't have more pressing matters at hand, and off to Devil's Backbone we went.

Devil's Backbone (<http://dbbrewingcompany.com/>) was for me, and I believe most, the highlight of the trip. After promptly being seated, we were introduced to the brewer and he guided us through a tour of the facilities and we ended with a sampling of his old ale, not quite ready to be released to the public. On to a tasting

of the four regular and six rotating and award winning styles with our lunch. DB is an excellent establishment top to bottom and worth a stop any time you are nearby or anywhere within an hour or two. After prying ourselves loose from the clutches of fantastic food and beer, we moved on to Blue Mountain (<http://www.bluemountainbrewery.com/>) which was rather busy and a bit confused on the fall afternoon, however tasty beer was quickly consumed and we continued to move, eventually.



After stops at Charlottesville's Wine Warehouse and Horton winery, we finished the consumptive part of our trip at the Innsbrook location of Capital Ale house. Beers were drank, food was eaten, and Greg Nowicki tweeted his last message (that's right CASK has been twittered). We piled back in the vehicles and headed back to our homes, making it to the park and ride without injury or major incident, and returning the van on time.



Belgian Strong Ales - Style of the Month

By Harrison Gibbs

(This article originally appeared in the January 2006 issue of *The Cellar*)



The featured style of the month this month is Belgian Strong Ales. Belgian Strong Ales can vary from pale to dark brown in color, darker ales may be colored with dark candy sugar. Hop flavor can range from low to high, while hop aroma is low. The beers are medium to full-bodied and have a high alcoholic character. Often highly aromatic. Spices or orange are OK. Strength evident, but alcohol flavor subdued or absent. Medium to full body, sometimes with a high terminal gravity. Medium to high carbonation. No roasted flavors or diacetyl.

Belgian strong ale recipes usually show off their colorful yeast character, with all other ingredients playing a supporting role. The flavor may be subtly complex, but should not be crowded. Body is comparatively light for beers of this strength, due to use of brewing adjuncts or of pilsner malt only.

High carbonation also helps; these beers should feel like mousse on the palate and have an impressive head. The best examples may be noticeably strong but still have no alcohol flavor. Flemish examples tend toward higher terminal gravities (1.025-1.050), while Walloon versions are usually more attenuated.

This is a broad style category and the BJCP includes Belgian Blond Ales, Belgian Dubbels, Tripels, and the broad classes of Belgian Golden Strong Ale and Belgian Dark Strong Ale. Commercial examples include: Corsendonk blond (8% ABV), Corsendonk brown (8% ABV), Saison DuPont (6.5% ABV), Gouden Carolus (7% ABV), Scaldis (12% ABV), Duvel (8.5% ABV), Brigand (9% ABV), Oerbier (7.5% ABV), Arabier (8% ABV), Bos Keun (7% ABV), Stille Nacht (8% ABV), Pauwel Kwak (8% ABV), Celis Grand Cru, Mateen (9% ABV).

When brewing, yeast choice is critical, as the yeast will provide the foundation flavors for the beer and all other ingredients should be added to support or accentuate them. As with all beers of this strength, high pitching rates and aggressive aeration are necessary. Fermentation temperatures should be cool (below 65F) to avoid creation of headache-causing fusels.

Infusion or step mashing techniques are standard procedure. Most commercial versions use pilsner malt as a base, but many also use substantial quantities of sugar or flaked corn as an adjunct. Caramel, Munich and toasted malts are often used in small quantities; roasted malts are sometimes used in very small amounts for coloring only. All classic hop varieties are common, but are used in small and judicious quantities. Still some beers are more aggressively hopped such as Duvel and Orval. Sugars are added in the kettle, as are spices. Many spices have delicate aromas and should be boiled for just a few minutes, if at all. Common choices are bitter or sweet orange peel, coriander, vanilla, and anise.

Extract brewers will do fine in this category. Start with pale extract, adding judicious quantities of caramel malts and sugar (1-2 pounds) to the kettle. The secret is to choose the right yeast and to keep your ferment as clean as possible. Use of light colored adjuncts such as Belgian candi sugar can help keep your tripels in the lighter color range.

Priming should be about 7/8 (125 grams) for five gallons. Addition of fresh yeast at bottling should assist with carbonation; a 1-pint starter is sufficient.

Common Problems in Brewing this Style include:

- Solvent & banana flavors. Fermentation at excessive temperature, poor yeast health, or both. Particularly a problem with people using Wyeast Belgian or Chimay yeasts at temperatures above 62°F.
- Wrong type of orange. Sunkist type orange should not be substituted for bitter or sweet orange.
- Insufficient carbonation. Use more priming sugar, or add fresh yeast when bottling.



In Remembrance: Lee Benner

On November 9, 2009, CASK member Leroy (Lee) Benner passed away unexpectedly. Lee was a long time member of CASK, an award-winning homebrewer, and he will be sorely missed. Lee was a retired Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air Force.

Lee was a self-proclaimed "bitter man," referring to his love of English bitters and milds. He would often tell fond stories of visits to pubs in England, which he traveled to often to visit family. On one visit to England, he brought back a beer engine (a hand pump for serving cask-conditioned ales), refurbished it and then installed it in his home bar. Lee was the first place winner, along with Craig Mayotte, of the CASK Summer Iron Brew in 2005. Lee and Craig brewed an American Pale Ale.

Lee is survived by his wife of 51 years, Beryl, to whom the club offers our deepest condolences. He is also survived by his two sons, Craig and wife, Susan, Dean and wife, Kathleen; and one daughter, Tanya, and also his five grandchildren, Ian, Alexis, Grant, Elise and Ashley.

There was a memorial service held on November 14, 2009, at St. Matthew's Anglican Catholic Church, in Newport News.

The CASK Calendar of Club Events and Competitions

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

November Belgian Strong Ales (Club Only)
December Winter Party

**You too 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!**

2010

January - English Brown (COC)
February - Porters
March - American Ales (COC)
April - Extract Beers (COC)
May - Bock
June - (Irish & Scottish Ales
July - Summer Party / Mead (COC)
August - Sour Ales (COC)
September - Cider
October - Strong Ales (COC)
November - TBD
December - Winter Party

**December 12, 2009: Third Annual Virginia Beer
Blitz**

<http://www.colonialalesmiths.org/beerblitz/>.