

FOR THE HOMEBREWER & BEER LOVER

16 RECIPES YOU CAN FERMENT

# zymurgy®



ALSATIAN  
 PILSNER

DÉJÀ BRÜ  
 COMPETITION

HALLUCINOGENIC  
 BREWS  
 —  
 ALTBIER

## LOST, ANCIENT, & OBSCURE BEER STYLES

SAMUEL  
ADAMS

# IT'S SAM SEASON



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# Paying Better Respect to Extract

We received a lot of feedback from our readers regarding Steve Ruch's Last Drop in the Jan/Feb 2025 issue of *Zymurgy*. While most of it was positive, a recent letter submitted by Weldon Leventry called us out on a glaring omission from the magazine—we were singing the praises of brewing with extract for both convenience and quality, but we weren't actually including that many extract recipes for AHA members who prefer extract brewing. Since there are reasons for this that our membership deserves to hear, I am including both his letter and my response in this issue's Editor's Desk rather than in its usual place in Dear *Zymurgy*.

## Dear *Zymurgy*,

I have read the articles and comments in the last two issues regarding extract brewing, and I share the belief that extract can be used to make good beer. I am disappointed that apparently a decision has been made to eliminate the extract versions of the beers featured in the magazine. This omission is certainly NOT "respecting the extract."

— Weldon Leventry

### *My response:*

Weldon, thanks for your feedback, and you have a valid point. The problem is that, as with most things in brewing, recipe conversion introduces a lot of variables—it's not as simple as swapping out gravity points per gallon. Former *Zymurgy* editor Dave Carpenter and I discussed this several years ago when I was associate editor. After printing extract versions of NHC gold medal recipes, we got feedback from readers who had brewed both versions; they said the all-grain and extract recipes often came out so different that we should not claim they were the same recipe. So we made the decision to omit extract versions unless, of course, the original submitted recipe included extract.

There are just a lot of details at play with conversion. A few parameters affected are hop utilization, color, finishing gravity, and extract quality (LME gives you a different result than DME, and even the same form of extract from one manufacturer can vary quite a bit from that of another). Dave wrote an article in the Jan/Feb 2022 issue for the Beer School section ironically titled *Easy Recipe Conversion* that addressed many of these variables. I highly suggest you read it—recipe conversion is not easy at all. Dave provided lots of tips and tweaks you can use to try to get close when converting, but more often than not, providing conversion info for a recipe is going to result in a significantly different beer. That was the logic behind largely omitting recipe conversion since 2021. Unless it's a tried-and-true extract recipe that's actually been brewed, we'd rather leave conversion up to you.

Of course, a good extract recipe on its own deserves a place in *Zymurgy*, and our executive director Julia Herz feels passionate about championing extract beers in the magazine. But conversely, to properly respect brewers who have won competition awards with all-grain recipes, it does not make sense to include an unproven extract or partial-mash recipe along with it. Beyond the National Homebrew Competition gold medal winners, most of the remaining recipes in *Zymurgy* come from contributors. When a contributor provides an extract recipe with an article submission, we are thrilled to print it; but the fact

is, most contributors the last few years have provided all-grain-only recipes with their articles.

We hear you—this is not respecting the extract. I need to do a better job of getting successful extract and partial mash recipes from our members and contributors and including them in the magazine. YOU are cordially welcome to send me extract-based recipes that have garnered awards at competition, either from your personal recipe book or from your club. There is also a huge database of excellent extract recipes on the AHA website to choose from; just go to [HomebrewersAssociation.org/homebrew-recipes](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/homebrew-recipes) and hit the Extract box under the Classification menu on the left to filter for extract.

I hope this response provides sufficient explanation for the lack of extract recipes in the magazine. Beginning with this May/June 2025 issue, expect to see more extract recipes included. For your part, *Zymurgy* readers, remember how blessed we are to have excellent brewing software available that will help you with the calculations to convert nearly any all-grain recipe to extract, and vice-versa. Thanks again, Weldon, for voicing this concern and helping me make your printed membership benefit more inclusive to homebrewers of all stripes.

Our May/June issue's theme is Lost, Ancient, and Obscure Beer Styles, so feature articles explore some beers you may not have heard of or brewed. Frequent contributor Ryan Pachmayer went down the rabbit hole to rediscover the Pilsners of Alsace, interviewing several French brewers from that region and collecting copious perspectives, memorabilia, and opinions (some conflicting) on the origins of the style, what makes it unique, and how to brew it at home. David Schmidt writes about beers that may leave people a little unfocused, with his Hallucinogenic Brews article. While many of the mind-altering substances mentioned are NOT recommended for homebrewers to try themselves, there is a simple (extract!) gruit recipe that's relatively safe to brew—it may change your mind about unhopped beers. Chip Walton reveals a unique competition that encourages entrants to submit lost and obscure beer styles past and present with his piece on the annual Déjà Brü event. And Josh Weikert rounds things out with a style that's survived since ancient times, but never seems to get the attention or respect it deserves: altbier.

Whether you choose all-grain or extract for your next batch, we hope these pages will provide you with plenty to inspire your spring and summer brewing. Cheers.

**Amahl Turczyn is editor-in-chief of *Zymurgy*.**



# Features



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## ALSATIAN PILSNER

The region of Alsace has been brewing its own distinctive style of pale lager in and around Strasbourg since the 1920s. These Alsatian Pilsners are known throughout France, and the style is beginning to catch on with U.S. craft brewers.

By Ryan Pachmayer



## HALLUCINOGENIC BREWS

In many cultures, plants with psychotropic effects have been used for centuries to brew sacramental drinks that connect mortals with the spiritual world. Some inspire visions or mild euphoria, but others can produce horrific experiences.

By David Schmidt



## DÉJÀ BRÜ COMPETITION

For the past three years, Chip Walton has been part of a small crew of Twin Cities homebrewers who've helped coordinate Déjà Brü, a distinctive homebrew competition that embraces and hopes to elevate historical, lost, and forgotten beer styles.

By Chip Walton



## ALTBIER

The copper-amber altbier, meaning "old beer," is a hybrid style that's all about balance and subtlety. It's like the middle child of the beer world: not too malty, not too hoppy; not too strong, not too weak; not too light, not too dark—it's just right.

By Josh Weikert

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By Amahl Turczyn



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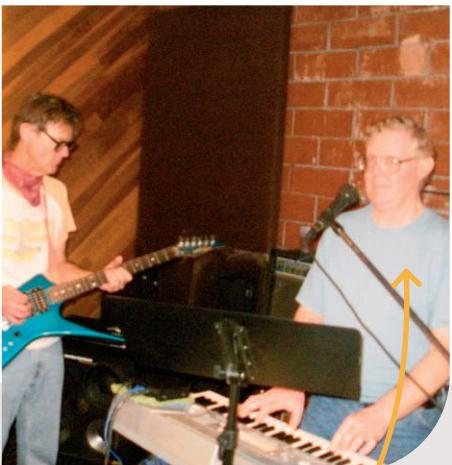
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Cover Image  
Luke TrautweinVol 48 • No. 3  
May/June 2025**zymurgy**<sup>®</sup>(zī'mər jē) n: the art and science  
of fermentation, as in brewing.**ON THE WEB**Find these homebrewing recipes  
and more on our website @  
[HomebrewersAssociation.org/  
homebrew-recipes](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/homebrew-recipes)

# NOW ON Tap



## The Falcons Honor Bruce Brode

California's homebrew club the Maltose Falcons are saddened to announce the passing of Bruce Brode, a key member and a giant (in their eyes) of the homebrew world. Bruce, a truly self-taught polymath, began homebrewing back in the '80s when knowledge was more "hand-me-down." In short order, he became club president from 1991 to 1993. During his tenure, the club established many of the traditions and practices that continue today. After his presidency, he served in the rarest of Falcons position: the Grand Hydrometer. This was the club's resident beer sage, leading education efforts and organizing special tastings, including a large mead tasting held every spring. This unique tasting, now to be named The Bruce Brode Mead Tasting, is responsible for creating a cadre of meadmakers and aficionados around Los Angeles.

Brode was one of the chief ring leaders (and keyboard player) in the Maltose Falcons Brews Band, formed during a memorable trip to Anchor Brewing in 1990. You can hear his considerable skills as a composer and arranger in the band's songs, including his "homebrewed" originals.

To the larger community, Brode laid the groundwork for a better and more knowledgeable world of homebrewing. He was a BJCP Master Judge who helped author the early style guide-

lines. His voice in the judging world lives on with the numerous judges he trained around California. He helped organize and operate the California Homebrewers Association and its big party—the Southern California Homebrewers Festival. On top of the already daunting effort of running a 1,500+ attendee party, he helped rescue the fest from legal limbo.

To the Falcons, Brode was both a friend and mentor. Despite his vast experience and breadth of knowledge, he was always warm and open to brewers of all levels. He loved talking about the art of fermentation with any and all who shared that love. Beer, mead, wine, cider, sake—all of it came out of the "Forever Brewery." Brode delighted in giving serious thought to what was in the glass in front of him, and would use a yellow legal pad to take copious tasting notes, producing long, cogent guides that preserved the finer points of the experience. Away from beer and mead, one never knew just what topics a conversation with him would meander through. The whole of history and humanity would weave and bob, leaving listeners delightfully informed.

The Falcons will miss Brode's wit, wisdom, humor, and passion. They trust that wherever he's gone, the beverages have gotten better there, and the music more lively.





## AHA Founder Charlie Papazian Inducted into the American Craft Beer Hall of Fame

We are proud to share that American Homebrewers Association founder Charlie Papazian was inducted into the American Craft Beer Hall of Fame (organized by Marty Nachel). An integral figure whose contributions helped evolve craft beer in the United States, Papazian is joined by fellow inductees Michael Jackson and Fred Eckhardt into the Advocates and Innovators wing of the Hall of Fame.

The American Craft Beer Hall of Fame shared the following about this home and craft beer pioneer:

*Papazian grew up in New Jersey, and attended the University of Virginia, majoring in Nuclear Engineering. During college, an older neighbor, who learned to homebrew during Prohibition, showed him the ropes, and he was hooked. After college, he traveled the West, including a chance passing through Boulder, Colorado, and he was smitten enough to stay, eventually finding a teaching job. He converted his garage to a home brewery, and even started teaching homebrew lessons. Once the hobby became legal again in 1978, he founded the American Homebrewers Association, and published his seminal book, *The Joy of Homebrewing*. The following year, he founded what would become today's Brewers Association, the trade association for craft breweries. In 1982, the first Great American Beer Festival was held, and he also launched the World Beer Cup in 1996. He's subsequently published seven books on homebrewing, and recently retired from running the BA, although he's still homebrewing and living by the maxim he coined, "Relax. Don't worry. Have a homebrew."*

Founded with the mission of honoring and remembering those who have contributed to the growth and success of the country's craft beer industry, the American Craft Beer Hall of Fame aims to inspire current and future generations to continue to innovate and collaborate so that it may thrive for many years to come. A board of over 100 electors, made up of many of craft beer's most respected and notable analysts, commentators, and advocates, came to consensus on the following 12 inaugural inductees for enshrinement:

- Fred Eckhardt
- Charles and Rose Ann Finkel
- Bert Grant
- Ken Grossman
- Michael Jackson
- Jim Koch
- Fritz Maytag
- Jack McAuliffe, Jane Zimmerman, and Suzy Stern
- Charlie Papazian

These inductees represent diverse facets of the industry—brewery owners, brewers, writers, and educators. Each has contributed greatly to the growth and development of craft beer in their own ways, and the industry as a whole owes them an enormous debt of gratitude. The induction ceremony was live streamed on Saturday, Feb. 15, from five breweries across the country, including Bierstadt Lagerhaus (Denver), Deschutes (Portland, Ore.), Dogfish Head (Milton, Del.), Dovetail (Chicago), and New Realm (Atlanta).



### BEER QUIZ

Beer stone is primarily:

- A. Calcium oxalate
- B. Calcium sulfate
- C. Calcium chloride
- D. Calcium lactate
- E. Sodium chloride

Beer Quiz answer on next page >

NATIONAL

# HOMEBREW COMPETITION

## National Homebrew Competition 2025

The National Homebrew Competition (NHC) is the world's largest and longest running competition. It gives homebrewers a chance to receive invaluable feedback on their entries and recognizes the most outstanding, world-class homebrewed beer, mead, and cider.

### 2025 First-Round Judging Locations:

New York, N.Y.	March 21–22
Tampa, Fla.	March 21–23
Indianapolis, Ind.	March 28–29
Chicago, Ill.	April 11–12
Longmont, Colo.	April 11–12
Seattle, Wash.	April 11–12
San Diego, Calif.	April 26–27

Seven first-round judging sites received 3,180 entries as of mid-March, with the final round judging planned for June 26–27 and the awards ceremony on June 28, both in Kansas City, Mo. The awards ceremony will be live streamed, so don't miss it! Catch the latest updates at [HomebrewersAssociation.org/national-homebrew-competition](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/national-homebrew-competition).



### Zymurgy Live AN EXCLUSIVE AHA MEMBER BENEFIT

Join us for these member-access-only broadcasts during which we discuss homebrewing techniques, hear from some of the best minds in brewing, and explore the world of all things fermentation! Register at [HomebrewersAssociation.org/zymurgy-live](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/zymurgy-live) to tune in to the webinars.

Missed an episode or need to catch up? Watch recordings at your convenience and up your homebrew game!

Recent and upcoming sessions include...

- BeerSmith's Brad Smith
- Author and Beer World Influencer Randy Mosher
- AHA Founding Board online to answer questions about the AHA transition to independence
- Beer Travel for a Deeper Understanding and Better Brewing
- Pregame for Learn to Homebrew Day with Rick Morales and Drew Beechum
- Master your Homebrew by Decoding Beer Evaluation with Max Fennane and John Hawkins
- And much more!

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LIVE WEBINAR





# Members Helping Members

# and the New AHA Forum



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- Other Fermentables
- Systems, Gear, ...
- The Pub



Homebrewers in need of equipment to brew and ferment merit support. Homebrewers who have been through natural disasters, home loss, robbery, had to move and could not bring their equipment, are beginners and need a nudge to get going with equipment they would not otherwise get, etc. are worthy of help.

■ Homebrewer Support  Latest Hot Votes My Votes

 Topic

Any help would be appreciated!

Earlier this year, new American Homebrewers Association member Joe Hetzel reached out for help securing homebrewing equipment. He realized soft drinks saturated with high-fructose corn syrup were impacting his health, so low- and non-alcohol beer became his beverages of choice. When he realized he could make these beverages at home for a fraction of the cost of buying commercial brands, he needed guidance putting together a brew system. Joe was looking for donated gear so he could confidently brew indoors, and get past challenging financial limitations of not being able to purchase equipment.

Serendipitously, the AHA recently launched a new members-only section of the AHA Forum called Homebrewer Support. This area exists to help members in need due to circumstances out of their control and is the only members-only area of the AHA Forum that allows members to ask for or offer equipment to offset and buffer hardships. Once Joe submitted a post to this area, fellow forum followers have been working with him to find a solution. A heartfelt thank you to all you forum followers who have selflessly contributed time and equipment to assist fellow homebrewers like Joe—this is what the AHA community is all about.

## AHA FORUM PARTICIPATION INVITATION

We invite you to join the conversation and use our new forum (in 2024 the AHA migrated the platform to Discourse) as an avenue to get your brewing questions answered. You've got questions, and fellow forum followers have answers. There's also a decade-plus archive to draw from. To add to this knowledge base, we hope you share your own homebrewing experiences and grow the toolbox of broader community support for each other.

Check out your AHA Forum here:  
[forum.HomebrewersAssociation.org](https://forum.HomebrewersAssociation.org)

## UPDATE ON THE AHA'S INDEPENDENCE

By Shawna Cormier and Julia Herz

*Note: An earlier version of this was published on HomebrewersAssociation.org on February 27, 2025*

Hello American Homebrewers Association (AHA) members. We are excited to share some important updates. Since our January 22, 2025, announcement that the AHA is incorporating to become a nonprofit organization independent of the Brewers Association (BA), we have received very positive feedback from both members and partners. With your involvement, our positive steps will help us keep pace, evolve, innovate, grow, and continue to serve you and the amazing hobby of homebrewing and fermenting in new ways. Also, thank you to those members who provided input and have stepped up to volunteer.

Highlights on what the newly seated AHA founding board did during our strategic retreat on Feb 10–11, 2025, include:

- A draft of an AHA vision statement for 2025: *We celebrate, educate, and promote the art, science, and joy of fermentation, championing a united community of today's and tomorrow's homebrewers.*
- A summary of the AHA's year one strategic priorities, including the following action items:
  - Organizational Strength and Health
  - Knowledge and Learning
  - Community, Collaboration, and Competition.
- Confirmed future plans for a 2026 return of Homebrew Con (HBC), 2026 board elections, and a 50th Anniversary celebration in 2028. Spoiler alert: we are taking steps to bring back HBC!
- Work on confirming founding board officers, new committees, and a board member task force to support the AHA's transition, including the creation of charters (pending for Spring 2025).
- Confirmation that the AHA will apply to be a 501(c)(3) over other 501(c) options.

### Notables

- On Jan. 22, the AHA filed for incorporation in Colorado.
- At the board's request, the AHA extended the National Homebrew Competition (NHC) entry window to Feb. 28.
- The board reviewed the AHA's finances and membership revenue and discussed the importance of establishing new member benefits and events.
- We discussed establishing the AHA's fiscal year cycle, drafting a reserves policy, term of service for this transition

board, and future elections of new board members in 2026.

- We continued the search to hire an Association Management Company (AMC) to carry out the AHA's day-to-day operations. With an AMC hire deadline of March 31, 2025, the AHA is scheduled to fully transition from the BA by the end of 2025.
- We hosted a Founding Board 24-hour Q&A on the AHA Forum from Feb 27–28, 2025 and recorded a March 18 Zymurgy Live Town Hall ([HomebrewersAssociation.org/presentations/zymurgy-live](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/presentations/zymurgy-live)) with the board. Members can watch the recording along with all past Zymurgy Live webinars.

We heard from many who desire more involvement, and we welcome more robust participation. There are multiple opportunities for members of the AHA, including:

- A front-row seat to nonprofit engagement, volunteer leadership, and history in the making. Please

apply at [HomebrewersAssociation.org/membership/volunteer-opportunities](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/membership/volunteer-opportunities).

- Renewing or joining the AHA to be part of this incredible association and homebrewing community. [HomebrewersAssociation.org/membership/join-or-renew/](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/membership/join-or-renew/)

We continue to appreciate your support, excitement, and opinions as we work toward a bright, sustainable, mission-focused future. We could not be more thrilled about the member, supplier partner, and companion organization's responses and collaboration that is unfolding.

**Shawna Cormier is chair of the AHA Founding Board, co-founder of Seattle Beer School, and director of membership and events, Washington Brewers Guild.**

**Julia Herz is executive director of the American Homebrewers Association. You can follow Julia's homebrew talks and travels on Instagram @ImmaculateFermentation or contact her at [ahaed@brewersassociation.org](mailto:ahaed@brewersassociation.org).** 

AHA founding board members (left to right, back row) Gary Glass, Drew Beechum, and Greg Roskopf; front row, Sandy Cockerham, Shawna Cormier (chair), and Julia Herz (AHA executive director).



# PAYING RESPECT TO DISABLED VETERANS

**Dear Zymurgy,**

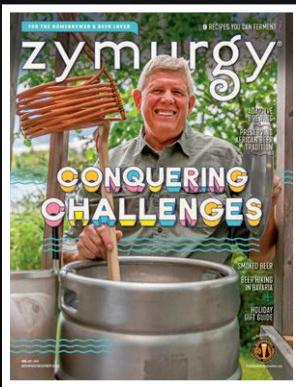
Today is my AHA membership anniversary. I joined in January 2009... a million years ago, and just yesterday. That anniversary made me reflect on my time as an AHA member and what that means to me as a super-basic homebrewer who keeps committed to the hobby through all kinds of challenges and changes.

I have been meaning to say for a few weeks that the “Conquering Challenges” issue was wonderful. I have wanted to see an issue about accessibility forever. Sometimes I think about what it means that I can do so many homebrewing tasks with so little effort (even as I compensate for the minor inconveniences of being small and old). As a veteran, it was also touching to see disabled veterans given some attention. The current issue is terrific—but I’m still super thankful that the “Conquering Challenges” issue happened, and on my AHAvary I’m making amends for waiting so long to commemorate it. Long live Zymurgy and the AHA!

Karen G. Schneider  
Knights of the Tap Handle, Windsor, Calif.  
Santa Rosa, Calif.

**AHA Executive Director Julia Herz responds:**

*Booyah to your AHA anniversary and for being such a longstanding member, KGS. That issue is one of my recent favorites too. Thank you for your service as well. We appreciate you!*





## RAUCH ON!

Dear Zymurgy,

After years of thinking about brewing this style, the rauchbier recipe in the November/December 2024 issue (Let There Be Rauch!) prodded me into action. The recipe's simplicity and brewer-tested smoke balance were appealing, and I was able to scale up from one gallon to five gallons pretty easily. Two months of lagering turned this into an amazing beer! Kudos to Zymurgy and Dan Jablow for a great recipe. I'm looking forward to brewing Jonathan Hernandez's NHC-winning gose recipe (Jan/Feb 2025 Zymurgy) in the next few weeks. The high-quality recipes that you publish are one of my favorite things about the magazine and my AHA membership!

Cheers!

Andy Farke

Horse Thief Brewers Association

Claremont, Calif.

[andybrews.com](http://andybrews.com)

(my review of the batch is at: [andybrews.com/2025/02/10/let-there-be-rauch](http://andybrews.com/2025/02/10/let-there-be-rauch))

**Contributor Dan Jablow responds:**

Cheers to you, Andy! That's a fantastic looking rauchbier. Glad you were inspired by the article.



## DEAR ZYMURGY

Send your Dear Zymurgy letters to [zymurgy@brewersassociation.org](mailto:zymurgy@brewersassociation.org). Letters may be edited for length and/or clarity.

## EXTRACTING SOME MUTUAL RESPECT

Dear Zymurgy,

It was gratifying to see two letters commenting on my Last Drop in the Jan/Feb issue. Other than from my local homebrew club, MASH Fort Wayne, I rarely see people's reactions to my articles. Thank you to Chris Smith.

Also a note to Chris: check out my "Brewing On A Budget" article in the May/June 2022 Zymurgy. Setting up for all-grain brewing can be done for under \$200; no need to spend thousands.

On a different note, the review of the Flash Brewing Kits was quite interesting. I'll have to consider that the next time I stock up on ingredients, although at the moment I'm covered until the middle of next year.

Cheers,  
Steve Ruch

## THE RIGHT YEAST FOR HOMEBREWING CLEAN LAGERS

There is always a perfect moment for a lager: a hot summer day, a game night, the end of a long working day, or a light lunch — to name just a few perfect moments! One of the cruelest paradoxes of homebrewing is that summer is the best time to drink a light lager. However, this beer style can't be brewed properly in the summer unless you have access to fermentation temperature control, which most homebrewers do not.

### What is Lager yeast?

A lager, by definition, needs to be brewed with lager yeast of the species *Saccharomyces pastorianus*. The *S. pastorianus* yeasts are hybrids of *S. cerevisiae* ale yeast with *S. eubayanus*, a cold-tolerant yeast species. The optimal fermentation temperature range for different types of lager yeasts is determined by genetics. Of the two traditional lager yeast lineages, Group I (Saaz) strains have more DNA from *S. eubayanus* and ferment at cooler temperatures (8 - 12°C), whereas Group II (Frohberg) strains have equal DNA from *S. eubayanus* and *S. cerevisiae* and ferment slightly warmer (10 - 15°C). A few years ago, yeast scientists used non-GMO breeding methods to select a novel lineage of lager yeasts. These Group III strains have a broader temperature tolerance because they have more DNA from *S. cerevisiae*. The first commercial Group III lager yeast is LalBrew NovaLager™, which has a wider optimal temperature range of 10 - 20°C.

### Refreshing lagers brewed at home with LalBrew NovaLager™

The ability to ferment warmer with Type III strains is a huge benefit for homebrewers since no diacetyl rest is required. LalBrew NovaLager™ will not produce H<sub>2</sub>S since it lacks a gene for sulfur metabolism. Furthermore, LalBrew NovaLager™ has a greater amount of *S. cerevisiae* DNA, meaning it efficiently uptakes valine from the wort and produces lower levels of diacetyl compared to traditional lager strains. Clean and neutral flavors are consistently reported when fermenting LalBrew NovaLager™ throughout the temperature range of 10 - 20°C. A few brewers have even pushed the limits above 25°C with great results.



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## YOUR HOMEBREW LABELS



The inspiration for my Scootie Delight label is from our pet Pug named Scooter and the red IPA we made for our son's wedding. (Homebrewer 13 years, AHA member 10 years)

Tom Luers  
Butler County Brewing Society  
Cincinnati, Ohio

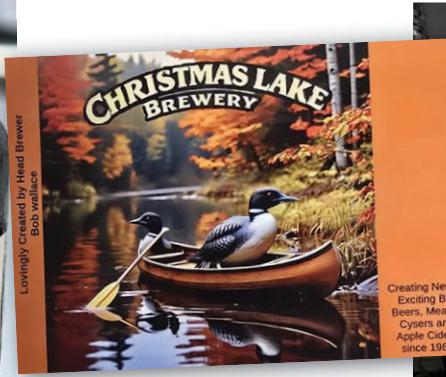


Kevin Worthen  
(Homebrewer 5 years, AHA member 3 years)  
Bexar Brewers / San Antonio Cerveceros  
San Antonio, Texas

I began brewing in 1980. Seeking a cool label a few years ago, I created one with Christmas Lake in Excelsior, Minn., but it was crude. Recently eight AI programs failed me, always adding Christmas themes like snow and holly. The text was never right. Finally, using PowerPoint fixed the text issues.

(Homebrewer 45 years, AHA member 29 years)

Bob Wallace  
Minnesota Home Brewers Association  
Excelsior, Minn.



### SUBMIT YOUR LABEL

Do you make custom labels for your homebrew? Want it featured here in the pages of Zymurgy for all to see your work? Upload your label to [HomebrewersAssociation.org/your-homebrew-experience](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/your-homebrew-experience) and we will take it into consideration!

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When I graduated Auburn University's brewing science and operations program in 2018, I was excited to have gained the tools to fine-tune the quality of our product and aid in the launch of our expansion.

In 2020, I realized the program also provided me with the knowledge necessary to enhance the survivability of our small business during a global pandemic.

**Kate Russell — Graduate Certificate '18,**

**Master of Science '23**

Hopkinsville Brewing Company,  
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# PICKLED RED ONIONS

By Amahl Turczyn

If you ever get a chance to visit the Yucatán region in Mexico, be prepared for some wonderful cuisine. From grilled red snapper, to the intensely floral honey made by the resident species of tiny, black stingless bee, to the bright yellow habanero salsa that seems to accompany every meal, to one of the most famous slow-roasted pork dishes in Mexico, *cochinita pibil*, you are guaranteed to eat very well during your visit. The latter is almost always served with *cebollas moradas en escabeche*, or pickled red onions. This bright-tasting, vibrant pink condiment shows up in a lot of dishes, and once I started making it at home, it quickly went from flashy adornment to regular staple. With its intense pop of color, tangy sweetness, and addictive crunch, it's good on just about everything.



Slice the onions finely into ribbons and juice plenty of limes.



Blanch the onions, then sprinkle with salt.



Add fresh-squeezed lime juice and seal to pickle.



If you are not a fan of oniony flavor, particularly the kind that lingers on the palate long after eating raw onions in, say, a salad, have no fear. These pickled onions go through a couple of process steps that remove that oniony sting, rendering them crisp and fresh tasting without the onion breath. There are countless recipes on the web for pickled red onions, but the vast majority use vinegar and sugar, and many of them include seasonings such as peppercorns and allspice berries. This recipe instead uses just three ingredients—fresh lime juice, onions, and a bit of salt—so it's a bit more labor intensive but, in my opinion, produces a much better and more authentic-tasting pickle.

The first step is of course slicing your onions. Red onions are pretty easy to find and should have a shiny, deep purple color once the papery outer layers are peeled off. Use a sharp chef's knife to slice off the tops and bottoms. Then cut the globe in half pole to pole, rather than following the equator, and place each half flat side down on a cutting board. Slice them end to end as thin as you can manage. The sharper your knife, the thinner you can go (and the fewer sulfur compounds you will release, so less crying). Yes, you can use the slicer attachment on a food processor, but a sharp knife produces a more finely textured result. Try to keep the slices together if possible, keeping the original shape of each semi sphere.

At this point, have enough boiling water going (about a cup) to cover the slices. Tightly pack them into a container made of glass or some other non-reactive material, again, trying to keep the slices together as much as you can to minimize air pockets. Then carefully pour the boiling water over the onions to cover them. Cover the container and let the onions soak for 20–30 minutes. While you are waiting, juice the limes. I like using the

traditional citrus press, half a lime at a time, rather than a mechanical juicer, as it also presses the rind. This releases more of those wonderful lime peel oils, which then go on to flavor the aroma of the finished result. (Unless of course you are preparing a large batch requiring several cups of juice, at which point the motorized juicer becomes a more attrac-

tive option.) For any batch size, you'll need just enough juice to cover the onion slices after discarding the water. With two medium-sized red onions, that amounts to about a cup of fresh lime juice, depending on how tightly you can pack the onion slices.

After the onions have finished soaking, drain and discard the water from the

Pickled red onions and fermented serrano hot sauce on tacos Barbacoa.



container. The soak-and-drain step tames a lot of the onion sting and allows the onions' natural sweetness to come out. Sprinkle about a teaspoon of salt over the onion slices and then cover them with the lime juice. Cover the container tightly, minimizing any air pockets to maximize contact between the lime juice brine and the onions. With the "glass lock" containers, you can actually tip them on one end, lock three of the four sides of the container, and press down on the top to squeeze

any remaining air out before locking the fourth side. It's a little tricky and messy, but possible, and then barring any leaks you can basically vacuum-pack all the liquid into the container without allowing any air to enter...the perfect solid-to-liquid environment. Refrigerate overnight (or at least for a few hours) to let the onions marinate and pickle. The acidity in the lime juice not only encourages more sweetness from the onions, it also turns them a vivid pink.

Use these pickled onion slices liberally on everything from tacos to pumpkin soup, tabbouleh to ramen, haggis to ham and eggs. Or, for the ultimate journey to the Yucatán (no ticket required), prepare a batch of cochinita pibil with a freshly minced habanero salsa and cebollas moradas en escabeche. It truly is a feast for the eyes as well as the taste buds.

*Amahl Turczyn is editor-in-chief  
of Zymurgy.*

## Yucatán-Style Pickled Red Onions

(cebillas moradas en escabeche)

**Batch volume:**  
about 2 cups

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 [about 1 lb., or 454 g] peeled, medium-sized red onions
- 1 tsp. [6 g] salt
- 1 cup [237 mL] fresh-squeezed lime juice
- 1 cup [237 mL] boiling water

### EQUIPMENT

2-cup glass container with a tight-sealing lid

### DIRECTIONS

Cut the ends off the onions. Cut each in half [pole to pole], then thinly slice each half, keeping the original shapes of the onion halves, if possible. Pack the slices into the glass container and cover them with the boiling water. Cover the container tightly and allow the onion slices to soak in the hot water for 20 to 30 minutes. Drain the water, then sprinkle the onions with the salt. Fill the container with enough fresh lime juice to cover the onion slices, and then seal the lid and refrigerate 2 to 3 hours or overnight.

Pickled onions will keep in the fridge for up to two weeks, if you can resist eating them for that long. Note: the leftover brine makes an amazing and very colorful martini. Just blend half and half with your favorite [frozen] vodka and garnish with a sliver of fresh habanero pepper.

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This!

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## A reload of rapid-fire tips for the short-attention-span homebrewer



### A LITTLE HOMEBREW WHITE LIE IS OK

Let's start with a controversial topic right off the bat. I am not an anti-gour-dite. And by that, I mean I like brewing pumpkin beer. Did I just lose half of you readers already?! Pumpkin itself doesn't have much flavor. Rather, it lends a certain mouthfeel and silky character. However, it's not uncommon for a competition judge to complain that they don't taste any pumpkin, only pumpkin spices. Then one day, I tried a commercial sweet potato beer. Immediately, I thought, "if I didn't know better, I'd think this beer has a flavor profile a pumpkin beer *should* have (if pumpkin had a flavor!)" So, I used sweet potato puree in my recipe instead of pumpkin the next time I brewed it. I threw it into a competition as pumpkin beer and was rewarded with bling and happy judge comments.

### EASY PHILANTHROPY

Is a favored charity in your community holding an event featuring a silent auction? As a homebrewing superhero, you have a simple but terrific item you can donate to the auction so they can raise even more funds: a homebrewing class! Hey, you were going to brew anyway—why not double your brew day's usefulness and turn it into a fundraiser too? And if you are part of a club, throw in a free one-year club membership. The charity will often ask the value of the donated item so they can relay that value to the bidder. Whenever we donate a brew class and membership, we give the same answer each time: it's priceless!

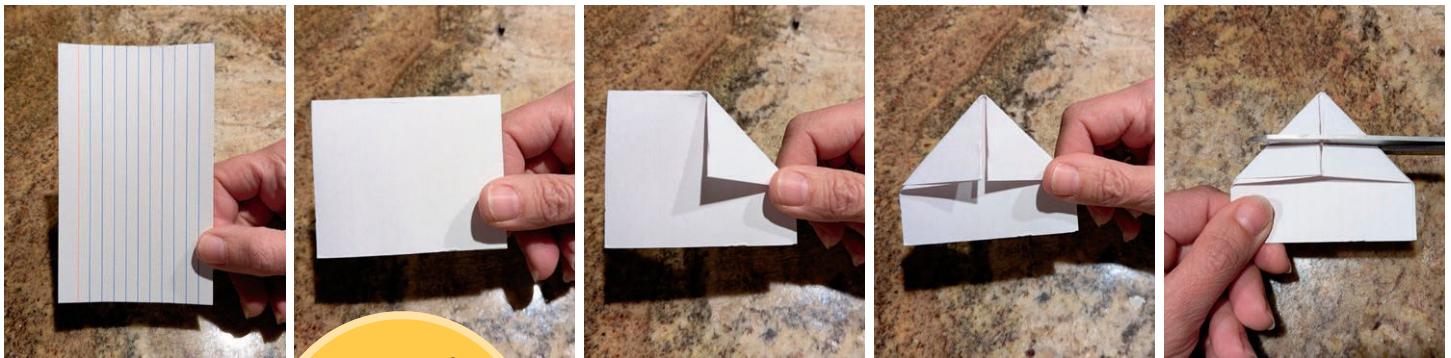
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A BREWING  
CLASS AND CLUB  
MEMBERSHIP TO A  
CHARITY'S SILENT  
AUCTION.

### DOUGH BALL DISTINTEGRATOR

Most people use some type of steel or wood mash paddle for stirring when they mash in (I personally used the classic hardwood mash paddle for years). The problem with the standard mash paddle is that it's not particularly good at breaking up dough balls. A few years ago, a couple of my fellow club members demonstrated a better solution: use a 24" steel French whisk to stir your hot liquor and grist together when you mash in. Dough balls disintegrate easily using this tool compared to your typical mash paddle. I've been using one to mash in ever since.

IF YOU  
WANT YOUR  
COMPETITION BEER  
TO TASTE LIKE  
PUMPKIN, USE  
SWEET POTATO.





**USE AN INDEX CARD TO EASILY IDENTIFY YOUR HOMEBREW BOTTLE'S CONTENTS.**



### POOR MAN'S BOTTLE BIB

Remember in elementary school when you learned how to fold paper and snip it up to make your own paper snowflake? Turns out that was a life skill. When you bring homebrew to a bottle share, you need to identify the bottle somehow so others know what's in it. Enter the Poor Man's Bottle Bib! Sure, Avery labels can be nice, but my laziness is surprisingly resilient. Instead, take a standard index card and fold it in half. Then fold it two more times to make an arrowhead (see photos). Snip the arrowhead about an inch below the point. Unfold and use a marker to write what's in the bottle. Easy to make and easy to read. Plus, your bottle will likely stand out more.

### LOW-EFFORT, FULL-FLAVORED HOME-SMOKED MALT

Obviously, the least amount of effort it takes to get smoked malt is just to buy it at your homebrew shop. But I really dig the DIY smoked malt I make at home. If you're a smoked beer fan and like the idea of creating your own smoked malt, let's chat. There are multiple ways to do this. If you want to learn a warm smoke method, I'll give a nod to the 2022 Homebrew Con seminar "Home Smoking Malt for Rauchbier." You can check that out at [HomebrewersAssociation.org](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org). Dan Jablow also provides some excellent guidance on home-smoked malt techniques in his Smoked Beer article in the November/December 2024 issue of *Zymurgy*. For me, my method of choice is cold-smoking. And it's very easy to do.

If you own a smoker, a charcoal grill, or a Big Green Egg, you're in business. Now go procure a Pit Boss Expandable 7–12" Stainless Steel Smoke Tube, available at your big box hardware store. Using wood pellets (apple and cherry are my preferences), the smoke tube allows you to generate smoke with very little heat. You can also help shield the heat more with a tray of ice cubes. For my



**FOR TERRIFIC DIY SMOKED MALT, COLD SMOKING IS EASY AND TASTY.**



smoker, I cut up window screen material so that it fits over each grate. I spread a thin layer of malt on each of the screens. To fire up the smoke tube, I use a small piece of Weber paraffin wax as a starter (see photos above). When the tube is properly lit and smoking, the grains go

into the smoker for 2.5 hours. When done, you can brew with the newly smoked grains immediately or save them for a future brew day. Smoked German Festbier is my favorite smoked homebrew and uses 5 lb. (2.27 kg) of home-smoked malt per 5-gallon batch.

## BREW DEMO AT A FESTIVAL WITH NO PLUMBING? NO PROBLEM!

Ever get recruited to do a brewing demonstration at a festival? It's great fun performing liquid bread alchemy in front of the public, and it helps spread the homebrew gospel. But there can be logistical issues when brewing offsite at a fest. Often the biggest issue is no running water, which means you'll have a problem chilling your wort. The solution: use the no-chill method. When the festival is over, transfer the hot wort into a sanitized Igloo cooler. If you have an HDPE container, that's even better.

Many fermentation buckets have specs that support storing liquid as hot as 180°F (82.2°C), so those are another great option. Pitch your yeast the next day. Bonus perk, this method also shortens the brew day. If you're worried about DMS or other off flavors, you'll be fine so long as your sanitation is good.

USE THE  
NO-CHILL METHOD  
FOR BREWING DEMOS IF  
NO RUNNING WATER IS  
AVAILABLE.



## POOR MAN'S COUNTER-PRESSURE FILLER

There are several keg-to-bottle filling gadgets on the market, including the classic counter-pressure filler I used many years ago. But I always dreaded the setup. Instead, for the past 15 years, I've been using what I call the Poor Man's Counter-Pressure Filler to fill bottles for competition, because it's so easy and reliable. Got \$3 or \$4 you can spare? If so, you can quickly make your own. Procure a #2 holed stopper. Then get 5' of 1/4" ID vinyl tubing, and 3" of 3/8" ID vinyl tubing. That's all you need. Assemble the filler per the accompanying photos.

Here's the process to use it:

- Sanitize everything (of course!).
- Set your keg at 3–6 psi (for a slow flow out of your picnic faucet).
- Attach the Poor Man's Counter Pressure Filler to the keg's picnic faucet. Depending on the need for limiting dissolved oxygen, take steps to purge the line and/or bottle properly before filling.
- Put the other end of the tube into the bottle with the holed stopper plugging up the top.

- Start the flow of your beer (only an ounce or two will get in before the flow stops due to the pressure).
  - Use your thumb to gently squeeze the stopper and release some of the pressure. The flow will continue slowly with very little to no foam.
  - Allow any foam present to overflow until beer reaches the top of the neck. Remove the tube.
  - Squirt a splash of beer from the faucet into the top of the bottle to form some foam. Cap your bottle on foam.
- If you're submitting the bottle(s) for competition, rubber-band the appropriate label onto your bottle, and it's now ready. May many ribbons of shiny, award-winning bling adorn your wall.

## ALTERNATIVE MEAD BACK-SWEETENER

If you need to back-sweeten your mead, you typically do that with honey (preferably the same varietal you used for fermentation). But if your supply of fresh honey has dwindled, there are a couple of handy alternative back-sweetening options you may consider. The first is organic blue agave syrup. It's just as sweet as honey and has a few other potential advantages.

- You can keep it handy in your pantry, and it does not darken over time like honey does. This way you won't darken your light-colored mead if the only available honey you have on hand is old.
- It does not crystallize like honey, so it's easier to dissolve.
- Sometimes back-sweetening with honey imbues mead with "that raw honey character," which is not always desirable. Using agave syrup avoids that.
- It's a little cheaper than honey. Okay, not a lot cheaper, but a little cheaper!

You may ask, why not just add cheap white sugar? You could, but I've always found that blending straight white sugar with mead, flavor-wise, just doesn't marry well (plus, you have to work a bit to dissolve it).

MAKING YOUR OWN RELIABLE COUNTER-PRESSURE FILLER WITH HOMEBREW SHOP ITEMS IS EASY AND INEXPENSIVE.

ORGANIC BLUE AGAVE SYRUP OR A DOUBLE SIMPLE SYRUP ARE TWO GREAT MEAD AND CIDER ALTERNATIVE BACK-SWEETENERS.

Instead, consider alternative back-sweetening option #2: simple syrup. Yes, the same syrup one would use to make a delightful bourbon-based Old Fashioned cocktail. However, instead of a standard simple syrup, which uses a ratio of 1:1 by volume (one cup sugar to one cup water), make it a double simple syrup (2:1 ratio). A simple syrup is so easy to make, even a Zymurgy author can do it. Bring one cup of water to a boil, add two cups sugar, and then stir until dissolved. Let it cool down. You can keep it in your refrigerator for many months. Simple syrup will dissolve easily in mead for back-sweetening.



## THE CARBONATION CAP IS NOT A ONE-TRICK PONY

The Carbonation Cap (a great homebrew invention) is primarily used to carbonate a small amount of liquid or to maintain carbonation in a smaller vessel (like a PET bottle, for example) when transferring it to a new location such as a party or bottle share. And sure, it can also help clean draft lines. But that's only a fraction of its usefulness! Along with a 2-liter bottle, I find it essential for enabling me to experiment with and modify the flavors of my homebrewed beer, mead, and cider, especially for competitions.

Add 24 ounces of water to your 2L bottle. Mark that water line with a black marker. Add another 12 oz. of water and mark that line (the 36 oz. line). If a competition requires two or three bottles, you'll know how much to fill the bottle. Here are a few example concoctions I've made using the Carbonation Cap/2L bottle team:

- Steep two dried and split open chipotle peppers in 36 oz. of sweet mead to make a nice chipotle mead with sweet heat.
- Blend a beer and a mead together for a spectacular braggot. You may want to test what the ratio should be in a sample cup first.
- Using 3 bags of chai green tea, make a tea concentrate using half a cup of water. Then blend that into 36 oz. of sweet or semi-sweet mead. In general, you can blend any tasty addition into mead this way. Then use the Carbonation Cap to make the mead pétillant (or sparkling if that's your thing). For me, most meads are more enjoyable if they are pétillant rather than still.

You get the point. I currently own seven Carbonation Caps to do my blending, infusions, and experiments for competitions and bottle shares. You may be thinking, "geez, why do you own seven Carbonation Caps?" Well, because I used to own six, and then I got one more.

THE CARBONATION CAP IS A TERRIFIC TOOL FOR BLENDING, INFUSING, AND DOING EXPERIMENTS TO CREATE NEW FLAVORS ON A SMALL SCALE.

## HOW A HOMEBREWER CAN SAVE THEIR GROCERIES DURING A HURRICANE

This quick tip is mainly for my fellow peeps who live in the Southeast where hurricanes like to smack us around from June to November. When a hurricane is headed your way, you're always concerned about potential property damage. But the more common concern is having the power go out, possibly for several days. If you have a generator, that helps keep the fridge running and the food from spoiling. But if you don't have a generator or would like to have a backup plan in case your generator fails, a homebrewer has an option that most non-homebrewing muggles do not: your carboy and your empty fermentation chest freezer.

How does a powerless chest freezer help? It helps because you'll be clever enough to turn that chest freezer into an old-style ice box just before the hurricane's arrival. Fill a PET carboy or plastic fermentation bucket with water, then place it into the chest freezer and set your freezer to its coldest setting. You may need to first unplug the freezer from its temperature controller and then plug it back into the wall. It can take a whole day to completely freeze 5 gallons of water. But once it's frozen solid, and then later when the power goes out, you can transfer your food to this ice box and passively refrigerate it all for several days to keep your groceries from spoiling.



USE YOUR FERMENTATION CHEST FREEZER AS AN OLD-STYLE ICE BOX IF THE POWER GOES OUT DURING A HURRICANE.

## ICE BEER CAN BE A HAPPY ACCIDENT

Freezers are fun—let's do another freezer-related quick tip. This situation has happened to me and several friends, so perhaps it's happened to you too: the beer in your carboy or keg froze solid. Perhaps something glitched and your chest freezer never shut off. Or perhaps the probe to the external temp controller failed. Either way, you ended up with a beer popsicle. You could simply take the beer out of the chest freezer and let it defrost back to a normal temperature, but what fun is that?

Bob Ross that beer-sicle into a happy accident and rack yourself an *eisbier*! You know you've always wanted to. Or perhaps it's been a while since the last time you did. Take the beer out of the chest freezer to defrost it but monitor it until it gets to the point where there's beer-colored liquid



USE AN ACCIDENTALLY FROZEN CARBOY OR KEG AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN EISBIER.

that's separated from the clear, slushy ice. Rack the liquid into another carboy or keg. A normal 5-gallon batch will yield about three gallons of *eisbier*.

30 PSI FOR TWO DAYS IS A GOOD DEFAULT KEG CARBONATION TECHNIQUE.

## SWIFT BUT CHILL KEG CARBONATION

These next three quick tips are mostly meant for brewers in their rookie year. I tend to get peppered with these kinds of questions from newbies in my own club, so I'm including them here. First up, with all the various keg carbonation techniques, which one gets the nod from me? As my default procedure, I favor chilling my keg to 41°F (5°C), setting my regulator to 30 psi, and letting it sit at that pressure and temperature for 36–48 hours, checking it after the first day. I don't alligator-wrestle with my keg, nor do I like the type of big bubbles it creates. If the carbonation tastes right, I then lower the psi head pressure to the standard 10–12 psi maintenance level. I can wait two days, which is how long it takes for most of my batches to properly carbonate.



## WHAT'S INSIDE THAT KEG?

After kegging your beer, mead, or cider, you need to somehow label the keg so you can remember what's in it. Homebrewers have come up with plenty of fancy and practical ways to label their kegs. My default label method of choice is to grab a permanent marker, scribble on a roll of blue painter's tape, and stick it on the keg's handle. Works great, and the tape comes off easily when it's time to clean the keg and refill it.

## EASY CLEAR BEER

Other than a hazy IPA or wheat beer (or other style that's meant to look cloudy in your glass), having your beer nice and clear yields benefits beyond simply looking good. Clarifying beer gives it a crisper mouthfeel and cleaner aftertaste. What's my beer clearing technique of choice? Unflavored gelatin. It's easy, it's cheap, it's widely available, and it works. Measure one teaspoon into half a cup of bottled water. Let it bloom (steep) for 20 minutes. Heat it to 165°F (73.8°C) to pasteurize it, then add it to the beer. No stirring required. Your beer should get noticeably clearer in three days. Keep a couple of boxes handy just for this purpose.



FOR  
AN EASY WAY  
TO CLEAR YOUR BEER,  
GELATIN IS CHEAP,  
RELIABLE, AND WIDELY  
AVAILABLE.

## A BIGGER "BIAB" BATCH, MY WAY

I do plenty of batches on my stovetop using the brew-in-a-bag (BIAB) technique. I'm often asked how many gallons I can make. Because of the limitation of stovetops, most expect me to say something like 3 gallons. But I tell them I make 5 gallons, and that seems to surprise many. Understandably, since they assume you can't fit enough water into a stovetop kettle to make a 5-gallon batch using BIAB (because a true BIAB session puts all the water in the pot at once and is sparge-less).

I actually use an 8-gallon pot (which is still not technically big enough for an actual 5-gallon BIAB batch since it requires about 7.5 gallons of water plus the grain), but I always hold back 1.5 gallons or so. Therefore, only about 6 gallons of water are used in the BIAB mash. Once the mash is over, I put the grain bag into a bucket and do a non-BIAB-purist poor man's sparge by rinsing it with the withheld 1.5 gallons of water. This also improves my batch efficiency. I then add that to the pot, and Bob's your uncle, Fanny's your aunt, I can make 5 gallons on a stovetop.



## SAVE PEOPLE'S TIME BY COMMUNICATING WELL

Here's a quick tip that's good for homebrew clubs. One thing I always notice at festival booths where they pour beer is what kind of menu sign they are using. Big A-frame chalk boards are great, if you have one. But it's essential to also have an easy-to-see menu of beers when you walk right up to the booth. This is where many fail. The consequence is that patrons fumble around trying to figure out what sample to order and end up slowing down the line. A menu of all beers should be easily seen from the back of the line, even if the patron is height-challenged, so they already know what they want to order.

My club has tried several sign designs and has settled on using clip-on, double-sided merchandise displays. They clip onto the top of your booth canopy, so they're easily seen from the back of the line. They're waterproof and rewritable with liquid chalk markers. They are also flexible for placement. And if a particular beer runs out, you simply snatch the sign down and put it away so no one can order it anymore. Plus, they're easy to store. Get a box of 20.



USE CLIP-ON,  
DOUBLE-SIDED  
MERCHANDISE  
DISPLAYS FOR FESTIVAL  
BEER MENUS.

USE A POOR  
MAN'S SPARGE  
TECHNIQUE TO  
INCREASE THE SIZE OF  
YOUR BIAB BATCH.

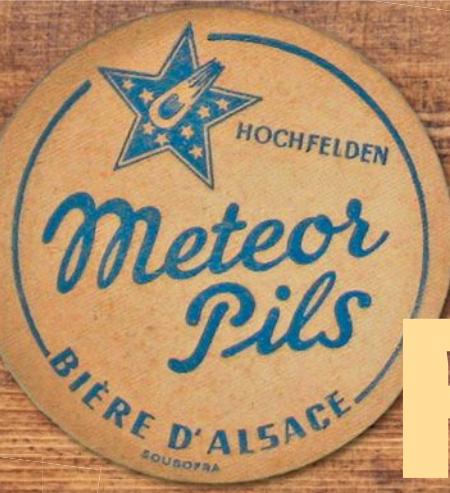


This can of quick-tip concentrate has now been drained (and into the recycling bin it goes). I hope you're able to make use of these bits of savvy advice during your homebrew ventures. And if any of these inspire you to create your own brilliant quick tips, well, that's good too. Don't forget to share!

*Ron Minkoff has been brewing in the comfort of his driveway since 2003. He is a past president of the Hogtown Brewers and is a BJCP Certified beer and mead judge, and doesn't feel shame for prematurely downing a pint of pumpkin sweet potato beer in August.*



Photos © Bartosz Salomonski [beer], Getty/Rouzes [wood];  
Musée de la Bière - Département de la Meuse [coasters]



# The FRENCH PILSNERS of Alsace

By Ryan Pachmayer

In the 1920s, American writer Ernest Hemingway lived in Paris. In his book *A Moveable Feast*, he talks about regularly visiting Brasserie Lipp, an Alsatian restaurant operating in Paris and frequented by fellow writers and poets, perhaps because of its affordability.

There Hemingway enjoyed cold beer, food, and the social scene. While he doesn't name specific brands of beer, it is likely he drank beers from Alsatian breweries such as Kronenbourg, Schutzenberger, Perle, and Meteor.

It wasn't long after the original Pilsner was created in Pilsen in 1842 that Alsace, a historical region in eastern France, would see its first Pilsner-type beer. Just five years later, lager was being made at the Schutzenberger brewhouse just outside of Strasbourg, the heart of the Alsace region. In the decades to come, Alsace was part of the lager revolution that was sweeping the world. These beers were sometimes made with only barley malt, but other times with corn or rice as a supplement.

Pilsner-like beers brewed in Alsace were not called Pilsner at the time, out of respect for the original Pilsner Urquell. Names such as Bière de Strasbourg or Bière d'Alsace were commonplace, though they did not always mean the beer was of a Pilsner type.

By the end of World War II, Alsace had changed hands between Germany and France many times, and as a result there is still some German influence in the region today, even though it has been an official part of France since 1945.

Louis Haag of Brasserie Meteor created the first official Pilsner in Alsace. He'd spent time visiting what is now the Czech Republic, learning about the bottom-fermented beer there. He released what would later be called Meteor Pils in 1927, subsequently receiving permission from the Czech Republic in 1931 to use that official Pils title. Over the next 30-plus years, dozens of other Pils brands would emerge, from Colmar, Schutzenberger, Peters, Adelshoffen, Fischer, Gruber, Ancre, Freysz, Kronen, Lutterbach, and Mutzig, to the original Kronenbourg 1664, a Pilsner-style beer which began production in 1952.



A slower period in the 1960s would lead to consolidation. Many of these Pilsner brands struggled and were sold to larger groups such as Heineken and Carlsberg, while others went out of business entirely. Those that were bought were often shuttered during periods of weak performance. The golden age of Pilsner in Alsace had seemingly ended.

## THE HISTORY OF PERLE

In 1882, Pierre Hoeffel founded Strasbourg's Brasserie Perle in the Alsace region. Hoeffel had three daughters, none of whom were interested in continuing the business. After 30 years, Hoeffel decided to sell the brewery to Charles Kleinknecht. Kleinknecht, an engineer, built a new brew-house and took Perle to greater heights.

One of Kleinknecht's daughters became the first female brewing engineer in the late 1920s. Hoeffel's grandson married into the Kleinknecht family as well, solidifying the union of the two important families.

As consolidation began in the 1960s, Perle struggled to stay alive. It was sold to a larger group in 1969, which was subsequently acquired by Heineken in 1972. The brand was discontinued, and the brewery demolished.

As a teenager visiting the U.S. in the 1990s, Hoeffel's great-great-grandson

Christian Artzner was surprised to see so many new breweries opening. Breweries like Sierra Nevada and Sam Adams were just starting out and inspired him to start a collection of beer coasters. That hobby quickly grew into a professional ambition, leading Artzner to study brewing at Scotland's Heriot-Watt University in 1995.

Artzner resurrected Perle in 2009. "It was a good thing that the brand was quickly stopped [in the 1970s]," he says. "It doesn't have the bad image that some industrial beers can have."

## (RE)MAKING A CLASSIC

While the quick stop to the Perle brand may have prevented the name from being tarnished, it also erased both the physical brewery and documentation related to its beers. As such, Artzner had to start from scratch when rebuilding the Pilsner brand from his family history. His aim was to honor the original Perle while embracing the challenge of creating a beer that could capture a slice of the competitive market. "The reason surviving breweries did not close [during tougher times] is because they're pretty good at what they are doing," says Artzner.

"It is my interpretation of an Alsatian Pilsner," says Artzner about creating Perle Pils. "I wanted to be authentic,"

he says, "but I knew we had to produce something bolder." Artzner did that with a slightly higher ABV of 5.4% and a bitterness level of 35 IBUs (for reference, Meteor Pils is about 26 IBUs). "I tried [putting myself] in the head of a brewer 60 to 80 years ago," says Artzner. "We use whole-leaf Strisselspalt hops and long lagering times."

Local Pilsner malts from Strasbourg and a small amount of German Munich malt gets milled in a four-roller mill before seeing a multi-step mash. Artzner doesn't use decoction mashing with these modern malts; he's happy with Perle Pils as it's currently brewed, though he is a bit curious about perhaps attempting a decoction regime in a future batch.

In addition to Strisselspalt hops, the beer uses Aramis for bittering. Aramis was developed in 2002 as a cross between Strisselspalt and Whitbread Golding. It maintains some of the former's characteristics while providing a higher alpha acid—meaning less vegetal matter is required to reach the same level of IBUs. "I like the earthy, herbal characteristics of these French hops," says Artzner. Perle Pils also uses Hersbrucker and Tradition hops from the Hallertau region of Germany. "I'm a big fan of whole hops," says Artzner, "especially in delicate beers like Pilsner."



Photos courtesy of Brasserie Meteor, Brasserie Popiñh

**From top right clockwise:**

Meteor Pils;

Brasserie Popihn;

Edouard Haag of Brasserie Meteor;  
an early image of Brasserie Meteor.



## MODERN FRENCH PILS

Despite breweries in France numbering around 2,500, craft Pilsner isn't having anything close to the revolution it is having in the U.S. There are a growing number of small breweries making interesting Pilsner, however. Here are a few, with some key details.

**Jondi Blonde** – Brewed by 90 BPM Brewing near Dijon, this 5% ABV Pilsner is made with *Tardif de Bourgogne* (late Burgundy) hops. This hop is grown in very small quantities in the Alsace region and is reportedly mild, European-like, with a dominant floral characteristic followed by hints of spicy pine, herbal frankincense, and rose petals.

**French Pils 2** – Brewed by Brasserie Popihn, this 5.4% ABV Pilsner uses Mistral hops to produce an aroma of "rose in the nose," according to the brewery.

**French Touch** – Brewed by Ninkasi, a large craft brewery founded in Lyon, France in 1997 (no relation to Ninkasi in the U.S.), this 4.3% ABV beer uses local rye malt along with French Pilsner malt and French Elixir hops. Elixir is a newer French variety that has a distinct tangerine and orange character. In the smaller amounts used in Pilsner-type beers, it can offer a woody, floral, and tobacco-like range of flavors as well. The soft water of the Monts du Beaujolais is also key in this beer.

**La Finette Pils** – West of Strasbourg lies Brasserie Lauth, also known as Brasserie Le Scharrach. Founded in 1997 by Daniel Lauth, it is the first microbrewery in the Alsace region. Regional ingredients are used in this 5% ABV beer, including Strisselspalt hops and Soufflet malt.

**Alphonse Pils** – Founded by Joël Halbardier in the Alsace region over 25 years ago, Brasserie Saint Alphonse brews this 4.8% ABV Pilsner with a low and slow fermentation, aromatic hop additions, and extended lagering to achieve a soft, flavorful beer.



Brasserie Popihn.



Cervecería Itäneñe's interpretation of Alsatian Pils.

There's a vegetable fruitiness from whole hops and a smoothness from them that I really like."

A dry 34/70 lager strain is pitched, then reused six or seven times before going back to a new dry pitch. The beer is fermented at about 53°F (12°C) before it's lagered at 32°F (0°C) for at least four weeks. It is 100% naturally carbonated to about 2.6 volumes, something Artzner feels is an important component of the beer.

A centrifuge is also critical. Artzner says that Perle Pils was originally finished with a filter. "After many tests, we felt like it just lost so much after exiting the filter. It's not always 100% crystal clear [with the centrifuge], but it has the brilliance we are looking for." He likes that it keeps some of the character formerly stripped away during filtration, while still removing yeast cells that can produce undesirable flavors.

In the end, Artzner created a beer that he is proud of; it not only stands out in the marketplace, it remains a testament to the old family brand. "Pilsner, for me, is about a fine balance between character and drink-

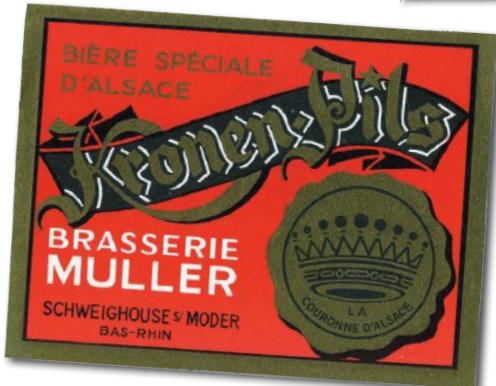
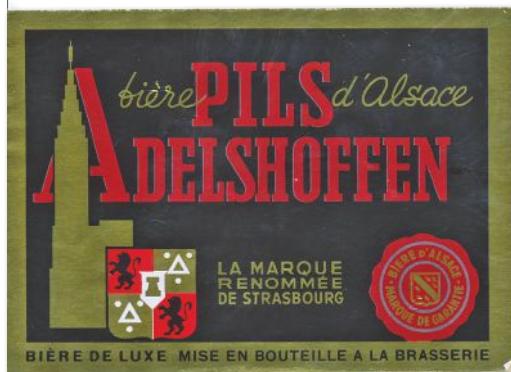
ability," he says. "You want classic floral, herbaceous, or fruity hop notes, but you also want dryness, drinkability."

## FINDING A PATH FOR PERLE

There was one issue with launching the Pilsner brewery that Artzner's great-great-grandfather first started: cost. Building a brewery that required long lagering times, counter-pressure bottle filling, and more meant that he would need about a million euros up front. He didn't have that kind of money.

Instead, he sought out an existing brewery that could make his beer the way he wanted. He found one in the Black Forest of Germany, just a few hours away. He began selling his beer in Alsace in 2009. For over five years he worked under this contract-brewing relationship. Despite having to explain that the beer was no longer brewed in Alsace, the community embraced it. "It was emotional," says Artzner. In 2015, after five years of contract brewing, Perle returned home.

Today, the brewery uses a 40-hectoliter



brewhouse of its own in Strasbourg, brewing into 80- and 160-hectoliter fermenters. The total output is around 5,500 hectoliters per year, which is about 4,700 U.S. barrels. Roughly 20% of that production is Pils. IPA is another popular brand from Perle, one of about a dozen beers the brewery has available at any given time.

## FRANCE'S OLDEST BREWERY

When many people think about Alsatian Pilsner, Brasserie Meteor is often the very first beer that comes to mind. Founded in 1640, it's not only the oldest operating brewery in France, it is still family-owned. While almost every independent brewery in the region closed or was bought out over the years, Meteor survived, stubbornly refusing to be sold, while making sure that it stayed healthy enough to weather down-markets.

Meteor Pils is also the very first beer in Alsace to be labeled a Pils—though it came with the stipulation that the words “Bièvre d'Alsace” had to be on the label. It uses an interesting formula: The mash contains roughly 20% corn, making it drink lighter and slightly sweeter. The modest 26 IBUs start with the bittering hop Aramis—one of the few changes to the historic recipe—followed by French Strisselspalt and Czech Saaz hops. The beer sees a decoction mash and is filtered. Words like “delicate,” “floral,” and “slightly spicy” have been used to describe the beer, and it is a mainstay

throughout France.

For those trying to brew something in the same vein at home, target the same percentage of adjunct, with the remaining 80% of the mash Pilsner malt (French or even Belgian origin is ideal). You'll want a starting gravity of 1.048 (12°P) and a 1.010 (2.5°P) finishing gravity. Cold-lager the beer for a long period and/or fine the beer so it is as clear as possible. By using flaked corn in your recipe along with the same hops as the original, it is possible to make a reasonable interpretation of the beer.

## GREEN BENCH GOES FRENCH

Many beers labeled “Alsatian Pils” in the U.S. have taken inspiration from Meteor—particularly those containing corn. At Green Bench, co-founder and head brewer Khris Johnson built a beer that looks a lot like Meteor Pils at first glance, but with his own personal touch and technique.

Johnson was looking to make a collaboration beer with American Stage, a company that hosts musicals in parks during Florida's wonderful springtime. “We wanted something with drinkability,” says Johnson. He started to outline the attributes that he was looking for. “Around 5% ABV, 25–35 IBUs, pale, dry, and bubbly.” With that profile in mind, French Pilsner made the most sense.

Further supporting the decision was the location of the musical, *Beauty and the Beast*—namely, France. The team at Green Bench couldn't use any direct references to the Disney-owned production, but they did find a little-known nugget to name the beer: Gaston's Tavern in the movie was originally called *Le Pub* in the script. The name was fair game and worked on multiple levels.

Johnson had tried a few French-style



## Le Pub

**Green Bench Brewing Co., St. Petersburg, Fla.**

Recipe by Khris Johnson,  
founding brewer, co-owner

[scaled to 5-gallon batch size with BeerSmith 3]

**Batch volume:** 5 gal (18.93 L)

**Original gravity:** 1.047 (11.8°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.009 (2.2°P)

**Bitterness:** 28–30 IBU

**Color:** 2.7 SRM

**Alcohol:** 5.2% by volume

**Efficiency:** 70%

### MALTS

7.75 lb. (3.52 kg) Franco-Belges Pilsner malt  
(82%)

1.75 lb. (0.79 kg) Riverbend malted corn (18%)

### HOPS

1.15 oz. (33 g) Hallertau Tradition, 4.8% a.a.  
@ 70 min [20 IBUs]

0.65 oz. (18 g) French Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a.  
@ 30 min [6 IBUs]

1 oz. (28 g) French Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a.  
WP 20 min @ 176°F [2 IBUs]

### YEAST

Bavarian lager

### BREWING NOTES

Mash in at a 4:1 liquor-to-grist ratio at 131°F (55°C) long enough to adjust pH to 5.4 and water profile to the desired Pilsner-style profile. Step up temperature to 148°F (64°C) and rest for 30 min; step up to 153°F (67°C) and rest for 10 min; step to 159°F (71°C) and rest for 10 min. If decocting, separate mash and bring 1/3 to a boil for 5 minutes. Reintroduce mashes and rest at 167°F (75°C) for 15 minutes before vorlauf and lauter. If you're not going to decoct, the mash doesn't need to be that thin.

Knock out at 53°F (12°C), aerate, and ferment with Augustiner or your favorite Bavarian lager yeast strain. When you hit 1.016–1.018 (4–4.5°P), raise the temperature to 59°F (15°C) until F.G. has stabilized. Crash and lager for at least 2 weeks before packaging to 2.7 vols of CO<sub>2</sub>.



## Figment

**Counter Weight Brewing, Cheshire, Conn.**

Recipe by Matt Westfall,  
owner and head brewer

[scaled to 5-gallon batch size with BeerSmith 3]

**Batch size:** 5 gal (18.93 L)

**Original gravity:** 1.044 (11°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.008 (2°P)

**Alcohol:** 4.8% by volume

**Bitterness:** 26–28 IBU

**Color:** 3 SRM

**Efficiency:** 70%

### MALTS

7 lb. (3.18 kg) Franco-Belges Pilsner malt  
(80%)

1.75 lb. (0.79 kg) Briess Flaked Corn (20%)

### HOPS

0.5 oz. (14 g) Aramis, 8.1% a.a @ 60 min  
(15 IBUs)

0.35 oz. (10 g) Aramis, 8.1% a.a @ 30 min  
(8 IBUs)

2 oz. (57 g) Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a @ 5 min  
(5 IBUs)

2 oz. (57 g) Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a,  
dry hop in secondary 3 days  
(optional)

### YEAST

BSI Augustiner lager yeast

### BREWING NOTES

Mash in at 147°F (64°C) and hold 30 min. Pull a single decoction by bringing 1/3 of the mash up to a boil. Boil 5 minutes, then add back to main mash and hold another 30 min. Ferment at 53°F (12°C) until fermentation is complete. Transfer and lager for at least 2 weeks.

Pilsners and had experience brewing one with his friend Todd DiMatteo at Good Word Brewing. For Le Pub, he wanted it to be closer to an adjunct lager. He sourced French Pilsner malt as the base and then used Cumberland Malted Corn from Riverbend Malt House for just under 20% of the grist. “We often use flaked corn, but we like to play around with that [variable],” says Johnson.

Corn variety has a reputation for being subtle in end characteristics, but Johnson uses it regularly in Green Bench’s flagship Postcard Pils, a Pre-Prohibition-style Pilsner, so he knows what he’s talking about. “When we use flaked corn, it gives a lot of flavor, but with malted corn, the aroma is stronger,” he says. “You just get this rich, almost sweet cornbread—it’s rad.” At the homebrew scale, Johnson says that if you’re batch-sparging, you can use a higher percentage of corn, comfortably up to about 30%. Green Bench goes to about

25% on Bench Life, its premium light lager.

For hops, Johnson uses Hallertau Tradition for the bittering hop—he needed a noble-type hop for the early boil since his French Strisselspalt was only 1.1% alpha acid. “We still ended up using a lot of [hop matter] because we wanted Strisselspalt for the flavor,” he says. “I like having a decent amount of vegetable matter, but we really focus on the oil content in a lot of lagers. We back into alpha acids by looking at the oil content first for our late additions, then our middle additions, then back into bitterness.”

## A DELICATE ENDEAVOR

Lucía Carrillo has a love for Alsatian wine. The owner and head brewer at Cervecería Itañeñe in Mexico City wanted to use the delicate flavors of French hops to bring some white wine characteristics to her interpretation of Alsatian Pilsner, without using grapes.

“The key ingredient in [La Crème de



## La Crème de la Crème

**Cervecería Itañeñe, Mexico City, Mexico**

Recipe by Lucía Carrillo, owner and head brewer

**Batch size:** 5 gal (18.93 L)

**Original gravity:** 1.049 (12.2°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.009 (2.2°P)

**Alcohol:** 5.25% by volume

**Bitterness:** 28 IBU

**Color:** 4 SRM

**Mash pH:** 5.3

**Final pH:** 4.38

### OTHER INGREDIENTS

5.1 oz. (145 g) Brewshield stabilizer

3 tablets Whirlfloc

2 g. yeast nutrient

### BREWING NOTES

Conduct a protein rest at 132°F (56°C) for 20 minutes. Mash at 148°F (64°C) for 60 minutes. Mash out at 167°F (75°C). Boil 70 minutes. Chill to 48°F (9°C) and pitch yeast. Ferment for 3 weeks at the same temperature. Transfer to secondary and start lowering the temperature 1°C per day. Once you reach 32°F (0°C), lager for 6 weeks. Carbonate to 2.4 vol. of CO<sub>2</sub> and enjoy. [Editor’s Note: if Brewshield is not available, Brewtan B may be substituted, though it is recommended to stick to the manufacturer’s dosage rates.]

### MALTS

6.6 lb. (3 kg) Weyermann Eraclea Pilsner malt

3.3 lb. (1.5 kg) Weyermann Vienna malt

### HOPS

1 oz. (28 g) Mistral, 5.5% a.a. @ 50 min

1 oz. (28 g) Mistral, 5.5% a.a. @ 10 min

1 oz. (28 g) Mistral, 5.5% a.a.,  
whirlpool 20 min @ 176°F (80°C)

### YEAST

3.5 oz. (100 g) Fermentis SafLager S-189

### WATER

6.87 gal (26 L)

Ca 100 ppm, Mg 20 ppm, Cl 180 ppm,  
SO<sub>4</sub> 80 ppm, Na 30 ppm

### EXTRACT VERSION

Substitute 2.3 lb. (1.04 kg) Vienna malt extract syrup for Vienna malt and 4.6 lb. (2.09 kg) Pilsner malt extract syrup for Pilsner malt. Dissolve extracts, top off to 5.5 gallons, and proceed with boil as above. Note that extract version may taste slightly different from all-grain version.

la Crème] is 100% French Mistral hops," says Carrillo. "The hops have the aroma of white flowers, with slightly more subtle fruit notes. [Compared to] American hops, French hops simply have a more balanced and elegant personality," she says.

Carrillo uses Vienna malt for a third of the mash bill, looking to add color. She chose Weyermann's Eraclea malt because of its soft honey notes that match well with the white flower character of the Mistral hops. She also notes that some Italian brewers use Eraclea when making grape ale.

The thoughtful combination of ingredients ended up working out well for Carrillo. She took home a gold medal at the 2024 Copa Cerveza Mexico competition in the special Hop France category.

## A RUSTIC TOUCH

Natalie Baldwin began making French Pilsner back in 2018. She was working at Portland, Oregon's Breakside Brewery then, and was using Triskel, a French hop developed in 2006 by crossing Strisselspalt with a male English hop. The result is a fruity, floral, and slightly citrusy profile. Baldwin was also using Strisselspalt at the time.

"I remember smelling Strisselspalt for the first time and [saying] 'I f-ing love this,'" she says. "I really like the black pepper and rose petal. I've brewed a lot with flowers over the years, and I just wanted to make something similarly floral, a really cool interpretation of these French-style Pilsners, but with an American touch to them."

Baldwin used to make a petite saison called "Delicate as F—" at Breakside that used spelt and early-picked, melon-heavy batches of



Brew  
This!



## Perle Pils

**Brasserie Perle, Strasbourg, France**  
Recipe by Ryan Pachmayer,  
based on notes from Christian Artzner

<b>Batch size:</b>	5 gal (18.93 L)
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.051 (12.7°P)
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.010 (2.5°P)
<b>Bitterness:</b>	35 IBU
<b>Color:</b>	4 SRM
<b>Alcohol:</b>	5.4% by volume
<b>Efficiency:</b>	70%

### MALTS

- 9 lb. French Pilsner malt
- 1 lb. BestMalz Munich I

### HOPS

- 0.83 oz. (24 g) Aramis, 8.1% a.a. @ 70 min  
(24 IBUs)
- 0.2 oz. (6 g) Aramis, 8.1% a.a. @ 30 min  
(4 IBUs)
- 0.45 oz. (13 g) Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a. @ 30 min  
(4 IBUs)
- 1 oz. (28 g) Strisselspalt, 3.5% a.a. @ 5 min  
(2 IBUs)
- 7 g. each Hersbrucker, Strisselspalt,  
and Tradition, in whirlpool

### YEAST

Perle uses Fermentis 34/70 dry yeast, then reuses the yeast for 6–7 generations. Dry or liquid German lager yeast would be appropriate; look for a 34/70 variant.



### BREWING NOTES

Mash in at 131°F (55°C) for 5 to 10 minutes before ramping up to 145°F (63°C) for 30 minutes. Raise temperature to 161°F (72°C) and hold for 20 minutes, then mash out at 172°F (78°C). Boil 70 minutes. Ferment at 53°F (12°C) for 7–14 days until primary fermentation is complete. Slowly lower 2–3 degrees per day until you reach 32°F (0°C). Lager for at least 4 weeks.

Using finings may be appropriate for this beer, as Perle uses a centrifuge for clarification. Carbonate to 2.6 volumes. Perle naturally carbonates this beer, so a spunding valve is recommended to do the same at home.

### EXTRACT VERSION

Substitute 12 oz. (340 g) Munich malt extract syrup for Munich malt and 6.3 lb. (2.86 kg) Pilsner malt extract syrup for Pilsner malt. Dissolve extracts, top off to 5.5 gallons, and proceed with boil as above. Note that extract version may taste slightly different from all-grain version.



## French Pils #2

**Brasserie Popihn, France**  
Recipe by Aymeric Gros, brewer

Popihn has been growing its own barley, as owner Arnaud Popihn oversees his family's farm. The barley is taken to Soufflet, a large French maltster, to be malted. Aymeric Gros, a brewer at Popihn, says that they called this beer an Italian-style Pilsner due to the dry hop in the beer. "Mistral hops are delicate but bring interesting white fruit and citrus aromas, perfectly suiting Italian Pils," says Gros. Gros adds that Fermentis S-23 German Lager Dry Yeast is very well suited to hop-forward lagers.

<b>Batch size:</b>	5 gal (18.93 L)
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.051 (12.7°P)
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.010 (2.5°P)
<b>Bitterness:</b>	31 IBU
<b>Color:</b>	3.2 SRM
<b>Alcohol:</b>	5.4% by volume

### MALTS

- 10 lb. (4.54 kg) French Pilsner malt

### HOPS

- 1 oz. (28 g) Mistral @ 60 min (26 IBU)
- 1 oz. (28 g) Mistral @ 5 min (5 IBU)
- 4 oz. (113 g) Mistral, dry hop

### YEAST

Fermentis S-23 German Lager Dry Yeast

### BREWING NOTES

Mash in at 126°F (52°C) for 8 minutes, then raise to 154°F (68°C) for 60 minutes. Ferment at 57°F (14°C) for 7–14 days, until terminal gravity. Raise to 62°F (17°C) for a diacetyl rest of 2–3 days. Dry hop at 55°F (13°C) for 48 hours, then crash the beer to 32°F (0°C) and hold for 2–3 weeks.

Hallertau Blanc. "I wanted to take the things I liked about petite saisons, the rustic-ness of those beers, and turn it into a lager." At Breakside, that Pilsner was called Rustic Spells.

Baldwin used French and Belgian Pilsner malt (based on what was available), spelt, and French hops. "I took some of the minerality that I really liked in those petite saisons and found different ways to bring in the floral components," she says.



## La Magie

Wayfinder Beer, Portland, Ore.  
Recipe by Natalie Rose Baldwin

<b>Batch size:</b>	5 gal [18.93L]
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.047 [11.7°P]
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.008 [2°P]
<b>Bitterness:</b>	31 IBU
<b>Color:</b>	2.9 SRM
<b>Alcohol:</b>	5.1% by volume

### MALTS

9.25 lb. [4.2 kg] Dingemans Pils  
3 oz. [85 g] Weyermann Spelt

### HOPS

2.5 oz.	[71 g] Strisselspalt @ 75 min (23 IBU)
1 oz.	[28 g] Strisselspalt @ 30 min (7 IBU)
1 oz.	[28 g] Strisselspalt @ 5 min (1 IBU)

### BREWING NOTES

Mash in at 131°F (55°C), hold for 10 minutes. Raise to 143°F (62°C), hold for 45 minutes. Raise to 158°F (70°C), hold for 30 min. Take 25% of the mash and bring to a boil, simmer for 10 minutes, then add it back to the main mash. Mash out at 168–172°F (76–78°C). Boil 75 minutes.

Knock out at 48°F (9°C) and ferment at 50°F (10°C) for 7–14 days or until terminal gravity is reached. Raise temperature to 57°F (14°C) and hold for two days for a diacetyl rest, then slow crash 2°F per day until you reach 31°F (0°C), and lager at least two weeks before packaging. Wayfinder filters its beer, so consider using finings and/or taking the proper time to ensure the beer is very clear.

When she took the head brewer job at Wayfinder, the first beer she brewed was a French Pils. "I talked to Ben [Edmunds], the brewmaster at Breakside, and I was like, hey, I want to take something I know and brew it on this system so that I know what I'm doing," she says. She wasn't going to brew Rustic Spells, but she took parts of the recipe and turned that into something new for Wayfinder. The result was La Magie.

La Magie is filtered at Wayfinder (Rustic Spells was not back at Breakside), which Baldwin says makes it drink a little less rustic. "But it's beautiful and tastes nice," she says.

She generally uses Aramis and Strisselspalt in her French-inspired beers these days, but again, she'll pivot based on availability. A recent batch used Flex hop extract and Hallertau Tradition, preserving the very low-alpha-acid Strisselspalt for the whirlpool.

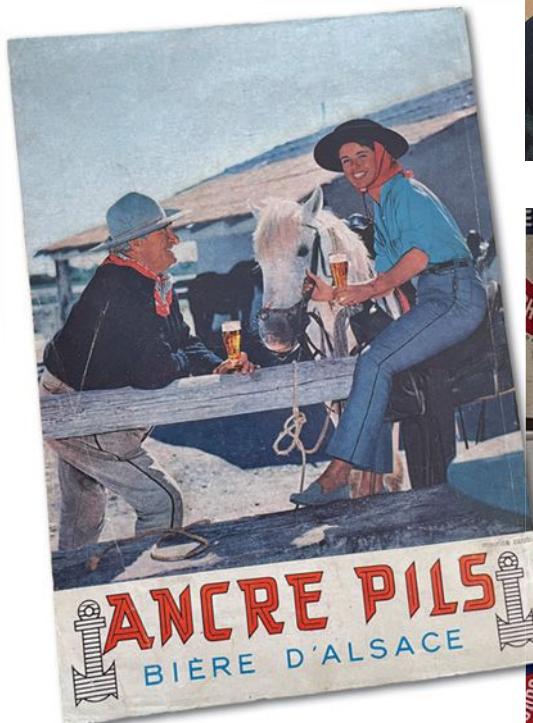
Aside from La Magie, Baldwin makes another beer called Midsommar, released on the summer solstice every year. The beer uses rose petals and pink peppercorns, complementing the rose petal characteristics of Strisselspalt. "I just like to mess around," she says.

## BUT IS IT A STYLE?

The history of Pilsners made in France, dominated by those from the Alsace region, (which itself has not always even been a part of France), doesn't follow a straight line. Ingredients like malt and hops often veer into German or even Czech sources.

Yet if you look closely, both today and historically, you will find some common themes. High-quality French hops are used, predominantly the delicately floral Strisselspalt and emerging hops such as Aramis, which allows brewers to craft truly unique Pilsners.

"I really think Alsatian Pilsner could be considered a style," says French beerologist Hervé Marziou. "I would like for Alsatian Pilsner to benefit from an *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC), but I haven't succeeded [yet]," he adds. Marziou describes the Pilsners of Alsace as having a creamier foam than International Pilsner and a perceptible but milder bitterness. He says that there is a balanced harmony that satisfies the sweeter tastes of Alsatians. "Even the bitterness is sweet," he says.



**ANCRE PILS**  
BIÈRE D'ALSACE



From top right clockwise:

Brasserie Popihn aerial view;  
Ancre Pils memorabilia.

Ryan Pachmayer is the marketing and events director at New Image Brewing in Wheat Ridge and Arvada, Colo., and former head brewer at Yak and Yeti Restaurant and Brewpub in Arvada.

He would like to extend a special thank you to the following people for their extensive contributions towards this article: Marie-Emmanuelle Berdah, Sabrina Breugnon, Laurent Cicurel, Gary Gillman, Sebastian Hohentanner, Anaïs Lecoq, and Gabriel Thierry.



Photos courtesy of Brasserie Poplin; Maxence Creusat [Ancré Pils images]; Wayfinder Beer; Brasserie Meteor

Hallucinogenic



Datura wrightii  
AKA Jimsonweed or Devil's flower

Brews



By David J. Schmidt

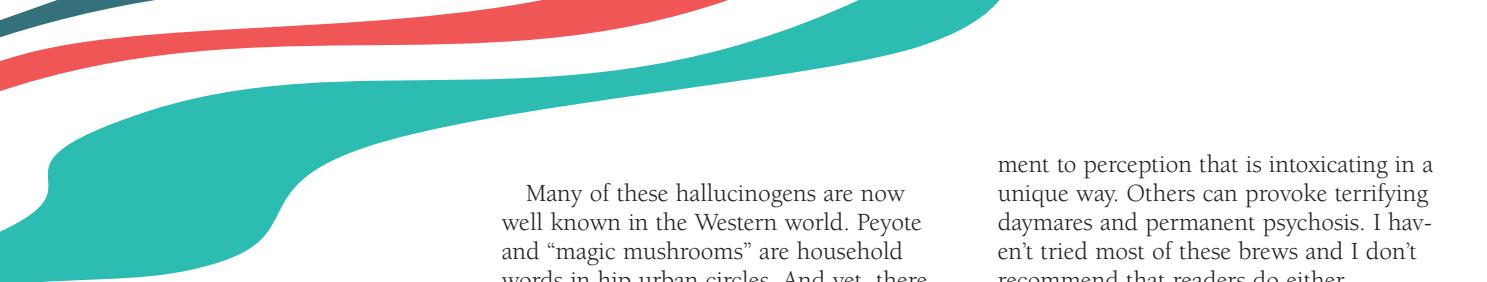
## Psychotropic Drinks from Across the Americas

**H**igh in the misty, wooded mountains of northwestern Oaxaca, Mexico, the cold air usually smells of smoky wood fires and pine resin. The small town of Huautla lies at the base of a sacred mountain known by the local Mazatec native people as The Navel of the World. Just below the peak of this mountain sits a humble, unassuming wooden house. This was the home of María Sabina, the shaman who introduced Mexico's hallucinogenic mushrooms to the outside world.

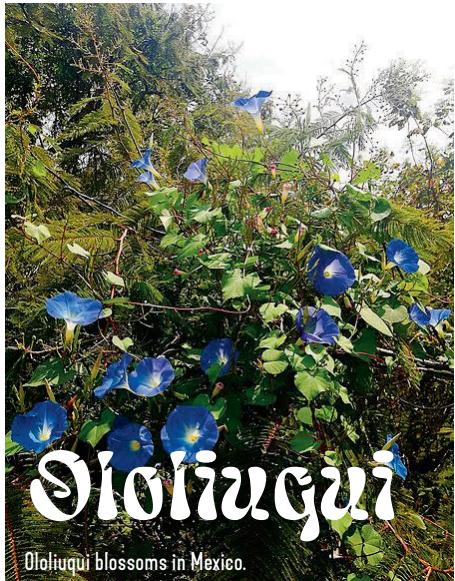
Like many other psychotropic plants, the mushrooms were revered by Mexico's indigenous cultures for millennia. The Mexica (Aztec) people referred to them as *teonanácatl*, "the flesh of the gods." María Sabina called them '*ntisitho*', a Mazatec word meaning "the Holy Children." They were sacramental, a means of connection with the Divine.

And yet, these ancient hallucinogens were nearly unknown to the outside world until the 1960s. Anthropologist R. Gordon Wasson had interviewed Sabina for years, and he happened to publish his first articles just as the counterculture movement was taking off. Sabina soon became world-famous, and her remote mountain cabin was flooded with curious visitors, including such celebrities as John Lennon, Bob Dylan, and Keith Richards. (This amount of attention had major consequences on the surrounding Mazatec community, and Sabina was ostracized).





Around the same time, Carlos Castaneda published his seminal book *The Teachings of Don Juan*, which described his apprenticeship under a Yaqui shaman who inducted Castaneda into the use of multiple mind-altering plants.



This property made ololiuqui very popular among shamans and priests of ancient Mexico. One of the earliest written records of it comes from the 1570s. Spanish colonial physician Francisco Hernández wrote that Mexica priests ate the plant to enter a “delirious state” and communicate with the gods, receiving visions and “terrifying hallucinations.”

These frightening properties inspired some of the plant’s names. The ancient Mayan word for ololiuqui is *xtabentún*, a word related to the name *Xtabay*, a murderous evil spirit. It is not to be approached lightly, but some believe its use can lead to insight and wisdom.

Ololiuqui is still a tool of healers and shamans today in indigenous communities across central and southern Mexico—cultures such as the Mixtecs, Chinantecs, and Zapotecs, as well as the Mazatecs. It can be drunk either as a tea brewed from the plant or as an infusion in an alcoholic drink. Some shamans steep the plant in a liquor such as mezcal or aguardiente, or in a barrel of *pulque*, the fermented nectar of the agave plant.

Harvard botanist Richard Evans Schultes traveled throughout the state of Oaxaca in the 1930s in search of this plant. As one of the 20th century’s greatest authorities on hallucinogenic plants, he spent decades researching them, often fearlessly using himself as a guinea pig to test their effects.

While I was intrigued by ololiuqui, I wasn’t nearly as brave as Schultes. I am easily deterred by a phrase like “terrifying hallucinations.” If only there were some way to try it in a diluted form, I wondered. Then I learned of a liquor produced in Mexico’s Yucatán Peninsula that is made with ololiuqui! Like Schultes, I spent years trying to track it down.

The liquor shares the same name as the ancient Mayan word for ololiuqui: *xtabentún*. It is made with anise and honey, and not just any honey—the bees harvest pollen exclusively from the ololiuqui blossoms. After a long search through the liquor stores of Mexico City, I finally found a bottle. I brought it to my friend Paulo’s house on his birthday and we cracked it open.

Many of these hallucinogens are now well known in the Western world. Peyote and “magic mushrooms” are household words in hip urban circles. And yet, there is a lesser-known corner of this psychedelic tradition that I will explore in this article: beverages that are brewed with such plants.

While many of these brews do contain alcohol, the psychotropic plants produce a very different kind of buzz. Some cause mild highs and euphoria or a slight adjust-

ment to perception that is intoxicating in a unique way. Others can provoke terrifying daymares and permanent psychosis. I haven’t tried most of these brews and I don’t recommend that readers do either.



**This article is for informational purposes only. Do not try these psychedelic brews at home.**

## OLOLIUQUI: THE NATURAL LSD OF MEXICO

While Mexico’s mushrooms and peyote are now familiar, a third substance remains shrouded in mystery: *ololiuqui*. This powerful hallucinogen goes back to some of Mexico’s oldest civilizations, where it may have been even more important than peyote or mushrooms. Many indigenous communities still drink infusions of *ololiuqui* to connect to the spirit world. Remarkably, it is also an ingredient in a modern-day liquor available in stores—but more on that later.

The *ololiuqui* plant (scientific name *Ipomoea corymbosa*) is a climbing vine of the morning glory family, with lovely white or blue flowers. Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann studied it in the 1960s and found that the active ingredient was an alkaloid very similar to the chemical structure of LSD.

The texture was thick and rather syrupy, with a soft golden color. I tilted my glass to the side and noticed nice, solid “legs,” to borrow a term from wine culture. The aroma was dominated by the licorice smell of the anise. When I took a sip, however, it was the honey flavor that stood out. It was sweet, but not overly saccharine. Paulo and I both found it instantly drinkable. We agreed that it would make a refreshing digestive, especially with a bit of ice and a splash of mineral water.

As we drank, my mind turned to absinthe, another anise-flavored liquor that contains the psychotropic ingredient wormwood. I recalled reading about how author Oscar Wilde often drank absinthe for inspiration. He once described a late evening in a bar when he began to experience vivid hallucinations of fresh tulips growing up through the wooden floor.

Paulo and I didn’t have anything close to hallucinations that night. And yet, I must admit that I felt uniquely inspired. It’s hard to say how much of that was the result of any residual alkaloids from *ololiuqui* and how much was the simple pleasure of good company and strong drink. (Any liquor of 30% ABV will get a fellow feeling creative.) Paulo and I sat chatting about our mutual artistic endeavors as we watched YouTube videos of Latin American protest music. By the time the sun came up, the bottle was nearly empty, and my notebook was full of several new writing project ideas.



# Branched Calalu

## HOLY RUM AND AFRICAN TRADITIONS IN JAMAICA

For our next hallucinogenic beverage, we travel eastward from Mexico to the steamy, tropical islands of the Caribbean, where Jamaicans make a traditional brew reminiscent of xtabentún. Both drinks are distilled liquors that involve psychotropic plants connected to the sacred and the supernatural.

The Jamaican plant known as branched calalu (*Solanum nigrum*) is a black nightshade that contains the hallucinogens atropine and scopolamine, chemicals with properties similar to those of ololiuqui. The leaves of the branched calalu plant are macerated and steeped in rum. When drunk, it causes delirium and ecstasy. Like ololiuqui, branched calalu is related to ancient, pre-Christian traditions—in this case, a uniquely Caribbean religion known as Obeah.

Obeah is common in Jamaica and other former British colonies with Afro-Caribbean roots: Grenada, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the Virgin Islands, and Guyana. It is a New World faith drawing from ancient African spiritual practices, like Cuban Santería and the Vodoun practices of Haiti. Many of these traditions involve sacramental alcohol and other mind-altering substances, as ethnobotanist Wade Davis found during his travels in Haiti. The protégé of Harvard biologist Richard Schultes, Davis studied Haitian Vodoun and learned about complex pharmacological potions, including one used to “zombify” an unfortunate person.

Vodoun, Santería, and Obeah are as elaborate as any other world religions, involving a series of complex rituals and beliefs intended to mediate between humans and the spirit world. In the case of Jamaican Obeah, rum infused with branched calalu serves as a conduit for this communion.

For centuries, Obeah practices were strictly forbidden by Jamaica's colonial-era laws, some of which lasted long after the country became independent. The Obeah Act of 1898, which prohibits anything remotely related to the African religion, is still on the books. Up until the 1950s, it was used to prosecute a variety of religious practices, even Christian-oriented traditions not related to Obeah. The last arrest under the law occurred in 1977, but it wasn't until 2012 that flogging was officially removed as a punishment for practicing Obeah.

And yet, despite years of government repression, Obeah and other African

traditions persist in Jamaica to this day. Some of these include the ritual use of hallucinogenic rum. The blog Shamanic Journeying contains a testimony of an anonymous person who experienced this practice in the flesh:

*"The Obeah [practitioner] poured a warm tea-like broth into two small bowl-shaped cups without handles. He took one and gave me the other, gulping down the liquid while motioning me to do the same. [After some time...] it was like my mind had grown so huge that trying to focus on something as minuscule as a few words to string together into a sentence had become an impossible hardship."*

As with ololiuqui, the active chemicals in branched calalu are alkaloids. Scopolamine is the same alkaloid found in many European plants sacred in European paganism, including belladonna (deadly nightshade) and mandrake. Similar chemical compounds are found in hallucinogenic mushrooms and peyote as well.

And yet, among all the world's plants, one stands out as uniquely fearsome, uniquely worthy of respect, and kept at a distance. Across the Americas, Asia, and Africa, it is associated with death and the grave. Davis describes it as “the drug of choice of poisoners, criminals, and [practitioners of ‘black magic’] throughout the world.”

People whisper its name with reverence and fear: *datura*.

## Datura: THE DEVIL'S FLOWER

**SPECIAL WARNING:**  
*Use of this toxic and psychoactive substance can cause respiratory depression, arrhythmia, fever, delirium, hallucinations, psychosis, and even death. Do not try datura.*

Datura is the one hallucinogen that even seasoned researchers like Richard Schultes refused to try. The plant looks deceptively harmless—a low-growing vine reminiscent of the sweet potato plant, with lovely bell-shaped pale flowers. It is a member of the same family of plants that includes potatoes and tomatoes, and its English language name, “Jimson weed,” sounds like an innocuous garden pest. However, many Latin American terms for it hint at the plant's terrifying properties.

Many know it as *la hierba del demonio* or *la flor del diablo*—demon's herb or devil's flower. Another Spanish name for datura, *estramonio*, rhymes with *demonio*, the word for “demon.” In Haiti, it is known as *concombre zombi*, the zombie's cucumber. Ingesting it is said to be one of the most frightening experiences on earth.

In his book *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, Davis describes a South American shaman who resorted to prescribing datura to cure a desperate patient. After drinking the substance, he described his patient's reaction:

*"His nostrils flared, and several minutes later his eyes began to roll, foam issued from his mouth, and his entire body shook with horrible convulsions. He plunged deeper and deeper into delirium, breathing spasmodically, kneading the earth with his long bony fingers like a cat exploring for fissures that might release him from his madness. Agonizing screams sliced into the night."*

Davis explains that datura causes a series of terrifying visions, followed by complete amnesia. "Just the raw experience. Pure, like madness." One acquaintance of his chewed some datura leaves in Colombia. The man was found three days later, wandering around the marketplace completely naked. Local police were afraid to even approach him.

In ancient Mexico, datura was known as *toloache*. Priests mixed it with fermented pulque for religious ceremonies, and warriors drank it to face death without fear.

Early Spanish colonial documents describe indigenous women who gave it to their husbands to stupefy them; the women were said to make love to strange men before the eyes of their husbands, who only stared on dumbly.

Mexican author Antonio Salgado Herrera describes a similar use for toloache in modern times. He writes that some housewives with cheating husbands secretly slip datura into their man's food or drink. This is supposed to tame the man, "to make him have eyes for no other woman but her [...]. However, the end result is that he becomes an imbecile. In other words, the man is transformed into a stationary object—foul, bothersome, and passive."

Why do I even bother discussing such a dangerous substance? Namely, because it was once sacred to the indigenous cultures of my homeland. In ancient Southern California, datura was a very normal part of growing up.

The harsh desert landscape was unforgiving. To survive it, men and women needed to be resistant, thick-skinned, and fierce. Becoming an adult involved toughening up to the harsh environment, and the fearsome datura plant was a tool for doing so. For pubescent boys and girls

in many cultures—Kumeyaay, Cahuilla, Luiseño, Chumash, and others—datura was a rite of passage.

The community's shaman would lead teenagers through several rigorous days of prayer and fasting, culminating in a trip deep into the wilderness. Once they arrived at sacred caves and rocks, they drank tea brewed from datura. The shaman sang sacred songs as the datura took effect, causing the young initiates to dance in ecstasy, followed by seizures and hallucinations. As they lay by the fire, each saw visions of the animal that would be their sacred protector for life.

The datura-inspired vision quest was followed by a series of other ordeals to initiate them into adulthood. Pubescent girls were buried in the hot sand of Mother Earth, symbolic of their future roles as mothers. Boys were often whipped with stinging nettles and covered in fire ants. After these trials, they were fully fledged men and women, ready for whatever life could throw at them. The datura visions were a key part of this process.

We must remember, of course, that these shamans were experts in the preparation of the datura tea, using a precise dose and recipe. For the ignorant modern person, datura can be deadly.

**Seriously—don't even try it.**



"Coca was never a drug," a mural of Colombian street art on display in downtown Mexico City.



an intimate link with *Pachamama*, the indigenous Quechua word for "Mother Earth." It also served practical purposes; poor farmers chewed coca leaves to stave off hunger pains and fight altitude sickness.

These practices persist to this day. And yet, the indigenous peoples of the Andes are still fighting to decriminalize the plant.

As the U.S., via President Richard Nixon, launched its "War on Drugs" in the '70s, the coca plant was under attack. Hope for change came in 2004, when the Bolivian government decriminalized coca for domestic use in its natural form, not for production of cocaine. A year later, the nation elected President Evo Morales, who had himself grown up as a poor coca farmer. Morales kicked the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) out of Bolivia in

## COCA BEER IN BOLIVIA

Are all hallucinogenic brews as terrifying as datura? Thankfully not. In fact, one brewery from Bolivia has created a beer with a mild amount of another sacred plant, one that has been widely maligned and misunderstood—the coca leaf. When many Westerners hear the word "coca," they immediately think of cocaine, a highly concentrated and processed form of the

plant. In the ancient cultures of the Andes in South America, however, the coca leaf was a much milder stimulant, closer to coffee or tea than to anything we would call a hard drug.

Like branched calalu, ololiuqui, mushrooms, and peyote, the coca plant was a ritual substance used to communicate with the Sacred. Across the mountains of Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia, it was

Brew  
This!



# Wormwood and Yarrow Gruit

Recipe courtesy of David Schmidt

Before the widespread use of hops in brewing, many of the alternative bittering agents had entheogenic properties similar to the plants described in this article. This recipe involves common plants used as “gruit” bitters: wormwood, ground ivy, and yarrow.

Wormwood, of course, is the active agent in absinthe. Yarrow feels like a fitting addition as well. Like the sacred plants in this article, it has medicinal uses in many Native American cultures and is connected to magic and divination practices around the world. In fact, one Scottish witchcraft trial accused a woman of using yarrow to predict the future.

The neutral flavor and aroma of the grains and yeast should allow the natural bitter flavors of the wormwood and yarrow to shine through. Caution: these plants may have mild psychotropic properties and may cause allergic reactions. When in doubt, consult your local physician and/or shaman.

**Batch Size:** 6 U.S. gal (18.93 L)

**Original Gravity:** 1.050 (12.5°P)

**Final Gravity:** 1.010 (2.5°P)

**Bitterness:** [varies with herbs used]

**Alcohol:** 5.2% by volume

**Color:** 8 SRM

## MALTS

8 lb. (3.63 kg) pale malt extract syrup

## HERBS:

2 oz. (85 g) yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) leaves and/or flowers @ 60 min

3 oz. (85 g) ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) leaves and/or flowers @ 60 min

0.25 oz. (7 g) dried wormwood (*Artemesia absinthium*) @ 10 min

## YEAST:

White Labs San Diego Super Ale Yeast (WLP090)

## BREWING NOTES

Dissolve extract in thoroughly and top off to 5.5 gallons (20.82 L) in the kettle. Boil 60 minutes, adding herbs at specified intervals. Chill, aerate, and pitch yeast. Ferment at 65°F (18°C) until terminal gravity is reached. Package, condition two weeks, and enjoy. If you see the future, don't forget to buy a lottery ticket.

## RECIPE SOURCES:

Homebrewing.com - [tinyurl.com/y84jmccr](http://tinyurl.com/y84jmccr)

The Mad Fermentationist - [tinyurl.com/4a8sfm48](http://tinyurl.com/4a8sfm48)

2008; the new Constitution of 2009 declared the coca leaf a “factor of social cohesion” and a “cultural patrimony of the nation.” Legislators in Colombia and Peru have discussed similar measures.

Since its legalization, Bolivian business owners have produced numerous products with coca leaves: candy, shampoo, face cream, and so on. It was only a matter of time until someone tried brewing beer with it as well. Last year, a brewery from the capital city of La Paz finally launched the first commercially available version of coca beer.

The distillery and brewery El Viejo Roble, (literally “The Old Oak”), has been in the alcohol business for over 10 years, producing a variety of rums, vodkas, sweet liqueurs, and pre-mixed cocktails. Many of their products proudly include native Bolivian ingredients such as quinoa and highland coffee. One liqueur is made with

honey from the Amazon as well as extract from the *maca* plant, a natural aphrodisiac known locally as the “Viagra of the Andes.”

Their newest creation is the aptly named Coca Beer. The brewery goes through at least 100 pounds (45 kilograms) of coca leaves every month to brew this coca-infused lager. “The beer may taste bitter to some,” said Luis Alfredo Alvarez Orozco, owner of El Viejo Roble, “but the sweet touch we add with the coca plant will make it more pleasant.”

The company produces many other coca-based products as well. The bottled cocktail named Coca Libre Camba is similar to the rum-and-Coke mix known as Cuba Libre; this version contains coca leaves as well. The company’s website includes a section titled *Licores Andinos*, which features liquors distilled with coca, one of which is named Pachamama.

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## ENTHEOGENS: SEARCHING FOR THE DIVINE

Schultes, Davis, Hofmann, and others who have studied psychotropic plants have coined a term for them: entheogens, “substances impregnated with the sacred.” As with many traditional folk brews, communities all over the world use these plants to commune with the Divine.

I can't necessarily recommend these entheogens to readers, and not just because of legal issues and potential side effects. The bigger issue is the fact that these sacred experiences are a part of the indigenous communities that know the plants intimately. For a person who didn't grow up in those cultures, the experience will be vastly different. Hallucinogenic plants are but one element of a vast cultural milieu, a spiritual tradition that people are steeped in from birth.

For readers interested in such mystical experiences, however, there is good news: you don't necessarily need any mind-altering substances. This was the central message of Yaqui shaman Don Juan in his teachings with Carlos Castaneda, as described in Castaneda's second book,

All these coca products are fully legal, sold in stores and airports throughout Bolivia. They can't be exported, however, due to international regulations. The Bolivian government has been trying to change this for years, citing the 70,000 coca farmers who depend on the plant for their livelihood. In 2023, the government submitted a petition to the World Health Organization (WHO) to decriminalize coca internationally.

Change may finally be on the horizon, according to Juan Carlos Alurralde, Bolivia's Secretary General for the Vice President. He recently told the Associated Press that, for the first time in history, the WHO has agreed to conduct extensive tests on the coca plant to evaluate its medical and nutritional properties. If things continue in this direction, we may be able to legally buy Coca Beer outside of Bolivia sometime in the near future.

*A Separate Reality.* The hallucinogenic plants, Don Juan explained, were only one means to an end.

Often, all it takes is visiting the land where this ancient magic has been practiced, and I can attest to this fact. I've visited María Sabina's home on the sacred mountain in Huautla several times. While I have never consumed the mushrooms, I always experience unique phenomena when I'm there, ranging from the inspiring and beautiful to the strange and uncanny. Some things I've seen up there are downright unexplainable.

There is a surreal quality to a place like Huautla, a sort of magical realism reminiscent of Gabriel García Márquez's novels. The veil is thin between worlds in those cloudy, forested mountains, and locals frequently report personal encounters with specters, supernatural beings, and ancient nature spirits. The magic is palpable, embedded in the land itself.

During one of my trips there, I chatted with a local Mazatec woman at her shop in town. She told me that her family had hiked up the sacred mountain for generations to seek spiritual renewal and blessings. “People go there to find God,” she said.

“By eating the mushrooms?” I asked.

“Sometimes. But usually not. Normally, all it takes is prayer and meditation. God appears in many different ways, and there are many ways to seek Him.”

For thousands of years, people have sought transcendence by consuming alcoholic beverages infused with entheogens—mushrooms, ololiuqui, branched calalu, datura, coca, and many others. And yet, for many of us, it can be far more transformative to simply spend time immersed in one of these cultures. Being present there allows you to experience a radically different way of speaking, living, working, and viewing the world. This can open up new levels of consciousness—a vast new “head space,” if you will—even if you never consume any of these psychedelic brews.

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"The Navel of the World," the sacred mountain near María Sabina's house where Mazatecs still go to seek God.

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**David J. Schmidt** is an author, homebrewer, and multilingual translator who splits his time between Mexico City and San Diego, Calif. Schmidt speaks 15 languages and has spent the past 20 years traveling throughout rural Mexico, Latin America, and Africa in search of ancient folk brews, making him a veritable Indiana Jones of homebrewing. (Think Harrison Ford with a beer gut.) He can be found on Facebook, YouTube, and X with the handle "Holy Ghost Stories," or via the website [www.DavidJSchmidt.com](http://www.DavidJSchmidt.com).

Xtabentún liquor from the Mexican distillery Casa d'Aristi, made with ololiuqui honey.



## Xtabentún Cocktail

Recipe courtesy of Casa d'Aristi Distillery

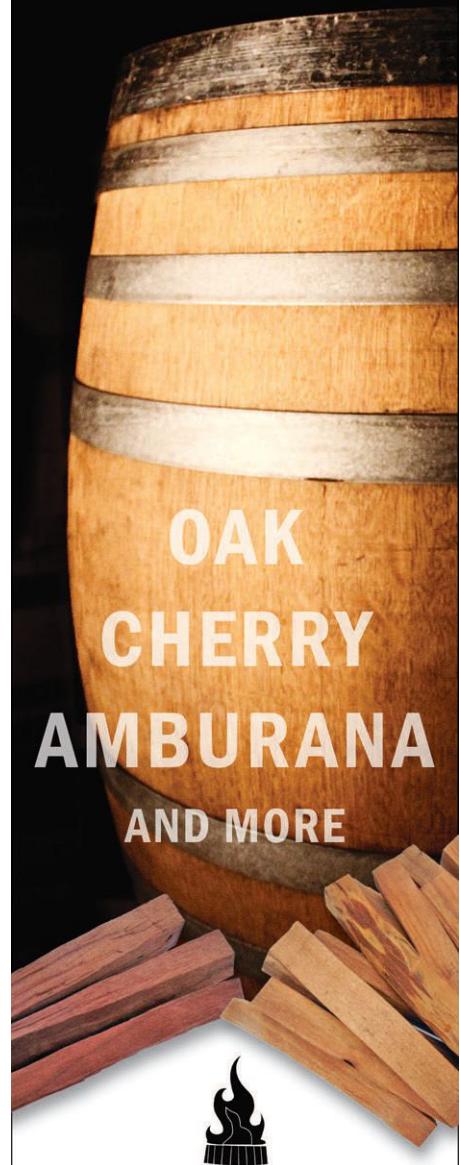
This is one of several suggested xtabentún cocktail recipes on the website of the Casa d'Aristi distillery. Source: [casadaristi.com/es/licores/daristi-xtabentun](http://casadaristi.com/es/licores/daristi-xtabentun)

0.75 oz. Xtabentún  
0.75 oz. Gin  
1 oz. Lime juice  
0.5 oz. Simple syrup  
Cucumber, to taste  
Celery, to taste  
Fresh basil, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

Dice and muddle cucumber, celery, and basil leaves. Then shake with the remaining ingredients and ice, and strain twice. Serve with a garnish of basil leaves and a lime slice.

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# DÉJÀ BRÜ

## HOMEBREW COMPETITION

CELEBRATING LOST AND FORGOTTEN BEER STYLES

BY CHIP WALTON

There is a saying that goes, everything old is new again. And this seems to be true for brewers (home and professional alike) who find new sparks of creativity by looking back to lost and historic beer styles for inspiration and recreating them to the best of their ability. Obviously, with the ever-changing global landscape of ingredients, equipment, and brewing processes, it's often difficult to produce these beers just as they would've been brewed hundreds (or thousands) of years ago, but that doesn't stop brewers from using their curiosity and cunning to get as close as possible. It's with a celebratory focus on these brewers and obscure beer styles that the Déjà Brü homebrew competition was established.

For the past three years I've been part of a small crew of Twin Cities homebrewers who've helped coordinate Déjà Brü, a distinctive homebrew competition that embraces and hopes to elevate historical, lost, and forgotten beer styles. Here I share a glimpse into what inspired the competition, why both brewers and judges enjoy being a part of it, and how you can get involved. For full disclosure, this article was

written in early February 2025, a few weeks before our third annual



# WHAT MAKES DÉJÀ BRÜ SO SPECIAL IS THAT ACCEPTED ENTRIES MUST REPRESENT A STYLE THAT IS CONSIDERED HISTORICAL OR OBSCURE.

competition took place. As such, I don't have all results of this year's event to discuss, but I'm excited to relate our experiences from the previous events and to share recipes from some Best of Show winners. Buckle up, we're going back in time.

## A HOMEBREW COMPETITION LIKE NO OTHER

What makes Déjà Brü so special is that accepted entries must represent a style that is considered historical or obscure. In the first two years of the event, categories shifted largely based on the entry pool but included groups broken down by region (Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the U.S.) or by ingredient (rye, wheat). Organizers found they needed to get creative to consolidate styles into groups that shared common elements, such as Trees and Bushes (brewed with spruce and/or juniper), Smoke Session (session-strength smoke beers), and *Mit Hefe nicht Weizen* (beers fermented with hefeweizen yeast but which contained no wheat). It's helpful to think of it as a contest of Historical and Specialty Beers competing solely against each other.

"The Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) and the Brewers Association (BA) move styles around, so they have a bunch of different styles they've tucked underneath the Historical category," said Déjà Brü co-founder and director Garrick van Buren. "In all the regular competitions that I've judged and helped out with, those beers do get entries—people do brew them—but they get buried. You end up getting, let's say, a Pre-Prohibition Lager, a Sahti, and a London Brown Ale all lumped together. They are three very different beers. We thought it would be nice if they could find their own place to shine, get the space they deserve, and put them up against beers that are similar, so they are judged more fairly."

Van Buren is responsible for building thematic flights for judges, and it is quite the

process. "It might be a little overdone," said van Buren, "but as each entry comes in, we give it four prospective categories it could fall into. Then as more entries come in, we figure out which of these four possible buckets we are going to fill up to create a six- to eight-entry flight." Swedish *Gotlandsdricka* is a great example of which directions an entry could go in based on the entities around it. It could go in the Scandinavian category because that's its geographic origin. It could go in Trees and Bushes because it includes juniper. It could go into Smoke Beers, or it could even go into some kind of Big Beers category. It all depends on what the rest of the field looks like. Where will that beer be closest among its peers?

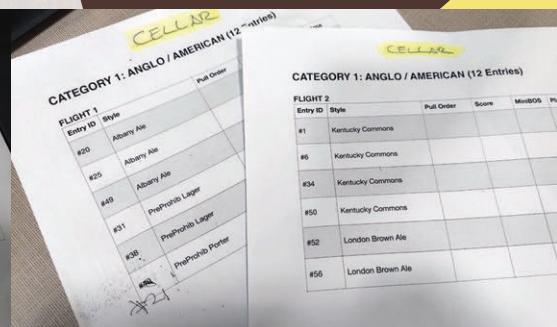
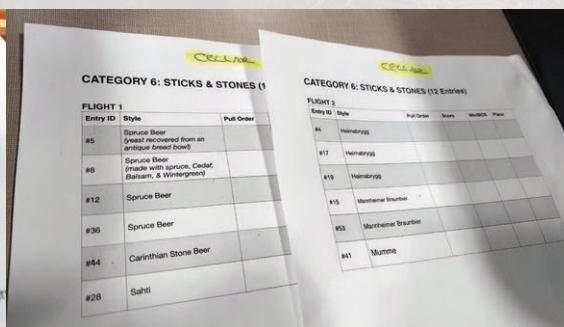
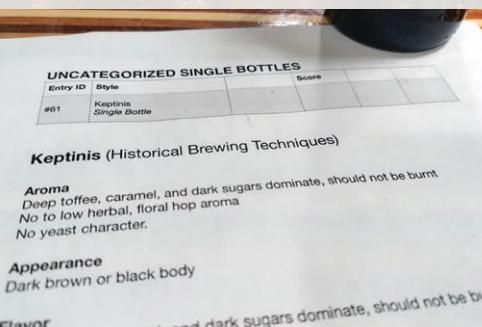
## A GLASS FROM THE PAST

As you can imagine, this all makes for a very different judging experience because many of these styles don't have "official" style guidelines, and in many cases, there are no commercial examples to reference. Many judges likely have never tasted any beer like the one they are now seated to judge—which can be fun, but also intimidating. "Going into this the first year, I was a little nervous," said co-founder and cellarman Aric Daul, "because it's a bit of a hard sell. Some people like judging Specialty and some really don't. Here we have a whole competition built around beers you likely are not yet familiar with."

Kim Thiel, Dave Cole, and Joe Gerteis.



Category pick sheets.

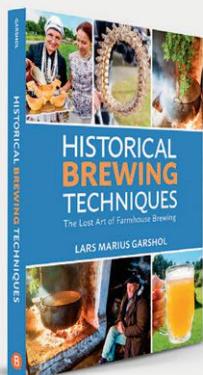




Best of show beers from 2023.

While a few styles are listed in the BJCP and/or BA Style Guidelines, such as London Brown Ale, Kentucky Common, Roggenbier, and Pre-Prohibition Porter, the majority of Déjà Brü style guides are compiled from other sources such as Zymurgy articles, books (e.g., *Historic German and Austrian Beers for the Home Brewer* by Andreas Krennmaier, *Historical Brewing Techniques* by Lars Marius Garshol, and *Radical Brewing* by Randy Mosher), blogs/wikis (e.g., Milk the Funk, Ron Pattinson's Shut Up About Barclay Perkins, Laura Angotti's Mystery of Mead, and Roel Mulder's Lost Beers), and scientific or academic journals. We're often leaning on historians and other brewers to guide judges' palates on this journey.

"This is by far my favorite competition of the year, as it is incredibly well run, has a solid judge pool, and features my favorite styles," said Dave Cole, who has traveled to Minnesota from Winnipeg, Canada, each year to judge. "I enjoy history and always want to learn and try something different." Cole is a key advocate for Canadian spruce



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Photos courtesy of Chip Walton



# NEWT GRISSETTE

BOS GOLD MEDAL 2023 DÉJÀ BRÜ

PETITE SAISON W/ LEMON

Recipe courtesy of  
Soren Jensen

I called the beer "Newt" because it was a smaller version of a saison I call "Salamander." Salamander won a gold medal at the 2022 Minnesota State Fair. It was inspired by Saison D'Epeautre from Blaugies, a brewery in Belgium. D'Epeautre (and Salamander) have spelt malt in the grain bill, but grisettes always use wheat, so I swapped in white wheat. The one thing that distinguishes a grisette from a saison is that a grisette should always include wheat, while a saison can include wheat but often does not. Also, a grisette is always a low-alcohol beer, while a saison can be, but often is not.

For Newt, I decided to add a little lemon zest and dried lemon peel late in the boil, which is not traditional. But I thought it would add some complexity, and I have been interested in tart saisons lately. I was going for a tart, dry beer with fruit and spice. It worked out well, though the tartness was pretty mild.

I always co-pitch saison yeasts and, actually, most yeasts. I would say that 3711 is my house strain for saisons, and I also use it in many of my pale Belgians. It's an amazing attenuator and always dries out the beer, which is key. I then pair it with some other strain to get a bit more fruit and spice. BE-134 seems to work quite well. It's common for me to pitch one slurry and one dry yeast; for example, I recently brewed a British Strong Ale that I co-pitched with Imperial Yeast Juice and SafAle S-04.

A few years ago, when I really got into all-grain brewing, I brewed 18 NEIPAs in a row before giving up. In the end, they were good, but not as good as the best. (But I learned how not to oxidize them, which is a good skill.) So then I took a break and brewed my first tripel. I was so scared of the high O.G. that I pitched several different strains. It turned out so good that I stopped making NEIPAs and switched to Belgians.

Not long after that, I brewed my first saison for my very first competition, which was the Iron Brewer competition of the Minnesota Home Brewers Association. Again, I used several strains. It won, and I got to brew it at Forgotten Star Brewing Co. in Fridley, Minn.

**Batch size:** 5 gallons (18.93 L)

**Pre-boil gravity:** 1.032 (8°P)

**Original gravity:** 1.039 (9.7°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.003 (0.7°P)

**Color:** 2.9 SRM

**Bitterness:** 33 IBU

**Alcohol:** 4.7% by volume

## YEAST

Wyeast 3711 French Saison

SafAle BE-134, co-pitched (see intro)

## OTHER ADDITIONS

0.5 tsp. yeast nutrient @ 10 min

8 oz. [227 g] cane sugar @ 10 min

Zest/peel of 1 lemon @ 5 min

1 oz. [28 g] dried lemon peel @ 5 min

Clarity Ferm @ pitch

## BREWING NOTES

Target a mash pH of 5.4. Strike/mash with 3.5 gallons water at 164°F (73°C). Mash at 150°F (66°C) for 60 minutes. Mash thickness: 1.75. Sparge with 5.5 gallons (20.82 L). Run 7 gallons (26.5 L) into kettle. Boil for 90 minutes. Collect 6 gallons (22.71 L) of wort post-boil; transfer 5 gallons into fermenter. Pitch at 70°F (21°C) and let free-rise (or force-rise) to 78°F (26°C) and hold until final gravity is reached. Raise to 82°F (28°C) for 2 days to ensure completion. Condition one week. Carbonate to 3.5 volumes. (Jensen bottle-conditioned his award-winning entries.)

## FERMENTABLES

5.5 lb. (2.49 kg) Dingeman's Pilsner malt

1.25 lb. (0.57 kg) Rahr white wheat (double crush)

8 oz. (227 g) flaked oats

8 oz. (227 g) Briess dextrin malt

4 oz. (113 g) German Vienna malt

8 oz. (227 g) table sugar (in boil @ 10 min.)

Rice hulls, as needed for the sparge

## WATER

Target Profile: Ca 52 ppm, Mg 9 ppm, Na 29 ppm, Cl 46 ppm, SO<sub>4</sub> 101 ppm

Treat 8.5 gallons (32.18 L) with half a Campden tablet, 2 g Epsom salt, 3 g gypsum, 1 g salt, and 4 ml lactic acid.

## HOPS

2 oz. (57 g) Saaz @ 20 min

1 oz. (28 g) Pacific Jade @ 10 min



beers (both historical and modern versions) and wrote the Déjà Brü style guide for traditional spruce beers. "This is a great platform to give people interested in history a chance to try the style and realize how many commercial breweries are making it now. It helps them gain the exposure they deserve for trying to keep history alive."

As with normal competitions, after flights are judged, there is a mini Best of Show (BOS) to choose category winners that go to overall BOS. Soren Jensen won the inaugural BOS in 2023 with a grisette. He has entered many categories over the event's three years. "What's so fun about Déjà Brü is that you get to research obscure beer styles, then apply both art and science to your recipe formulation and brewing skills," Jensen explained. "It also greatly expands your knowledge of beer styles. I've heard some brewers complain that they are tired of brewing the same styles over and over; they wonder what else they could brew. Well, even if you don't enter the competition, check out the list of historical styles on the Déjà Brü website and you will quickly realize there's a whole world of beers out there you've

never even heard of. If that doesn't get you out of a brewing rut, nothing will."

After judging is complete, an integral part of the event is the bottle share and social hour for judges and stewards to sample not only the winning beers but other brews they didn't get to taste yet that day. "This is part of why Déjà Brü is a three-bottle competition," said van Buren. "We put all the entries out for this massive sampling at the end of the event, and it's key to help us ensure the maximum number of people get exposed to otherwise obscure styles." Many judges also offer beers from their travels. It is an excellent opportunity to broaden your sensory horizons.

### LEARNING AS WE GO

An increasingly important component of the competition is the educational speaker and beer sampling during the midday break. We aim to bring these remarkable styles to life for judges and participants by hearing from people working to preserve and/or revive them. In 2024, I coordinated a virtual tasting featuring three authentic *heimabrygg*—

traditional farmhouse beers from the Voss area of Norway—brewed and sent to us by Norwegian farmhouse brewer Ivar Geithung. We also included a prerecorded video interview in which Geithung talks about his family's generations-old traditional brewing processes and equipment (including his family's own unique *kveik* culture), as well as his efforts to help document and protect Norwegian farmhouse brewing history.

This year, we are presenting a live-stream lecture and Q&A with Mike Karnowski, owner/brewer of Zebulon Artisan Ales in Asheville, N.C. Karnowski focuses on historical recreations of vintage beers, on which he works closely with noted beer historian Ron Pattinson. "I have brewed a few recipes from the 1700s," said Karnowski, "but those recipes tend to be vague and some ingredients can be unavailable—like diastatic brown malt, which I had to make myself. Once you get to the 1800s, the recipes are more modern and therefore more easily recreated. The hopping levels are quite shocking compared to many modern beers. [Even milds] have over

Jeremy Olsen and Geoff Haas.



Diversity of entries.



Mash baking for Keptinis.





# LONDON BROWN ALE

**BOS SILVER MEDAL 2023 DÉJÀ BRÜ**

Recipe courtesy of Jessica Ihms

I like tackling recipes that may have been sidelined for whatever reason and don't get a lot of love. This popped up during some research and it sounded really appealing. I added the lactose straight to the bottling bucket, saving it for the last step because I wanted to see how much residual sweetness there was before dosing, so I didn't over-sweeten it.

<b>Batch Size:</b>	5 gallons [18.93 L]
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.043 [10.7°P]
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.014 [3.6°P]
<b>Color:</b>	29 SRM
<b>Bitterness:</b>	22 IBU
<b>Alcohol:</b>	3.8% by volume

## MALTS

6.5 lb.	Maris Otter [69.3%]
1 lb.	[454 g] crystal 80 [10.7%]
10 oz.	[283 g] crystal 120 [6.7%]
8 oz.	[227 g] Special Roast [5.3%]
8 oz.	[227 g] pale chocolate [5.3%]
4 oz.	[113 g] Carafla II [2.7%]

## HOPS

1 oz.	[28 g] Fuggles, 5.6% a.a. @ 60 minutes [22 IBU]
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## YEAST

White Labs London Ale Yeast WLP013

## OTHER INGREDIENTS

1 lb.	[454 g] lactose @ packaging
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## BREWING NOTES

Mash grains at 158°F [70°C] for 60 minutes. Collect wort and boil for 60 minutes, adding hops per recipe. Cool wort to 68°F [20°C] and pitch yeast. Add 1 lb. [454 g] lactose and stir gently to dissolve before bottling.

## PARTIAL MASH VERSION

Omit Maris Otter malt. Steep remaining grains in 160°F [71°C] water for 30 minutes. Drain, rinse grains, and dissolve 4.25 lb. [1.93 kg] pale malt extract syrup into resulting wort. Proceed with boil as above. Note that partial mash version may taste slightly different from all-grain version.

Brew  
This!

# SAULES JOJIMAS KEPTINIS

**BOS SILVER MEDAL 2024 DÉJÀ BRÜ**

Recipe courtesy of John Ridgley

I've managed to pull this recipe together from memory, and some stuff I had on my phone. I brew with a Grainfather, so it is based on that equipment but should work for any BIAB setup.

<b>Batch Size:</b>	5.5 gallons [20.82 L]
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.080 [19.3°P]
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.016 [4°P]
<b>Alcohol:</b>	8.4% by volume

## MALTS

12.75 lb.	[5.78 kg] Pilsner malt
1.25 lb.	[0.57 g] 10L Munich malt

## HOPS

1 oz.	[28 g] Saaz @ 60 minutes (see Brewing Notes)
1 oz.	[28 g] Saaz @ 15 minutes (see Brewing Notes)
1 oz.	[28 g] Saaz, whirlpool @ 190°F [88°C]

## YEAST

Omega Jovaru Lithuanian Farmhouse yeast

## WATER

Adjust pH to 5.3 with lactic acid.

## BREWING NOTES

Follow a Lithuanian Farmhouse Keptinis method: Mash very thick at 154°F [68°C] for 60 minutes. Strain mash and transfer to bread pans. I used disposable 1-lb aluminum pans. Bake pans of

mash for 3 hours at 375°F [191°C]. When done, the top and sides of the mash loaves will be dark, but the insides will still be wet. While baking, prepare a hop tea with 2 quarts [1.89 L] water. Boil 1 oz. Saaz for 60 minutes, then add an additional 1 oz. Saaz for the last 15 minutes. Remove grain from the bread pans, breaking it up as you go, and return it to the mash tun. Add hop tea and sparge it through the baked, crumbled grain. Add sparge water if needed to get the mash loosened up, and continue sparging enough to run 5.5 gallons of wort into the kettle. This is historically a raw beer, but it is advisable to heat the wort to 190°F [88°C] and whirlpool with the final 1 oz. of Saaz. Chill wort to fermentation temperatures. Pitch the Omega Jovaru Lithuanian Farmhouse yeast and ferment toward the lower end of its range, between 75 and 80°F [24–27°C]. Ferment under pressure and cold-crash before kegging. A more traditional method would be to transfer after a couple of days of fermentation into a keg and let it finish in the keg to carbonate. You could also just finish fermentation in the fermenter and force-carb in the keg. Note that the original gravity for this beer will be higher than your software will calculate since more sugar conversion occurs during the baking.

100 IBUs for stability purposes, as this is long before refrigeration or pure yeast cultures." Déjà Brü attendees this year will enjoy two of Zebulon's beers, Original IPA and East India Porter (both circa 1840). The beers were produced with a method "[to] prepare [them] for the Indian market," meaning they had double the hops (140–160 IBUs), were aged for a year in barrels with *Brettanomyces*, and were heavily dry hopped.

### THREE WINNING RECIPES

Soren Jensen won Best of Show gold at Déjà Brü 2023 with **NEWT GRISSETTE**, a petite saison with white wheat and lemon. One of the BOS judges was Tom Berg, chief brewing officer at Falling Knife Brewing Company in Minneapolis. When Jensen messaged Berg to thank him for judging the beer, Berg proposed they work together to brew a pro-scale version

at the brewery. "The commercial version got excellent reviews on Untappd, where it won an award as one of the best farmhouse beers brewed in Minnesota," said Jensen. "I like to think that everyone who had it will now order a grisette or a saison when they see one on beer menus. That's good for craft beer and for all craft beer lovers, because it means maybe more grisettes and other forgotten beer styles will be brewed more often."

The recipe for **LONDON BROWN ALE** was shared by Jessica Ihms, who won the Best of Show silver medal at Déjà Brü 2023. She said she discovered the style while doing research on rare beer styles and was intrigued because it was so different from typical British brown ales. In a method unusual to most modern homebrewers, the beer is back-sweetened post-fermentation with lactose to achieve the style's definitive sweet finish. Ihms's expertise with historical styles led to her working with The Jolly Scholar Brewing Company in Cleveland, Ohio, to develop recipes for their seven-barrel brewhouse. She plans to scale up this winning recipe there soon. "The Déjà Brü competition is totally unique because its sole focus is on styles that may have been lost over the centuries," Ihms said. "Each style has a story as to how it came about and why it may have faded into the background. Learning about them is just as much fun as brewing them."

John Ridgley is a homebrewer from Georgia who likes to think of himself as a historical beer evangelist. He won the Best of Show silver medal at Déjà Brü 2024 with his **SAULES JOJIMAS KEPTINIS**. (*Saules Jojimas* means "riding the sun" in Lithuanian). It is a style he learned about from Lars Marius Garshol's Larsblog. An engineer by trade, Ridgley finds beers with complicated processes more interesting, which is fitting because a traditional Lithuanian keptinis requires the brewer to bake the mash (that's right, bake in the oven) for three hours before adding it back to the mash tun. This, of course, adds a lot of time and energy to the brew day, but without that process, he says you wouldn't achieve the beer's toasted, melanoidin-rich, cookie-dough characteristics. It is an amazingly flavorful beer.

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

As we near the third annual Déjà Brü competition, we're excited to see that a large proportion of the entries are first-time registrants. And we're almost more excited to see that a good half of the

*Brew  
This!*

## 1350 WURTZBERG MEAD

### OVERALL BEST OF SHOW 2025 DÉJÀ BRÜ

Recipe courtesy of Alex Bruch

Here is my process and thoughts on making this mead. When I signed up for Déjà Brü, I knew I wanted to make something unique. I saw the category of 1350 Wurtzberg Mead and it immediately intrigued me. I hopped on the computer and started researching it. I couldn't believe how old the recipe was and how different it was than all the other meads I have made in the past. There were things in the old recipe book that left me with numerous questions: What temp? How long? How many sage leaves? What ale yeast? It all made me think, let's give this a try.

Since I have a beekeeper friend whose honey is delicious, and he gives me a great deal on price, I figured, might as well make a 6-gallon batch, and I am very glad I did.

Once it was finished, I poured a sample and was pleasantly surprised with how it tasted. Since I've never had a mead like this before, I didn't know what to expect and what it should taste like; I just knew I really liked it. It was honey-floral, oaky, and bubbly.

This mead was so fun to make, so different from any other meads I've made before, and it tastes great.

I started working on the recipe, 16 lb. of fresh honey, 5 oz. of Saaz pellets, and around 48 fresh sage leaves. Top it off with 2 packets of Lalbrew Voss Kveik Ale Yeast and some oak cubes and it's set.

**Batch Size:** 6 gallons (22.71 L)  
**Original gravity:** 1.101 (24°P)  
**Final gravity:** 1.020 (5°P)  
**Bitterness:** 8.78 IBU  
**Alcohol:** 10.6% by volume

### FERMENTABLES

16 lb. (7.26 kg) raw honey

### HOPS

5 oz. (142 g) Saaz  
@ 10 minutes (8.78 IBU)

### OTHER INGREDIENTS

48 sage leaves @ 10 minutes  
oak cubes

### YEAST

2 packs Lalbrew Voss Kveik Ale Yeast

### MEADMAKER NOTES

I filled my kettle with 6 gallons of fresh tap water and turned the heat up to start to boil the water. My little trick to make the honey more pourable

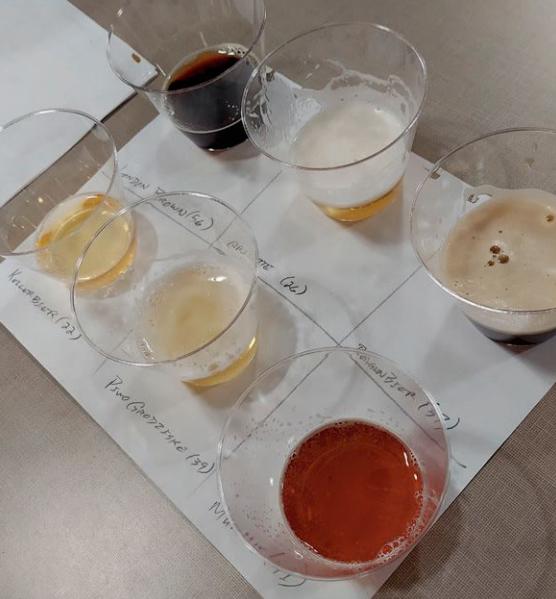
is to have it rest on the lid of the kettle while the water heats to warm it up.

Once the water was boiling, I added the hops and freshly picked sage leaves. The sage was purchased at a local grocery store. I stirred the mixture for a minute and then added the wort chiller. I boiled for 10 minutes to sanitize everything and then I chilled the hop/sage water to yeast pitching temp, which is 91°F (33°C).

While the water was boiling, I added the warmed honey to the cleaned carboy and tossed in a handful of oak cubes. The original recipe called for aging in a barrel and I figured this was more cost effective.

Next, I topped off the carboy with the hop/sage water and pitched my two packets of yeast. I filled the carboy to 6 gallons knowing I would lose some at secondary.

I had the carboy on temperature control at 91°F for 10 days and then transferred to secondary but left the yeast cake and hop residue at the bottom of primary. Then I let it sit in secondary for 20 days, transferred it to a keg, and force carbonated.



Best of Show judging.

entries are from returning brewers, which means they are entering beers in more categories and exploring more styles. We would say that is the main goal of the competition. Please check the link below to see this year's winners, including Alex Bruch's Overall BOS 2025 **1350**

**WURTZBERG MEAD.** Looking for some inspiration? Check out the Accepted Styles list for something new (or, ahem, old)

to try in your home brewery. And if you don't see an obscure style included that you think should be there, please let us know, especially if you can point us to reliable sources or research to help explain the styles and write a judge's guide.

#### RESOURCES

Competition website: [dejabru.org](http://dejabru.org)

Accepted Styles: [dejabru.org/accepted-styles](http://dejabru.org/accepted-styles)

*Chip Walton is a freelance writer and video producer based in Saint Paul, Minn., where he also produces the homebrewing/craft beer web show Chop & Brew. He has worked for Northern Brewer Homebrew Supply, Summit Brewing Company, The Splendid Table radio show and podcast, and is currently a freelance content producer for RahrBSG.*



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# What's Old • *is New* • *German Altbier*

By Josh Weikert

If there's a beer style that I make more than any other, it's German altbier. I love it. I love its profile and its balance. I love its history and its evocative flavors. I love that it's a beer I can open almost any time, in any place, and have it fit the context. Heck, I even love that it's something of an oddball in its production, a "hybrid" beer that defies easy definition. That's why I'm both discouraged that it isn't more popular and simultaneously heartened that it's still around. Today we're going to dig into the history of this outstanding amber ale (or is it?), talk about what goes into it, learn some best practices for making it, and I'll hold out hope that by the end of our time together you're eager to go find an alt or brew one for yourself. If you're in the market for a go-to beer that hits almost all the quintessential "beer" characteristics without being overpowering, have I got good news for you. But first things first—let's talk about how altbier got to where it is today.



## IT'S DIFFERENT, BUT THE SAME

Altbier, as you might guess from a name that translates as “old beer,” has been around for a while. In fact, it used to be the norm: an amber to copper ale with a restrained fermentation profile (thanks to the cool temps of northern Europe), flavored with local hops. The name itself evokes a sense of nostalgia, a relic of a bygone era, a beer that recalls the German brewing traditions of a time when the world was simpler and beer wasn’t so obsessed with dry hopping or hazing its way into the future. Altbier, like a classic rock album or a weathered leather jacket, is unapologetically old-school. But that doesn’t mean it’s any less vital today. If anything, its quiet resilience is a testament to how timeless quality can be. But to understand altbier, you’ve got to start in Düsseldorf, a beautiful city nestled along the Rhine River in North Rhine-Westphalia, where the beer scene is as much a part of the landscape as the river itself. Düsseldorf wasn’t always the center for altbier—in fact, it came to be so only when the rest of the brewing world was busy moving on to new styles.

The history of altbier is rooted in a broader beer tradition that stretches back centuries, but its distinctive style began to take shape during the 19th century, when Germany, like much of Europe, was in the midst of a brewing renaissance. The beer landscape during this period was already changing rapidly, and brewing methods were becoming more standardized, industrialized, and commercialized. Into this already-evolving scene we drop: the lager revolution.

In Bohemia and southern Germany, brewers began to embrace bottom-fermented lager styles; they had a cleaner, crisper taste, and were easy to produce on a large scale. Pilsner and its geographically-modified variants (it still astonishes me how much beer style development is just brewers figuring out how to brew with the water and ingredients they have locally) created a new standard in beer, and older styles were often neglected, if not outright abandoned. But up north in Düsseldorf (and later in places like Essen and Münster), something different—or, rather, the same—was brewing. North German brewers were sticking with what they knew, *vielen dank*. Rather than brew the popular new pale lagers, they stuck with their barrel-aged, firmly-hopped copper ales. You can see the early rivalry here: lager versus ale, light versus dark, tradition versus innovation. And in Düsseldorf, the people chose tradition, though, as you might expect, it

wasn’t always easy. The industrialization of brewing, along with the rise of the lager styles, put plenty of pressure on these more old-fashioned ales.

Over time they nearly disappeared. The rise and increasing dominance of lager and Pilsner in the late 19th and early 20th centuries took a toll on the ale world in general, and altbier was no exception. The industrialized nature of lager production made it easier to mass-produce and distribute, whereas altbier’s more artisanal approach struggled to compete on the same scale. Then came the dark days of World War II, when beer production (along with many other non-martial industries) suffered greatly. After the war, ongoing ingredient scarcity and market disruptions meant that all that was available were the lighter, more accessible lagers that were cheap, easy, and popular. Altbier went into something of a decline, relegated to a niche within Düsseldorf, with only a handful of breweries continuing to produce it.

But the true beauty of altbier lies in its persistence. Like the best traditions, it has refused to die. While it may not have reached the global prominence of lagers or IPAs, it has maintained a loyal following, particularly in Düsseldorf. In fact, altbier saw a resurgence in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as beer drinkers began to search for something different, something with a bit more depth, a bit more complexity than the one-note beers dominating the market. In today’s craft beer world, altbier is an understated star. It’s not flashy

like the latest double IPA, wild, or sour; it doesn’t chase trends. Instead, altbier stands firm as the quiet rebel, a beer that reminds us of what beer is at its core: a balance of ingredients, a reflection of time and place, and a testament to the brewers who care about crafting something unique. Altbier’s resurgence may not be as loud as the IPA boom, but it’s steady, and it’s got a loyal audience that appreciates its subdued sophistication.

## A MIDDLE CHILD STYLE

So, what makes the altbier style unique? It’s usually characterized as a hybrid beer, neither ale nor lager, but possessing elements of both. Fermentation is usually done with a typical Continental ale yeast; however, that fermentation is done at cooler temperatures and is often followed by a period of cold conditioning, both of which are more akin to what we see with lager. The result is a beer restrained in its fermentation profile. That same character is present in most other parts of the beer, too.

Alt is a beer with balance. It’s like the middle child of the beer world: not too malty, not too hoppy; not too strong, not too weak; not too light, not too dark—it’s *just right*. It’s darker than a Pilsner, with a coppery hue that gives it a depth of color and character, but it’s still far from being a heavy, dark beer. The malt backbone is clean and toasty, with a touch of caramel sweetness, and the hops, while present and making a noticeable contribution to both the flavor and aroma, don’t scream “IPA.” Instead, they play the role of the



Brew  
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# "Is It Cold in Here, or Is It Just Me?"

## Altbier

Recipe by Josh Weikert

This is probably the most successful recipe I have ever developed, both in terms of competition wins and popularity on my taps at home. Take your time during fermentation and it should knit itself together nicely. Also, I freely admit this is too big a recipe for a standard altbier, but...when something works, it works, you know?

**Batch size:** 5 gal (18.93 L)

**Original gravity:** 1.057 (14°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.011 (2.7°P)

**Color:** 19 SRM

**Bitterness:** 37 IBU

**Alcohol:** 5.8% by volume

## MALTS

5 lb. (2.3 kg) Maris Otter

4 lb. (1.8 kg) Pilsner

1 lb. (454 g) Munich

4 oz. (113 g) pale chocolate

4 oz. (113 g) Carafa II

4 oz. (113 g) Caramunich

## HOPS

0.75 oz. (21 g) Magnum, 12% a.a. @ 60 min

1 oz. (28 g) Hallertau Mittelfrüh, 4% a.a. @ 5 min

## YEAST

Wyeast 1007 German Ale Yeast

## BREWING NOTES

Mill the grains and mix with 3.4 gallons (12.7 L) of 163°F (73°C) strike water to reach a mash temperature of 152°F (67°C). Hold this temperature for 75 minutes. Vorlauf until your runnings are clear, then run off into the kettle. Sparge the grains with 3.9 gallons (14.7 L) and top up as necessary to obtain 6 gallons (23 L) of wort. Boil for 60 minutes, adding hops as above. After the boil, chill the wort to slightly below fermentation temperature, about 60°F (16°C). Aerate the wort with pure oxygen or filtered air, and pitch yeast. Ferment at 62°F (17°C) for 21 days. Cold crash, then bottle or keg the beer, and carbonate to approximately 2.25 volumes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

elegant background musician, adding a solid bass note of bitterness that keeps the beer dry and refreshing without overpowering the malt profile. The ABV usually lands in the 5% neighborhood—though Sticke (“secret”) and Doppelsticke variations bump that up as high as the eights.

But here’s the kicker: altbier isn’t just about balance, it’s about subtlety. Unlike many other ales, which can be bold and assertive in their fruity esters, yeasty character, hopping regimen, or alcohol warming, altbier is all about the way those elements come together. Balance is only half the picture, since a beer can be balanced and still be quite loud on the palate. Instead, altbier is a beer style that is *intentional*, adding what it needs, not just “as much as it can.” The result is a beer that’s rich yet clean, robust yet delicate, complex yet approachable. It doesn’t beat you over the head, but when you stop to think about the altbier in your hand (probably by now an empty glass) you realize you’ve just had one of the most perfectly constructed beers you’ve ever tasted.

Let’s talk about how to make it.

## MAKING AN ALTBIER

From a recipe standpoint, there’s not much that’s challenging. It uses a pretty standard grist (I like a 50/50 blend of Maris Otter and Pilsner) with just a few toasty accents: light Munich malt, Caramunich, Briess Special Roast, and maybe some chocolate rye or Carafa II or III for depth of flavor. Just remember that our watchwords are *balance* and *subtlety*. The fun here—much as it is in American amber ale—is that you can really explore and engage your own preferences. My altbiers tend toward the darker/stronger end of the spectrum, about 5.5–6% by volume and 16–17 SRM, but there are outstanding lighter options if you want to try them out. If you’ve formulated an amber-colored beer at about 1.050–1.060 for an original gravity, you’re likely in great shape.

Moving on to hops, you want about a 0.75:1 IBU-to-gravity point ratio, or about 35 IBUs for most recipes. Most of that will come from a traditional 60-minute hop addition, but you’re also in the market for some hop flavor and aroma, so up to an ounce in a late-boil addition and maybe even some at flameout will add those accents. Classic German hops are common—Mittelfrüh, Tettnang, and Hallertau—but I also like to play with hops that have a healthy dose of caryophyllene, an oil common to hops like Northern



Brewer and that expresses a wonderful dried-leaves, walk-in-the-woods flavor that fits this style perfectly.

In terms of water, most profiles that are slightly hard will give you what you need. If you have particularly soft water, a small gypsum addition might be appropriate. If you're on a hard well, you may think about diluting with some distilled or soft spring water. But you know your water better than I do—whatever you usually do to make any amber ale or lager will be fine.

Finally, yeast: there *are* hybrid yeasts on the market that some folks like, but I've never felt the need. In fact, aside from your more off-the-wall Belgian or British strains, I've found that great alt can be made with almost *any* yeast, ale or lager, owing to the process steps that we're going to discuss next.

Altbier owes its unique style status to its brewing process. Starting in the mash, you want to produce a more fermentable wort. I mash at 152°F (67°C) for a solid 75 to 90 minutes. So far, nothing unusual. Likewise, the boil, flameout, whirlpool (if that's your thing), and chill are the same as they are for most ales. But things change when we get to fermentation.

First, you want to maximize attenuation, but keep in mind we need to do so *without* driving temperatures higher, because our hybrid style is supposed to be restrained. One way around this conundrum is to include a healthy dose of oxygen at pitching. Fill that headspace with pure O<sub>2</sub>, and make sure your pitch rate is sufficient to prevent any struggles in your yeast. Assuming you're good to go there, it's just a matter of time and temperature. We're going low for an ale (but high for a lager), so around 58–62°F (15–17°C), and then it's a set-and-forget situation for a while—I like to give it a solid three weeks. You can let it free-rise to room temperature at the end of fermentation if you want, but neither diacetyl nor other off-flavors/precursors are a major concern here given the initially cool fermentation. After packaging you can do a little lagering if you like to let flavors come together, but I love to taste it all the way through its aging. It's not really a lager, so don't feel like you can't just jump right in.

You may find you need to do some tweaking to get the recipe just where you want it, but what a wonderful learning experience it is.

#### GO FIND IT (OR GO BREW IT!)

In Düsseldorf, there are still the traditional brewpubs where you can sit down with a *Stange* of altbier poured from a wooden barrel, have the *Köbe* (waiter) keep them coming as they mark how many you've

Brew  
This!



# Doppelsticke Altbier

Recipe by Amahl Turczyn

While purists may note that it is not in keeping with *Reinheitsgebot*, the addition of corn syrup in the fermentation vessel boosts alcohol and dries out the finish, making the beer an appropriately malty, yet dry heavyweight of the altbier family. I use Korean *mul-yeast* for brewing, as it's available at my local Asian supermarket and has only one ingredient: corn starch. As a pure glucose syrup, it's completely converted to alcohol by the yeast, making it a handy tool for brewers.

Also note that the yeast of choice is specific: SafAle K-97 is a dry German ale yeast that requires extra attention. It's kind of like that fashion model from Belarus you used to date. Passionate, temperamental, often hard to get along with, but ultimately sooo worth it. It seems to take forever to get going once it's pitched, then blows out of the fermenter with Vesuvian enthusiasm (so have that blowoff equipment ready). Then towards the end of fermentation, it doesn't want to stay in the beer, preferring instead to float above it in a thick mass. You literally need to swirl the whole vessel to encourage it back down into the beer. Once it's back into solution, it doesn't want to drop out. However, it attenuates quite well, taking its time to eventually produce a lightly fruity, malty, dry Kölsch or altbier. You'll have to cold crash it at 40°F (5°C) or lower for at least a week to get it to finally settle out. But in the end, it makes a beautifully clear, strong altbier you'll want to make again.

**Batch size:** 5 gallons (18.93 L)

**Original gravity:** 1.073 (17.7°P)

**Final gravity:** 1.008 (2°P)

**Color:** 19 SRM

**Bitterness:** 35 IBU

**Alcohol:** 8.5% by volume

#### MALTS

5 lb.	(2.3 kg) Pilsner liquid malt extract
5 lb.	(2.3 kg) Munich 20L
1 lb.	(454 g) Caramunich
4 oz.	(113 g) Carafa I
1 lb.	(454 g) Brewer's corn syrup or mul-yeast, in FV

#### HOPS

1 oz.	(28 g) Magnum, 12% a.o., FWH@60 min
-------	-------------------------------------

#### YEAST

SafAle K-97 dry German ale yeast

#### BREWING NOTES

Mash Munich, Caramunich and Carafa at 149°F (65°C) for one hour or until conversion is complete. Vorlauf until your runnings are clear, then run off into the kettle, adding first wort hops as it fills. Dissolve malt extract into the wort and then boil for 60 minutes. Chill the wort to slightly below fermentation temperature, about 60°F (16°C). Aerate the wort with pure oxygen or filtered air and pitch yeast. Ferment at 62°F (17°C) for 10 days, or until fermentation begins to slow. Add corn syrup directly to fermenter, raise temperature to 65°F (18°C), and ferment until terminal gravity is reached. Cold crash until yeast settles, fine with gelatin, then bottle or keg, carbonating to approximately 2.25 volumes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

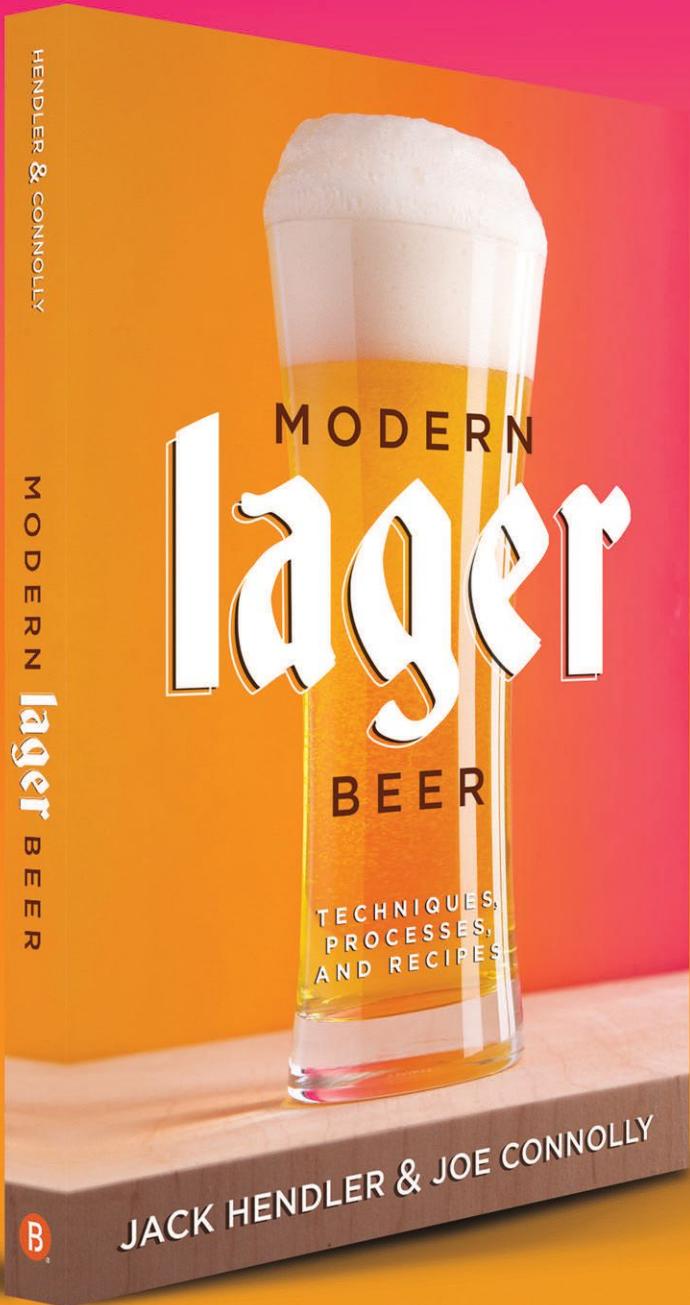
had on your coaster, and the experience feels timeless. The beer is still brewed in the same old-fashioned way. But you don't need to make your way to the Rhine to get a good alt; you probably just need to be on the lookout for it, because it's often hiding in plain sight. Not even two months ago I introduced a crowd of beer neophytes to Alaskan Brewing Co.'s altbier, cleverly disguised as an innocuous "amber ale." We were in Texas, so I naturally got the question, "so it's kind of like Shiner?" Whatever gets you to try it, pardner. And try (and enjoy) it they did.

Altbier isn't going to go out of style. Its quiet, elegant character will continue to stand the test of time. In a world full of new

and innovative beers, altbier is the reminder that sometimes, the best styles are the ones that are already here—waiting to be rediscovered. So, the next time you crack open a bottle or can of altbier, take a moment. Let it remind you of what beer used to be and, if we're lucky, what beer will always be: classic, balanced, and fundamentally good.

**Josh Weikert** is a professor of political science and is a founding member and past president of the Stoney Creek Homebrewers. He has medaled in every BJCP beer style, is a BJCP Grand Master Judge and Certified Cicerone, and is a two-time Eastern Pennsylvania Homebrewer of the Year.

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# Relax, Don't Worry, Have a Homebrew!

Sir Tuckerman Smith "Tucker"  
Brew Buddy 2010–2025

That mantra rings as true today as it did in 1978 when Charlie Papazian cofounded the American Homebrewers Association with Charlie Matzen. Homebrewing can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it, but the first step is always to relax and not worry.

To aid your relaxation and help you get the most out of *Zymurgy*, here are some standard assumptions and methods for our recipes. Of course, when a recipe says to do something different, follow the recipe. But you can always fall back on these general tips to brew great beer.



#### ON THE WEB

For more detailed info, head over to [HomebrewersAssociation.org](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org) and dive into our How to Brew resources.

## BREWING WITH ZYMBURG

### MAKING WORT

Most recipes in *Zymurgy* offer an all-grain version and a malt extract or partial-mash alternative. Pick the procedure you prefer and prepare some wort! Some recipes

might include a water profile. If you can't (or don't want to) deal with water chemistry, don't worry about it: just go ahead and brew! Extract brewers needn't add minerals to water.



### Malt Extract Recipes

Making wort from malt extract is easy.

- Crush specialty grains, if any.
- Place milled grains in a mesh bag and tie it off.
- Steep bag of grains in 150–160°F (66–71°C) water for 30 min. in your brew pot.
- Remove bag of grains from the pot.
- Fully dissolve extract in the hot, grain-infused water (if there are no specialty grains in the recipe, you can skip directly to this step).
- Top up with water to your desired boil volume. (Leave some room for foam!)

### All-Grain and Partial-Mash Recipes

Unless otherwise specified, all-grain brewers can conduct a single-temperature infusion mash with these parameters:

- Water/grain ratio: 1.25 qt./lb. (2.6 L/kg)
- Mash efficiency: 70%
- Mash temperature: 150–153°F (66–67.2°C)
- Mash duration: 60 minutes

Partial-mash recipes make the same assumptions but use a smaller amount of grain and augment the wort with malt extract.

### BOILING

No matter how you get here, everyone loves adding hops.



- Boil time is 60 minutes unless otherwise stated.
- Boils are assumed to be the full batch volume, but you can also boil a concentrated wort and top up with water in the fermenter.
- Hop additions are given in minutes before the end of the boil.

# Brew Lingo

Every field has specialized language, and homebrewing is no different. Here are some of the key terms, abbreviations, and acronyms you'll find throughout Zymurgy.

**AA** – alpha acid

**ABV** – alcohol by volume

**AHA** – American Homebrewers Association

**BBL** – U.S. beer barrel (31 U.S. gal or 117.3 L)

**BIAB** – brew in a bag

**BJCP** – Beer Judge Certification Program

**Chico** – American ale yeast, aka Wyeast 1056, WLP001, SafAle US-05, and others

**CTZ** – Columbus, Tomahawk, and Zeus: interchangeable high-alpha-acid hops

**DME** – dry malt extract

**DMS** – dimethyl sulfide, an off flavor similar to canned corn or cooked vegetables

**DO** – dissolved oxygen

**EBC** – European Brewing Convention (beer color)

**FG** – final gravity

**FWH** – first wort hops, added to the boil kettle as it fills with sweet wort after mashing

**HERMS** – heat exchange recirculating mash system

**HLT** – hot liquor tank

**IBU** – international bitterness unit

**LHBS** – local homebrew shop

**°L** – degrees Lovibond (malt color)

**LME** – liquid malt extract

**LTHD** – Learn to Homebrew Day

**MLT** – mash-lauter tun

**NHC** – National Homebrew Competition

**OG** – original gravity

**°P** – degrees Plato (wort/beer density)

**RIMS** – recirculating infusion mash system

**RO** – reverse osmosis, a water purification process that removes most dissolved ions

**SG** – specific gravity (wort/beer density)

**SMaSH** – single malt and single hop

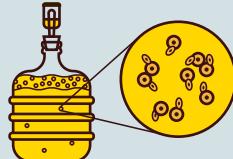
**SMM** – S-methyl methionine, precursor to dimethyl sulfide (DMS)

**SRM** – Standard Reference Method (beer color)

## FERMENTING & CONDITIONING

Pitch yeast into chilled, aerated or oxygenated wort.

- Use twice as much yeast for lagers as you do for ales.
- Ales ferment at 60–70°F (15–20°C). Lagers ferment at 45–55°F (7–13°C).
- Condition ales at room temperature or colder for a week or two.
- Condition lagers at close to freezing for several weeks if you can (traditional but not required).



## BOTTLING & KEGGING

If you bottle,

- Use 1 oz. (28 g) of dextrose (corn sugar) per gallon of beer (7.5 g/L) for a good, all-purpose level of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Use less sugar for less fizz.
- Take care with higher carbonation levels—many single-use beer bottles aren't designed for high pressure.



If you force carbonate in a keg,

- Use the chart to dial in the gauge pressure on the regulator.



- Add 0.5 psi (35 mbar) for every 1,000 feet (300 meters) you live above sea level.
- To convert psi pressures to mbar, multiply by 69.
- To convert volumes of CO<sub>2</sub> to g/L, multiply by 2.

## REGULATOR PRESSURES (PSI) FOR VARIOUS CARBONATION LEVELS AND SERVING TEMPERATURES

TEMP (°F)	VOL. CO <sub>2</sub>										
	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1
33	5.0	6.0	6.9	7.9	8.8	9.8	10.7	11.7	12.6	13.6	14.5
34	5.2	6.2	7.2	8.1	9.1	10.1	11.1	12.0	13.0	14.0	15.0
35	5.6	6.6	7.6	8.6	9.7	10.7	11.7	12.7	13.7	14.8	15.8
36	6.1	7.1	8.2	9.2	10.2	11.3	12.3	13.4	14.4	15.5	16.5
37	6.6	7.6	8.7	9.8	10.8	11.9	12.9	14.0	15.1	16.1	17.2
38	7.0	8.1	9.2	10.3	11.3	12.4	13.5	14.5	15.6	16.7	17.8
39	7.6	8.7	9.8	10.8	11.9	13.0	14.1	15.2	16.3	17.4	18.5
40	8.0	9.1	10.2	11.3	12.4	13.5	14.6	15.7	16.8	17.9	19.0
41	8.3	9.4	10.6	11.7	12.8	13.9	15.1	16.2	17.3	18.4	19.5
42	8.8	9.9	11.0	12.2	13.3	14.4	15.6	16.7	17.8	19.0	20.1

■ = PSI

Source: Brewers Association Draught Beer Quality for Retailers



# FERMENTATION UPGRADED

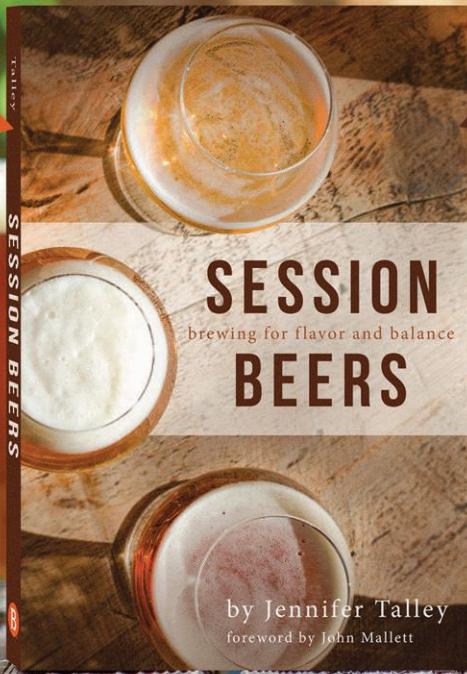
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# BIG BREW

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## Brewing Big for Big Brew

By Ethan Elliott

The words “Big Brew” conjure several possible scenarios. Setting Macbeth’s witches aside, one of them is the concept of making a high-alcohol, heavy hitter of a beer. Another is making a very large batch of beer, accepting that size is subjective and one brewer’s pilot batch is another’s annual output. On a global scale, Big Brew could also be the concept of a concerted effort by the brewing community to brew the same beer, in multiple places, simultaneously. The latter, of course, is where this story begins.

### BIG GOAL

Big Brew is an annual event, organized by the American Homebrewers Association (AHA), that takes place every year on the first Saturday of May. May 3, 2025 will be the 27th annual Big Brew. It’s a celebration that anticipates our holiday—National Homebrew Day—which was first officially recognized by Congress on May 7, 1988.

The goal of Big Brew is simple: promote homebrewing by getting as many people as possible brewing the same thing on the

same day. This is often accomplished at the club level, but it’s a free country, and anyone can brew (by themselves, with friends and family, or with their dogs). The rules are simple: in order to officially participate in Big Brew, the brewing must take place on the appointed day, which gives a nice 24-hour window for early birds and night owls alike; and participants are encouraged to use the official recipe.



The annual Big Brew Competition is hosted by the Weiz Guys Homebrew Club, in Loveland, Colo. All AHA-registered clubs are invited to enter.

The AHA chooses different recipes every year. This year's selection is definitely a heavy hitter. At 11.2% ABV and boasting two National Homebrew Competition gold medals, Big Blimp! American Barleywine is sure to create a buzz for all who brew it. It was developed by Larry and Donna Reuter of Akron, Ohio, members of the Society of Akron Area Zymurgists (SAAZ) homebrew club. Big Blimp! won gold medals in the Strong American Ale category in 2019 and then again in 2023 after slight changes to the hop schedule. Requiring 22 pounds of grain for a five-gallon batch, a larger mash tun (or an extra one) may be necessary. If you'd prefer to brew an extract-based recipe instead, please visit [HomebrewersAssociation.org/beer-recipes/](https://HomebrewersAssociation.org/beer-recipes/).

## BIG EVENT

Those who embrace Big Brew truly make it an event. Many clubs brew a large batch, then split the wort between members. Some commercial breweries even do a wort share, where homebrewers can bring their own fermentation vessel and take home wort. One such share takes place at Half Batch Brewing in Hendersonville, Tenn. Likewise, Jefferson Beer Supply in Jefferson, S.D. invites homebrewers to join head brewer Nicki Werner for the mash and then take home as much wort as they can carry. The Upstate New York Homebrewers Association is arranging a collaboration with a local brewery to provide the club with commercially made wort distributed in five-gallon increments, according to club president Sam Tischler.

Even without premade wort, many breweries and clubs across the country plan a massive brew day get-together. Jon Newton at 4 Barking Dogs Brewery in Burien, Wash. puts up four large tents and invites local homebrewers to join in making both extract and all-grain versions of the recipe; plus, there's smoked chicken and axe throwing. The Ozark Zymurgists plan to spend the day homebrewing, barbecuing, and enjoying



A Big Brew requires big kettles. Calculate grain space, as well as water. Take turns stirring—or not.

Print a copy of the recipe and use it to take copious notes. The more brew data you record, the more repeatable the beer. Save these printouts for future reference.

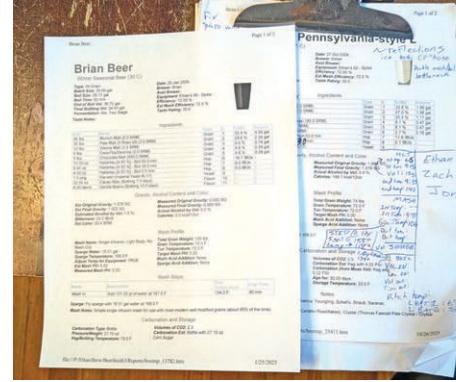
good company; later they'll enter their brews into the Weiz Guys Big Brew Competition.

Marc Makarem, head brewer at Back Channel Brewing in Spring Park, Minn., says they'll clear their dock space and provide water for homebrewers who bring their own gear and brew. After the wort share, they'll head into the taproom for burgers and watch the Kentucky Derby on the Jumbotron. Sign up through the Minnesota Home Brewers Association at [mnbrewers.com](http://mnbrewers.com).

One club even plans to take Big Brew camping. The Inland Empire Brewers Homebrew Club in Corona, Calif. has missed Big Brew repeatedly over the years because it coincides with the Southern California Homebrewers Festival, a 40-homebrew-club camping weekend in Temecula, Calif. This year, Inland Empire president Jason Dunn plans to take equipment and supplies to brew at their campsite while fellow brew clubs stop by for "trick-or-treating for beer." Dunn says, "hopefully I can find some Kveik yeast, because of the lack of fermentation temperature control."

If none of these locations are close enough, contact your local homebrew clubs, breweries, or supply shops to find out about similar events in your area.

No matter which avenue one takes to participate, the thing that sets Big Brew apart is the thing that makes it special:



every participant endeavors to brew the same recipe on the same day. That doesn't mean every beer will taste the same—in fact, tasting the beers after Big Brew is another huge part of the process. Even with the same recipe, differences in equipment, water, and fermentation temperatures have profound effects on the final result. Just ask Blake Ernst.

## BIG COMPETITION

Ernst is vice president of the Weiz Guys Homebrew Club in Loveland, Colo., which hosts the annual Big Brew Competition. Because everyone uses the same recipe, says Ernst, "it is a club-versus-club contest—a competition of process. Participation in Big Brew had been lacking," he notes, but he believes many clubs put extra effort into brewing for competitions. So he proposed the idea to AHA executive director Julia Herz, who enthusiastically agreed. Originally established as a friendly bet between two Colorado clubs, the competition soon gained momentum, and in its first year, the Weiz Guys received entries from six states, found National- and Master-level



judges to score the entries, and received sponsorship from Brewers Supply Group.

"The biggest purpose of the competition is to promote homebrewing and get people together," says Ernst. In that spirit, the event is now open to all AHA-registered homebrew clubs across the country. Last year, the Weiz Guys emailed around 1,700 clubs, and they hope to reach even more this year. There is a 300-entry limit, and entry fee proceeds are split between the top three winning clubs' charity of choice. Those winners will also have their clubs featured in *Zymurgy*. For more information and entry details, visit [weizguys.com/bigbrew](http://weizguys.com/bigbrew).

For the last two years the competition has been held in July, but with this year's recipe, it will be pushed later to accommodate the extra conditioning time entrants will need. The entry window for 2025 will be 9/1–10/20, with judging 11/8.

Even if you're not interested in competing, you can still host your own Big Brew May 3. Looking for pointers, or just a laugh alongside some well-meaning misinformation? Keep reading for a step-by-step guide.

**Before investing in an electric brew controller, make friends with an electrical engineer. Have an equipment team ready on brew day.**

**Carefully transfer cooled wort to the fermenter, aerate, and pitch yeast at the recommended temperature.**

### BIG PLANNING

When planning any brew, the early bird gets the wort, as the old saying goes. First, and most obvious: go over the official recipe and make sure you have what you need for brew day. If there aren't any local breweries or clubs doing a wort share, purchase ingredients from your local homebrew shop. Locate and inspect your brewing equipment, and make sure you have the necessary supplies. This sometimes entails a perilous quest through the recesses of the attic or garage. It also sometimes means making repairs or changing out components. Prepare thyself.

In other pre-brew preparations, make a jobs chart and assign each member of your brew team specific tasks (these can be rotated from one brew day to the next). For example, one person can be the Head Brewer, in charge of following the recipe, brewing, and not missing a beat of the hop schedule. (This is also the person to blame if the beer doesn't turn out.) The honorary title of Water Boy is given to the brewer's assistant—the gofer who runs tasks as assigned. Someone has to be in charge of equipment, because something always breaks or needs to be adapted on brew day. The thankless, bottom-of-the-barrel jobs of the Cleaning Crew are actually instrumental to the execution of a successful brew day. Without cleaned and sanitized equipment, good beer can go very bad. Got extra people? Assign them fun jobs: King

for a Day, Comedian, Unapologetic Lush. If everyone starts the day with a clear set of tasks and expectations, the brew day runs much smoother.

### BIG DAY

First thing on brew day, work together to set up the equipment and start heating water. While it's heating, fill everyone's glass and have a team meeting to make sure the crew understands their assignments for the day. Brew buddies who can work autonomously to complete tasks make the process easier and faster. And don't let everyone walk away just yet. There's still one vital job to do: record data.

Record (practically) everything! The key to making repeatable beer is to keep accurate notes on as many brew parameters as possible. What was the ambient temperature on brew day? What were the starting volumes? How long was the mash? Were there any recipe adjustments? What was the final boil volume? What was the pitching temperature? Each of these elements plays a part in the subtle shifts that impact beer flavor. Keeping track of variables allows for repeatability—it's one of the best ways to ensure you'll be making great beer. When making the exact same recipe more than once, a change in any variable can impact the final product. Take notes!

The outside temperature will have a huge impact on heat loss, so calculate this into your temperature targets. Once your strike water reaches the desired temperature, transfer it to the mash tun. When the right amount of water is in place, have one person stir while another slowly adds grains (oh, Water Boy!).

If all calculations were done well, this should result in a reasonable mash temperature. Big Blimp! has a single-infusion mash temperature of 150°F (66°C). Once all grains have been thoroughly stirred in, to quote my good friend Gandalf, "Keep it secret. Keep it safe." Cover the mash tun with a lid and consider adding blankets or additional insulation to help the valuable contents maintain a steady temperature. The mash is a great time to refill drinks, eat lunch, or write a letter to someone you admire.

While everyone else starts eating lunch, the Water Boy should start heating sparge water. (It's not a hard job, so why should anyone else have to eat cold food?) Enjoy a hot meal while they stand alone, TAKING NOTES, literally watching a pot boil. Alright, somebody go out there and keep them company.

When the water is ready, begin the sparge: pour water over the grain bed gently to avoid over-compression, then begin transferring wort from the mash tun to the boil kettle. Transfer slowly, maintaining about an inch of sparge water above the grain bed. Take it



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slow. The only rush here comes from significant others who want their house back.

Once the wort from the mash has been transferred to the boil kettle, set hop schedule timers and take notes on volumes, temperatures, time, etc. The boil does require occasional stirring and attention—especially at the hot break stage—but it's typically a good time to gather, chat, and have a homebrew.

At the end of the boil, cool the wort and transfer it to the fermentation vessel. Carboys and plastic buckets work great, but conicals exude awesomeness. All yeasts have different temperature requirements, so consult the manufacturer's specifications for the strain you are using. Take notes. At this point, just about everyone's job is done.

All this time, of course, the Cleaning Crew has worked silently in the background, mixing up sanitizer, cleaning lines, fermenters, and sometimes bottles or kegs, without a word of thanks. Well, this is their thanks: don't forget to clean all of the kettles and turn off the lights.

## LITTLE THINGS

Making a stronger brew shouldn't really affect timing, but somehow high-gravity beers always seem to result in longer brew days. It does take longer to heat the extra sparge water, and lautering can take more time. While a very efficient small batch can be finished in under six hours, for Big Brew tell people eight hours at least.

Kettle space is another important consideration when brewing a high-gravity batch. More grain takes up more room, sometimes



### CLUBS CORNER IDEAS

Calling all AHA-Sanctioned Homebrew Clubs! Want to see your club featured in Zymurgy's Clubs Corner? Contact us at [zymurgy@brewersassociation.org](mailto:zymurgy@brewersassociation.org).

Set up equipment and start heating water as early as possible. During cold or hot weather extremes, heat wrap the mash tun to maintain consistent temperatures. (Do not apply direct heat to wrapped kettles.)

perature can affect yeast health, and fermentation temperature has a significant impact on yeast activity—and therefore on flavor outcome. Follow recommendations or repeat past successes (from all those notes).

Big Brew is a great chance to participate in brewing on a grand scale, and to test or compare brewing processes. Whether participating in a large club event, camping in California, picking up your five gallons at a wort share, or firing up burners in your own backyard, spread the word and join the celebration on May 3.

*Ethan Elliott is a Denver-based writer and homebrewer who would have made a great monk, except for the celibacy. As a hobbyist inventor, he lives by the motto "Where there's an Ethan, there's a way."*

requiring a larger (or additional) mash vessel. A larger grain bill also absorbs more water. Have more on hand or consult brew software for calculations.

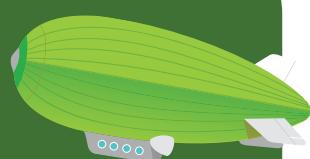
Temperature is another variable that deserves special attention. Yeast pitch tem-

Brew This!



# Big Blimp! Barleywine

Strong American Ale



Courtesy of Donna and Larry Reuter

<b>Yield:</b>	5 U.S. gal. (18.9 L)
<b>Original gravity:</b>	1.096 (22.9°P)
<b>Final gravity:</b>	1.018 (4.6°P)
<b>Bitterness:</b>	100 IBU
<b>Color:</b>	17 SRM
<b>Alcohol:</b>	11.2% by volume

## MALTS & ADJUNCTS

19 lb.	(8.62 kg) Simpsons Finest Maris Otter
1 lb.	(454 g) Simpsons Crystal Light Malt
8 oz.	(227 g) Simpsons Crystal Medium Malt
4 oz.	(113 g) Dingemans Special B®
4 oz.	(113 g) Rohr Dextrin Malt
1 lb.	(454 g) dextrose, in boil

## HOPS

0.75 oz.	(21 g) Cascade, 5.8% a.a., FWH
0.75 oz.	(21 g) Centennial, 12.8% a.a., FWH
0.75 oz.	(21 g) Chinook, 10% a.a., FWH
1.25 oz.	(35 g) Cascade, 5.8% a.a., whirlpool
1.25 oz.	(35 g) Centennial, 12.8% a.a., whirlpool
1.25 oz.	(35 g) Chinook, 10% a.a., whirlpool
1 oz.	(28 g) Cascade, 5.8% a.a., dry hop 4 days
2 oz.	(57 g) Centennial, 12.8% a.a., dry hop 4 days
1 oz.	(28 g) Chinook, 10% a.a., dry hop 4 days

## YEAST

2 packs (22 g) LalBrew BRY-97™

## WATER

Ca 5 ppm, Mg 42 ppm, Na 60 ppm, Cl 80 ppm, SO<sub>4</sub> 20 ppm

## ADDITIONAL ITEMS

1 tsp. Irish moss @ 10 min

## DIRECTIONS

Mash at 150°F (66°C) for 90 min. Target mash pH of 5.3. Batch or fly sparge for 15 to 30 min. Boil 90 min. Begin chilling. Add whirlpool hops when wort reaches 190°F (88°C) and whirlpool 30 minutes while continuing to chill wort to 60–62°F (16–17°C), then aerate and pitch yeast. Dry pitching without rehydration is recommended (more straightforward process, more consistent fermentation performance, and reduced risk of contamination). Ferment 21 days in primary at 60–62°F (16–17°C), then dry hop for 4 days. Keg with 3.5 oz. (99 g) of corn sugar in a simple syrup (mixture of water and sugar, typically 1:1) and allow carbonation to develop over 2 weeks. Crash cool to 30°F (-1°C) and hold 2 weeks, then age until ready to serve.

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# The Pub Bar



**T**he old pub, nestled amidst the bustling city, is a sight to behold. Its weathered brick facade, adorned with climbing ivy and a quaint wooden sign, exudes a timeless charm. From the outside, it appears to be a cozy, traditional pub, a sanctuary for weary travelers and locals alike. However, the true allure of the establishment lies hidden within its walls.

Outside, the pub's ambiance is inviting, but once the heavy oak door is opened, a world of sensory delight unfolds. The air is thick with the aroma of freshly served beer, mingling with the tantalizing scent of sizzling bangers and roasting potatoes from the kitchen. The dimly lit interior, adorned with antique bar stools and vintage photographs, creates an intimate, home-away-from-home atmosphere.

At the heart of the pub is the bar: A gleaming mahogany counter that stretches across the width of the room. Behind it lies a vast array of gleaming steel taps, each adorned with a unique handle, showcasing the establishment's extensive selection of ales. From hoppy IPAs to smooth stouts, there's something to satisfy every palate.

The bartender, a grizzled old man with a twinkle in his eye, is a fixture at the pub. He knows every beer on tap by heart, and

his recommendations are always spot on. Whether you are a seasoned connoisseur or a novice just starting to explore the world of beer—or just someone who desires a refreshing drink—he is always happy to offer his expertise.

As I sit at the bar surrounded by the camaraderie of other patrons, I cannot help but feel a sense of belonging. The pub bar is more than just a place to enjoy a good, fresh pint; it's a community hub where people come together to relax, socialize, and enjoy good company.

One of the regulars, a woman named Janeane, is particularly fond of the pub's beer selection. She often says, "The pub's atmosphere is great, but the people and the beer selection make it special."

I recognize another visitor as a man named John, who discovered the pub some time ago while exploring the city. A seasoned craft beer enthusiast, competitive homebrewer, and beer judge, he has tried beers from all over the world, and always finds himself looking for the next hidden gem. Initially drawn to this pub by its charming exterior, he is quickly captivated by the inviting atmosphere and the wide variety on tap.

As the evening wears on, the pub fills with the sounds of laughter, conversation,

and the clinking of glasses. It's a place where time seems to stand still, and worries melt away. Punching out after a long day at the factory, I stretch my legs at the bar and bring the first frothy pint to my tired lips. The reddish-amber ale gleams gem-like in the crystal-clear glass, filling my senses with the clean, fruity flavors of hops and barley. I turn to see another familiar face among the usual patrons and start up a conversation.

As I leave the pub, I cannot help but feel a sense of satisfaction. My tired limbs have lost their ache and weight. Sure, the outside of the pub looks inviting, but it's the comforting interior, with its welcoming atmosphere and the murmur and laughter of high spirits, that keeps me returning night after night. It's a place where I can escape the hustle and bustle of the city and the grind of the workday, and just enjoy the simple and meaningful pleasures of life.

*John Jons is a BJCP Certified Beer and Mead judge, and has been a homebrewer and beer competition competitor for over 15 years. He is a longtime member of the Bay Area Mastonauts homebrew club in Clear Lake, Texas.*

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