



Latest news headlines:

- ▶ **Monthly meeting for December is on the 10th at the Outpost, on the right just south of the intersection of Egret Bay/El Camino with NASA 1**
- ▶ Style of the month is *Holiday, Specialties, Novelties*. No, not *that* kind of novelty. Sheesh.
- ▶ Election results.
- ▶ All LR9 sponsors are now listed in every issue, with one or two spotlighted each month.

Regular features:

- ▶ [The Mission](#) - Where are we and what are we doing in this handbasket?
- ▶ [The Commander's Briefing](#) - Guy tempts fate and winds up at a competitor's gas station.
- ▶ [The Countdown](#) - BOTY, meeting minutes, calendar.
- ▶ [Crew Brew Review](#) - 'Twas The Homebrewer's Night Before Christmas.
- ▶ [Orbit-ale Repairs](#) - "Wheat - grain vs extract, extract vs grain?"

The Mission



The small print:

The Bay Area Mashtronauts is a club dedicated to the art and enjoyment of fermented beverages. The club is associated with the Homebrewers of America and supports the American Homebrewers Association's goal of brewing better quality beers and enjoying them in a responsible fashion.

Annual dues are \$20 for individuals (\$30 for families) payable in January (or pro-rated at month of joining).

The club meets on the second Tuesday of each month with the venue rotating among the Clear Lake eateries. Check the Mashtronaut website or contact an officer for the next meeting place. Meetings begin at 6:30pm. The officers and newsletter staff assume no responsibility for the accuracy of any story in this newsletter. Read and believe at your own risk; what do you think this is anyway, the National Enquirer?

The cockpit crew:

- Mission Commander (and Prez): Guy "Geeee" Munster (guy.h.munster@exxonmobil.com)
- Pilot (and vice president): John "the rookie" Schmalz (beerjohn@houston.rr.com)
- Payload Specialist (and treasurer): Julian "JB the elder" Bell (julianbell@ghg.net)
- Comm Specialist (and secretary): Joachim "Jocko" Beek (beer@beeknet.net)
- Data Input Specialist (and club PRster): Bill "Braveheart" Kilty (bkilty@hal-pc.org)
- The Force (and club conscience): Mike "The Force" Wiley (crampedmail@yahoo.com)

Featured this month:

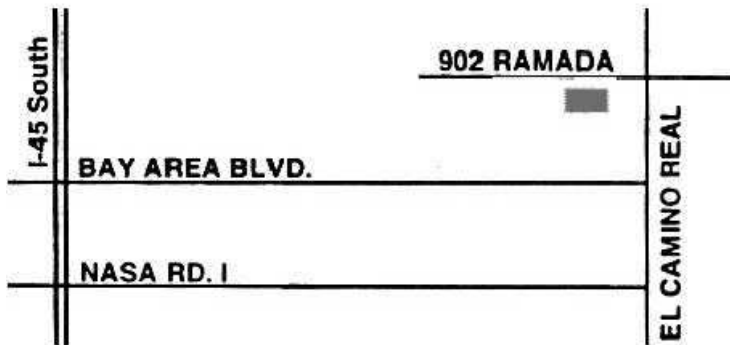
- Our generous Lunar rendezbrew 9 sponsors:
- Auto Cool-it**
automotive a/c repair and custom systems
- Auto House of Switzerland**
downtown European auto repair
- Brenham Brewery**
Houston area's newest microbrewery
- Brian Bartz**
CPA
- Clear Creek Animal Hospital**
Clear Lake vet care since 1971
- DeFalco's**
brewing supplies
- Molly's Pub**
now in League City too
- Monks, Monks, Monks, and Hiran**
Attorneys at Law
- Outpost Tavern**
a Clear Lake tradition
- Perfect Beauty**
Hair & Nails Salon
- Private Mini-Storage**
55° cold storage year round
- Saint Arnold Brewing Company**
Houston's first microbrewery
- The Brew Stop**
northside brewing supplies
- TheLaserGuy.com**
custom laser engraving
- Two Rows**
Houston's lone remaining brewpub

These businesses helped us...please return the favour!



281-486-0971

902 Ramada
Houston, TX 77062



...and in League City at I-45 and 518, just behind Academy.



The Commander's Briefing



There are two basic rules in life, that a person violates at his/her peril:

- (1) Never volunteer for anything, and
- (2) Never, ever say (to anyone within earshot, or even to yourself, lest you tempt the fates!) that something bad has (by careful planning, superior intelligence, or just plain dumb luck) has not (yet!) happened to you.

There is actually a third basic rule, which deals with never sitting in the back of a slightly-used VW Vanagon on Halloween unless you've brought a large bag of marshmallows and flame-retardant underwear, but let's not confuse the situation, shall we?!

In any case, as my soon-to-be-ending service as your faithful Mission Commander would suggest, I failed at rule #1. My penance for this error in judgment has been to have to answer to your heartless Chief Scribe and Prostoberfuhrer for the last two years, as he pounds on me without mercy for monthly newsletter contributions (and this month's edition is smokin' off the presses, if you catch my drift!). Your penance, for having contributed to my service as MC, is to have to have read all of these loquacious diatribes and discourses.

I'd been doing well on rule #2, until just a week or so ago. Then in a moment of incautious weakness, I happened to think to myself (didn't have the nerve to voice this comment to any sentient being), that I hadn't had a flat tire in my entire driving history (the ex had one, once, many moons ago, but that's a hit on her karma, not mine). What a tribute to my careful selection of tires, my superior efforts to maintain my vehicle and drive with care and attention, what sheer luck to have never run over a nail or a dead body or the charred remains of a van!

What utter stupidity, that!?!

So guess what happened last Tuesday at 11 p.m., in the cold and rain, making my way home from a much-too-long day at our Chad Project offices up near the airport? Yep, a flat.

As I limped my way off the 610 loop at the Lockwood exit, into the deserted (though fortunately well-lit) parking lot of a Chevron station, I remembered how the jack and tire wrench which Isuzu had thoughtfully provided me nearly ten years and three sets of tires ago, which I had never had reason to use, had been stolen by someone several years earlier (obviously someone with less care in planning, natural intelligence, or lady luck, for I never worried one moment about losing those useless tools). And as I sat in my truck, leaning over to one side on a tire whose best days were clearly in the past, I realized (as I would be reminded many times in the coming hour) that I was not in a good part of town.

Fortunately (careful planning? superior intelligence? dumb luck?) I still had my spare tire, and I had my Triple A card. So I grabbed a map, and headed out to find some help.

Started with the Chevron station. Nice, bright, comfy, dry store, with a pay phone inside, a clerk who could tell me (so I could tell AAA) where I was. Grabbed the door ... locked. The clerk, on the other (dry!) side of the door, pointed to a sign: "Doors locked after 10 p.m.." First confirmation that I wasn't in a good part of town. We tried some sign language, but either the clerk thought I was an idiot (after all, what was I doing in this part of town at that hour?), or didn't understand what my confused look and waving of a rapidly-melting Houston city map were meant to be.

Fortunately, a customer saw my confusion, and once I was able to wring out enough water, quickly showed me where I was. And then added, in case I wasn't clear on the matter, that this was a bad part of town.

I saw a pay phone next to the service station, and headed for it, only to discover that someone had already used it earlier ... as a target for some small arms fire practice. Another indication, in case I wasn't convinced, that this wasn't a place where I wanted to be at that hour, rain or no rain. I wandered about the intersection looking for another phone, when a women closing up a fast food Chinese to-go shop asked me what was wrong. She very kindly did not laugh at me when I asked about finding a pay phone in the area (apparently the one bullet-ridden relic I did find was from the last ill-advised attempt by SBC

to "reach out and touch" this part of town), and instead told the owner to let me use their phone.

The person at AAA took care of the details, helpfully pointing out that I was in a bad part of town, and advising that I stay where I could keep an eye on the other three (functional) tires.

As I was waiting by my car, I was approached by three people. One woman asked me if I needed a coat. Another man asked if he could help me change the tire. And a third came by, commiserated with my wet, unfortunate state, and then asked if I could spare a buck or two for a beer (normally I'm not much for hand-outs, but who couldn't use a buck or two for a beer, so I obliged). Not too shabby for being in a bad part of town.

The cavalry from AAA arrived, just ahead of the next onslaught of rain, and had my spare swapped out in no time (even had enough compressed air to give it a quick fill, as it was nearly as flat as my bum wheel). He worked fast, in part because (as he pointed out) this was a bad part of town. "I don't like coming here myself," he confessed, and this coming from a guy who (1) looked a lot more like he belonged there than I did, if you understand my meaning, and (2) was approximately the size of Hulk Hogan. I grabbed his spare tire iron and pulled sentry duty while he fixed up my truck. "Halt ... who goes there?"

The story ends quietly enough; I was home by 12:30, safe and sound (less \$2 for our beer-loving friend, but none-the-worse for the experience). And except for having to buy some new tires this weekend, and maybe giving some thought to replacing the missing jack and tire iron, my ordeal is over.

I learned three important lessons from this experience:

- (1) Never tempt the fates (they are mean-spirited souls without a sense of humor). And don't think you can trick them either, by saying things like, "I'll never have a million dollars," or "I'll never get to sleep with a super model," because they are not as stupid as Br'er Fox.
- (2) Never assume that because you are in a bad part of town (or in a bad point in your life) that you aren't surrounded by good people. Most people want to help each other, if we give ourselves a chance. Just look at our members; stand around at a meeting or brew-in, looking confused and lost, and someone will step up, offer you a beer, and elect you as an officer of the club.
- (3) Never put anything flammable in a VW Vanagon. This includes compressed, inflammable gases (propane, for instance), boxes of paper or clothing, containers of fuel, marshmallows, small children, pet, spare tires, or gasoline. Especially in the tank. Granted, it won't go very far without gasoline. But it won't catch on fire nearly as quickly that way.

May the holidays find you and your loved ones in good health and great fortune, and may the coming year bring you much joy and happiness. It has been (except for one poor tire) a good year for me and my family, and I look forward to a new year with a new wife and new challenges and opportunities. Through our fellowship, I think that we've all been blessed by much more good fortune than bad, and even when we've found ourselves at times in a "bad place," the good people around us have been there to help lift some of our burdens. I'd point out all of the terrible things that could have happened to us this year but haven't ... but that would be asking for trouble. I've learned my lesson.

That is all. Guy Munster. Mission Commander.



Brewer of the year competition

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|----|----|----|----|-----|--|-------|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|----|----|----|----|-----|--|--------|----|----|----|----|-----|--|--------|----|----|----|----|----|--|--------|--|--|--|----|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|--|--|--------|--|--|----|----|--|--|---------|--|----|----|----|----|--|-------|--|--|----|----|--|--|--------|--|--|----|----|--|--|------|--|--|----|----|--|--|-----------|----|--|----|----|--|--|
| <p>Beer Styles of the Month: January - <i>Stouts</i> February - <i>Amber beers</i> March - <i>Old and Strong Ales</i> April - <i>Nuts & Bolts</i> May - <i>British Isles</i> June - <i>Wheats</i> July - <i>Light Ales and Lagers</i> August - <i>The club's Rendezbrew ribbon winners</i> September - <i>Oktoberfest</i> October - <i>Alternatives: Belgians, Liqueurs, Ciders, Meads</i> November - <i>Porters</i> December - <i>Holiday, Specialties, Novelties</i></p> <hr/> <p>Points: Brews judged for the style-of-the-month: 45pts for first place 35pts for second place 30pts for third place 15pts for showing 10pts for bringing a not-to-style homebrew</p> <p>The small print: entries due by meeting time, your two best brews count, must be shared with rest of club to be eligible for points, void where prohibited by law, some assembly may be required, batteries not included.</p> | <p align="center">We have a winner!</p> <p>BOTY is on hold (once more!) until we as a club figure out a better way to judge monthly entries (could be a topic of discussion at an upcoming meeting near you...hint hint). This leaves the standings unchanged from May's meeting at:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td align="center">Jan</td> <td align="center">Feb</td> <td align="center">Mar</td> <td align="center">Apr</td> <td align="center">May</td> <td align="center">Pts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stumpy</td> <td align="right">75</td> <td align="right">45</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">60</td> <td align="right">195</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jocko</td> <td align="right">10</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">65</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">30</td> <td align="right">155</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tom N</td> <td align="right">10</td> <td align="right">45</td> <td align="right">45</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">115</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>John J</td> <td align="right">60</td> <td align="right">10</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">30</td> <td align="right">115</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bill K</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">95</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>John S</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td align="right">30</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wayne</td> <td align="right">10</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">60</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mike W</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td align="right">45</td> <td align="right">45</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>KKKathy</td> <td></td> <td align="right">10</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">40</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Don P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monika</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td align="right">35</td> <td align="right">35</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rich</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td align="right">30</td> <td align="right">30</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jefferson</td> <td align="right">10</td> <td></td> <td align="right">15</td> <td align="right">25</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>plus 15 for everyone else for entering N&B</p> | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Pts | Stumpy | 75 | 45 | 15 | 60 | 195 | | Jocko | 10 | 35 | 65 | 15 | 30 | 155 | Tom N | 10 | 45 | 45 | 15 | 115 | | John J | 60 | 10 | 15 | 30 | 115 | | Bill K | 35 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 95 | | John S | | | | 30 | 35 | 65 | Wayne | 10 | 35 | 15 | 60 | | | Mike W | | | 45 | 45 | | | KKKathy | | 10 | 15 | 15 | 40 | | Don P | | | 35 | 35 | | | Monika | | | 35 | 35 | | | Rich | | | 30 | 30 | | | Jefferson | 10 | | 15 | 25 | | |
| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Pts | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stumpy | 75 | 45 | 15 | 60 | 195 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jocko | 10 | 35 | 65 | 15 | 30 | 155 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tom N | 10 | 45 | 45 | 15 | 115 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| John J | 60 | 10 | 15 | 30 | 115 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bill K | 35 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 95 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| John S | | | | 30 | 35 | 65 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wayne | 10 | 35 | 15 | 60 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mike W | | | 45 | 45 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KKKathy | | 10 | 15 | 15 | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Don P | | | 35 | 35 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Monika | | | 35 | 35 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rich | | | 30 | 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jefferson | 10 | | 15 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

November's meeting minutes

Election results:
 Mission Commander: John "the rookie" Schmalz beat a late-surging "Unopposed" by one (yes, 1!) vote
 Pilot: Bill "braveheart" Kilty
 Comm Spec: Joachim "papa joe" Beek
 Payload Spec: Brian "numbers" Bartz
 PR: John "the mad baker" Jurgensen

The Club Activities Calendar - Decembeer

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-----|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 <i>1st Fri at BayViewDuck</i> | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 <i>Monthly meeting at the Outpost Holiday brews.</i> | 11 | 12 <i>John "the rookie" Schmalz's birthday!</i> | 13 <i>2nd Fri at Molly's L.C.</i> | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 <i>3rd Fri at Molly's L.C.</i> | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> | 25 <i>Happy Christmas!</i> | 26 | 27 <i>4th Fri at Molly's L.C.</i> | 28 | |



Found in the Homebrew Digest Forum Page (<http://hbd.org/forums/>) by John "the mad baker" Jurgensen

'Twas The Homebrewer's Night Before Christmas (Author: Unknown)

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house,
Every creature was thirsty, including the mouse...
The steins were empty, and the bottles were too
The beer had been drunk with no time to brew.

My family was nestled all snug in their beds
While visions of Christmas Ale foamed in their heads.
Mama in her kerchief lamented the drought,
She craved a pilsner and I, a stout.

When out on the lawn, there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my chair to see what was the matter.
Away to the kitchen, I flew like a flash,
Opening the door with a loud bang and crash!

I threw on the switch and the lights, all aglow,
Gave a luster of mid-day to the brew-pot below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear
But Gambrinus himself, the patron of beer.

With a look in his eye, so lively and quick,
He said, "You want beer? Well, here, take your pick."
More rapid than eagles, his recipes came
As he whistled and shouted and called them by name.

"Now, Pilsener! Now, Porter! Now, Stout and Now Maerzen!
On, Bitter! On, Lager! On, Bock and On Weizen!"
"To the top of the bottles, the short and the tall,
Now brew away, brew away, and fill them all!"

As dried hops before a wild hurricane fly,
And then, without warning, settle down with a sigh,
So towards the brew-pot, the ingredients flew,
Malt extract, roasted barley and crystal malt, too.

And then in a twinkling, I heard it quite plain,
The cracking open of each barley grain.
As I drew in my head and was turning around,
Into the kitchen, he came with a bound.

He was dressed like a knight, from his head to his toes,
With an old family crest adorning his clothes.
A bundle of hops, he had flung on his back,
And the brewing began when he opened his pack.

His hops were so fragrant! His barley, how sweet!
The adjuncts included Munich malt and some wheat.
The malted barley was mashed in the tun,
Then boiled with hops in the brew-pot 'till done.

Excitement had me gnashing my teeth,
As the sweet smell encircled my head like a wreath.
Beer yeast was pitched, both lager and ale,
The wort quickly fermented, not once did it fail.

It was then krausened, or with sugar primed,
And just being bottled when midnight had chimed.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know, I'd be shortly in bed.

He spoke not a word but kept on with his work,
And capped all the bottles, then turned with a jerk.
And laying a finger alongside his nose,
He belched (quite a burp!) before he arose.

Clean-up was easy, with only a whistle,
And away the mess flew, like the down on a thistle.

And I heard him exclaim, 'ere he left me the beer,
"Merry Christmas to all and a HOPPY New Year!"



"Bits and bobs from the web" - captured and slapped into shape by Joachim "papa joe" Beek

[<http://www.realbeer.com>] WIN A SKI TRIP TO COLORADO

Newcastle Brown, the imported dark beer that is never heavy or bitter, is offering a chance to win a ski trip for two to Vail, Colo. Enter Newcastle Brown's Avoid a Bitter Holiday Sweepstakes and the only bitterness you'll have to contend with this year will be from the friends who you leave behind. What are you waiting for? Enter now: <http://www.realbeer.com/contest/newcastle>

[<http://www.realbeer.com>] WYOMING CONSIDERS BOOSTING BEER TAX 400%

Wyoming legislators have proposed boosting the state's beer tax 400% without raising taxes on wine or distilled spirits. Members of the Labor, Health and Social Service Committee voted to send a proposal to the Legislature that increases the tax on beer from 2 cents per gallon to 8 cents per gallon. Wyoming has the lowest beer tax in the nation and has not raised the rate since the end of Prohibition. Rep. Tony Ross, R-Cheyenne, voted against the proposal because he felt the committee was singling beer out. "If we need the money, why not increase the tax on wine and distilled spirits?" he said. Dave Clements, president of Cheyenne Beverage, called the measure was unfair. "It will put more tax on the common man, Joe Six-Pack," he said.

[<http://www.realbeer.com>] LONG LIVE THE BRITISH PUB

Reports of the 'death of British pubs' are premature, writes Roger Protz. Being sensible people, the Brits still have more pubs than either petrol stations or doctors' surgeries. <http://www.protzonbeer.com/documents/27660-001792.html>

[<http://www.realbeer.com>] DROWN YOUR SORROWS IN A BEER BATH

Klosterbrauerei, a German monastic brewery, is promoting its dark brown beer as a bath supplement. The brewery, in Neuzelle, near Leipzig, eastern Germany, says the dark brown brew has restorative powers for both the mind and body, improving the skin as well as spirits. Klosterbrauerei showed off its "new" product to shoppers in Leipzig last month. "It opens up the pores, the yeast penetrates the skin and after 15 minutes your skin feels softer everywhere," company spokesman Dirk Vock said. "It is also a good remedy for people with skin problems."



"Wheat - grain vs extract, extract vs grain?" by John "the mad baker" Jurgensen

I brew. And I try to learn how to brew better brew.

My situation is that I like to brew a lot of beer, but I do not have the time to brew all of the beer I want using all-grains. (... If only I had the Mission Commanders BIG RIG!) So, the question is: Do I sacrifice quantity, quality, or do I try to find a way to sacrifice neither? Somehow the third choice seems most desirable.

I listen to my own taste buds, but I have learned that I cannot accurately evaluate my own beers. So, I ask other people whose opinion I respect to help me. This is the first of several articles in which I will share my attempts (using your help) to learn how to brew either better beer or similar quality beer faster/easier. I will show my gratitude by writing these articles.

I like wheat beers. I understand that there are still a few people who do not adequately appreciate them, but I decided to start these experiments with wheat beers. One reason was a statement from Designing Great Beers by Ray Daniels when he was discussing the beers that made it to the second round of the National Homebrewing Competition:

"The most surprising feature of the NHC weizens was the frequency with which extract was used - not just as a supplement, but for the entire fermentable content. A bit more than one-quarter of the weizen recipes were extract only formulations. Three used nothing but weizen extract - usually some mix of wheat and barley malts - and one included a small portion of regular barley extract in addition to weizen extract."

I know and believe that the best way to get exactly the results you want are to mash your own grains. Or, at least that is true for most beers - especially when using grains with special flavor/color/etc characteristics. But what about standard grains used in a standard manner. Maybe, if you are not trying to achieve "special effects" (using "specialty grains"), you do not *have* to use "special" techniques. I thought about my mashing techniques for grains for Hefeweizens, and realized that they were absolutely standard. And then it occurred to me that maybe a professional masher could mash standard grains in a standard way better than I could!

So, I talked Papa Joe Beek out of his LR9 Award Winning Hefeweizen recipe, and ... brewed the best all grain Hefe I could (using Papa Joe's recipe), followed by the best extract-only Hefe I could (using a recipe modeled after Papa Joe's all-grain recipe). Everything other than the fermentables (i.e. boiling time/hops/hops schedule/yeast/ fermenting- fridge/secondary/bottling/aging/etc/etc/and any other aspect you can think of) was identical.

They were just barely ready in time for Dixie Cup - I tasted them two weeks after bottling and entered them the next morning ... on the last day to enter the competition. Both were judged by the same three judges (2 "experienced" and 1 "BJCP Certified"). They scored the all-grain at 24 points out of 50. (Sorry, Joachim, but I am not up to your level yet ...) They scored the extract only at better than 32, and it entered the second round. I was stunned by the difference. As I said, I cannot accurately evaluate my own beers.

Then, last month, I brought both beers to the meeting and asked you to vote on which you preferred. Of those that said they could remember which was which, 7 preferred the extract Hefe while 8 preferred the all-grain Hefe.

Conclusion? I don't know. There are no absolutes in brewing. It is not that one technique is always better than another and will guarantee that one brewer using that technique will always produce better beers than all other brewers using any other technique. And these results certainly do not apply to other styles of beer.

How will I brew Hefeweizens in the future? I don't know. Probably brew some all-grain Hefe's and some extract only Hefe's ... depending on how much time I have available. The one thing I do know is that I will continue to experiment.

How do these results apply to you? I don't know. Why don't you experiment, and let us know your results? Preferably in liquid form at the monthly meetings (so we can taste the difference for ourselves) and in text form via the Orbit-Ale Repairs column.

John