

The OVHA Tap

Vol 11 No. 5

May 2007

Meeting Wednesday, 7:00 pm May 30 at Germania Mannerchor

Featured Beer: Belgian Beers

Beer evaluation schedule:

March: Porter/Stout

April: Pale Ale / IPA

May: Belgian Beers

September: Wheat/Wit

October: Oktoberfest

November: OVHA "Big Turkey" Homebrew Contest

December: Holiday Beer/Winter Warmer

, Brewer's Musings

Decoction Concoctions! What a life, doing decoction brewing. I certainly hope the two decoctions brews I've made recently are worth the work.

The first one was the DoppelBock for Big Brew day -- as anyone who attended knows, it took quite a while, and I only did a double instead of a triple decoction. More on that later....

With all the heating and boiling (and stirring) and so forth, I finally got the beer down to temperature at about 6 pm. Not too bad for a very slow sparge and no real preparation. Noonan says it takes 9 hours for a triple decoction, and he's just about exactly on, as the second one I did at home last weekend took from 9 am to 3:30 pm.

And the decoctions were only the start of the fun, too. I got a "new" fridge from work that was surplus. We laid it on it's back for the trip from the East Side home, but it had been standing up for a week or so when I plugged it in. It seemed to run OK, so I set the temp as high as it would go and loaded the carboy in. Worked great, temp dropped to 46 F in a couple hours, I though I was off to the races. Monday morning, temp is up to 68, there is foam squirting out of the airlock, and the compressor is locked up. Off to Steve's to stuff the beer in his temp controlled fridge (before work, no less). After several rounds of banging on the compressor with a hammer after it cooled off I finally got it to operate all the time, so that's good. Beer looks good, although it's going on three weeks without significant clearing, so I may have to keg it for lagering with more yeast in it than I really want. Minor problem.

So last weekend I decided to brew up a nice Oktoberfest, it's that time of year anyway. Set the crush somewhat coarser on my old Corona mill than I had in the past, so with the triple decoction (boiling the free liquid from the mash to heat to mashout), I got a very nice run-off. However, I didn't get the malt profile I wanted, since I didn't boil enough of the mash to get



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Meeting Schedule 2007

February 28th Germania 7 pm

March 28th Germania 7 pm

April 18th Germania 7 pm

May 30 Germania 7 pm

June ? Cookout at Jack's

July 28 TBA

August 25th TBA

September 26 Germania 7 pm

Upcoming Events:

16. BELGIAN AND FRENCH ALE

16A. Witbier

Aroma: Moderate sweetness (often with light notes of honey and/or vanilla) with light, grainy, spicy wheat aromatics, often with a bit of tartness. Moderate perfumy coriander, often with a complex herbal, spicy, or peppery note in the background. Moderate zesty, orangey fruitiness. A low spicy-herbal hop aroma is optional, but should never overpower the other characteristics. No diacetyl. Vegetal, celery-like, or ham-like aromas from certain types of spices are inappropriate. Spices should blend in with fruity, floral and sweet aromas and should not be overly strong.

Appearance: Very pale straw to very light gold in color. The beer will be very cloudy from starch haze and/or yeast, which gives it a milky, whitish-yellow appearance. Dense, white, moussy head. Head retention should be quite good.

Flavor: Pleasant sweetness (often with a honey and/or vanilla character) and a zesty, orange-citrusy fruitiness. Refreshingly crisp with a dry, often tart, finish. Can have a low wheat flavor. Optionally has a very light lactic-tasting sourness. Herbal-spicy flavors are common but not overpowering, and can taste moderately of coriander and other spices at a more subtle level. A spicy-earthy hop flavor is low to none, and never gets in the way of the spices. Hop bitterness is low to medium-low (as with a Hefeweizen), and doesn't interfere with refreshing flavors of fruit and spice, nor does it persist into the finish. Bitterness from orange pith should not be present. Vegetal, celery-like, ham-like, or soapy flavors from certain types of spices are inappropriate. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body, often having a smoothness and light creaminess from unmalted wheat and the occasional oats. Despite body and creaminess, finishes dry and often a bit tan. Effervescent character from high carbonation. Refreshing, from carbonation, light acidity, and lack of bitterness in finish. No harshness or astringency from orange pith. Should not be overly dry and thin, nor should it be thick and heavy.

Overall Impression: A refreshing, elegant, tasty, moderate-strength wheat-based ale.

History: A 400-year-old beer style that died out in the 1950s; it was later revived by Pierre Celis at Hoegaarden, and has grown steadily in popularity over time.

Comments: The presence, character and degree of spicing and lactic sourness varies. Overly spiced and/or sour beers are not good examples of the style. The beer tends to be fragile and does not age well, so younger, fresher, properly handled examples are most desirable.

Ingredients: About 50% unmalted wheat (traditionally soft white winter wheat) and 50% pale barley malt (usually pils malt) constitute the grist. In some versions, up to 5-10% raw oats may be used. Spices of freshly-ground coriander and Curacao or sometimes sweet orange peel complement the sweet aroma and are quite characteristic. Other spices (e.g., chamomile, cumin, cinnamon, Grains of Paradise) may be used for complexity but are much less prominent. Ale yeast prone to the production of mild, spicy flavors is very characteristic. In some instances a very limited lactic fermentation, or the actual addition of lactic acid, is done.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.044-1.052
IBUs: 10-20 FG: 1.008-1.012
SRM: 2-4 ABV: 4.5 - 5.5% (5% is most typical)

Commercial examples: Hoegaarden Wit, Vuuve 5, Blanche de Bruges, Blanche de Bruxelles, Brugs Tarwebier, Sterkens White Ale, Cells White (now made in Michigan), Blanche de Brooklyn, Great Lakes Holy Moses, Unibroue Blanche de Chambly, Blue Moon Belgian White

16B. Belgian Pale Ale

Aroma: Prominent aroma of malt with moderate fruity character and low hop aroma. Toasty, biscuity malt aroma. May have an orange- or pear-like fruitiness though not as fruity/citrusy as many other Belgian ales. Distinctive floral or spicy, low to moderate strength hop character optionally blended with background level peppery, spicy phenols. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Amber to copper in color. Clarity is very good. Creamy, rocky, white head often fades more quickly than other Belgian beers.

Flavor: Fruity and lightly to moderately spicy with a soft, smooth malt and relatively light hop character and low to very low phenols. May have an orange- or pear-like fruitiness, though not as fruity/citrusy as many other Belgian ales. Has an initial soft, malty sweetness with a toasty, biscuity, nutty malt flavor. The hop flavor is low to none. The hop bitterness is medium to low, and is optionally complemented by low amounts of peppery phenols. There is a moderately dry to

moderately sweet finish, with hops becoming more pronounced in those with a drier finish.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-light body. Alcohol level is restrained, and

any warming character should be low if present. No hot alcohol or solventy character. Medium carbonation.

Overall Impression: A fruity, moderately malty, somewhat spicy, easy-drinking, copper-colored ale.

History: Produced by breweries with roots as far back as the mid- 1700s, the most well-known examples were perfected after the Second World War with some influence from Britain, including hops and yeast strains.

Comments: Most commonly found in the Flemish provinces of Antwerp and Brabant. Considered "everyday" beers (Category I). Compared to their higher alcohol Category S cousins, they are Belgian "session beers" for ease of drinking. Nothing should be too pronounced or dominant; balance is the key.

Ingredients: Pilsner or pale ale malt contributes the bulk of the grist with (cara) Vienna and Munich malts adding color, body and complexity. Candi sugar is not commonly used as a high gravity is not desired. Noble hops, Styrian Goldings, East Kent Goldings or Fuggles are commonly used. Yeasts prone to moderate production of phenols are often used but fermentation temperatures should be kept moderate to limit this character.

Vital Statistics: 00:1.048-1.054

IBUs: 20-30 FG: 1.010-1.014

SRM: 8-14 ABV: 4.8-5.5%

Commercial Examples: De Koninck, Speciale Palm, Dobbie Palm, Cinder Ale, Op-Ale, Vieux-Temps, Brewer's An House Pale Ale, Ommegang Rare Vos (unusual in its 6.5% ABV strength)

16C. Saison

Aroma: High fruitiness with low to moderate hop aroma and moderate to no herb, spice and alcohol aroma. Fruity esters dominate the aroma and are often reminiscent of citrus fruits such as oranges or lemons. A low to medium spicy or floral hop aroma is usually present. A moderate spice aroma (from actual spice additions and/or yeast-derived phenols) complements the other aromatics. When phenolics are present they tend to be peppery rather than clove-like. A low to moderate sourness or acidity may be present, but should not overwhelm other characteristics. Spice, hop and sour aromatics typically increase with the strength of the beer. Alcohols are soft, spicy and low in intensity, and should not be hot or solventy. The malt character is light. No diacetyl. **Appearance:** Often a distinctive pale orange but may be golden or amber in color. There is no correlation between strength and color. Long-lasting, dense, rocky white "Belgian lace" on the glass as it fades. Clarity is poor to good though haze is not unexpected in this type of unfiltered farmhouse beer. Effervescent.

Flavor: Combination of fruity and spicy flavors supported by a soft malt character, a low to moderate alcohol presence and tart sourness. The fruitiness is frequently citrusy (orange- or lemon-like). The addition of one or more spices serve to add complexity. Low peppery yeast-derived phenols may be present instead of or in addition to spice additions. Hop flavor is low to moderate, and is generally spicy in character. Hop bitterness may be moderate to high, but should not overwhelm fruity esters, spices, and malt. Malt character is light but provides a sufficient background for the other flavors. A low to moderate tart sourness may be present, but should not overwhelm other flavors. Spices, hop bitterness and flavor, and sourness commonly increase with the strength of the beer while sweetness decreases. No hot alcohol or solventy character. Substantial carbonation and bitterness give a dry finish with a long, bitter, sometimes spicy aftertaste. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Light to medium body. Alcohol level can be medium to medium-high, though the warming character is low to medium. No hot alcohol or solventy character. Very high carbonation with an effervescent quality. There is enough prickly acidity on the tongue to balance the dry finish. A low to moderate tart character may be present but should be refreshing and not to the point of puckering.

Overall Impression: A medium to strong ale with a distinctive yellow- orange color, highly carbonated, well hopped, fruity and dry with quenching acidity.

History: A seasonal summer style produced in Wallonia, the French- speaking part of Belgium. Originally brewed at the end of the cool season to last through the warmer months before refrigeration was common. It had to be sturdy enough to last for months but not too strong to be quenching and refreshing in the summer. It is now brewed year-round in tiny, artisanal breweries whose buildings reflect their origins as farmhouses.

Comments: Varying strength examples exist (table beers of about 5% strength, typical export beers of about 6.5%, and stronger versions of 8%+). Sweetness decreases and spice, hop and sour character increases with strength. Herb and spice additions often reflect the indigenous varieties available at the brewery. High carbonation helps bring out the many flavors and to increase the perception of a dry finish. All of these beers share somewhat higher levels of acidity than other Belgian styles while the optional sour flavor is often a variable house character of a particular brewery.

Ingredients: Pilsner malt dominates the grist though a portion of Vienna and/or Munich malt contributes color and complexity. Adjuncts such as candi sugar and honey can also serve to add complexity and thin the body. Hop bitterness and flavor may be more noticeable than in many other Belgian styles. A saison is sometimes dry-hopped. Noble hops, Styrian or East Kent Goldings are commonly used. A wide variety of herbs and spices are generally used to add complexity and uniqueness in the stronger versions. Varying degrees of acidity and/or sourness can be created by the use of gypsum, acidu-

lated malt, a sour mash or Lactobacillus. Hard water, common to most of Wallonia, can accentuate the bitterness and dry finish.

Vital Statistics: IG: 1.048-1.080
IBUs: 25-45 FG: 1.010-1.016
SRM: 5-12 ABV 5-8.5%

Commercial Examples: Saison Dupont, Foret and Moinette Blonde; Fantome Saison(s); Saison de Pipaix and La Folie; Saison Silly; Saison Regal; Saison Voisin; Lefebvre Saison 1900; Ellezelloise Saison 2000; Brooklyn Saison; Southampton Saison; New Belgium Saison; Pizza Port-Carlsbad Saison

16D. Bierede Garde

Aroma: Prominent malty sweetness, often with a complex, light to moderate toasty character. Low to moderate esters. Little to no hop aroma (may be a bit spicy). Commercial versions will often have a musty, woody, cellar-like character that is difficult to achieve in homebrew. Paler versions will still be malty but will lack richer, deeper aromatics and may have a bit more hops. No diacetyl. Appearance: Three main variations exist (blond, amber and brown), so color can range from golden blonde to reddish-bronze to chestnut brown. Clarity is good to poor, although haze is not unexpected in this type of often unfiltered beer. Well-formed head, generally white to off-white (varies by beer color), supported by high carbonation.

Flavor: Medium to high malt flavor often with a toasty, toffee-like or caramel sweetness. Malt flavors and complexity tend to increase as beer color darkens. Low to moderate esters and alcohol flavors. Medium-low hop bitterness provides some support, but the balance is always tilted toward the malt. The finish is medium-dry and malty. Alcohol can provide some additional dryness in the finish. Low to no hop flavor, although paler versions can have slightly higher levels of spicy hop flavor (which can also come from the yeast). Smooth, well-lagered character. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-full body, often with a smooth, silky character. Moderate to high carbonation. Moderate alcohol, but should be very smooth and never hot.

Overall Impression: A fairly strong, malty, lagered artisanal farmhouse ale.

History: Name literally means “beer which has been kept or lagered.” A traditional artisanal farmhouse ale from Northern France brewed in early spring and kept in cold cellars for consumption in wanner weather. It is now brewed year-round. Related to the Belgian Saison style, the main difference is that the Biere de Garde is rounder, richer, sweeter, malt-focused, often has a “cellar” character, and lacks the spicing and tanness of a Saison.

Comments: Three main variations are included in the style: the brown (brune), the blond (blonde), and the amber (ambree). The darker versions will have more malt character, while the paler versions can have more hops (but still are malt-focused beers). A related style is Biere de Mars, which is brewed in March (Mars) for present use and will not age as well.

Ingredients: The “cellar” character in commercial examples is unlikely to be duplicated in homebrews as it comes from indigenous yeasts and molds.

Commercial versions often have a “corked”, dry, astringent character that is often incorrectly identified as “cellar-like.” Homebrews therefore are usually cleaner. Base malts vary by beer color, but usually include pale, Vienna and Munich types. Darker versions will have richer malt complexity and sweetness from crystal-type malts. Lager or ale yeast fermented at cool ale temperatures, followed by long cold conditioning. Soft water. Floral or spicy continental hops.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.060-1.080
IBUs: 20-30 FG: 1.012-1.018
SRM: 6-19 ABV: 6-8%

Commercial Examples: Jenlain (brown), St. Amand (brown), Ch’Ti Brun (brown), Ch’Ti Blond (blond), La Choulette (all 3 versions), La Choulette Biere des Sans Culottes (blonde), Saint Sylvestre 3 Monts (blonde), Biere Nouvelle (brown), Castelain (blonde), Jade (amber), Brasseurs Biere de Garde (amber)

16E. Belgian Specialty Ale

Aroma: Variable. Most exhibit varying amounts of fruity esters, spicy phenols and/or yeast-borne aromatics. Aromas from actual spice additions may be present. Hop aroma may be none to high, and may include a dry-hopped character. Malt aroma may be low to high, and may include character of non-barley grains such as wheat or rye. Some may include aromas of Belgian microbiota, most commonly Brettanomyces and/or Lactobacillus. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Variable. Color varies considerably from pale gold to very dark. Clarity may be hazy to clear. Head retention is usually good. Generally moderate to high carbonation.

Flavor: Variable. A great variety of flavors are found in these beers. Maltiness may be light to quite rich. Hop flavor and bitterness may be low to high. Spicy

flavors may be imparted by yeast (phenolics) and/or actual spice additions. May include characteristics of grains other than barley, such as wheat or rye. May include flavors produced by Belgian microbiota such as Brettanomyces or Lactobacillus. May include flavors from adjuncts such as candi sugar or honey.

Mouthfeel: Variable. Some are well-attenuated, thus fairly light bodied for their original gravity, while others are thick and rich. Most are moderately to highly carbonated. A warming sensation from alcohol may be present in stronger examples. A “mouth puckering” sensation may be present from acidity.

Overall Impression: Variable. This category encompasses a wide range of Belgian ales produced by truly artisanal brewers more concerned with creating unique products than in increasing sales.

History: Unique beers of small, independent Belgian breweries that have come to enjoy local popularity but may be far less well-known outside of their own regions. Many have attained “cult status” in the U.S. (and other parts of the world) and now owe a significant portion of their sales to export.

Comments: This is a catch-all category for any Belgian-style beer not fitting any other Belgian style category. The category can be used for clones of specific beers (e.g., Orval, La Chouffe); to produce a beer fitting a broader style that doesn’t have its own category (e.g., Belgian-style barleywines, Trappist Enkels and Quadrupels, Belgian spiced Christmas-type beers, etc.); or to create an artisanal or experimental beer of the brewer’s own choosing (e.g., strong Belgian golden ale with spices, something unique). Creativity is the only limit in brewing but the entrants must identify what is special. The judges must understand the brewer’s intent in order to properly judge an entry in this category. THE BREWER MUST SPECIFY EITHER THE BEER BEING CLONED, THE NEW STYLE BEING PRODUCED OR THE SPECIAL INGREDIENTS OR PROCESSES USED. Additional background information on the style and/or beer may be provided to judges to assist in the judging, including style parameters or detailed descriptions of the beer. Beers fitting other Belgian categories should not be entered in this category.

Ingredients: May include herbs and/or spices. May include unusual grains and malts, though the grain character should be apparent if it is a key ingredient. May include adjuncts such as candi sugar and honey. May include Belgian microbiota such as Brettanomyces or Lactobacillus. Unusual techniques, such as blending, may be used through primarily to arrive at a particular result. The process alone does not make a beer unique to a blind judging panel if the final product does not taste different.

Vital Statistics: OG: varies
IBUs: varies FG: varies
SRM: varies ABV: varies

Commercial Examples: Orval; De Dolle’s Arabier, Oerbier, Boskeun and Still Nacht; Chouffe; Ellezelloise Hercule Stout and Quintine Amber; Unibroue Ephemere, Maudite, Don de Dieu, etc., Minty; Zatte Bie; Caracole Amber, Saxo and Nostradamus; Silenrieu Sara and Joseph; Fantome Black Ghost and Speciale Noel; St. Fullien Noel; Gouden Carolus Noel; Affligem Noel; Guldenburg and Pere Noel; De Ranke XX Bitter; QUAD; Biere de Miel; Verboden Vrucht; New Belgium 1554 Black Ale; Cantillon Iris; and many more.

Malt of the Month: Wheat Malt

Wheat Malt is, of course, malted wheat rather than malted barley. Since modern wheat is a naked grain, without a husk, it is both more difficult to malt as the acrospire is exposed during malting, and contributes no husk filter material to the mash for support during sparging. Mashings containing large amounts of wheat malt benefit from the addition of a pound or so of rice hulls, but will still usually run slowly and are prone to setting. Wheat malt also contains much more protein than barley malt, and it is less subject to protease degradation during the mash. Wheat malt will contribute to a firm, long lasting head, but if used in more than small amounts, will inevitably produce a beer with considerable chill haze. Attempts to reduce this haze with finings will remove both the head and the rich character from the beer.

Wheat malt is normally light in color, available only as a low temperature roast malt. It is possible that darker roasts are available occasionally, but it is never found as crystal malt -- the lack of husk prevents production.

Wheat malt can be fairly low in diastatic power, and should never be used for more than 2/3 of the grain bill, the remainder being lager or high diastase pale malt. A protein rest is required to produce a wort of normal viscosity.

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156 F for the conversion rest, it ended up at 145 for a while as I boiled more. My tester jar ended up at a final gravity of 9, a bit drier than I wanted for an initial gravity of 60 (from 12 lbs of grain in six gallons -- you do get much better yield with a decoction mash).

Another "minor" problem is that Superior Lager yeast isn't a lager yeast, it's an ale yeast that ferments very cleanly. It appears to be completely inactive below 60F, and I have a 6.5 gal carboy sitting at 45 F -- I will have to re-culture the yeast from the Doppelbock to get it to ferment! What a pain, as I've pitched it twice, once with a starter of Superior, but on re-reading the package, I discovered that it is not recommended for fermentation below 15C (60 F). Oh well, brewing is always an adventure some way or the other. Once it gets to the secondary stage, I'll stash it in the fridge in the basement. I think the Doppelbock will go into a keg and get lagered at Turoni's if Jack will let me store it there, it will be handy for taking to the Brewer's Festival and Brew-ha-ha from there.

Now that there is a nice lager fermentation box working, I think I'll start making some. I suspect SAFlager yeast is gonna work better than Superior, though -- at the moment, I can't run the temp any higher than 45 degrees.

Hop of the Month: Spalters

Spalters are only produced in the Spalt region, southwest of Nurnberg. Alphas average from 3.5 to 5.0%. This is another traditional variety with a fine "noble" aroma. Yields are low, therefore production is very small, only 3% of the total in Germany. However, the new variety from Hull, Spalter Select, shows considerable promise. It has an alpha of 3.8%, beta acids are 3.9%, a very fine aroma, and good storageability. The Elba/Salle region, formerly of East Germany, produced about 6.6 to 7.7 million pounds each year, depending on weather and how well you believe the former government's figures. Recent annual production was only 4.8 million pounds. The region produces primarily bitter or higher alpha varieties such as Northern Brewer and Brewers Gold.

The Beer Buzz

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