The Main Street Brewer

229 East Main Street
Hillsboro OR 97123
(503) 648-4254
www.mainbrew.com

News from the Storefront

Spring is springing. And in the Spring, a young brewer's fancies turn to thoughts of... hops.

HOP RHIZOMES: We have been selling our hop rhizomes for several weeks now, and, believe it or not, they are almost sold out. If you are still interested in growing hops in your yard this year, please contact Main Street right away. We live in the perfect place to grow hops - the Pacific Northwest - and hops look pretty damn beautiful draped over a gazebo or cascading over a toolshed late in the Summer. So what are you waiting for? If you've already missed out this year, be sure to sign up for the Main Street on-line newsletter where you can keep abreast of all the latest Main Street info and updates.

BLICHMANN BREWING SCULPTURE: Blichmann Engineering has recently announced their all-new modular brewing sculpture. Made from rust-free stainless steel and high-strength aluminum, the shelves and burner configurations are infinitely adjustable to accommodate any pots and mashtuns that you might already have. Or you can use Blichmann's state-of-the-art boiling pots and propane burners and bolt them right onto the rotatable shelves.

The sculpture will be available "later this Spring" and pricing has not yet been announced, but Main Street will get one in as soon as they hit the street. Be sure to check it out in the store sometime in the next few months...

New Wine Yeasts

We have just discovered a new line-up of premium wine yeasts that will expand our choices quite a bit this year. Vintner's Harvest Wine Yeasts are some of the most interesting, style-specific wine yeasts that we have seen, maybe ever.

Vintners Harvest entered into an exclusive yeast strain screening program with the European commercial winemaking industry. Three thousand separate fermentations were performed over two years resulting in the isolation of nine distinctive wine yeasts, all of which are used in commercial European wine production.

Vintners Harvest then proceeded to figure out which styles of grape, fruit and vegetable wines would be most appropriate for each of these nine yeasts. The information on each of the strains, as well as recommendations for using them with different types of fruits and grapes can all be found on the Main Street web site.

These yeasts promise to provide very interesting flavors and nuances to all of your upcoming wines, both grape and "country" styles.

PACIFIC COAST STEAM BEER

Although most people associate steam beers with its sole surviving example, Anchor Steam, the history of steam beer is much more complex and diverse.

The earliest known record of the term "steam beer" goes back to about the time of the Gold Rush: the 1860's to 1870's. It was a style born of necessity. German and European immigrants, traveling to the Old West, carried with them strains of lager yeast that they had brought from the Old Country. However, lager strains are best suited to ferment at colder temperatures (below 55 degrees F).

When the emigrants arrived at the dusty, primitive West Coast and set up their make-shift breweries, there was no electricity, no refrigeration and no cold areas in which to ferment. So these lager yeasts were thrown into warm temperature fermentations, producing a complex, fruity hybrid style of beer.


Kevin in 5 or 6 years

Although Anchor Steam (out of San Francisco) is the sole surviving example, steam beers once came in every color and style. They were golden and malty, black and hoppy and everything in-between. The commonality was that they all used refined lager yeasts fermenting at unusually warm ambient temperatures.

The name itself, "steam" beer, is somewhat of a mystery. Some believe it came from the huge whooshing release of pressure that occurred when the fermenting vats were opened. Others believe that, sometimes, the hot wort was pumped up to the top of the breweries to chill in the cool Pacific coastal air, thus shrouding the breweries in a cloud of mist or steam. And there is a third belief that the name came from an old German beer called "Dampfbier" (literally "steam beer") which was a traditional German ale fermented at very warm temperatures (although using a German ale yeast - not lager yeast - strain). Many Germanic emigrants might have been familiar with this style and may have applied the European name to this new beer they were hybridizing in the American West.

In any case, believe it or not, Steam Beers are the only true all-American beer style, born and bred completely in the US of A. Everything else we brew is a style copied from another country - mostly Germany or Great Britain.

Steam beers are easy to make, easy to drink and can really be done any way you want - just like in the Old West. Cook up a beer, pitch a lager yeast (any lager yeast), ferment it around 65 to 75 degrees F (or warmer), and you have a beer similar to what they might have had in some grubby old gold-mining saloon in the 1870's - although without the cheap dance hall girls (boo!) or Yul Brynner tracking you down (yay!).... Enjoy this classic West Coast Ale on the Fourth of July for a True American experience.

COPPER CREEK ETERNAL SALVATION WEST COAST ALE:

AN OREGON STEAM BEER

8 lbs. Light Malt Extract

8 oz. Victory Malt

8 oz. Special Roast Malt

4 oz. 120L Crystal Malt

2 oz. Roast Barley

1 oz. Northern Brewer..... 60 minutes

1 oz. Northern Brewer..... 20 minutes

1 oz. Willamette..... 10 minutes

1 oz. Willamette..... 2 minutes

San Francisco Lager Yeast, or any Lager Yeast of choice.

1 cup of corn sugar for carbonation

Follow normal brewing procedures.

Hop the beer according to the above schedule. Drop the temperature of your five gallons to 80 degrees or less, then pitch your lager strain of yeast. Keep the beer between 65 and 78 degrees until activity is complete, then rack the beer into a secondary (or keg) for aging.

Bottle with your standard amount of corn sugar. Let sit for two to three weeks, then start to sample. Feel free to mix and match whatever hops you want in this recipe, it is very free-form.

Although this recipe, as written, is slightly "Anchor Steam"-ish, we have another recipe that will come much closer if Anchor Steam is what you want. Ask at the store. Enjoy!

DOUG'S QUEST AND THE NEED FOR MEAD.

Doug, who many of you know from the store, has (for the past few years) been working hard on all things mead. His love and respect for this ancient beverage is obvious, and he has been pushing his knowledge far beyond my own sporadic midnight experiments. One day, not so long ago, Doug came into the store - breathing hard - with a bottle of crystal clear golden mead in his hand. He slammed it onto the countertop.

Doug: The circle is now complete, old man. When I left you I was but the learner. Now I am the Master.

Kevin: That's cool, man. Let's crack it open...

His homemade mead was recently sampled by the owner of a world-class professional meadery (Havill Meadery) in New Zealand who proclaimed it, "The best mead that I've ever tasted..." He found it hard to believe it was home-made and not from an upstart commercial meadery somewhere in the US.

Doug, in all of his generosity, has even been sharing his knowledge and findings in a great, information-rich website that he recently uploaded onto the World Wide Web.

TraditionalMead.com. Within the website he details many of the things that he has discovered about mead fermentations, the primary one being proper nutrients must be added to the mead at the right times. Honey is extremely nutrient-poor and even contains some anti-bacterial properties (to protect the hive from spoiling). But these anti-microbial properties can inhibit yeast and cause them to struggle through the long alcoholic fermentation.

Although some of his newfangled opinions have rattled a few old-school meadmakers, (Doug is sort of an outlaw in the "horned helmet" circle of mead-making...) the proof is in the drinking, and Doug has clearly proven his ability to make a spectacular mead. Concentrating only on what he considers the true essence of honey wine, he has forsaken spiced and fruit meads for the simplest - and most difficult - mead to perfect: traditional, non-flavored, pure mead. Using only varietal honey, water, yeast and nutrients, Doug has been able to craft some truly outstanding drinks.

If you have ever been interested in mead, Main Street has the answers for you. Be sure to ask Doug about mead next time you see him at the store.

FUN FACTS ABOUT HONEY AND BEES

A honeybee visits between 50 and 100 flowers in one collection flight from the hive.

A hive of bees must fly 55,000 miles to produce one pound of honey.

In order to produce one pound of honey, over two million flowers must be visited.

One bee colony can produce between 60 and 100 pounds of honey in one year.

An average worker bee makes only 1/12 teaspoon of honey in her lifetime.

A honeybee is not born knowing how to make honey, she must be taught from older, more experienced workers....

The Page Known as "Four"

Presents

So You Think *You* Can Drink

Although we all like to look back on our wilder younger days and remember the late-night parties that we can barely remember, most of our party stories are put to shame by this one - true to the last word (probably) - and long-lost to the mists of History.

Fondly remembered as the "the Great London Brew-nami of 1814," it goes something like this:

The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain not only saw an increase in manufacturing and machinery and cotton gins (thank you Eli Whitney!) and what-not, but there was an exponential increase in beer production. Not only was more and more beer being produced, but - guess what - more and more beer was being consumed by the hard-working laborers of London. Brewery owners became known as "beer barons" and quickly became the *nouveau riche* of their day, desperately trying to spend their wealth in the age-old manner of all sudden millionaires: heavy partying.

One brewery, Meux's Horseshoe Brewery, in 1814, used its surplus wealth to construct a brewing vat that was 22 feet tall and 60 feet in diameter; its interior could seat 200 people for dinner. (Why 200? A few years earlier, a local competitor had built one that could seat 100 people...)

So, after the inaugural dinner *inside the fermenter* for all 200 invited guests, the vat is emptied out and filled to its 4000 barrel capacity. (Four thousand barrels is about 124,000 gallons.) Unfortunately, it seems like the technology of the early 1800's was not yet ready for such a massive fermenter because there was a faulty supporting hoop and it gave way. This caused a chain reaction with other vats within the brewery causing a beer eruption heard over five miles away.

A wall of dark ale - porter, to be exact - estimated to be over two hundred thousand (200,000!) gallons in volume smashed through the brewery walls, caving in two adjacent tenements and - according to local reports - killing eight people "by drowning, injury, poisoning by the porter fumes or drunkenness..."

But that's not the end. Rescue attempts were quickly hampered by the thousands of civilians who rushed into the area attempting to drink the porter right off the road. And when the injured (and inebriated) were finally brought to the local hospital, the other patients became convinced that the hospital was serving beer in every ward except theirs and a riot erupted within the hospital, leaving even more people injured.

All of which reminds me of my twenty-first birthday except I could swear we were drinking IPA off the road. Or maybe it was that we rode to Pittsburgh, PA looking for porter... I don't know. I'm pretty certain there was a riot in there, somewhere, though.

But, man, the Industrial Revolution: when a brewery thought it needed to build a 124,000 gallon fermenting vat to keep up with demand and a submarine captain could play cool pipe organ while doing battle with giant squids. I was born in the wrong time, man. Next newsletter: Summer. Stay cool, be safe and happy fermenting!!