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THE MAINSTREET BREWER

Volume XVII, Issue 1

Spring of 2006

News from the Storefront, Revisited:

The gap between the Winter and Spring newsletter always seems to be the longest. But that only means that we usually have a lot to talk about once the Spring newsletter starts to get written. This month is no exception, so let's jump right in.

Carboy Dryers:

Who would think that a little piece of plastic could make a Man so happy? But how do I love my new carboy dryer? O' let me count the ways...

This simple device is a one-trick pony, but what a trick it has. It quickly and easily solves the age-old dilemma of how to completely drain a carboy after rinsing or sterilizing. I know, I know, we all have our cool carboy drying tricks that we like to show off: propping it upside down in the corner of the shower, sitting it precariously in the garbage disposal, holding it out the window of the car while speeding on Highway 26.

But the simplicity of this little invention is where its true beauty lies. It is not electric-powered, there are no microchips within its curvy, (*and quite fetching!*) post-modern design, its soothing cerulean color will never fade. It will just hold your upside-down carboy oh-so-tightly and allow it to drain completely free of water. Every time. Without fail. How much is this peace of mind worth? Well, I'll tell you: quite a bit, really. But all of this design perfection can be yours for a mere \$10.95. Makes a great Memorial Day gift, too!

The Return of the Stockpots:

After a long and dreary absence, we FINALLY have our full line-up of stockpots back in the store. Eight, ten, fifteen and twenty gallon, heavy-duty stainless steel pots are available once more to you, The Teeming Masses, whenever you want. Praise be! So for all of you that came by the store while we waited patiently for Customs



to clear them of any terrorist-related connections, your wait was not in vain. They have been allowed safe passage through our tightly-secured borders, and are available, once more, to you, The People, right now. Best news of all: although stainless steel has gone up in price over the past year or so, the prices on these pots have remained strangely unchanged.

Celiacs Rejoice:

For years we have had people coming in asking about the logistics of brewing gluten-free beer. And our stock answer was always: "My child, it is a long and arduous process... Unless you are willing to devote your soul to the brewing arts, it is not a task to be undertaken lightly." Which, upon hearing, confused most people, as they really didn't know what the hell we were talking about.

But no more! We can finally get rid of that annoying stock answer and truly embrace our celiac brethren because we are now stocking (*drumroll, please!*) gluten-free white sorghum extract for the wheat and barley-intolerant! See The Page Known as Four for more details on this very exciting, groundbreaking development here at Main Street.



The Great Grape Buy, Round Two:

Although the cool Harvest days of Fall are still many months away, believe it or not, it is already Time to begin thinking about purchasing wine grapes. For those that were involved in last year's bulk purchase, you know that these grapes are high-quality and they can - and do - sell out quickly. Please see Page Three for early preliminary information, and please call or e-mail if you have any questions about this year's purchase. We will need final sign-ups and deposits by early to mid-Summer.

That's all the space I have for now. As always, thanks for choosing Main Street. Now on with the newsletter...

SPRUCING UP YOUR HOMEBREW

As far as my calculations go, this is my sixty-fourth or sixty-fifth newsletter since first opening the doors of Main Street. "Well, to tell you the truth, in all this excitement, I've kind of lost track myself..."

So you'd think that by now - by this sixty-something-ish newsletter - I would have to start repeating myself. Sure, you might say, it's cool, Kev, whatever: it's bound to happen. After all, there is only a finite amount of wordage that one can write on the topic of homebrewing. Well, fear not, me droogs, because beer, here at Main Street, transcends all finiteness. (Hey, I just coined a new word!) Even now, in my head, I have detailed outlines for every newsletter up to the one-hundred-and-third, and vague overviews that continue well beyond my eventual Death. It's a cornucopia of never-ending homebrew information!!

So, having said that, let's get onto something completely different:

Spruce beer is - exactly as the name implies - beer flavored with spruce needles. It has a long and interesting history, going back to (at least) the Norse Vikings. By the 1700's, it had been introduced into colonial America and was brewed by many famous patriots, including Benjamin Franklin.

Lewis and Clark brewed casks of spruce beer on their trek across America and Captain Cook, while passing through Alaska's Inside Passage, provided it to his sailors as a means to prevent scurvy.

Spruce needles are full of Vitamin C, and have recently been discovered to contain flavonoids (medicinal compounds believed to be anti-carcinogenic). They also contain sugar, which can add to the alcohol content of the beer. But the real reason to brew with them is because spruce can be both delicious and refreshing in beer. Here in the Pacific Northwest we are lucky enough to live in ever-green Paradise. Pines, firs and,



yes, spruce trees grow everywhere making it extremely easy to try your hand at this unique style of beer.

But, really, the big question is: how does it taste? From reading the historical texts, I'm pretty certain that the 17th Century versions were pretty nasty. Using pounds of spruce boughs and gallons of molasses, it probably did not have the refined microbrew quality that we, as proud Northwesterners, have come to expect.

But when used properly, in small flavoring doses, spruce can add a citrusy, piny, very pleasing, resinous-floral quality to almost any beer. I have tasted awesome spruce porters, spruce barleywines, and spruce winter ales, as well as this upcoming Amber Spruce.

But first, a few words of caution from the Main Street Legal Department:

- (1) Never, EVER use the little jars of liquid spruce flavoring you might find in homebrew stores. Your beer will taste as close to Nyquil as you can probably get without violating Vick's trademark laws. Don't do it. You have been warned.
- (2) If you are unsure of what a spruce tree looks like, please ask a local plant nursery, an arborist, a woodsman, a ranger or a qualified tree identification specialist (Q.T.I.S.). Do not confuse spruce with poison oak or any of the other toxic, venomous, noxious, deadly, lethal and/or hazardous woodland vegetation that exists throughout our fair countryside. If in doubt, don't use it, slowly back away, and go brew a nice IPA.
- (3) Do not use spruce needles that have been sprayed with any of the assorted poisons that we, in our infinite wisdom, enshroud our vegetation with in order to ward off Nature. Malathion will NOT add extra flavor. (At least, not GOOD extra flavor...) Again, if in doubt, don't use it.
- (4) Do not covet thy neighbor's boughs, nor tread upon ...

OK, you get the idea, people: use common sense.

When picking your spruce needles, try to find the new spring growth. You can tell this by its lighter color, and the smaller, less-prickly, softer needles. This new growth will be on the tips of the branches. Here in the Northwest, you will find the new spring growth usually in April and May. Go to mainbrew.com for a picture of new growth on a spruce tree.



So what follows is a lightly-spruced malty amber ale. If you can, let it age until the Fall and it will dramatically improve: you will be rewarded with a well-balanced, refreshing truly Northwest ale. This, kids, is what they call old-school!

KODIAK AMBER

- 8 lbs. Amber Malt Extract
 - 8 ounces English Crystal malt
 - 8 ounces Melanoidin Malt
 - 1.0 ounce Amarillo hops.....60 minutes
 - 1/2 pint new-growth spruce needles.....30 minutes
 - 0.5 ounce Amarillo hops.....20 minutes
 - 1/2 pint new-growth spruce needles.....10 minutes
 - 0.5 ounce Amarillo hops.....2 minutes
- White Labs East Coast Ale yeast, Windsor dried yeast, or yeast of choice.
- Bottle with 3/4 to one cup of corn sugar, as normal

News, THRee DiFFeRent ONes...

Bit O' Honey:



Throughout the past year Doug and I have been hearing from several local beekeepers about a mysterious issue affecting bee hives both in the U.S. and around the world called Colony Collapse Disorder. Basically - from what I understand - all the bees in the hive just vanish, leaving the larvae behind to die. Nobody knows what is happening to the workers; they just never come back. Some beekeepers are losing over 50% of their hives within a year or two, and are severely overworking their remaining bees, by forcing them to pollinate all of the crops required of them.

This presents all sorts of worries to those in the know. Since we depend on these travelling pollination services to fertilize our fruits and vegetables, there are some fears about food shortages and crop collapse. But the reason I am bringing this up today, is that, in the short term, I am worried about a dramatic spike in the cost of honey. As with any commodity, the price of honey naturally fluctuates, and shortages - or even worries about shortages - can cause huge price swings. Main Street was recently able to stock up on honey still at the old price, and, to be honest, I cannot even say for sure that honey prices WILL increase, but from what I am hearing, there are serious problems afoot in the apiary world and honey may become much more scarce very soon. So all you meadmakers, remember: honey is non-perishable and will NEVER spoil on you. Forget the 401K: honey just might be the best investment you can make right now....



The Great Grape Buy, Round 2:

In the "it's never too early to think about the future" department, we are already taking preliminary names and requests for wine grapes this Fall.

Last year we brought in from Richland, Washington a bevy of beautiful, succulent clusters - and there was much rejoicing. This year we plan on repeating the same four varieties: Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, and maybe adding a new variety or two if we can find enough quantity at our usual premium quality.

At this point now, we are just taking preliminary names and approximations. You will then be added into the "Main Street Master List Grape Purchasing Database" (it's really just a yellow note pad). Once I confirm everything with the grower later this Spring, you will begin to receive e-mails from me and we will begin to take exact requests and deposits. We will need full payment by mid-Summer. More information will be on the website in the next few months. Meanwhile, feel free to call if you have any questions.



Island Mist Blueberry Pinot Noir

Brand new from Winexpert is another delicious thirst-quenching cooler, perfect for the hot Summer afternoons and nights to come.

Blueberry Pinot Noir.

The tangy, sweet burst of blueberry combines with the light-medium body and cherry-spice flavours of the Pinot Noir to bring a delicious blueberry fruit flavour to your palate. This wine maintains the smooth, easy to drink taste that Island Mist is well-known for producing.

All of the Island Mist coolers are huge crowd pleasers for those "mixed company" type of parties, and this blend, to me, sounds better than most... It is available now, at Main Street.

*"And any fool knows that a dog needs a home
A shelter from pigs on the wing..."*

- Pink Floyd

The Page Known as Four

Presents

CELIACS DELIGHT

Two or three years ago, very few people had heard of the term “celiac,” or of their unfortunate plight: gluten intolerance. Then, like a Biblical plague, it seemed that everybody knew somebody who couldn’t eat (or drink) wheat or barley-based products, and more people were being diagnosed every day. It was an epidemic. Entire grocery stores sprang up specializing in gluten-free products. But there was a missing item in these groceries’ shopping carts: gluten-free beer.

“So,” many of these despairing souls assumed, “if I can’t buy it, I’ll just brew my own gluten-free beer...” But to further dash their alcoholic hopes, for years, we had to be the bearer of bad news. With heavy hearts we sadly informed people that the only way to make gluten-free homebrew was to go find and buy raw buckwheat and malt it (over the course of several days) in warm water. Then quickly dehydrate and crack the grains, and then mash them until they were fully converted to sugar. Finally sparge off the sugar and boil with hops. Then ferment. Then rack off and bottle.

This, understandably enough, frightened off most of the gluten-intolerant. Many, sadly, turned to the evils of Tequila.

But, if there is one thing that I, Kevin, believe, it is that everybody should drink beer. And lots of it. *(Editor’s note: Everybody over the age of twenty-one who will not be driving a vehicle or operating heavy machinery and who doesn’t have any symptoms of alcoholism, or any pre-existing medical conditions that might be exasperated by the intake of alcohol. Pregnant*

women and women who may become pregnant should not drink alcohol. Please consult a medical professional before beginning any beer-drinking regimen.)

So, with the help and guidance of Mike H., I have sought out and returned with an answer to these lost, beerless souls: Sorghum Syrup. Sorghum is a gluten-free grain that can - and does - make quite a good beer. It is originally from Africa and is actually used by the Guinness Brewery in Nigeria to make a sorghum version of Guinness stout for the local populace. Sorghum provides all the proteins and amino acids necessary for yeast nutrition and head retention along with color and flavor.

Our ready-to-use sorghum syrup makes a lighter, crisper beer than barley or wheat extract will, but the flavor - although not quite the same as “normal” beer - is very palatable and refreshing. For those doomed never to drink beer again, this is very exciting news.

We also have tapioca extract, which is lighter and less flavorful -- more of a lightening agent, and we are working on a brown rice extract. Main Street has all the recipes for these gluten-free beers and can help you, my dear ce-

liac brothers and sisters, get back to what is important: drinking beer.

That’s all folks, next newsletter in late June. Have a great Spring. Thanks, as always, for visiting Main Street....



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