

THE WRITTEN WORT

The newsletter of the New York City Homebrewers Guild
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A BIG TALK ABOUT OUR LITTLE FRIENDS

By Deidre Hinds



At the January 15th meeting the Guild had the pleasure of listening to an interesting and informative presentation on brewing yeast from Neil Acer, brewer at the Ramapo Valley Brewery, out of Suffern, NY as well as the Colorado Brewing and Trading Company in Danbury CT. His discussion on yeast management gave a great overview of how yeast treatment can make or break a homebrew.

What made the entire presentation and subsequent question and answer session so interesting is that he mentioned the often-overlooked fact that healthy yeast actually improves the sanitation of your brew! The most common discussions of yeast are about what strain to use with what type of beer is being made, how often a strain can be used and how to know when your strain has gone bad. All those topics were examined during this talk but

preceding those oft-mentioned yeast issues was a very worthwhile discussion on keeping yeast healthy. The facts he mentioned and that every brewer should know are yeast reproduction actually damages the yeast wall, which can reduce subsequent yeast reproduction and increase yeast demise. Furthermore, the healthier your yeast is the harder it is for non-invited organisms to crash your brewing party. Neil mentioned types of yeast nutrients and how they improved the cell wall structure, thereby improving the overall health of your yeast strain and improving the viability of successfully reusing a strain. All of this was very worthwhile information for the beginner, intermediate and expert brewer looking for the edge to improve their brewing success rate. Neil ended the discussion by taking numerous questions on what type of yeast went best with designing a specific taste palate in a specific beer style, naming some of the yeast strains he was partial to and finally breaking out a keg of Ramapo's IPA to share with the guild members.

DUES ARE DUE

Just a reminder that guild dues will be collected in February. It's fifteen dollars for new members and ten for membership renewal. New members receive an etched guild pint glass.

A-PUBCRAWLIN' WE WILL GO!

By Paul Kervran

One thing about homebrewers is that they love good beer. What better way to satisfy that need than a club pubcrawl. The key to a good pubcrawl is the selection of establishments that will be visited. That task was left to Marc LaPointe who painstakingly visited each of the destinations and went through the difficult task of sampling their wares. We know it was hard work for Marc, but we appreciated it.

As the first in a series of planned pubcrawls, the targeted area for this tour was midtown / westside. The point of gathering was the **Heartland Brewery** (midtown). As we waited for the pubcrawl group to gather, I settled upon an Oatmeal Stout which was quite tasty. As luck would have it when one wears a white shirt and drinks a dark beer, yes indeed stout polka dots. As the crowd settled in, several of us tasted a very non-traditional barley wine that was both light in color and body. As everyone finished up their round, we decided it was time to move on.



Our beer bloodhound, Marc told us our next destination was **Bar 54**. As we neared our destination, one thing became quite apparent, it sure looked dark in there. As it turned out, Bar 54 was closed which was disappointing considering

the number of good beers on tap that we spied as we looked through the front window. Not to be deterred we proceeded on to the next stop, **Scruffy McDuffy's**. The beer selection was more limited but we got a good chuckle when we saw the infamous Checkered Cab tap handle. Beer glasses anyone?

NEW MEMBERS!

The NYCHG would like to welcome its newest members: Adam Bouone, John Herman and Michael Kane. Bring some homebrew next time!

After a round at Scruffy McDuffy's we were off to our next stop which was only two doors down, **The Collins**. While not a lot of taps, there were some good selections on hand. To go along with these good beers were some rather unusual pint glasses including Star Trek and The Outer Limits. After expressing interest in the glasses, the bar patron obliged us with some for future Guild raffles. Be on the look out for these unique items.

We were off again, this time to **St. Andrews**, a distinctly Scottish establishment including kilt wearing bartenders. What does one drink at such a place? Belhaven Scottish Ale of course! Appetites were beginning to build to the point that some of the more adventurous of the group decided to order some Haggis. For those unfamiliar with this concoction, you're better off not knowing what's in it.

As the crew was getting hungry (and thirsty) we were on to our next and final destination, **Hallo Berlin**. If you didn't guess, it's a German restaurant / bar with a great lineup of German beers and all the classic German fare such as Wursts, Viener Schnitzel, etc. This was a great finale to the day as the beer and food were equally good.

Who knows which corner of the city we will be crawling to next? Dare you join us?

RAFFLE!

Donations for the monthly guild raffle are needed! Anyone wishing to donate any beer-related paraphernalia (glassware, clothing, beer, etc) will receive free tickets for the raffle.

SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE

By Jeff Eiche

My God, catastrophe of Olympian proportion! Oh, the unbearable heaviness of being. Hear me, vain, inscrutable gods! Ye who retire on furs of Minotaur and drink from unicorn horns the herbaceous, sweet-tart nectar denied mere mortals. 'Zounds! Grapes and young girls! Damn your revelry while we slugs of clay eke out our drops of libation to only have them fall like tears to the thirsty earth while we sweep up yet another shattered dream like broken glass. —Rick Millican

The old man was past his best; he knew it. For as long as he could remember, his spirits had been hushed. When the time to brew came, he knew it and pulled the lines and floats and valves and adjuncts from their secure place in the tins of the cupboard. There was a sorrow to it—the time, the planning, the endless washing and cleaning. He knew all this and the toil it demanded. But it was what he did. And it had been too long.

Why didn't the boy come? The boy would bring beer and the papers with old news of the great Papazian who would free rappel to declare a symposium. But the boy never came anymore, for the old man in his red beard embarrassed him. He couldn't remember people's names or anything but his stories of the times he bedimmed the noontide sun or made graves ope and let their sleepers forth by his most potent art and other baloney. In the bar and on the radio they had there, he heard of the great Papazian and the mythical CAMRA and the crafters. There was talk of real ale and Flowers and Burton-on-Trent and Coronation this and that and the legendary Guinness, which only lived as live ale in faraway Ireland. Or did it, anymore? He remembered San Diego, where there was nothing but a library that connected to Los Angeles, a photo shop, one solitary, sincere, hardware, and a tobacconist. When he was

sixteen or fifteen, he read of brewing and was the first man to use a water cooler bottle as a fermenter. No one cared, anymore.

First, the inventory. Plenty of hoses, no more caps, some roasted barley and chocolate malt left. Cases of old, clean bottles; thermometer; hydrometer; kettles, and food-grade plastic tubs. Baster, strainer, grain-steeping bag. Locks and stoppers. The ladle. Cleaned and sanitized and dried and reverently cased in their original boxes were the *kharballahs*. Safe in their lightproof paper and boastfully covered with all the labels they made before computers and color printers. He totted it all up and started to clean. The house, the kitchen, the toilet and tub. The counters and sink. No grease, no oil; no soap. Stainless steel, no aluminum. The kettle and saucepan that dipped, filled, and rinsed. Scrubbed.



It was after midnight when the outfits were prepared. The boy was probably asleep after a week of office work. The woman certainly was, after Oprah and the food channel. But she, like the old man, was not a player, anymore, and never had any libido to begin with. He draped the towels to dry. Soon he woke but knew better than to rise. There would be toasters and Mr. Coffee and skillet and oatmeal, filling the air with fats and oils and bread-lube. Best to wait it out and clean it all up to start the day. At least there wouldn't be the thoughtless—or was it willful—pitching of cat food spoons into the degreased sink. Once the Smart Balance and the Silk soymilk and all the glasses with their handprints of lotion were washed, the old man could work. All the scrubbing and scouring had already tired him and his hands were beginning to cramp. But the grinding had to be done. Adjustments, tests, and careful counting. "I wish I had a scale," the old man thought to himself. But scales are for wienies. His figures were consistent according to the rule of one cup to a quarter pound. So much to wash! How

long the bleach took to drain, while he cradled the carboy like a boy showing off and hefting a wild girl. Again and again he marveled that his feet didn't hurt and his legs didn't ache. "Just like riding a bicycle," he thought. But riding a bicycle doesn't take so much juggling in the head. This kettle heats the strike, then makes a jacket for the mash. During the vorlauf, I wash the mash kettle. The other boils water for the sparge. The dipping pot is my grant. Later it will take part of the boil. The iodine test was the best ever. "What up with that?" the old man wondered. Mustn't be smug. Try it again. Just to be sure. Better than ever. Many towels and rags, now. Time to start the boil. Now the slave work begins: Wash this pan. Keep running back to check the kettles. Crouch over the tub and wash and wash and wash. Rinse the bleach from—what? The spoon. Drain the carboy. Rinse and dump. Rinse and dump. The boiled water from the day before. Cool and covered. All the piece parts soaking in bleach. Yeast! Yes, out of the fridge since yesterday. Boiling, now. Mark time and hop. Is all the scouring powder dissipated? Make notes. Always make notes. Clean up from the grinding. Stir. Forty-five minutes. Hop. Combine kettles. No boil-over! Mustn't be cocky. Start cold in tub. Clear sink. Spent grains gone. Sparge assembly washed. All in one kettle. Last hop. Sink in sink. Then to tub. Time to wash more. The hands are cramping. What is the good of hands if they cramp? And every cleaner stings the nicks in the skin! He remembered when he had done two brews in a day and spent the week after serenaded by the double chord of blowoffs from two foaming hoses. And he remembered the brick tenement wall that kept even a ridiculously-strong stout cool enough to brew like something civilized. "The weather is good," he said. "The weather is my friend." He stirred the wort and changed the water and took the VCR's he had taped to his neighbors. He got his own beer, for the boy was probably asleep. "The great Papazian hates me for opening the kettle to stir the wort, wort," he said to the wort, "but I have never had an immersion chiller and I know you must cool quickly." He balanced the boiled spoon on the plate and flexed his fingers.

It was before midnight when the woman came home.

The wort was cool and the old man drained the tub. He gently set the *Kharballah* beside the kettle and ritually washed the Clorox from the great funnel. Back and forth through the stingy space, he hoisted and bore the boiled, cold water and poured a cushion into the vessel. Then, he sat on the toilet and neatly raised

the kettle and poured it for a long, careful time, into the jar, omitting the trub and hop slurry. The aroma reminded him of the tenement, where the brick wall had no "R" value and the last hops sang like they knew they never would when the bottling had its way with them. Room in the bottle. It is greedy, but the point is a five-gallon batch. He went again to the pre-boiled water and, cradling it, filled the bottle to its shoulder. The night and the day had been long, but there was no pain. There was excitement. There was serenity. "This is what the ministers mean when they speak of happiness." He stirred the wort with a sanitized siphon cane and drew a sample with a sanitized baster. It was time to pitch the wort.

While the woman, who had long since discarded the old man from her interest and her bed, toyed with the obsolete computer, the old man plodded from bathroom to kitchen and gathered stoppers and tubes from the Clorox and rinsed them in sinks and arranged his old carboy box by the windows. His hands hurt from the cramps and the wounds of scouring, but after this would only be the readings. One last effort and a few more rinsings. The cat was quietly abed and the way was free. It was too good and the old man should have known. He grasped the neck and worked his hand beneath the bottle. He raised it and fell into the hall, happily out of sight of the woman. Too late to reconsider, he hugged the jewel and jimmied to his feet with the help of the wall. Rescued, he carried his prize round and to the box, to lower it gently in.

It lapsed the last four inches and broke. In that prolonged instant, the old man forfeited his self. In the bore tide of pancake syrup that immersed the flat, Papa was drowned and spectres of Steinbeck and Updike were left to account the loss. The woman gamely took charge and rescued the absorbent furnishings, guiding the barren old man to take this end; to position that stool. He had broken his glass, she was mopping up the guts.

She called him drunk, fool, in-denial. He lay all night with his face in a dark pillow, his shaking palms upward and ruined fingers twitching. He was dreaming of shame. He was still there the next day.

At this writing, poor Eiche has a new batch, racked to the secondary, coolly attenuating. He persists, humiliated.

FROM THE PRIMARY

By Phil Clarke Jr.

I really don't have much room to write my column in this month's issue of the Wort so, for once in my life, I will be brief. Recently the guild had its first steering committee, consisting of six of us. While enjoying the fine foods and beers available, we planned upcoming events for the guild and discussed certain issues that I will go into next month. Other than this, all I can say is, I hope to see everyone at the meeting.



UPCOMING EVENTS

February 19 – NYCHG meeting. Guest speaker is Dan Sobboti Jr. of the Gaslight Brewery & Restaurant.

February 23 – Best of Brooklyn 2002 at the Brooklyn Brewery.

March 3 – Fifth Annual Eastern Connecticut Homebrew Competition in Willimantic, CT. See <http://homemadebrew.net> for details.

March 9 – Split Thy Brooklyn Skull Barleywine Festival, 2:00-6:00 p.m., *Mug's Ale House*, 125 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn.

March 23 – Hudson valley Homebrewers 12th Annual Competition at the Hyde Park Brewing Company. See <http://www.hbd.org/hvhb> for details.

April 1 – Cider, Beer and Mead Tasting at the Gaslight Brewery and Restaurant. See <http://www.gaslightbrewery.com/cider,.htm> for details.

April 6 – New York City Homebrewers Guild 15th Anniversary party at Brewsky's.

VISIT THE WEBSITE!

<http://www.pipeline.com/~doglebe/nychg.html>

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