



BREWS & NEWS

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Wash my Beers Away By President Soggy Beechum

As I write this, looking out across the Warner Bros studio lot and the kelly green Hollywood Hills, I have to wonder: is this the perfect Pilsner water dropping from the sky in unprecedented quantities? Yes, it's a sad moment when you recognize how deep the brewing sickness has seeped into your skin.

Jonny Lieberman and Bruce Brode both start a set of articles covering "Big Beer" brewing (Jonny) and Sourdough Bread (Bruce). Kent drops the details on the first ever brew on the Falcons Brewery Mk II.

April Club Meeting and Brew Day Sunday, April 3rd (Brew – 9AM; Meeting – 1PM at The Shop)

This month we're going positively retro with our meeting. Back in the days of the "Garden of Olives" (John's old shop across Ventura Blvd from the current shop) it wasn't uncommon for a member to hold a brewing demonstration during the club meeting. With our new brew system now up and operational, what better time to revisit the tradition? Based

on discussion with Vinnie C of Russian River, Jonny Lieberman and I have formulated an XPA based on the flavors and aromas of the Pliny the Elder and Younger beers. Say hello to Pliny the Toddler XPA.

Brewing will commence at the 9AM hour with Kent Fletcher watching carefully to make sure we (Drew, Jonny Lieberman and Nick Salerno) don't hurt his baby. This is a great opportunity to spend your Sunday at our favorite church, the Church of Brewing. We'll also be making 20 gallons of brew at least and could always use takers for the beer. Remember beer takers pay for the cost of the beer above and beyond the club's kick-in.

Starting at 1PM, we'll begin the month's meeting. Bring beer, Chef will bring food. Cullen will be presenting the style of the month, Bock Beer. The demonstration of the month will be taking place right outside with the brewing. Continuing last month's development, the person with the best home brewed beer presented to
See "President" (continued on page 4)

Bock: Highly Filtered, Yet Still Full of Character! by Cullen Davis

Bock and its brethren are a glorious parade of malt upon malt, supported by malt with layers of maltiness interwoven throughout. Bocks, Doppelbocks, Eisbocks, Maibocks, and Weizenbocks all get to be called bock because of the character of their malt. If it's not malty, it's not bock. Now on the threshold of Spring, many of us think automatically of Bock

beers, but why should that be? There have been times in the past when brewers would release Bock beers any old time as a regular product of the brewery. In the early part of the 1900's, the German-immigrant dominated U.S. brewing industry made bocks regularly, but mostly to fill out the line headed up by Pilsener-type beers. Some would release their bocks as a specialty at festive times throughout the year: 4th of July, Fall harvest, Winter Holidays, Easter mostly. Brewers, liking to schedule major shifts in production, pushed for set dates, ending up concentrating mostly on early Spring. We would probably have the Franciscan monks to thank for that, who made their hearty brews to sustain them through fasting periods of Advent and
See "Grand Hydro" (Cont. on page 3)

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Brews & News Currents

By Kent Fletcher, Editor

Another 12 page edition this month, with lots of (hopefully) useful stuff. Drew's got the upcoming events pretty well nailed down, with the exception of the Mayfaire Party.

We found out very shortly before press time that the La Jolla Group site at Point Mugu State Park has been closed due to damage from the winter storms. The State Parks service is saying that it will likely remain closed until July 31. I've called the Point Mugu Ranger Station, and they say that it's **possible** that the repairs may be done in time for our party, but we won't know until near the end of April. The Ranger also offered to try to fit our group into the regular family campsites down the road in Sycamore Canyon, but that would most likely not be a happy move; the usage restrictions in that portion of the park would really put a crimp in our usual party activities. **Late Update: We have secured a site at Far West resort, in a group camping area across the creek from where we held last year's Sunfest, in Steckel Park, north of Santa Paula.**

The inaugural brew on the new Falcons Pilot Brewery went very well, with quite a few folks in attendance.

Please see my article on page 6 for all the details.

Last month saw the first issue distributed to participating members via email, in .pdf format. All of the feedback was very positive. This "E" edition contains much better graphics, can be saved on your hard drive indefinitely, and saves the Club some money, as well. The "E" edition will also arrive two to three days earlier than the snail mailed paper edition, without giving the USPS opportunity to tear it up in transit. So far we have just shy of 40 members on the "E" mailing list, but we can do better than that, I'm sure.

In addition to Drew's article and my own, other contributors this month include: (in alpha order) Bruce Brode with a (not so) short course on making Sour-dough Bread, our Grand Hydro, Cullen Davis, with some style info and history on Bock Beers, and Jonny Lieberman with a Brodishly long treatise on the art of making really Big Beers. As I'm writing this, I have not finished doing the layout, so either or both of Bruce and Jonny's articles may be continued into next month's issue. Also enclosed in this issue is the flyer for Mayfaire Comp entries, but on-line registration is strongly encouraged. **kf**

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Brewer's Support Network

These knowledgeable and experienced Falcon brewers are part of our new support network. They are available to help you with any brewing related questions you might have, so please feel free to contact them.

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Grand Hydro (Continued from page 1)

Lent. Now why should we pay attention to brewing habits of monks hundreds of years ago specifically in regards to bock?

The Franciscan Monks who established their monastery in Munich came from the Italian town of Paula and so were called Paulaners. When they began to sell their special hearty brew to the public, they naturally named it in honor of Christ, their savior or "Salvator". The famous Paulaner brewery still sells Salvator Doppelbock (with a monk on the label) over 200 years after the monks first flung open their doors to thirsty Bavarians. At that time, the monks' beer was quite a bit like a stronger, maltier version of another beer that was already popular, known as "Bock" so they called the new-comer "Doppelbock" (or double bock) in a marriage of convenience more than a shared genesis.

It is a bit of a mystery where the name Bock really came from. Some say it is a term for a goat (hence the goat on many labels) that was applied to a beer with an aggressive character like that of a goat. Conventional wisdom says that the term derives from a diminutive form of the name of the town of Einbeck in the Bavarian dialect in the 1600's (Say that after you've had a

couple bocks!). If this is the case, what business, then, did Munich have ordering up beer from some rundown berg in the northern boonies? In the 1600's and a couple hundred years before that, Einbeck's brewers were at the top of their game, and Bavarian beer, by contrast, just wasn't quite up to par. Einbecker beer (in Munich, "Ainpoeker pier", then "Poek", then "Bock") was very highly regarded and shipped throughout northern Europe. Bavaria was trying hard to improve brewing locally, making rules about what you can and can't put in it, and casting thirsty glances northward. They managed to get a brewer from Einbeck to make a trip to Munich in 1612. He made a distinctive beer that was well-received, though not exactly like the beer made back in Einbeck. In Munich, he wasn't allowed to use any wheat as was the practice in Einbeck, so the new brew used all local barley malt, which tended to be a bit darker as well. Lager brewing was the norm in Munich, whereas in Einbeck, top-fermenting was the preferred method. Hops were used sparingly up in the Bavarian high country, where they didn't grow as well as they did in the lowlands to the north.

To follow this trail of history, the original forefather of bock beer is as a light-colored, dry, hoppy, top-fermented beer -- pretty much the opposite of how it ended up. Sure it's been filtered through thick beds of history, but we can be glad that German brewing tradition has clung to the Bock style as treasured artistry in malt. *cd*

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Enter Those Beers!

With all of the excitement over winning the California Homebrew Club of the Year and the fantastic Anchor weekend, there hasn't been much emphasis lately on entering competitions. Besides our own Mayfaire (see flier on page 11 of this issue), entries are due this month for the first round of the AHA National Homebrew Competition. We did OK last year, garnering 3 gold medals in the Finals, and that with a relatively low number of first round entries.

The AHA is a very well-run comp, and the feedback you can get from the judges can really help you perfect your beers. If you have a beer that's kegged, no worries. Just bring it to the meeting Sunday and we'll Counter-Pressure fill them for you, we'll even provide bottles and caps if you need them. So don't be shy, bottle up some of your best and enter them. Just like the Lotto, you can't win if you don't play!

President (Continued from page 1)

the club will receive a small prize.

Mayfaire Competition (Entries – 4/1-4/14; Judging – 5/7; Festival – 5/14)

The time has come for the annual Mayfaire Competition. Steve Cook will have more information later in this newsletter, but I'd like to emphasize the importance of this competition. Every year we offer Hashell a chance to fly free and the Mayfaire Festival is always best when we can slap the shoulders of the winner. So grab your best beers, bottle them up and throw them into the fray. Details are at maltosefalcons.com. We'll be judging on the 7th at St. Martin in-the-Field Church in Canoga Park. If you'd like to judge or to help in any way, contact Martin Carman (judging@maltosefalcons.com). The Festival will be held at Far West Resort, across the creek from our last Sunfest site at Steckel Park, near Santa Paula. Look for map in next issue. Incidentally, we're looking to see if anyone is interested in brewing at the Mayfaire site this time around. Let me know if you have any interest in the sport of mobile brewing operations.

BJ's Beer Appreciation Night (BJ's Woodland Hills – 4/6 – 7:30PM)

This month's topic: "French and Belgian Ales from Vanberg & DeWulf with Don Fineberg". Remember to tell them you're a Falcon and receive \$2 off the admission, which covers beer and a free glass.

AHA National Homebrew Competition (Judging – 4/22-4/23 – San Diego)

Unlike the past couple years; there is no LA judging site for the AHA California Regional. Because of this, the folks with QUAFF are desperate for more judges to travel from LA to San Diego to cover assignments. Please help out and signup at <http://www.brewingcompetition.com/>.

Southern California Homebrewer's Festival (4/30 - Temecula)

Imagine: Temecula, Vail Lake Resort, you, me and a thousand other homebrewers. What could be better? 24 brew clubs pouring beer should do the trick!

Joining the CHA (a requirement to attend the party) is simple. Go to <http://www.calhomebrewers.org/> and pay your membership dues there. You must register as a member before 4/29 at 10PM to attend the festival.

The Falcons also have a raft of campsites available to

us and Steve Cook (vicepresident@maltosefalcons.com) is coordinating the sites. I'm coordinating the beer. To see what's coming with us, check <http://www.maltosefalcons.com/events/2005SCHBF/>. The group will be assembling at the campsites on Friday and having a bit of a cookout and beer available that night. Kevin Baranowski and Kent Fletcher will be bringing the bars down and will need help with the setup so be prepared to jump up and lend a hand.

May Shop Brew – George & Craig's British Brown Porter (5/1 – The Shop)

While many Falcons are away partying, er... recovering, in the Temecula Valley area, George Mahoney and Craig Shapland will fire up the Falcons' Brewery to make a traditional British Brown Porter for the Mayfaire Festival. Craig and George are award winning brewers, so come on down and join them in drinking some beer, cooking up some food and brewing a quick batch of brew.

Double IPA Taste-off (September – The Shop)

Don't forget. Brew up those Double IPAs for a chance to brew a beer with BJ's in Woodland Hills. The tasting and vote will be held at the September meeting. *db*



Phantom Brewers Tip: Draining Carboys Fast

TPB brings you two tips this month, both to help you get those carboys empty quick by avoiding the glugs. Those pressure equalizing bubbles of air slow down the voiding of liquid. So to speed up the flow, you must provide air to the interior of the carboy.

- The Racking Cane – This is the classic alternate use of everyone's racking cane. Just place and hold the racking cane while you invert the carboy. Move the racking cane so that it's open in the air bubble at the inverted base and watch the water gush.
- The Vortex – The old standby frat party trick, the swirl can help you out here. If you have a carboy stand, it's even safe. Place the carboy in its stand and start rotating it quickly. Get the liquid moving quickly and then stop the carboy. The liquid will keep swirling and soon a vortex shooting air into the carboy should appear. (This can also be done by holding the carboy in your arms and rolling the liquid, but be careful and don't drop the carboy!) *tpb*

Thinking Big: Getting a Handle on Brewing Big Beers

by Jonny Lieberman

Recently I was speaking with a non-brewer friend of mine about high gravity/alcohol beer. He asked me why wine seems to always fall into the 10-15% range while beer is typically 4-7% by volume. His jaw dropped when I told him about beers such as George Mahoney's *Frankenale* measuring an insane 27% and that **Hair of the Dog** makes *Dave*, a beer that holds the dubious high-gravity record at 29% (this is an *eis* fortified beer).

The conversation got me thinking; why is it typically that a solid proletariat beverage like beer has 2-3 times less alcohol than a hoity-toity drink like wine? Obviously, in a given grist (or whatever you call squashed grapes--a "mush?" Fine, "must") there is more sugar available to the yeast in wine than in beer. However, it is more than that. Brewing a high-gravity beer is more difficult than brewing a "normal" sized ale or lager and *much* more difficult than making wine. Direct cost is an obvious factor. It requires more fermentables (grain, sugar, etc) to achieve higher alcohol levels. You need more hops and yeast, too. But it is all quite doable and the payoff, after the time and the money is spent, is much higher than any of the individual parts. Assuming you're willing to make the investment required to brew a "big" beer, then this article aims to teach you how to do it right.

What's Big?

At 5'11", 225 lbs., One foot is size twelve, the other thirteen. I've got an eighteen-inch neck. I'm a big dude. However, around certain Falcons I feel like a shrimp. The same is true with "big beers." Sure, Sierra Nevada's Celebration is fairly high in alcohol (and delicious), but at 6.8% it simply isn't "big." For this article I'm going to use 8% as the cutoff point between big and not-so-big for a couple of reasons. First, the most righteous Strong Ale Festival at Pizza Port only featured beers 8% or bigger. Additionally, in *Radical Brewing's "Big Honking Beers"* chapter, Randy Mosher also makes the 8% distinction. Finally, 8% is just a nice round (and "big") number.

When most people (and I'm talking about pro and homebrewers in addition to laymen) think "big" they think Barleywine. But "big beers" are not simply limited to them. You have Russian Imperial Stouts, Old Ales, Scotch Ales (Wee Heavys), Dapplebocks (and Eisbocks), Belgian Triples and Specialty beers, an endless number of festival/special occasion beers that don't necessarily fall into any of these categories, and finally Double IPA--the style that has come to symbolize West Coast gumption, energy, obsession and passion. There is even stratification within the styles themselves. For in-

stance, Barleywines are broken into English and American versions. There are a whole slew of "big" beers out there that are ripe for contemplation, experimentation and most importantly, consumption.

Why Big?

How does an Oktoberfest differ from other Späten beers? What sets Bigfoot apart from Sierra Nevada's other products? Why are most of Stone's seasonal releases over 8%? Why did monks brew themselves Dapplebocks when they had to fast for Advent or Lent? Historically, and right on through to the present, special beers brewed to mark special occasions were "big." If we look at the English tradition of parti-gyle brewing we see that while the second and sometimes third runnings of the mash became the normal everyday drinking beers, the precious first runnings were greedily hoarded away until the birth of a child or a wedding or a King was crowned or the King was beheaded--any excuse to declare the day special and break out that delicious strong beer. When talking about this article, Drew the President mentioned;

The historical beers of yore were stronger than today's beers with higher OGs and FGs, but they also needed to provide nutrition. Beers got weaker as the demands for alert workers rose during the industrial revolution and governments implemented taxes on malt and alcohol content. Combine that with the fact that it's more profitable to get someone to drink 6 units of your product in a sitting as opposed to one or two, and you have a compelling economic argument for the breweries as well.

And a true treat these big beers are. Very recently I pulled a Barleywine out that has been aging for close to two-years. My long time brewing-partner Nick Salerno and I drank it back-to-back with four other beers, all of which appear in BeerAdvocate.com's top 50. While I won't go so far as to say ours was "better", we sure enjoyed it a hell of a lot more. Very recently I pulled out a Barleywine that had been aging for close to two years. My long-time brewing partner, Nick Salerno, and I drank it back-to-back with four other beers, all of which appear in BeerAdvocate.com's "Top Fifty." While I won't go so far as to say that ours was "better," we sure enjoyed it a hell of a lot more.

Step Number One: Grain Bill

Any sucker can add a few pounds of rice-extract to a pale ale recipe and call it a barleywine. And for many brewers--me included--this is how we first approached
See "Big Beers" (Continued on page 8)

March Shop Brew: Inaugural Brew on the "Mark II"

by Kent Fletcher

The Shop Brew on March 20th was the culmination of over a year of discussing, planning, searching, scrounging, and scrap yard dumpster diving to acquire the parts and materials needed to bring about the creation of the new Maltose Falcons Mark II Brewery.

For a little background, the original M.F. Pilot Brewery was built in 1991, by Bill Ellis, Rick Sherman and Gregg Stark. It was a fairly typical All-Grain homebrew system, utilizing half-barrel Sankey type stainless steel beer kegs converted for use as kettles, and direct-fire natural gas burners under the three vessels. Over the next 14 plus years, the Club made very good use of this system, producing over 1,400 gallons of beer! However, the old system did have some drawbacks. Doing step mashes with direct fire under the mash tun is an easy way to scorch the grain. The system also used cut-up water heaters to both support the converted kegs above the burners and also act as heat shields, to guard against accidentally burning a hapless brewer's clothing, but they also retained a lot of heat, which frequently led to overshooting rest temps. Also, the Mash/Lauter Tun (MLT) had been made by cutting off the entire top of the keg, which reduced it's capacity by 6-8 pounds of grain, as compared to one with only a hole cut in the top.

Almost two years ago, Drew and I began discussing updating the system, using converted swimming pool filter vessels. The inspiration for this came from Richard "Beanie" Webster, who had made a tri-level brew sculpture using such vessels. Richard hosted brewing the Old Smokey 30th Anniversary brew on his system in February of 2003, and we were sold. I began making occasional trips to the same scrap yard that Richard had bought his vessels from. Unfortunately, the filter cans were frequently ruined by the scrappers who cut out the bronze diverter valve at the bottom with a torch, in lieu of actually unbolting them. I spoke with the manager, and he assured me that when the work load allowed, he would instruct his guys to unbolt them. On top of this, many of the cans wound up with bad dents from

being tossed into the huge bin that they put all of the stainless scrap in. Anyway, by the summer of 2003 I was able to purchase three cans that were in decent shape. Then they languished in my garage for quite some time, largely due to all the activity surrounding the 2004 AHA Conference in Las Vegas and of course all of our 30th Anniversary brews. Then after recovering from our 30th bash, I began work on the new system.



HLT with sight gauge and temp sensor Control Panel with Electronic Temp Controllers on top, pilot lights show status of pump and HLT burner



Jonny and Nick doughing in 55 pounds of grain, with plenty of room to spare in the 40 gallon Mash Tun!



The filter housings have a hole in the bottom, over four inches in diameter, where the diverter valve was originally installed. This hole had to be filled in by welding a matching circular plate of 304 stainless steel in place. I was lucky enough to find several laser cutouts at the scrap yard that were about six inches, perfect for the job. I took the vessels to Terry at Jaytech Fabrication and Welding, the same guy we went to for the group keg work a while back. Terry told me that, as I had suspected, the filler plates would have to be welded from the outside, as the kettles were too deep and confining to be able to reach in and weld from the inside (which resulted in spending several hours of grinding the inside of the vessels at the weld locations). In addition to the bottoms, Terry also welded all of the couplings and half couplings for the drain valves, HERMS coil connections, and sight glass for the HLT, and of course drain valves on the MLT and BK. I also had Terry weld a combination of stainless pipe and angle brackets on the MLT to provide pivots on which to rotate the tun for emptying the spent grains.

I built a sturdy frame structure from some large scrap steel augmented by Unistrut, and bolted the frame down to the concrete at it's new home, outside the Club Room. Jason Paynter and I ran a new gas line along the wall outside the shop to

(Continued on next page)

Mark II (Continued from page 6)

serve the new system. I was able to get two new electronic temperature controllers for a very good price on eBay, and ordered new high output burners from <http://www.thegrillstoreandmore.com>. I had been using one of these burners on my home system for over a year, and can highly recommend the supplier.

I piped in the new burners, again with a timely assist from Jason. The HLT burner is connected to an automatic gas valve and intermittent pilot, which was also scrounged from the scrap yard. This valve is controlled by one of the two electronic temperature controllers, allowing the brewer to simply dial in the desired hot liquor temp. The second controller cycles the pump to run wort through the HERMS coil. For those who may not be familiar with the term, HERMS is short for Heat Exchange Recirculating Mash System. Wort is drawn through the MLT manifold and pumped through a coil of copper tubing in the HLT. This transfers heat from the hot liquor to the wort, which is returned to the top of the mash, bringing up the temperature of the whole mash. The controller's sensor is placed in the mash, allowing precise control of the mash temperature.

So, enough about the system. We had a really great turn-out for the inaugural brew. Some, like George Mahoney, Gregg Van Citters, Jonny Lieberman, Nick Salerno and Jay



Magnetic drive pump circulating wort through the HERMS coil



Sweet wort running into bottom of boil kettle. 40 gallon kettle will allow us to brew a full barrel batch of beer!

lunch, and generally hang out and have a good time! Steve Cook played Burgermeister-for-a-day, manning the BBQ and cranking out the burgers. Unfortunately, I had been out of commission with a cold/flu the week before, so I was still making such finishing touches as mounting the control panel, connecting pump outlets, etc, on brew day. Thus I was a little too busy to make notes, so I'm sorry to say that I can't name all of the delicious beers that folks brought and



27 Gallons boiling!

shared, both homebrewed and commercial, but suffice to say that nobody went thirsty. All in all it was a really great brew day, thanks to **all of you** who participated. This month we're doing the shop brew on Meeting day, to get even more of you involved. Oh yeah, we made about 24 gallons of American Wheat, you can see the recipe on the MF web page. Look for this beer at the SCHF and of course the Mayfaire party. Remember, Jonny will be leading the Pliny the Toddler XPA brew this Sunday, April 3rd. We start at 9:00 am, and don't forget to set your alarm clock for Daylight Time! **kf**



We had a great turn-out for the inaugural brew

Shevek, pitched in on the Brew Crew. Other attendees including such usual suspects as Drew Beechum (with visiting Mom in tow), Cullen and Di, and Jim Kopitzke. We were glad to also see many more that have not typically made it to the Shop Brews, like the whole Grizzard family, Matt Udall, Steve Sult, and Richard Webster the guy that really got this pool filter idea started. They came to see the new system at work, share some brews and a tasty burger



Now that football season is over, Jonny and Nick made it to the brew and pitched in to crew

Big Beers (Continued from page 5)

the style. While the results can be good, just as often they can be wanting, leaving the brewer and his audience disappointed and potentially turned off to the style, or worse, homebrew altogether. To brew a "big" beer right, it is obviously going to require more thought than just upping the gravity. Let's look at one of my favorite styles first, Russian Imperial Stouts. For now, we'll assume that this type of beer is an amped-up version of the more common Foreign or Export Stout with an assumed gravity of 1.065. Therefore the original grain bill might be:

- 10.5 lbs. of British 2-Row
- 1 lbs. of Crystal 60
- 0.50 lbs. of Chocolate Malt
- 1 lbs. of Roasted Barley

Just upping the gravity to achieve a healthy 1.110 (7 more lbs. of base malt) would do several things. First, the beer's color would be greatly affected. Instead of the inky black most of us expect in our stouts, the resulting beer would be dark brown and if held to the light your Russian Imperial would look red. I know because the last one I brewed looked this way. That beer had only a pound of Roasted Barley and a pound of Chocolate Malt with an OG of 1.145 *after* a three-hour boil. The beer can hardly be described as black. Even weirder is that the small beer we pulled has an SRM of about 8 or 9. This is India Pale Ale territory and we had intended it to be a stout! So, as the amount of base malt increases, you need to take into account that the percentage of specialty grains will plummet. Blindly doubling *all* the grains isn't the solution, either. Two pounds of Roasted Barley, while not "crazy," is really too much roast flavor in a 1.110 brew. Especially when you take into account that as your Imperial Stout ages, all flavors will mellow except the phenols. Smoke and Roast flavors linger longer than hops and malts. Doubling was the route I chose to go when I designed the first *Blackwine*, third place winner at last year's State Fair. I just doubled the grist of my favorite stout recipe. The judge's only critique: "Too phenolic." 10 pounds of 120 Lovibond plus grain does that to a beer. As Kent Fletcher said upon tasting, "Hey, this is actually pretty good. [Pause] Too phenolic."

The solution is the middle road. Yes, you will need to up the amount of specialty grains, but just doubling the amount is not the way. All of this holds true for other "big" beers, not just Russian Imperial Stouts. As an example, doubling the grain bill of a typical American Pale Ale to create a Barleywine, might add up to 4 lbs. of Crystal Malt in a five-gallon batch--not a mouth watering proposition. Adjusting the grain bill based on *percentages* guided by your nose and experience is a better way to go. For the Blackwine recipe, I would rework it thusly:

- 18 lbs. of British 2-Row
- 1 lbs. of Crystal 60
- 1 lbs. of Chocolate Malt
- 1.5 lbs. of Roasted Barley

The Chocolate Malt and Roasted Barley maintain basically the same percentage of the grist--11.5% in the Foreign Export vs. 11.7% in the Imperial. The color darkens up a touch, probably how it should be.

Please do not think I am trying to tell you that beers, especially "big" beers need to be brewed to style. I am not a style-phile and I think my own creations bare this point out well. In fact, I think because so few "big" beers are produced that there is no type or class of beer riper for pushing the envelope and constant experimentation.

Recently, I have reverted the way I formulate my "big" recipes--let sugar do the work for you. The Byron Burch School of Brewing that I cut my teeth on taught that rice extract was a great way to boost the gravity of a beer. It is a cheap and easy way to boost the alcohol without having too much of an effect on the finished beer's flavor. Because of the rice extract's fermentability the body might be thinned a bit, but less so than with table sugar. For close to a decade this is how I formulated recipes for my "bigs." However, as eating the same thing for lunch everyday is no fun, neither is drinking the same beer for breakfast. So, I changed my tack.

At first it was only *more* malt so as to be a "serious" all grain brewer, but that grew dull quickly. In *Radical Brewing* Mosher lists over ten different sugars he's brewed with. The floodgates really opened on our Anchor trip when Russian River's Vinnie C. explained that two of my favorite commercial beers, both *Pliny the Elder* and *Younger*, were brewed with corn syrup accounting for 7% of the grist.

Inspired, the gloves came off and I brewed a clone of Lagunitas *Brown Shugga'*. Instead of brown sugar (the bland supermarket variety is really just white sugar dyed with molasses), I used a pound each of Muscavado, Demerara and Piloncillo, all of which are available at any Whole Foods. Not to brag, but I much prefer mine to the original. The clone tastes as if a half-dozen Carmellos were tossed into the boil. I've also had good luck with Turbonado. I am itching to try another of Mosher's tricks; cooking down dry malt extract with a little water. The benefit here is that you get honest to goodness melanoidins from the malt that other sugars just can't provide. See? There are plenty of new interesting ways to go "big."

jl

["Big Beers" will continue in the May issue]

Lambic Bread (aka Sourdough) by Bruce Brode

Bread and beer are close relations, enough so that anthropologists have been discussing which is the older product - which had the 'civilizing' influence on humans through the grain agriculture necessary to make either one. The parallels are many, right down to the fermentations that take place in beer wort and in bread dough. Small wonder that they go well together, too.

Put in beer terms, sourdough breads are the "Lambics" of the bread world; in other words, the sour ones fermented with wild microorganisms and not cultured ones (in their classic renditions). The Lambic reference is to the unique sour ales brewed in a farmhouse tradition near Brussels, Belgium, where the beer wort is inoculated with local microflora from the night air (including wild yeasts and lactic acid bacteria).

I'd like to relate my experiences in starting and maintaining sourdough cultures and in baking with them, to help demystify the process a bit if I can. It all centers on the mix of microbes that make up any given sourdough 'culture.' The most significant of those that have been identified include wild yeasts such as *Candida milleri* (reclassified from *Saccharomyces exigus*) and a veritable grab-bag of *Lactobacillus* species (including the famous *Lactobacillus sanfrancisco*). It turns out that many of these microbes are naturally present in rye grain. As a result, some quite viable sourdough cultures can be created directly from organically produced rye flour. These microorganisms ferment sugars in the dough to form acidic compounds including lactic acid and acetic acid, whence the sourness comes.

Starting a Starter

There are innumerable methods and formulations for "starting a starter," including schemes involving potatoes, fresh wine grapes (for the wild yeasts growing on their skins), leaving the starter open to the air to capture passing microbes, etc. Here's a simple method for starting a viable sourdough culture of your own with out resorting to any odd ingredients or unsanitary techniques. Procure some organically produced rye flour, such as the organic dark rye flour from the Bob's Red Mill brand that is available at Whole Foods markets and other natural foods stores (besides, it makes great rye bread). Begin with one cup of the rye flour, and 3/4 cup of purified water. You should avoid using tap water since the chlorine or chloramine in the water figures to hamper the growth of the microbes you are trying to activate. Whisk the flour and water together until a thick batter is formed. Put the batter in a clean plastic or glass container, cover loosely, and allow to sit for several hours or overnight at room temperature. After twelve hours or so, repeat this process but use bread flour or all-purpose flour this time and

for all subsequent feedings, using the same ratio of flour to water. What you are looking for is enough activity in the starter to produce bubbles of gas distributed throughout the batter. Continue to feed it until you see this activity developing in the starter. If the volume of starter is getting too big before you see the bubble activity, you may find it necessary to discard half the starter prior to feeding it at 12 hour intervals. It is generally true that successive 12-hour feedings will eventually produce an active starter. The ratio of 1 cup of flour to 3/4 cup of water (by volume) duplicates the ratio of 1 part flour to 1 part water by weight and these proportions are felt to be ideal for the growth of the microorganisms in the starter medium. The volume of the feeding can be doubled at each feeding if the starter is sufficiently active. The parallels here with growing up a yeast starter for brewing are obvious.

Maintaining a Starter

The starter can be maintained simply by refrigerating it in a snap-top plastic container. Feeding it once a week helps to maintain its viability. Follow the 12-hour rule and leave the starter out at room temperature right after feeding so that it can activate appropriately. Feeding the starter with this ratio of flour to water and letting it ferment at room temperatures should encourage the natural microorganisms to become active and increase their fermenting mass. You will often find that a stored starter develops some gray-colored liquid on top. This is known colloquially as the "hootch" and I recommend that you pour it off the top and discard it before you begin feeding your starter (others may disagree). In any event, the appearance of the hootch is a good sign that the starter needs feeding.

Some starters tend toward the lactic type of acidity, and some toward the acetic (or vinegar) type. There is some information to suggest that starters of a wetter consistency grown in a cooler environment will favor the lactic flavors, and the opposite conditions will lead to more alcohol production and eventually vinegar character (as vinegar results from the fermentation of alcohol). I tend to prefer the lactic flavors as a bit more refined, but this is all a question of your individual taste. It is even possible to dry some starter by spreading it on a baking sheet and allowing it to dry, then breaking it up and freezing it in double-wrapped plastic bags. This provides a handy way to ship some to a friend or maintain longer-terms stocks of your starter.

[The saga of "Making Sourdough Bread" will continue in the May issue]

General Meeting March 6, 2005 By Paul Sedgwick

A fine crowd of 53 Falcons gathered at about 1:30 PM at the Shop for the March meeting. This month we began the meeting with the tasting of the homebrew. We had an American Stout from Rick Burnside as well as a shop brewed Stout from Chef Sean. We tasted a 3-year-old very high gravity brew from Rick Hoppe. Jim Kopitzke and Drew Beechum provided their Saison Atomne. We had four fine brews from John Aitchison: a Flanders Red, a Biere de Garde, a Framboise and a straight Lambic. Craig Warden brought Homie's IPA. Jen and Ken Rhude supplied a lemon mead. Ken Rhude, Jim Moorman and Chef Sean treated us to Rude Dog Double IPA. Our Grand Hydro, Cullen Davis brought a straight Lambic. We tasted a Biere de Mars from George Mahoney and a Bitter from Craig Mc Farland. We sampled a straight Lambic from Tom Wolfe. MB Raines brought us four different Lambics fermented with different strains yeast and /or bacteria.

Cullen Davis' Lambic was selected as the Falcon's entry in the upcoming AHA Belgian Sour Club Only Competition. This month John Daume donated a beer stein to be awarded to the brewer of the best homebrew tasted at the meeting. Congratulations to Ken Rhude who took home the award for his Rude Dog Double IPA.

After the tasting it was time for the business portion of the meeting. The club expressed its thanks to all the people who made the Anchor Party weekend such a huge success. Special thanks go to Gregor Reti, Gregg van Citters, John Aitchison, Craig Wickham, Dean Lynn, Cullen Davis and Drew Beechum.

Ken Rhude announced that he will soon be opening a brewpub in the Castaic area. He is currently looking for investors.

George Mahoney is now the coordinator of the Shop brews. The club will pay the first \$25 towards the cost of ingredients for Shop brews, brewers will pay the balance. John Daume will supply the yeast. The current plan is to sell or raffle the old Shop brew system, as John D needs the shop space. According to records compiled by our esteemed President, 1348 gallons or 45.5 barrels were brewed on the old system since it was put into service in May of 1991.

Bruce Brode announced that he will lead the annual Mead Tasting on Saturday March 26th at the Shop. This has been an annual Falcons event since 1992.

The 2005 Southern California Homebrewers Festival will be held on April 30th at Vail Lake. The Falcons band will

be playing. You must register online at calhomebrewers.org to renew/get a membership. Contact Steve Cook for Falcons campsite information. We need plenty of high quality homebrew for this event. Let Drew Beechum know what beer you plan to bring.

For lunch, Chef Sean served lemon pepper chicken, garlic mashed potatoes and succotash, with lemon bars for dessert. Bruce Brode provided us with his home-made sourdough bread, and gave an interesting talk on the making of sourdough bread.

We finished the meeting with the commercial beer tasting. Grand Hydro Cullen Davis brought us some fine Belgian sour beers to enjoy. We had Geuze Boon from Brouwerij Boon. We tasted Duchesse de Bourgogne and Echt Kriekenbier from Brouwerij Verhaeghe Vichte. We enjoyed Cantillon Broucsella (1900) Grand Cru from Brasserie Cantillon Brussels. We sampled Cantillon Kriek Lambic, courtesy of Geoff and Sally Larsen. The meeting adjourned at 4:45PM.

Board Meeting Minutes—March 14, 2005 By Paul Sedgwick

This month's board meeting was held at 7:30 PM at Gregg van Citters' house in Glendale. The Board Members in attendance were Drew Beechum, Steve Cook, Cullen Davis, Kent Fletcher, Paul Sedgwick and Gregg Van Citters.

Gregg reported that the Treasury is doing well. Recent new memberships and renewals, as well as robust swag sales from the Anchor Party have helped to keep bank account looking good.

The Mayfaire party is scheduled for May 14th. We had planned to have the party at La Jolla Group Campground, but it is closed until August because of broken water lines. We need a new location ASAP. The Mayfaire Competition judging will be held at St. Martins Episcopal Church on May 7th. Steve Cook will contact thewerks.net to get the medals.

Preliminary plans for Sunfest were discussed. Bright Lake in Tehachapi was suggested as a possible venue.

The April meeting will be held on the 3rd. The style for the tasting will be Bock beers. The main topics of discussion will be the Mayfaire and the SCHBF.

Thanks to Gregg Van Citters for hosting the meeting and providing some excellent beer and chili. *ps*

[Editor's note: Portions of the General Meeting and Board Meeting minutes covering subjects covered elsewhere in this issue have been redacted]

2005 Mayfaire Regional Homebrew Competition
(AHA and BJCP Sanctioned)

The Maltose Falcons Home Brewing Society
Qualifier for *Sierra Nevada Homebrewer of The Year*

ONLINE ENTRY! (Preferred Method)

Pre-register and information at <http://www.maltosefalcons.com/>

Entry Deadline: Entries (3 Bottles) are due between April 1st - April 14th, 2005

Entry Fee: \$6.00 per entry, check or money order only, payable to the Maltose Falcons. *No Cash will be accepted!*

Drop or send prepaid entries (3 Bottles) to:

2005 Mayfaire Competition c/o The Home Wine, Beer and Cheese Making Shop 22836 Ventura Blvd. #2 Woodland Hills, CA 91364	2005 Mayfaire Competition c/o Culver City Home Brewing Supply 4358 1/2 Sepulveda Blvd Culver City, CA 90230
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Styles: Please use the 2004 Falcons' Style Guidelines available on our site.

Judging: Saturday, May 7th, 2004, St Martins Church, Canoga Park, CA

Awards Ceremony: At the Maltose Falcons' Mayfaire Festival, Saturday, May 14th, 2004

Best of Show: "The Bird," a statuette of the Maltose Falcon "Hashell Dammit"

First, Second, and Third Place Metals may be awarded in each beer style Class,
Subject to the decisions of the Judges. All Judges decisions are final.

For further information, or entry forms, contact:

Steve Cook, Competition Organizer Tel: (818) 563-5211 Email: vicepresident@maltosefalcons.com	Martin Carman, Judging Coordinator Email: judging@maltosefalcons.com
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Mayfaire 2005 Bottle ID Form
Entrant's Name :
Address :
City, State, Zip :
Phone :
Category :
Subcategory :
Special Ingredients :
Classic Style :
Mead & Cider(circle) : Sparkling/Still - Sweet/Medium/Dry
Entry Dates: April 1st-14th 2005
Attach one form to each bottle with a rubber band
Remember to include a check for \$6 per entry.

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Membership Renewal

Cut out or copy, fill out and mail this form to:

Maltose Falcons Membership
C/O The Home Beer, Wine & Cheese Making Shop
22836 Ventura BL #2
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip Code _____

Email address _____

Please include check in the amount of:

New Member __ \$24.00 Renewal __ \$20.00

Make check payable to Maltose Falcons

*Check this box to receive the "E" edition of the
 Brews & News, in lieu of a mailed copy.*

Coming Events:

- *Next Shop meeting: Sunday, April 3rd, 1:00 pm, Featuring Bocks, with concurrent Shop Brew starting at 9:00 am*
- *French and Belgian Ales from Vanberg & DeWulf with Don Fineberg, BJ's Woodland Hills: April 6th, 7:30 pm*
- *Southern California Homebrew Festival, April 30th, Vail Lake*
- *Mayfaire Comp Judging, May 7th at St. Martin OTF Church in Canoga Park*
- *Mayfaire Fest: May 14th, Far West Resort Group Camp, north of Santa Paula*



**MALTOSE FALCONS
HOME BREWING SOCIETY**
22836 Ventura Blvd #2
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

