

# Boiler



## hobby brew year!

MS Society Donation

MHBA Club Calendar

Board Meeting Notes

Upcoming Meetings

December Recipe of the Month  
*Special Bitter*

Christmas Party Wrap-up  
*with winning recipe*

Competition Corner

January Recipe of the Month  
*Belgian Dark Strong Ale*

Back Cover

The Newsletter of the  
Minnesota Home Brewers  
Association

January 2009



# State Fair Homebrew Competition and Club donates to Multiple Sclerosis Society

Each year the State Fair Homebrew Competition donates any remaining proceeds to a worthy charitable organization. This year the proceeds were donated to the local chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The almost \$400 after expenses was jointly donated by the Minnesota Homebrewers Association and by the Saint Paul Homebrewers Club. MhBA generously matched their portion of the donation, rounding the total donation up to \$600.

Multiple sclerosis (or MS) is a chronic, unpredictable, and often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous

system (CNS), which is made up of the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from one person to another.

On behalf of the local chapter of the MS Society I would like to thank all the homebrewers for their support and generous donation. For further information on Multiple Sclerosis, please go to [www.mssociety.com](http://www.mssociety.com).

*Jonathan Crist*

## MHBA Club Calendar

January 25: Finnegans Dodgeball Tournament  
*at Station 4 in St. Paul*

January 28: Flat Earth and Lift Bridge Beer Tasting  
*at Stub & Herb's*

April 4: 2009 Gitchee Gumeew Brewfest  
*in Superior, WI*

April 18: MNBeer.com 3.5 Year Anniversary Party  
*at Stub & Herb's*

June 28: St. Paul Summer Beer Fest  
*at the Midway Stadium Parking Lot*

To learn more about these and other upcoming events, visit <http://mnbeer.com/category/beer-events/>



# The Board Meets!

For the first time in at least six years, the officers of the Minnesota Home Brewers Association held a board meeting. All club members were notified via club e-mail on The Barn, and about 10 members showed up at The Bulldog for the 90 minute meeting. Several members e-mailed ideas or concerns. A pledge to drink no beer until the meeting adjourned was quickly abandoned.

Issues discussed included:

## Communication

The club has grown enormously in the past year – about 95 new members and counting. Yet, the numbers for meeting attendance and club volunteer projects remain relatively modest for a club of over 200 members. There is a theory that communication might be part of the problem, but there is a strong suspicion that many of the new members join simply for the homebrew shop discount privileges. This is their loss and a possible gain for active members who enjoy the benefits of dues provided by absent members. We gave a toast to these absent and unknown members. But we can't help think that they might enjoy us, and we might enjoy them, if only we had a chance to meet.

Of greater concern is communication. We have an excellent and free system in The Barn. People simply have to make the effort to sign up for this communication service. For 2009, the Treasurer will develop a simple primer on how to sign up on The Barn that goes out with membership cards. (Also note, that if you want to be removed from The Barn, you need to do it yourself.)

We discarded the idea of developing our own e-mail list because e-mails

going out to 200+ people would run into trouble with spam filters.

It was suggested that we consider a vice president for communication to make sure that every meeting gets a promotional e-mail and that prompt notices go out for every new issue of The Boiler newsletter. No decision was made on this.

The meeting endorsed the idea of sending postcard reminders of meetings quarterly to the homes of all paid members. We have done this sporadically in the past.

There also was talk of a "MHBA Google Calendar" that members could "import." The technical details were over the heads of some members, including your secretary.

## Newsletter

We have had excellent newsletter editors in the past few years. Brock Ray is dropping his editor duties but staying on as designer and publisher. Chip Walton will be taking over the duties of editor: planning stories, recruiting writers and assembling the text for Brock. Thanks to him and to Brock Ray for injecting such style and color into the newsletter this past year, so we delighted that he's staying on in the design role.

For the most part, we have achieved 12 issues a year – or close to it. We have not been as good in alerting people to download the newsletter. This is another reason to sign up for The Barn.

We will send out one newsletter a year to get address corrections (the February issue). Many people enjoy getting the newsletter in the mail, but printing and postage is a huge drain on the club

treasury. With two minutes of effort, you can download your own copy, and even print it in color if you desire.

## Club meeting topics

A couple members proposed meeting topics for 2009. This is excellent, and an almost certain way to get called upon to volunteer as meeting leader. John Kreimer has a pale ale taste experiment he would like to present. Eric Swann has proposed that the club do its own version of the Autumn Brew Review, with members presenting beers around the room for tasting. The only concern is that people presenting beers not be tied to their kegs because they'll want to be sampling as well. John and Eric, thanks for volunteering.

Club President Gera Exire LaTour factored those ideas into a first draft of meetings for 2009.

Several people suggested that we may try too hard on some of the meetings with so many activities scheduled that people have little time to simply talk beer with one another. It was suggested that one or two meetings a year be fairly laid back affairs with plenty of time for socializing.

We discussed having meetings during months where there were club activities like the Upper Mississippi Mash Out in January and the intra-club camp out in the summer. Because the duties for the Mash Out are intense and it is one of the prime involvement activities for members, we will continue to avoid a regular meeting in January. However, relatively few members participate in the camp out, so we will look at scheduling a meeting that month.

### Drink Responsibly

Someone e-mailed to urge that the club purchase an DWI measurement device. We think this is a bad idea. It would have the effect of making the club legally liable for irresponsible members. Instead, we propose that, along with the Jimmy Carter toast at the start of meetings, everyone take a pledge that they will refrain from driving if a fellow member raises that concern with them. If they can't agree to that pledge, we ask them to refrain from drinking at the meeting or leave.

### Club Library

We have a great club library, but many people don't know about it. Jonathan Crist suggested via e-mail that we develop an on-line catalogue and check-out system. This would also be a way to suggest new books for club purchase. You could also e-mail the club librarian to ask for a specific book delivered to the next meeting (avoiding the need to haul the entire library). Members who check out books could provide short reviews on the site. Librarian Jon Messier thought this was an excellent idea and said he would follow up.

### Club Swag

Some time was spent discussing whether members should receive a club glass or t-shirt with their membership. A couple years ago, we made a purchase of club glasses and new members were supposed to receive

a free glass with their membership. This discussion did not come to any conclusions. Some people liked glasses or t-shirts and some did not.

The problem is fulfillment. Nobody likes dragging boxes of glasses or t-shirts to meetings. Keeping track of who has claimed their item is a pain.

An alternative idea for a membership perk was to assemble kits for brewing a certain style and make these available to brewers who commit to bringing the style to a future meeting to share with all members for consumption and discussion.

Members who have ideas on how the club treasury (your dues) could provide them with a more meaningful club experience should contact any club officer. Clearly, the board needs some help in making this determination.

### Attendees and Contacts

Attending were: Gera Exire LaTour (president), Al Boyce (vice president), Paul Dienhart (treasurer/secretary), Chris Smith, Jon Messier, Cory Dallas, Mike Behrendt and distinguished past presidents John Longballa, Steve Piatz, Rick Oftel and Mike Moranz. For ideas, comments or questions, please contact Gera, Paul or Al at: Gera\_latour@hotmail.com; Paul\_Dienhart@cargill.com; or Allan.Boyce@usbank.com

### It's Easy to Sign Up for Club E-Mail

Wondering why you never hear about club meetings? You probably haven't signed up for the club e-mail list. Here's how:

To post to the list, simply send your e-mail to [mba@thebarn.com](mailto:mba@thebarn.com)

To join the list, simply follow the simple directions at: [www.thebarn.com/mailman/listinfo/mba](http://www.thebarn.com/mailman/listinfo/mba)

To remove yourself from the list (unsubscribe) or change e-mail addresses, send a message to [mba-request@thebarn.com](mailto:mba-request@thebarn.com)

At a minimum, we try to notify members of upcoming meetings and of new postings of the club newsletter, The Boiler. You can also use the list to communicate beer-related news or questions to other club members. It all works pretty slick, but it does require two minutes of effort to sign up.

## Upcoming Club Meetings

Sunday, February 8 (noon-3 pm) at Black Forest Inn - Elections  
Saturday, March 14 (noon-3 pm) at CSPA - Chili Cook-off  
Saturday, April 4 (noon-3 pm) at CSPA - Beer Tasting hosted by Eric Swann  
Saturday, May 2nd (10 am - 3 pm) at Flat Earth - Big Brew

# Special/Best/ Premium Bitter

by Steve Piatz

This month the recipe of the month (ROTM) is for a Special/Best/Premium Bitter in preparation for the February 2009 AHA meeting. This is a quick turnaround style so making this beer by Christmas will give you plenty of time to get the beer ready for the February meeting. The beer should only take five to seven days to ferment out to be ready for kegging or bottling, bottle conditioning will take another couple of weeks to carbonate, force carbonating a keg can be accelerated to less than a day resulting in a beer ready to drink in about 10 days.

## Special/Best/Premium Bitter Description

From the description of the Special/Best/Premium Bitter in the BJCP Guidelines available at <http://www.bjcp.org>. **Aroma:** The best examples have some malt aroma, often (but not always) with a caramel quality. Mild to moderate fruitiness. Hop aroma can range from moderate to none (UK varieties typically, although US varieties may be used). Generally no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed. **Appearance:** Medium gold to medium copper. Good to brilliant clarity. Low to moderate white to off-white head. May have very little head due to low carbonation, **Flavor:** Medium to high bitterness. Most have moderately low to moderately high fruity esters. Moderate to low hop flavor (earthy, resinous, and/or floral UK varieties typically, although US varieties may be used). Low to medium maltiness with a dry finish. Caramel flavors are common but not required. Balance is often decidedly bitter, although

the bitterness should not completely overpower the malt flavor, esters and hop flavor. Generally, no diacetyl, although very low levels are allowed. **Mouthfeel:** Medium-light to medium body. Carbonation low, although bottled and canned commercial examples can have moderate carbonation. **Overall impression:** a flavorful, yet refreshing, session beer. Some examples can be more malt balanced, but this should not override the overall bitter impression. Drinkability is a critical component of the style; emphasis is still on the bittering hop addition as opposed to the aggressive middle and late hopping seen in American ales.

The **classic commercial examples** of Special/Best/Premium Bitter available locally include Fuller's London Pride, Young's Special, Goose Island Honkers Ale, and Rogue Younger's Special Bitter.

Special/Best/Premium Bitter	
OG	1.040 – 1.048
FG	1.008 – 1.012
SRM	5 – 16
IBU	10 – 20
ABV	3.8 – 4.6%



## Special/Best/Premium Bitter Background

Special/Best/Premium Bitter is a relatively new beer style, developed in the early 20th century, at a time when beer was still transported from the brewery to the pub in wooden barrels. The beer would be fermented out and then barreled for delivery, at the pub the beer was fined with something like Isinglass (processed fish swim bladders) and the barrel was sealed to attain a little carbonation. The beer was served via gravity or in more recent times via a hand pump that could pull the beer from the barrel (perhaps in the cellar) to the glass. The CAMRA cask conditioned version of the style is served with very little carbonation by a hand pump (a.k.a. a beer engine). The beer engine may or may not have a sparkler, a device sort of like the aerator on your kitchen water faucet, used to create some head and release the little carbonation present in the beer. Many non-CAMRA establishments do serve the beer from modern kegs with carbon dioxide, some even have taps that look roughly like a beer engine.

Traditionally the style would have used only UK origin hops but these days distinct American or even continental European varieties are being used to make members of the bitter family in the UK. In recent years, several of the winners at the Great British Beer Festival have used the citrus-like characteristic hops from the Pacific Northwest.

The style has a wide color range reflecting the various grist choices used. They range from beer made with only pale ale malt to those made with an assortment of crystal malts and even those with a hint of black and/or chocolate malt for color. Many traditional versions use adjuncts like corn, wheat or sugar. The CAMRA Real Ale Almanac in the references gives the grist composition in percentages for many beers in the United Kingdom and can serve as a good starting point if you want to experiment with the ranges of the style. From that reference here is the documented OG, grist and hops used in some randomly selected examples inventoried by CAMRA. *See chart on page 7.*

### The Recipe

The target for the recipe is a beer with an original gravity of 1.046 and 37 IBUs. The recipe is for 5.5 gallons of wort. That should give you a full five gallons of beer in the fermenter after the typical losses in the kettle.

### All Grain Version

Amount (lbs)	Ingredient
8.00	Pale Ale Malt
0.45	Crystal 55° L
0.45	Wheat Malt

The grist is similar to the bulk of the CAMRA referenced beers though it doesn't include any sugar. The grist is mashed at 152° F with about 3 gallons (1.33 quarts per pound of grist) of water for about 45 minutes. A mash out at 168° F is optional.

### Extract Version

The extract version just replaces the grist with extract to reach the same original gravity.

Amount (lbs)	Ingredient
5.50	Light Liquid Malt Extract
1.25	Pale Ale Malt
0.45	Crystal 55° L
0.45	Wheat Malt

For the extract version of the recipe, you have to do a mini-mash to convert the wheat malt. Mash the malts in about 0.75 gallons of water at 152° F for 45 minutes and then rinse them into the kettle.

For both version of the recipe, you can replace the wheat malt with flaked wheat, torried wheat, flaked barley, or even sugar and still match some of the examples in the UK. You can use a different color of crystal malt or a combinations of different crystals and again you still will match the interpretation of the style in the UK.

If you do not have the ability to boil, the full 7 gallons of wort in the extract recipe try for the largest boil you can handle. If your boil volume is significantly below 7 gallons, you will probably want to increase the hop quantities (below) by a lot but I can't really estimate how much with a recipe like this that uses all late additions. Remember, a partial boil is going to result in a slightly darker colored beer than you would get from the same ingredients used in a full volume boil.

### Water

You should be able to produce this beer with medium hard water. However, to my knowledge, none of the water sources available in the metro area have enough sulfate ions for this style. For my high carbonate water in Eagan, I add several teaspoons of calcium sulfate to the boil. If your water is lower calcium

and carbonates you may have to use additional salts to get your water closer to the Burton-on-Trent water profile to fully match the profile of the style. Note that you can make a very drinkable beer without the water adjustments but making them can be that magic that takes your good beer to the great level.

### The Boil

The hop bill is as follow:

Amount (oz)	Hop Variety	Time Left
0.87	10% Target, Pellets	90
0.25	4.75% E. K. Goldings, Whole	3

### Post Boil Processing and Fermentation

Chill the wort to the fermentation temperature for your chosen yeast strain. There are a LOT of yeast choices for this style of beer, nearly any ale yeast can be used though the English varieties tend to produce more esters than the US varieties used in American Pale ales and IPAs. The style makes a good base for experimenting with ale yeasts to find the ones you like most.

No matter which yeast you select, you need to chill the wort to the vendor's suggested fermentation temperature range. Getting some oxygen in the chilled wort is a good idea, oxygen injection or even air from an aquarium pump with a sterile air filter can do the job.

### References

Roger Protz, The Real Ale Almanac, Fifth Edition, CAMRA, Neil Wilson Publishing, 1999.

Roger Protz, The Ale Trail, Eric Dobbey Publishing Ltd, 1995.

Terry Foster, Pale Ale, Brewers Publications, 1990.

### ProMash recipe files

The Special/Best/Premium Bitter recipes in ProMash format are at <http://www.mnbrewers.com/recipes/SOTM-o812-Special-Bitter-all-grain.rec> and <http://www.mnbrewers.com/recipes/SOTM-o812-Special-Bitter-extract.rec>

### Next

Elsewhere in this issue, the Boiler will have a recipe for a big beer (OG

> 1.080) in preparation for the March 2009 meeting and AHA CoC for big beers. As always, if you have recipe ideas, questions, or suggestions let me know at [sjpiatz@gmail.com](mailto:sjpiatz@gmail.com)

Below is the documented OG, grist and hops used in some randomly selected examples inventoried by CAMRA.

Beer Name	SG	Grist	Hops
Black Sheep Special Bitter	1.046	Pale 83%, crystal 7%, torrified wheat 10%, roast malt extract 0.005%	Fuggles, Challenger, Goldings, and Progress. Late hopped with Goldings, 26 IBU.
Brakspear Special	1.043	Pale 96%, crystal 3%, black 1%, invert sugar 10%	Fuggles, Goldings and Styrian Goldings hops, Challenger oil, dry hopped, 46 IBU.
Brewers Droop	1.048	Pale 95%, wheat 2.5%, crystal 2.5%	Challenger for bitterness, Styrian Goldings for aroma.
Cwrw Tudno	1.047	Pale 95%, crystal 5%	Fuggles, German Hallertau and Tettnanger, Tettnanger for aroma, 32 IBU.
ESX Best	1.047	Pale 79%, crystal 7.2%, chocolate 0.2%, torrified wheat 12%, invert sugar 9%	Fuggles and Kent and Styrian Goldings, dry hopped, 34 IBU.
Florrie Night-In-Ale	1.048	Pale 90%, crystal 5%, wheat 5%	Challenger and Goldings.
Friar Duck	1.048	Pale 97%, crystal 3%, light Muscovado sugar	Challenger (50%) and US Liberty (50%) for bitterness, Liberty dry hopped.
Ind Coope Draught Burton Ale	1.047	Pale, chocolate, liquid sugar	UK varieties for bittering, Styrian Goldings dry hop.
Landlord	1.042	Pale 100%, 20 units of color	Tenn Valley Fuggles, Tenn Valley and Kent Goldings, Styrian Goldings.
Linfit Special	1.041	Pale 88%, crystal 11%, flaked barley 1%	Challenger.
London Pride	1.040	Pale 90%, crystal 3%, flaked maize 7%	Challenger and Northdown for bitterness and aroma, Target for bitterness. 30 IBU.
Master Brew Best Bitter	1.037	Pale 83%, crystal 7%, cereal adjuncts 10%	Kent Target and Goldings, 41 IBU.
Prince Bishop Ale	1.044	Pale malt 100%	Fuggles for bittering, Kent Goldings for aroma.
Royal Oui	1.044	Pale, crystal, small % wheat	Liberty and Yeoman.
Scratching Dog	1.046	Pale 95%, crystal 5%	Target for bitterness, Willamette for aroma, dry hopped.
Sedgley Surprise Bitter	1.048	Pale malt and invert sugar	Hereford Goldings, dry hopped.
Valiant Bitter	1.043	Pale 90%, invert sugar 10%, 20 units of color	Goldings, 20 IBU.
Whapweasel	1.048	Pale malt, < 5% crystal	Target, Goldings, Styrian Goldings.

# 2009 Holiday Potluck Wrap-up

On December 12th the club held it's annual Holiday Potluck. There were many familiar faces in the crowd as well as many new ones in attendance. As one of the biggest club gatherings of the year this year's lived up to it's reputation with many of the chairs and tables filled to capacity.

In order to give a little back to the community this year a raffle was held to raise money for Second Harvest Food Shelves in Minnesota. I want to thank members Steve Piatz (award winning mead), Mike Valentiner (base malt), Doug Hoverson ("Land of Amber Waters"), and Al Boyce (Pedal Pub Certificate) for donating prizes. We also received donations from Still H2O, Zipps Liquor, & Four Firkins. We were able to raise \$351.00 with the sale of the raffle tickets. Thanks to everyone who bought tickets.

The big winners this year for people's choice were Rick Ofel for his bourbon barrel barley wine and Bob Norman for his Baked Beans with Chipotles. There was also a third unidentified winner for her beer-braised ribs. Each winner took home a \$25.00 gift certificate to The Four Firkins. Bob was kind enough to provide his bean recipe complete



with instructions on brewing your own vinegar and making your own chipotles.

The commercial keg of La Rulles Erpe-mere Saison provided by the club was a big hit and was finished before the night was over.

I want to especially thank everyone who was there to help set up and to clean up at the end. I hope everyone has a good time and I hope to see you at the next meeting.

## Baked Beans with Chipotles

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound dried great northern beans
- 1 pound dried mixed beans (look for mixed soup beans)
- 1 clove of garlic chopped
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 4 cups of ketchup
- 1 cup of molasses
- 2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 pound of bacon (slices work but bulk end cuts are cheaper)
- ¼ cup of homemade vinegar (see home brewers recipe below!)
- 2 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons homemade chipotle (see make it yourself directions below)

### Preparation:

Soak the beans overnight in salted water (cover a couple of inches).

In the morning rinse the beans and place in a large pan or soup pot. Cover with water (a couple of inches over the top of the beans) and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let

simmer for about one hour or a little more. They are done when tender but don't wait until the open.

While the beans are cooking mix everything else except bacon, onions and garlic. When you mix the spices you might want to start with half the pepper and chipotle and sample the sauce and then add more if desired. Fry the bacon until crispy and then crumble. In the bacon grease fry the onions and garlic until tender.

Mix all the ingredients together. You can now cook everything for about an hour in the oven at 325 degrees or cook for a couple of hours in a crock-pot. This will require a couple of big baking dishes or a very big crock pot.

About 16 to 20 servings

## Homemade Vinegar (mostly all grain)

Target is the famous Lao Chen Vinegar (Old Mr. Chen) of Taiyuan city of the Shanxi province of China (similar to balsamic vinegars)

### Grain Bill:

- 9 pounds Rahr 2 row base malt
- 2 pounds split green peas
- 1 pounds white rice
- 2 16 ounce bottle of sorghum syrup (or a bunch of sorghum grain if you can find it)

### Process:

I didn't have a cereal cooker so I slow cooked the peas and rice on the stovetop over slow heat

for about an hour. (If you found sorghum grain add it in this step).

Place base malt in mash tun and water and bring to 152 degrees. When temperature is achieved add other components and stir in and let the enzymes work on the mash for one hour. Fly or batch sparge and transfer to boil kettle. Hit mash again with 172 degree water wait 10 minutes and add to boil kettle. Repeat until there is about 6 to 6 ½ gallons. NO HOPS NEEDED!

Cool to about 75 degrees and add just about any beer yeast (I recycled Wyeast 1056 from the yeast cake of an American IPA). Let it ferment in primary 1 week then secondary about 2 to 3 weeks more.

Transfer to a plastic primary bucket - surface area is important! Add a couple of bottles of "mother of vinegar", which I purchased at Northern Brewer.

Mother of vinegar is similar to yeast. Where yeast converts wort to alcohol, mother of vinegar will convert alcohol to vinegar. It is some kind of bacteria. Make sure you clean your gear really well after this.

Cover primary bucket with a couple layers of cheesecloth and let set in a warm place for a couple of months. I used the furnace and water heater room that was about 75-80 degrees.

Test periodically until it tastes like vinegar.

## Homemade Chipotles

Get a bunch of peppers (cayenne, habanera, Anaheim, jalapeno, banana, etc.), which are really cheap at the farmers market in September.

Use of gloves, breathing masks and goggles is recommended. Cut peppers in half to remove seeds and expose flesh. Also trim the stems.

Slow smoke about 8 to 10 hours at about 125 to 150. Watch carefully to make sure peppers don't turn black (recommended to keep varieties separated because some finish faster than others). I used Mesquite wood and hickory.

When done allow to dry. Crush peppers using a food processor or any kind of a mill - for this step a breathing mask and a well ventilated area is a very good idea!

## The Four Firkins

Jason Alvey, the owner of The Four Firkins, is currently offering a 10% discount to MHBA member on purchases in the store. The Four Firkins is Minnesota's first beer only specialty store.

8009 Minnetonka Blvd.  
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

HOURS:  
M-Th, noon to 8 p.m.  
Friday, noon to 9 p.m.  
Saturday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

952-938-2847 (phone)  
952-938-3436 (fax)

alvey@thefourfirkins.com

# Competition Corner

Results and upcoming competitions close to the Twin Cities, and qualifiers for MCAB, the Midwest Home Brewer of the Year, and the High Plains Brewer of the Year awards. *Compiled by Al Boyce*

## Meadlennium

Location: Orlando, FL  
Date: 1/24/2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://cfhb.org/>

## Great Northern Brew-Ha-Ha

Location: Duluth, MN  
Date: Feb 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.northernalestars.org/>

## 10th Annual Domras Cup Mead Competition

Location: Savannah, GA  
Date: Feb 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.savannahbrewers.com/>

## 2009 Home Meadmaker Competition

Location: Boulder, CO  
Date: Feb 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://hmmc.meadfest.com>

## AHA Club-Only: Belgian & French Ales

Qualifier: AHA Club of the Year  
Location: St. Charles, IL  
Date: Jan/Feb 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/homebrewing/schedule.html>

## Kansas City Bier Meisters 26th Annual

Qualifier: Masters Championship of Amateur Brewing (MCAB)  
Qualifier: High Plains Home Brewer of the Year  
Location: Roeland Park, KS  
Date: 2/20/2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.kcbiermeisters.org/>

## AHA Club-Only: Beers With OG > 1.080

Qualifier: AHA Club of the Year  
Location: Fargo, ND  
Date: Mar/April 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/homebrewing/schedule.html>

## March Mashness

Location: St. Cloud, MN  
Date: March 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/homebrewing/schedule.html>

## IBU Open

Qualifier: High Plains Home Brewer of the Year  
Location: Des Moines, IA  
Date: March 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://iowabrewersunion.org/>

## AHA NHC First Round

**Midwest Regional**  
Location: TBD  
Date: April 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/events/nhc/index.html>

## AHA Club-Only: Extract Only

Qualifier: AHA Club of the Year  
Location: Arlington, TX  
Date: May 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/homebrewing/schedule.html>

## 3rd Annual Goblets of Gold Mead Competition

Location: Homer, AK  
Date: May 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.greatnorthernbrewers.org/competitions/Ring%20of%20Fire/ROF%20Comp%20Invite.doc>

## AHA NHC Finals

Location: San Francisco, CA  
Date: June 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/events/nhc/index.html>

## AHA Club-Only: Style TBD

Qualifier: AHA Club of the Year  
Location: Broomfield, CO  
Date: August 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.beertown.org/homebrewing/schedule.html>

## Minnesota State Fair Homebrew Competition

Location: St. Paul, MN  
Date: 8/14-15/2009  
Deadline: 8/7/2009  
Website: <http://www.mnbrewers.com/events/mnfair>

## Byggvir's Big Beer Cup

Location: Shakopee, MN  
Date: Sept 2009  
Deadline: TBD  
Website: <http://www.rennfestbeercup.com/>

# Belgian Dark Strong Ale

by Steve Patz

This month the recipe of the month (ROTM) is for a Belgian Dark Strong Ale in preparation for the March meeting and AHA Club-only Competition for big beers (OG of 1.080 or higher). The AHA CoC allows for all the styles where the OG is 1.080 (or higher) including BJCP categories 5c, 5d, 9e, 12c, 13f, 14c, 15c, 16c, 16d, 16e, 18c, 18d, 18e, 20, 21, 22b, 22c, and 23 so the CoC is pretty wide open. The Belgian Dark Strong will take a week to ten days to ferment out and since this is a style that really benefits from bottle conditioning you should allow a couple of weeks for the bottles to carbonate, that means you really should get yours brewed in January if you want it ready for the March meeting. Of course you don't have to bottle condition the beer so kegging it could save you a few weeks.

## Belgian Dark Strong Ale Description

From the description of the Belgian Dark Strong Ale in the BJCP Guidelines available at <http://www.bjcp.org>.

**Aroma:** Complex, with a rich malty sweetness, significant esters and alcohol, and an optional light to moderate spiciness. The malt is rich and strong, and can have a Munich-type quality often with a caramel, toast and/or bready aroma. The fruity esters are strong to moderately low, and can contain raisin, plum, dried cherry, fig or prune notes. Spicy phenols may be present, but usually have a peppery quality not clove-like. Alcohols are soft, spicy, perfumy and/or rose-like, and are low to moderate in intensity. Hops are not usually present (but a very low noble hop aroma is acceptable). No diacetyl. No dark/roast malt aroma.

No hot alcohols or solventy aromas. No recognizable spice additions.

**Appearance:** Deep amber to deep coppery-brown in color ("dark" in this context implies "more deeply colored than golden"). Huge, dense, moussy, persistent cream- to light tan-colored head. Can be clear to somewhat hazy. **Flavor:** Similar to aroma (same malt, ester, phenol, alcohol, hop and spice comments apply to flavor as well). Moderately malty or sweet on palate. Finish is variable depending on interpretation (authentic Trappist versions are moderately dry to dry, Abbey versions can be medium-dry to sweet). Low bitterness for a beer of this



strength; alcohol provides some of the balance to the malt. Sweeter and more full-bodied beers will have a higher bitterness level to balance. Almost all versions are malty in the balance, although a few are lightly bitter. The complex and varied flavors should blend

smoothly and harmoniously.

**Mouthfeel:** High carbonation but no carbonic acid "bite." Smooth but noticeable alcohol warmth. Body can be variable depending on interpretation (authentic Trappist versions tend to be medium-light to medium, while Abbey-style beers can be quite full and creamy).

**Overall Impression:** A dark, very rich, complex, very strong Belgian ale. Complex, rich, smooth and dangerous.

The **classic commercial examples** of Belgian Dark Strong Ale sometimes available locally include Rochefort 10 (blue cap), St. Bernardus Abt 12, Gouden Carolus Grand Cru of the Emperor, Achel Extra Brune, Rochefort 8 (green cap), Chimay Grande Reserve (Blue), and Gulden Draak. The best example is Westvleteren 12 (yellow cap, no label), in my opinion one of the best beers in the world, but that beer is NOT exported to the USA. The Rochefort 10 is a close second to the Westvleteren, in my opinion, and it is sometimes available locally.

## Belgian Dark Strong Ale

OG	1.075 – 1.110
FG	1.010 – 1.024
SRM	12 – 22
IBU	20 – 35
ABV	8 – 11%

## Belgian Dark Strong Ale Background

If you look at the full list of classic examples in the BJCP Style Guidelines you will notice several of the Trappist beers; Westvleteren 12, Rochefort 10, Rochefort 8, Achel Extra Brune, and Chimay Grande Reserve represent four of the seven Trappist breweries in the world and are all classic examples of the style. Only the La Trappe Trappist brewery in Holland, and Westmalle and Orval in Belgium don't have an example in the list. Orval only sells one beer (except at the café down the road from the monastery and there they sell the small version of the regular Orval)

and Westmalle only sells Extra (a small beer), a Tripel, and a Dubbel. La Trappe only makes a Blond, Dubbel, Tripel, and Quadrupel (more of a Trappist version of barleywine). The Trappist really have defined the style even though there are a number of commercial “Abbey” versions in Belgium with religious sounding names, they are produced in secular breweries. Secular breweries aren’t bad, most of the Trappist breweries use mostly or even all secular employees these days to produce their beers. The Trappist breweries tend to be a little more secretive about their recipes and process since they aren’t always readily open for tours, some are nearly impossible to tour. The Trappists brew for their own use and as a way to raise money for their social service activities.

Historically, back as far as the time of the rule of Saint Benedict, around 530, the monks were self-sufficient and brewed beer. None of the current Trappist breweries date back to St Benedict but they still have a long history, though the term Trappist only dates to the mid-1600’s. The French revolution resulted in the destruction of several of the abbeys, you can still see the impressive ruins at Orval. Of the current Trappist breweries, Westmalle is the first to start/restart brewing, starting in the first half of the 1800’s. The idea of using sugar (as syrup) in the beers to reduce the body can be traced back to Westmalle just after World War I. The resultant beer was drier and more refreshing.

One has to assume that in the early brews of the time of St Benedict, and probably until at least the time of the Industrial Revolution and Louis Pasteur’s research on fermentation that the beers were relatively dark, fairly sweet and a little sour. As a result of the Industrial Revolution technology improved; barley malting could produce a consistent product, thermometers allowed consistent mashes, and sanitation was understood so that the

beers became cleaner. The product became repeatable. Along the way it appears that as the quality of life improved, people didn’t need to get as many calories from their beer and tastes changed. The introduction of sugar to Trappist beers followed the wide availability of sugar derived from sugar beets, it reduced the body (and residual sugars) and resulted in what we would consider new beer styles.

### The Recipe

The target for the recipe is a beer with an original gravity of 1.084 and 27 IBUs. The recipe is for 5.5 gallons of wort. That should give you a full five gallons of beer in the fermenter after the typical losses in the kettle.

### All Grain Version

Amount (lbs)	Ingredient
11.38	Pilsner Malt
1.80	Crystal 55° L
0.40	Chocolate Malt
0.60	Special B Malt
0.53	Flaked Corn
1.38	Dark Sugar

The grist is fairly straight-forward with the exception of the sugar. You can buy dark Belgian candi sugar at the homebrew supply store or you can make your own (see the sidebar for the details). Do NOT use grocery store brown sugar, it has the wrong characteristics for the style since the brown color comes from molasses. Options include reducing the chocolate malt or even replacing it with carafa malt. You could also replace the flaked corn with some additional sugar to retain the same OG, if you use light colored sugar you need to do that to get the appropriate beer color.

The mash calls for a two-step profile with rests at 140° and 153° F. I use a decoction process to get to the second rest as well as for mash out but you can use infusion or direct heat if you wish.

The decoction process will give you a little more malt complexity and typically will result in a couple points higher OG than from the infusion process

### Extract Version

The extract version just replaces the pilsner malt in the grist with extract and the flaked corn with sugar to reach the same original gravity.

Amount (lbs)	Ingredient
8.75	Light Liquid Malt Extract
1.80	Crystal 55° L
0.40	Chocolate Malt
0.60	Special B Malt
1.75	Dark Candi Sugar

For the extract version of the recipe, you can just steep the specialty malts in about one gallon of water at 150° F for half an hour to extract the flavors.

As in the all grain version, you can reduce the chocolate malt or even replace it with Carafa.

If you do not have the ability to boil, the full 7 gallons of wort in the extract recipe try for the largest boil you can handle. If your boil volume is significantly below 7 gallons, you will probably want to increase the hop quantities (below) by a lot but I can’t really estimate how much with a recipe like this that uses all late additions. Remember, a partial boil is going to result in a slightly darker colored beer than you would get from the same ingredients used in a full volume boil.

### Water

You should be able to produce this beer with high alkaline (carbonate like from most of the deep wells in the metro area) water. The dark malts will counteract the alkalinity.

## The Boil

The hop bill is as follow:

Amount (oz)	Hop Variety	Time Left
1.65	3.8% Styrian Goldings pellets	75
0.60	4.5% Hallertau Hersbrucker pellets	30
0.30	4.5% Hallertau Hersbrucker pellets	5

### Post Boil Processing and Fermentation

Chill the wort to the fermentation temperature for your chosen yeast strain. There are a LOT of yeast choices for this style of beer, both Wyeast and White Labs produce several different Belgian Trappist/Abbey strains. While my personal favorite is White Lab Trappist Ale (WLP500) if you haven't tried a few of the choices you might want to split your batch so you can compare a couple of the choices. For my favorite WLP500, I find that ramping the fermentation up during primary is essential. Start around 68-70° F and after a day or two you can take the temperature into the mid 80's to increase the esters and phenols.

No matter which yeast you select, you need to chill the wort to the vendor's suggested fermentation temperature range. Getting some

oxygen in the chilled wort is a good idea, oxygen injection or even air from an aquarium pump with a sterile air filter can do the job.

### References

Stan Hieronymus, Brew Like a Monk, Brewers Publication, 2005.

### ProMash recipe files

The Belgian Dark Strong Ale recipes in ProMash format are at <http://www.mnbrewers.com/recipes/SOTM-0901-Belgian-Dark-all-grain.rec> and <http://www.mnbrewers.com/recipes/SOTM-0901-Belgian-Dark-extract.rec>

### Next

In February, the Boiler ROTM will have a recipe for a Brown Porter in preparation for the April meeting. As always, if you have recipe ideas, questions, or suggestions let me know at [sjpiatz@gmail.com](mailto:sjpiatz@gmail.com)

## Making Candy Sugar

The process is very simple, you need a metal pot, a candy thermometer (reads up to 350° F or higher), some table sugar, and a pinch of citric acid. The process starts by weighing the amount of sugar you want into the pot, add just enough tap water to create a thick syrup. Add the pinch of citric acid (or acid blend), the type of acid isn't important as it is just to convert the sucrose (table sugar) into fructose.

Start heating the syrup, you want to get the mixture into the range of "hard ball" and "soft crack" both of which are marked on candy thermometers. Those are 260° F to 285° F. Once you reach the hard ball temp the color of the mixture will start to darken. As mixture boils the temperature will increase as the water boils away, carefully add a little water as the temp gets close to soft ball and stir it in, you don't want the mixture to get above 280° F. I boil the mixture for an hour, until the syrup is roughly the color of a beer bottle.

Once you reach the color you want you can turn off the heat. I pour the syrup into cake pan lined with aluminum foil (wax paper is a bad choice). Once the mixture cools peel the foil off and your sugar is ready for brewing. Alternatively, you could add a little extra water as you turn the heat off and then pour the syrup into a heat resistant jar and save it until you are ready to brew.

Remember you weighed the dry sugar at the start of the process so you know how much sugar you have in the final result, any additional weight is just from the water.





Minnesota Home Brewers Association

2344 Nottingham Court  
Minnetonka, MN 55305

<http://www.mnbrewers.com>

# MHBA membership expired?

Check the expiration date on your mailing label. Send your check for \$15 to:

MhBA, c/o Paul Dienhart, Treasurer  
2344 Nottingham Court  
Minnetonka, MN 55305

Now, you can pay your membership fee by PayPal. Just go to the club website ([www.mnbrewers.com](http://www.mnbrewers.com)) and click on the link. Thanks for supporting your club!

Warning! The Twin Cities homebrew shops are aware that MHBA now issues cards by calendar year, so don't be surprised if they ask to see your 2008 card before providing the 10 percent discount.

## Classifieds

Are you interested in running a classified ad in The Boiler? Contact Chip Walton at [chipaway@hotmail.com](mailto:chipaway@hotmail.com).

## Boiler Deadlines

Do you have a brewing story, or a new technique you would like to share with club members in The Boiler? Send it to: Chip Walton, Editor — [chipaway@hotmail.com](mailto:chipaway@hotmail.com)

### Issue

February 2009

March 2009

April 2009

### Copy Deadline

January 30, 2009

February 20, 2009

March 20, 2009

## MHBA Officers

### President

Gera Exire La Tour 612-636-9014  
[gera\\_latour@hotmail.com](mailto:gera_latour@hotmail.com)

### Vice President

Al Boyce 952-927-8968  
[alboyce@bigfoot.com](mailto:alboyce@bigfoot.com)

### Treasurer/Secretary

Paul Dienhart 952-544-2831  
[paul\\_dienhart@cargill.com](mailto:paul_dienhart@cargill.com)

### Newsletter Editor

Chip Walton  
[chipaway@hotmail.com](mailto:chipaway@hotmail.com)

### Newsletter Designer

Brock Ray 612-481-0566  
[brock@brockray.com](mailto:brock@brockray.com)

### President Emeritus

John Longballa 651-292-9693  
[jlongballa@newspritschool.org](mailto:jlongballa@newspritschool.org)