



## Next Meeting – Aug. 12

We'll be looking for more good weather as we meet in the upper outside terrace of Durty Nellies at 7:30 PM. As always, we'll be sampling either your 4 bottles of homebrew, or buying some of Nellies' finest beer with your \$5 donation. See you then.

## Upcoming Club Events

Tuesday, Sept. 9 – Monthly Meeting, Durty Nellies, 7:30 PM. Any Imperialized Beer AHA Contest.

Saturday, Sept. 13 – Club Wort Summer Crawl, Contact John Guilfoil, [karla\\_guilfoil@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karla_guilfoil@sbcglobal.net)

## Our Summer Crawl & Picnic

No editorial, just two commercials.

If you missed last year's Great Lakes Beer Fest, you should have been kicking yourself as you read my article naming it one of the best ones I ever attended. And having someone else do the driving up the under construction tollway or Edens and a stop at the Milwaukee Ale House is worth the \$30.

Picnic attendance is always a little lighter than I expect. All it requires of you is bringing a side-dish to share and a little homebrew. In return, you get a great meal, good beer, and a chance to know your fellow members better. Plan to attend.

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## July 2008 Meeting Highlights

The second nice meeting night in a row found us outdoors and enjoying Nellies upper veranda. Twenty-two members and a guest were present as Brad brought us to order.

Brad wasted no time and got the AHA Mead contest going. Much to my surprise, there were only 3 meads in competition. When the honey settled, our beer steward, John Guilfoil, was declared the champion. And no one raised any suspicion about his substituting some else's brew for his own.

The summer picnic came up next, and Mark Procter was able to offer in person his backyard as the place for this year's picnic. Ed Pawelko volunteered to supervise its conception. An email will be sent out informing members of the chosen date and other pertinent information.

John Guilfoil and Mike Hudak then reported on plans for the Summer Crawl. It will occur on September 13, start at 11:00 AM, travel to Milwaukee Ale House for lunch, and end up at the Great Lakes Beer Fest in Racine. Cost is projected at \$60 for 36 attendees, which cost will come down if more members attend.

As part of the Treasurer's report, the subject of dues renewal was addressed. After much discussion, it was agreed that the Treasurer would be responsible for dues collections. Non-renewing members would continue to receive the newsletter, but will not have any other member privileges like the brew-ins, library, and early sign up for pub crawls.

Our guest was introduced next. A friend of Jim Holbach, Mike Bushen wants to learn to brew. Brad next talked about upcoming AHA contests.

Brad announced that the member survey had been created and emailed to members. It consists of 10 questions, and he requested that all members respond. He wanted candid comments. There were 12 responses already. He asked that everyone refrain from the Chicago practice of voting early and often.

The Sieben's update was more of the same – slow sales due to no distribution and hopes that a friend's new distributor plan would come through.

The next brew-in was announced for July 19<sup>th</sup>. It would be held at Jim Arendt's house in Elk Grove. Only 30 gallons would be brewed due to lack of equipment beginning at 7:00 AM. The recipe would be either a Hefeweisen or Blonde Ale.

A possible road trip was proposed to Fox and Hounds in Schaumburg due to \$2 pint Tuesdays. Other locations were also advanced including Two Brothers in Warrenville and Adam's Ribs in Lincolnshire. Due to favorable reviews by me and Paul Lange, we will journey to Adam's Ribs in October.

Upcoming fests were announced including the Barrington and the Real Ale Fest in Soldier's Field on July 12<sup>th</sup>, Governor's on the 19<sup>th</sup> and Emmett's in West Dundee on August 2.

The Hardware Committee listed their latest acquisition, a food-grade garden hose. Rich Colberg has donated/loaned his equipment to the Club, thus eliminating a large amount of expenditure on vessels. Still to be purchased are a food-grade pump and a grain mill.

The last item covered in the meeting was a motion by me that Jim Thommes become our 3<sup>rd</sup> life member. It passed by acclamation.

## **AHA Beer Contests**

November 2008 – IPA (14)

January 2009 – Belgian & French Ale (16)

March 2009 – Any Beer with a style specifying an original gravity over 1.080.

May 2009 – Any extract beer.

Note the style guideline numbers and letters after each beer. You can check at

[www.beertown.org](http://www.beertown.org) to get the style info.

## **Classified Section**

Club Wort T-Shirts in the following sizes:

Medium (2); Large (7), X-large (7). Cost is \$10.

Contact Paul Lange at [pdlange@rockwoodco.com](mailto:pdlange@rockwoodco.com).

Three-pound (1 Quart) containers of honey; Cost is \$7.50; Contact Elliot Hamilton at [elliioth@ml1.net](mailto:elliioth@ml1.net)

## **You too can Brew**

*David Jakubiak, Pioneer Papers the Week of June 26*

(Editor's note: Jim Thommes referred me to the reporter who interviewed me by telephone in April. The article finally ran in some of the local Pioneer Press newspapers, but none in our membership area.)

Imagine delicious beer flowing from your kitchen tap with just a few additions.

The availability of inexpensive equipment and easy-to-use ingredients has a growing number of people concocting their own suds, all by adding a little malt, hops and yeast to their tap water.

"Homebrewers are people who like to cook and like to garden. They are people who get a lot of pleasure out of making something themselves," said Mike Kolbuk of Wheeling.

Kolbuk took his first crack at brewing in the 1980s. He got hooked after taking a brewing class offered by the River Trails Park District in 1992, and he is now a member of Club Wort, a homebrewing group that meets monthly at Durty Nellie's in Palatine.

"The thing I like about it is that I can do things that commercial brewers won't do," he explained. As can be the case with cooking and gardening,

brewing can sound a lot more intimidating than it actually is, said Billy Oaks, manager of Perfect Brewing in Libertyville. "If you can boil water and follow directions you can make beer," Oaks said.

The process doesn't require acres of footage, giant stainless tanks or the palate of a professional beer taster. Perfect Brewing sells a starter equipment kit for \$70 that includes almost everything a brewer needs to make a five gallon batch. The only thing the brewer needs are a pot big enough to boil a few gallons of water, and 46 to 56 thoroughly cleaned and sanitized 12-oz. bottles.

Any non-twist-off beer bottle can be recycled for use in homebrewing, said Kolbuk. "It's easy to get bottles. Invite some friends over, or, do as I did in the past, and do some dumpster diving behind a bar that serves a significant amount of high-quality beers."

Oaks said that when a potential brewer is ready to brew he or she will need four basic ingredients: water, malt, hops and yeast.

For the water, he said, most area residents are lucky.

"Most people have Lake Michigan water which is good for brewing. If your water tastes good off of the tap, it will be OK to brew with."

All of the other ingredients can be found at a local homebrew shop or online supplier.

For the malt, most starting brewers work with malt extract. Malt extract is sugar that has already been extracted from barley and is available in either liquid or powder, or dried, form.

Kolbuk said choosing hops requires a little bit more discretion. Hops will add bitterness, scent and flavor to your beer. Typically there are several types of hops available and each has its own qualities, which are classified based on International Bittering Units or IBUs. In short, lower the IBU number the less bitter the influence of the hop. So, for example, a pilsner would call for a lower IBU, while an India Pale Ale requires hops with a higher IBU.

The final ingredient, yeast, is responsible for the magic that will turn your tap water into beer. Again, a wide variety of yeasts are available, but for beginning brewers the key is to select a yeast that has a fermentation temperature that allow the yeast to do their work wherever you'll be brewing.

For example, Oaks said, ale yeast ferment between 65 degrees and 70 degrees. Lager yeast, however ferment between 50 degrees and 60 degrees. So, he said, if you plan on brewing in a bucket on a basement floor, you'll likely be using ale yeast.

Oaks suggested that first time brewers use kits, sold by homebrew shops that contain all the ingredients for a five gallon batch. These kits are also cost effective, he said. At around \$30 they'll yield just over two cases of high quality beer.

Kolbuk also suggests not brewing alone. Joining Club Wort, he said, "was the best thing I could have done as a brewer. You will learn techniques, and you will learn about equipment, and you will learn about styles. It really helps to improve your brewing."

Oaks said brewing is a hobby you can take as far as you like. Kolbuk agrees. He brews five batches a year. Another member of his club has gone even further.

"One of our members, Rich Sieben, is marketing his grandfather's beer. He and another member of the club have contracted to brew Sieben's beer. Sieben's was a longtime brewery in Chicago that closed in 1967. He and his friend Elliot Hamilton have revived the brand."

For Skokie's Doug Wich, brewing has lead to friendships and some pretty serious competition. "I've never met an unhappy homebrewer," he said.

A competitive brewer, beer judge, and member of the Chicago Beer Society, who has been brewing for over 20 years, Wich brews through the mashing method, which means he extracts his own malt

allowing for increased control and complexity is his beer.

Wich is chasing the crown of Midwest Homebrewer of the Year which will take him to competitions throughout the Midwest. But it all began with a vision.

"When I moved in my house in Skokie it had a great basement, and I thought, 'this would make a great brewery.'"

## **Crying In Their Beer**

Raise a pint to the old British pub: Dark-paneled, fixed on the English landscape – and, more than ever these days, empty.

Beer sales in pubs have slumped to their lowest level since the Great Depression, including a 10 percent drop in pints drawn in just the past year.

Blame a nationwide smoking ban that took hold last year, rising costs, competition from supermarkets and an economic downturn that has more Britons tossing back a Newcastle or Boddingtons at home and skipping the local watering hole.

"I used to go two or three times a week after work, but now I just stay at home and go once every now and again," said Chris Hanson, 43, a carpenter in London.

A report from the British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) said pub managers across Britain are pulling around 14 million pints a day, down about a third from the height of the market in 1979. More than 1,400 pubs made their final "last calls" last year. More than half of British villages are dry for the first time since the Norman Conquest of 1066.

How can it be in a nation where beer is such a staple that regulars store their personal drinking cups at their favorite establishment?

"Most people are a bit bored with beer," said Anthony Buck, a manager at the Lock 17 bar in London. Buck said beer is being overtaken by

drinks like hard cider, which, he said, "is a lot more fashionable."

It's not that Britons are walking away from beer altogether. Sales in stores rose nearly 4% the past year.

The BBPA fears the slower sales will mean more of the 57,000 pubs in Britain will have to close.

They blame the national alcohol tax and its annual hikes for much of the industry's ills. "We need a change of approach from the government. Brewing is a major industry, beer our national drink, and pubs a treasured part of our national culture.

## **Bell's is Back**

Nearly two years after they pulled out of the Chicago area due to a distributor dispute, Bell's returned effective August 1. It will be hard to find at the beginning, but distribution is expected to ramp up considerably in 2009.

The original problem came when Bell's distributor – National Wine & Spirits – wanted to sell rights to Miller's primary distributor. Larry Bell felt that he would be ignored in favor of the big guy. Since Illinois law made it so difficult to switch distributors (See Sieben's info from the last few months), Larry decided to pull out of the market that accounted for 10% of his sales. In December 2007 he re-entered it with his Kalamazoo Royal Amber, but that effort caused National to threaten to sue.

Bell's lucked out recently when National dropped its Illinois license, thus forfeiting any right to distribute in Illinois.

The loss of Illinois didn't hurt Bell's. Its output grew 22% in 2007, becoming the 14<sup>th</sup>-largest U.S. craft brewer. The new distributors (3 of them) are excited about carrying Bell's, especially with the pent-up demand. The first establishment to pour Bell's was Sheffield's Beer Garden, whose customers had still been mourning its loss.

# HÄGAR THE HORRIBLE



## July Meeting Pictures

Taken by Elliot Hamilton

