



Next Meeting – Sept. 9

Where will we meet next at Dirty Nellies? All I know is that the meeting will start at 7:30 PM somewhere in or outside the building. Our AHA Any Imperialized Beer contest will occur, so I'm looking forward to some interesting beers. Bring your 4 bottles of homebrew, or buy some of Nellies' finest beer with your \$5 donation. See you then.

Upcoming Club Events

Saturday, Sept. 27 – Club Wort Picnic at Mark & Laura Procter's in Hawthorne Woods at 1:00 PM.

Tuesday, Oct 14 – Road Trip Monthly Meeting to Adam's Ribs on Milwaukee Ave. in Lincolnshire.

Our Picnic

We have the date and the time – September 27 at 1:00 PM. We have the location – Mark & Laura Procter's back yard at 4 Piper Lane in Hawthorne Woods.

What we need is you. All you have to do is confirm attendance with Mark (he will be emailing us with instructions) and give an idea of what kind of side dish – appetizer, salad or dessert – you are bringing. A little homebrew would be good also. In return, you get a great meal, good beer, and a chance to know your fellow members better. See you there.

Aug 08 Meeting Minutes

There was a party in the upstairs room and terrace that night, but luckily no Guitar Hero so Dirty Nellies put us 18 members and two guests in the main concert room.

Brad started the meeting with introduction of the guests. Justin, a friend of Rick Rodriguez, is a non-brewer looking to start the hobby. Jay, a friend of Randy Drumtra, is a viner wanting to expand into brewing.

Paul Lange tried to sell Club Wort T-shirts, but was stymied by not having the XX-Large sizes that our new members seemed to require.

Mark Procter announced that he would be happy to host our Summer Picnic on September 27 beginning at 1:00 PM. Jim Thommes said that Dave Schoemaker had offered to prepare his dynamite beef brisket for the picnic.

John Guilfoil talked about the upcoming fall pub-crawl. As of meeting time he had 24 firm commitments, which was well short of the 36 needed to pay for the bus. Because of the danger that tickets for the Great Lakes fest could sell out before our members knew whether a Club trip was feasible, he agreed to set a one week deadline to get the minimum to sign up.

Elliot Hamilton next gave the purchasing committee report. A Barley Crusher grain mill has been ordered. An oxygenator will be ordered along with a better burner. On plan to be built are a water center and heat sticks. Since keg work will not be needed, there will be some significant savings from the original spending estimate.

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Brad reported on the results of the survey. An excellent 25 responses were received. He will be looking over the responses and will try to incorporate them into a future meeting.

The last brew-in was reviewed. Although it started at 5:00 PM, it was all over by 10:00 PM. Elliot said there would be no brew-in in September except if the pub-crawl fell through.

Elliot then showed a keg conversion that eliminated the flange at the top by cutting at the seam. The handles were retained for ease of handling. The same capacity remained.

Miscellaneous topics were dealt with next. All Great Taste attendees enjoyed the time in Madison (see article this issue). Fox & Hounds in Schaumburg will give us free appetizers and has \$2 drafts on Tuesday if we want to do a road trip. The brew-in at Flatlanders in September still had open slots – pay a fee and get wort to bring home from their equipment. Emmett’s is sponsoring a June 2009 tour to the Czech Republic costing \$3,600 per person.

Finally, I ended the meeting with a plea for more newsletter articles from the members.

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 [.beertown.org](http://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.

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

DIY Yeast Magnetic Stir Plate

Written by Brad Griffin

All of us home-brewers know that you can’t make beer without yeast. Yeast provides many of the flavors we desire and if not properly used can be responsible for off-flavors too. One simple step that we can do to improve the quality of our beer is to improve the quality of our yeast, by pitching the proper amount of yeast into our wort. This can be simply and cheaply done by building your own magnetic stir plate from spare computer parts and a few bucks. According to research I found on-line, a normal yeast pitching rate, for 5.25 gallons of wort with an S.G. of 1.048, would be 180 billion yeast cells. www.mrmalty.com provides an online calculator to determine the proper pitching rate based on gallons of wort, its S.G. and what type of yeast you are using. White Labs vials usually contain between 70 and 120 billion cells and a Wyeast activator pack contains about 100 billion. This means putting in two vials for an average batch, and even more for those of us who like to brew big beers. This can be a costly venture. To avoid this cost you can make a yeast starter and start with one yeast pack and step up the yeast to the proper cell count. Using a magnetic stir plate to constantly stir your starter keeps your yeast in suspension and provides excellent oxygen exchange, providing the best environment for the yeast to multiply. Now that you are convinced of the benefits of the starter let’s get onto the “how-to”.

The parts you will need to complete this project are the following: 12V DC cooling fan and the two magnets from a hard drive from an old computer; a 9V DC power supply adapter from an old electronic device (other voltage adapter ranging from 6 to 12 should work fine too); a 5K-ohm potentiometer

(pot) from Radio Shack (the pot controls the speed of the fan, my experience was that the 5K-ohm pot was too big and a smaller one should be used to give more gradual control over the speed); on/off switch from Radio Shack (if you want the deluxe model); a 1 inch magnetic stir bar and 2L Erlenmeyer from Perfect Brewing; scrap wood pieces (1x3 and ¼” plywood) to build the box to house the electronics.

Step one, removing the magnets. Loosen screws on the top plate and remove, exposing the internals of the hard drive. These magnets are usually glued to a piece of metal which is attached in the drive with screws. You may need to mangle the drive a bit to extract the pieces holding the magnets. You should use a putty knife to pry the magnets off the holders. These magnets are surprisingly strong for their size.

Step two, position one of the magnets in the middle of the fan. Positioning is important. If the magnet is not centered your fan will wobble, and not properly spin the stir bar and shortening the life of the fan. Temporarily connect the fan to the power supply to test the spin of the fan/magnet. Use a dab of hot glue to keep the magnet in place once center has been found. The spinning magnet is what spins the stir bar in the flask.

Step three, connecting the electronics. If you have not already done so, snip off the end of the power supply (the end that plugged into the device, not the wall). Strip the ends of the wires, about ¾”. Strip the ends of the wires from the fan. Attach the positive wire (usually marked somehow) from the power supply to one of the outer connectors of the potentiometer (it should have three connection points). Attach the positive wire of the fan to the middle connector on the potentiometer. Attach the negative wire of the fan to the negative wire of the power supply. For the deluxe model put a switch between the power supply and the potentiometer. Test your set up. If everything works well solder your connection points. You could use electrical

tape to hold your connection points but it just isn't as sturdy and may loosen up causing a short.

Step four, build the box. The size of the box depends on the size of the Erlenmeyer flask. A 7” by 7” box should fit a typical 2L flask. Cut the 1x3 stock to create the four sides/walls of the box. Cut a piece of ¼” plywood to fit as the top of the box. The construction of the box can be as simple or as professional as you want. Use butt joints to connect the four walls and nail the plywood over the top or use miter joints for the walls and create a dado cut to hold the plywood top; whatever you are comfortable with.

Step five; prepare the box for the electronics. Center the fan on the top of the box marking the four bolt holes and drill through the top. Counter sink the hole from the top so the head of the bolts used to attach the fan do not stick up. Drill a hole on one of the sides of box. The stem of the potentiometer will stick out from here. Drill another hole for the on/off switch if you added one.

Step six, attaching the electronics into the box. Attach the fan to the underside of the top. Use small washers as spacers to keep the fan about ¼” from the top. This may need to be tweaked to get the best spin on the stir bar. You will need to play with this. Use epoxy or other strong glue to hold potentiometer in place. Be careful not to overdo it, the stem needs to be able to twist.

Step seven, finishing touches. You may want to spray the wooden box with a protective coating since it might get wet. Add rubber feet to the corners, to allow airflow under the box and keep the box from moving. Attach knob to potentiometer. Keep the second magnet to use as a stir bar holder on the bottom of the flask when dumping your starter into your wort. It's always a good idea to have a second stir bar around, just in case your stir bar ends up in your wort.

For more information search the internet for “DIY magnetic stir plate” and you will find other

instructions of varying complexities and that you may find valuable.

Great Taste of the Midwest

I admit it. I never was a big fan of the Great Taste of the Midwest. Between the waiting in line to get in and the large crowds around the beer, I felt I had better times at smaller fests like Great Lakes.

However, every 6 years I get curious enough to try it again. To my surprise, it has changed enough for the better that I will probably be a more frequent visitor.

I went up Saturday morning with the Procter's. Mark and Laura had softball and a birthday party Friday night, while I had a Janis Ian concert to attend. The trip to Madison city limits took exactly 2 hours as predicted by Mark, and soon after we were at Capital Brewery. After lunch offsite (where we were joined by Roger Santagato) we got on the bus and were waiting in line by 12:15 PM.

Here is where the first change (at least from the last time I came) occurred. Workers roamed up and down the lines collecting tickets and fitting wristbands on. This eliminated the ticket-collecting delay after the gates were opened: we walked in, collected our sampling glass, and by 1:15 were drinking.

The next surprise was the increase in the tents where the beer was located. This dispersed the crowd very effectively, so that there were only a few locations (Bells and Three Floyds) that had a significant line in front.

As I was drinking my first beer (New Albanion's 12% Malcolm's Ale) I made my way to Jim and Nancy Thommes's gathering spot for lost Club Worter's and friends. I didn't spend much time there that afternoon as it was a little too close to the Real Ale tent, and with the high-gravity beers being offered, I knew the afternoon would end too fast if I only drank there.

I won't bore you with listing all the beers I sampled. One brewer stood out for me – The Livery (Benton Harbor, MI) with their fruit infused Belgian's and other high-gravity beers. There was another brewery, whose name I can't recall, which served non-hopped beer – they used other herbs and spices to preserve their beer. The beers didn't do anything for me, but it was gutsy to try something different. A lot of breweries seemed to have a beer aged in a bourbon barrel. It made me wonder if Club Wort can ever get another barrel with that demand.

The weather was perfect all afternoon. The crowds were well-behaved. And the beer was mostly excellent. The wait for the bus going back to Capital after the fest was about an hour, but it helped sober me up a little. A pretty, perfect day it was.

July 2008 Brew-in

Written by Eric Raz

“I don't know about you, but we're making beer here!” exclaimed Jim Arendt from the other end of the phone. After weather forced us to re-schedule our original date, and another scare earlier in the day when a wicked storm tore through the area, these were good words to hear.

It was a little after five pm when I pulled into Jim Arendt's driveway. A small piece of paper marked “CW” attached to the fence indicated I was at the right place. I made my way to the back of the house and was greeted by Jim Arendt and Barry Filerman. With an array of equipment scattered across the deck they had already begun heating the hot liquor.

To our knowledge, this was going to be the first club brew-in held on a weeknight. The plan was simple. Make 30 gallons of Blonde ale in one evening, utilizing a shortened mash and batch sparge to keep the process as short as possible. We'd have to be nimble and work quickly.

In no time, the three of us got a second hot liquor tank set up and fired the burner. Barry began crushing grain while I prepared the two mash tuns.

Jim Arendt, our host and chef for the evening, put the final touches on his meal: New Orleans style rice and smoked sausage complimented by beer bread. We were still waiting for the hot liquor to get up to temp so we took that opportunity to eat.

Around 6pm we began mashing in. But, we missed our strike temp. *Ouch* we added some hot water to bring things back in range. At this point Patrick showed up, asked what he could do to help out, and quickly joined in our efforts. Shortly thereafter, Elliot arrived with his camera, spiffy motorcycle pants, and some grief. He expected us to be boiling by now -- which we weren't. As much as we wanted to be boiling, the lower mash temp put us behind a smidge.

Then we began collecting wort. Jim Brewer arrived and started helping with the sparge. As we pulled off our final run, Jim Holbach waltzed in. We evened up the gravity between the three kettles (13 Brix) and turned up the burners. The kettles came to a boil around 8:30pm, we added the first hop addition, and darkness fell upon our event. Jim Arendt procured a high-output halogen work light for the rest of session. Forty-five minutes later we dropped in our flavoring hops. We then prepped and sanitized the club's recently purchased Chillzilla for its maiden run.

After knock-out the average gravity was around 1.055 +/- 1 point. The target was 1.051 so we were a little more efficient than planned. It's not surprising; we ended up mashing longer than expected and thus most likely gained some efficiency.

We began chilling wort and noticed that while the Chillzilla was bringing the wort temperature down, it wasn't happening fast. After some troubleshooting, we realized that we had the "wort-in" and "wort-out" ports mixed up. Thus the water was traveling the same way as the wort and not "counter-flowing" as it should. We flipped them around and immediately noticed a 4-degree gain in

efficiency...but it was still slow. With the warm ground water, wort was trickling into the fermenters at 72F. It took over an hour and a half to chill the 30 gallons of wort and get it into the six carboys. It was only after that we realized we had the Therminator on site. Employing it in addition to the Chillzilla would have reduced our chilling time substantially.

We finished cleaning up, loaded our shares into our vehicles and left a little wiser. It was 11:30pm.

July Brew-In Pictures

Taken by Elliot Hamilton

