



Club Christmas Party – December 8

You all should have made your reservations by now for our Club Christmas party at Dirty Nellies. Homebrew will be welcome, but the bar will be open to buy other refreshments including commercial beer. Start showing up at 6:30 and expect to eat at 7:00 PM. Bring your significant other so you don't have to drive home. \$10 /person.

Upcoming Club Events

Tuesday, Jan 12 – Monthly meeting, Dirty Nellies, 7:30 PM. English Brown Ale AHA Contest

Saturday, Jan. 30 – January Pub Crawl, 10:30 AM – 9:30 PM, Dirty Nellies pickup, \$30 for your seat.

Pub Crawl Blues

It's been 3 weeks since I handed out the itinerary at the meeting and emailed out to the membership. I look at the list and there are 4 members other than me on it. Maybe nobody likes the stops, but they were vetted by both Roger Santagato and Paul Lange. Come on, guys, your calendars should be pretty empty at this time, which is why I got it out as early as I did. I hesitate to take any more action, like securing the bus with a deposit, because I don't have a good handle on attendance.

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Trees Falling and No One Hearing the Noise

Since you have just opened the newsletter, please email me back that you did. No message required.

Unless you are totally clueless, you are aware of the problems newspapers are having. No one is reading them, at least in the numbers they did in the past. Maybe their time has passed, lost in the visual and aural clutter of modern times. Is this the fate of this newsletter?

After the last brew-in, I emailed the 10 participants at the last brew-in asking whether anyone could write a short article and did anyone take pictures? I'm still awaiting any response. Days after I emailed out (instantaneously received by all) the November newsletter, I talked to two long-time members of the Club, neither of whom had read it. Then at the November meeting a former officer asked what happened at the cider making, revealing that he hadn't read the newsletter either.

I just want to know whether this newsletter is relevant anymore. It's no big deal. In fact, I'll have a few more hours each month to do other things if we stop it. This poll won't work if anyone sends out a mass email, since I need to know how many actually took time to read this.

November 10 Meeting

We were back at Dirty Nellies after our road trip, and a large group of 21 members showed up. In addition, in from Zurich, Switzerland was Jim Arendt. I was impressed that he would take up some of his time back in the world (as we called it when I was stationed in Germany) to see us. We had our youngest attendee ever as Evan Van Dyke

brought his little one.

Eric started the meeting with introduction of our guest, Jeff. He has been brewing for two years and had just started all-grain. Unfortunately, he resisted our sales pitch and did not join.

Dave Banks gave the Treasurer's report - \$1,401.34 less money owed to Randy Drumtra for whiskey barrel maintenance.

Randy was next up, and showed the Club the new hop screen holders that he and Elliot Hamilton had constructed out of PVC piping. It was used at the last brew-in and definitely stopped chiller clogging.

The AHA Belgian strong ale contest attracted one entry. Bob Wappel brought in a partial-grain Amber Trippel.

Members next considered the Christmas party venue. Durty Nellies would charge between \$10 and \$15 per person depending on the menu and a \$50 fee for a bartender for the evening. Eric had checked with L'Olivo in Schaumburg. They would charge between \$12 and \$18. Evan added that he didn't think much of their food. Finally, Bob Wappel said his development's club room would cost a \$100 rent, a \$15/hour attendant fee, and \$75 liquor license. In addition, we would have to clean-up the room at the end. A vote was taken, and Durty Nellies won overwhelmingly. The next item for the party was the cost to the members.

Competing proposals were \$10 per attendee with the Club covering the difference, or the Club covering \$400 and attendees paying the difference. An overwhelming vote chose the \$10 fee, as it would be easier to administer.

Barry talked about the upcoming Flatlanders brew-in on the 21st. It would be a vanilla porter.

The final t-shirt discussion came next. Production options included a back-only, front-only, or a little logo in front, big in back. I mentioned that I had gotten a quote of \$14.50 per shirt for the duo type, so it would be more expensive than just front or

back. The members voted to buy the duo version. Eric reported that 25 t-shirts and 10 polo shirts were ordered by the members in the email poll.

Randy recommended that the whiskey barrel be abandoned after this last fermentation finishes, as it is too expensive to maintain with 1.75l of whiskey every month.

There was new Sieben's news. A NW Wisconsin distributor wants 25 barrels of beer. Unfortunately, Sieben's needs a new contract brewery. Elliot has 10 cases of beer left, and the Club members urged him to sell it to members.

Barry Filerman then gave a presentation on spice, herb, vegetable and Christmas spice beer complete with samples (see his notes following). Jim Thommes asked whether there was interest in a Club yeast bank.

Nov. 2009 Tasting Notes

Written by Barry Filerman

Tasting this month occurred in our usual spot, the balcony at Durty Nellies. We had the pleasure of tasting beers from all over the spectrum this month. First up was Bob Wappel's Belgian Trippel. This was the only beer entered for this month's AHA contest. Members commented that the beer was very tasty.

Next up was a cream ale courtesy of Eric. Eric mentioned that the beer was based on the Schlitz recipe. Members said that the beer was very good.

The next beer was a toasted grain amber from Mark. This beer was brewed with grains that Mark toasted in the oven after a late evening. Mark explained that he toasted the grains at 350 degrees for 15 minutes and then crushed and mashed. Members commented that the beer had a really nice toasty flavor and even though Mark indicated he was shooting for a beer that was "fat tire" like. Members commented that they enjoyed this beer much more.

Randy treated us to 2 Flatlanders Oktoberfest beers that he fermented with 2 different strains of yeast, S04 and S05. Members commented that the S04 beer had much more flavor due to the increased phenolics as an aftertaste and some members commented that the 2 beers would be nice if they were blended.

The next beer was another Flatty's Oktoberfest from Jim Holbach. Jim fermented this share with German Ale Wyeast. Members commented that it also had a high level of phenolics as an aftertaste.

Next, Rob treated us to a Cherry Irish Red ale. Members commented that it had a very nice cherry flavor.

We were treated to a visit by Jim Arendt who was here for a few days on hiatus from Zurich. Jim brought along with him some of the club favorite, Positively Porter. Of course, everyone thought the beer was absolutely delicious and all agreed that this is an excellent recipe. It was also nice to see and chat with Jim.

The next beer was courtesy of Brad who treated us to a porter. Members commented that it was not as roasty as Jim's but it was still enjoyed by all and had a nice flavor and a chocolaty nose.

The last beer of the evening was courtesy of Dave Banks. Dave provided 2 of the same pale ales brewed with 2 different hopping schedules, one traditional with Centennial and Columbus hops and one untraditional with an assortment of many hops. Many differences were noticed by members including the bitterness and piney-ness of the untraditional one.

There will not be tasting notes next month as the next meeting will consist of the holiday party. Until the next installment, cheers!

Thou Shall Not Resell

The Trappist monks at St. Sixtus monastery in Belgium near the French border have taken vows against riches, sex and eating red meat. They speak

only when necessary. But you can call them on their beer phone.

These monks are the brewers of Westvleteren beer, the scarcest of all Trappist brews. They have been brewing their beer since 1839. Their beer is offered in strengths up to 10.2% alcohol. It sells for \$30 for a 13-oz bottle on the internet if you can find it.

For the 26 monks, however, success has brought a spiritual hangover as they fight to keep an insatiable market in tune with their life of contemplation.

The monks are doing their best to resist getting bigger. They don't advertise and don't put labels on their bottles. They haven't increased production since 1946. They sell only from their front gate. You have to make an appointment and there's a limit of 2 cases a month. Because scarcity has created a high-priced gray market online, the monks search the net for resellers and try to get them to stop. They even have filed complaints with the Belgian government when persuasion failed.

"We sell beer to live, and not vice versa," says Brother Joris, brewery director. Beer lovers, however, seem to live for Westvleteren.

Until the monks installed a new switchboard and set up a system for appointments two years ago, the local phone network would sometimes crash under the weight of calls. Cars lined up for miles along the flat one-lane country road that leads to the red brick monastery.

Some beer lovers say the excitement over Westvleteren is hype born of scarcity. "It's a very good beer," says Jef van den Steen, a brewer and author of a book on Trappist monks and their beer. "But, it reminds me of the movie star you want to sleep with because she's inaccessible, even if your wife looks just as good."

Thanks to the beer phone, there are no more lines of cars outside the monastery, but production remains just 60,000 cases per year. The beer has become

almost impossible to find, even in the specialist beer bars of Brussels and local joints.

The St. Sixtus monks' attitude is in stark contrast to other monasteries brewing Chimay, Orval, Westmaile and Rochefort, who have grown their businesses to meet demand. Not that the St. Sixtus monks are backward. They might brew only a few days a month using their original, secret recipe, but they have plowed profits into productivity-enhancing equipment; their current brew house was built in 1989 with expert advice from the Artois Breweries. And they are partners with the other monasteries in the Trappist alliance. They get together every few months to share sales and business strategy, and employ lawyers in Washington and Brussels to sue brewers who try to use the word Trappist.

In the 1980's, the monks even debated whether they should continue making something from which people can drunk. "There is no dishonor in brewing beer for a living. We decided to stick to our traditional skills instead of breeding rabbits."

AHA Beer Contests

Note the style guideline numbers (and letters) after each beer. You can check at www.beertown.org to get the style info.

January 2010 – English Brown Ale (11)

March 2010 – American Ale (10)

April 2010 – Any beer 50% made from extract

July 2010 – Mead (24,25,26)

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@m11.net

November Meeting Pictures

Taken by Elliot Hamilton



