

# The Worthouse News

A PUBLICATION OF THE EDMONTON HOMEBREWERS GUILD

FEBRUARY 2001



## The Edmonton Homebrewers Guild Executive

*(Sept. 00 to June 01)*

President..... Roxy Hastings  
Vice-President ..... Frank Kuzemski  
Secretary .....Gunther Trageser  
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Treasurer ..... Robert Charmanati  
Competition Chair .. Kevin Zaychuk  
Newsletter .....Jim Scott

## Club Meetings

EHG meetings are held on the first non-holiday Monday of a month, from September to June, at Alley Kat Brewing, 9929 – 60 Avenue, Edmonton. Meetings start at 7:30 p.m.

## Contributions

The Worthouse News is a monthly publication of EHG, mailed to paid members, club sponsors and sister Brew Clubs. Articles in the Worthouse News may be used in other homebrewing newsletters providing credit is given to the author and EHG.

Submissions to the Worthouse News may be sent to the editor/publisher.

## View from the Top- President Roxy Hastings

Well it was certainly gratifying to see the turnout at the February meeting. We actually had enough people show up that it actually felt like we were a club again.

One of the requests that has been repeatedly brought to my attention is that people want to be tasting more homebrew at the meetings. Members really want to taste what other people are brewing and they don't want to be just tasting those few brews being made by the elite few super competitors. When I first joined the Guild over a decade ago, it was an unspoken rule that everyone would bring at least three bottles of brew to share with the other members. It didn't matter if the beer had won a gold medal at the nationals or was lawn mower beer, brewed to style or was "just" homebrew, flawless or fucked up. Virtually everyone brought beer. We all enjoyed tasting the gamut of brews that were being made by all members of the Guild.

At that time there were very few of us competing nationally and even fewer were winning. Even though our standards were not as high then as they are today, there was certainly a wider range of

homebrew being served at the meetings. I encourage you not to be intimidated by the quality of those few of us who have achieved national standards - none of us started out that way. Every one of us who has reached those high levels spent years making — well, ... homebrew, some of it good and a lot not so good. But the one thing we all did was that we always brought what we made to the meetings and we passed it around and we asked for opinions. And we got them. And we used that information to brew better beer.

So it is not necessary to hold back bringing your beer because you don't think it matches the standards of Harry Wagner; because let me tell you, when Harry first started out he wasn't making great beer. But he also wasn't embarrassed about bringing what he did make just because it didn't match that being made by Neil Herbst. However, over time Harry's beers have become the standard by which we judge beers at the national level. By bringing beer to the Guild meetings Harry got immediate and honest feedback about the quality of his beer, and for that, he got better, much better!

Yes, competing in national level competitions has certainly improved our brewing, but nothing can match the immediate feedback you get from a brewer you respect when you share one of your beers with him at a Guild meeting. So no matter what your level, novice or expert, national champion or beer kit beginner, bring your beers to the meetings and share them with your peers. We all benefit by tasting the range of beers brewed by all of us. We're supposed to be a guild, a group of craftsmen devoted to helping each other be better - let's perform like one.

### **EH3 News**

Pales Please!

To help bring about what I talked about in "View" we are going to have a style theme for the March meeting. Now with many homebrew competitions coming up it is quite likely that a number of you have been doing some serious brewing in some of the more popular styles. So we are going to take a wild guess and gamble that there just might be some British and American Pale Ales and Bitters around. So if you happen to have anything that could be broadly defined as a pale ale we encourage you to bring a few bottles to share with the members. Let's experience as wide a range as possible. And don't worry about bringing the best, or being the best or being the worst. It doesn't matter. Just bring some Pale Ale homebrew.

Of course if you don't happen to have any Pale Ale, bring a few bottles of whatever you have. With competition season fast approaching we need to start tuning up the taste buds, both to help the judges judge and to help members decide on what they should be entering (or what they should call there entry).

### **Upcoming Competitions**

March in Montreal - entry deadline 17 March, judging 31 March - limited classes  
Marquis de Suds, Calgary - entry deadline 14 April, judging 21 April - all styles but grouped into broad classes (same entry form as last year)  
Great Canadian Homebrew Competition, Toronto (CABA event) - AHA qualifier - entry deadline 21 April - all BJCP classes and styles (realbeer.com/caba)  
Regina Ales - entry deadline 6-12 May - all styles but grouped into 8 broad classes (email russ.rtemple@accesscomm.ca)  
Aurora Brewing Challenge, Edmonton (CABA event) - MCAB 4 qualifier - entry deadline 31 May, judging 1-3 June - BJCP classes and styles 1-20 plus meads, specialty fruit and spice, and smoked (www.ehg.ca)

The executive highly encourages you to compete in these competitions. All of them boast first class judging and all groups are working very hard to support each other. In fact I have never seen such interclub cooperation as I have witnessed in this year, especially among the western Canadian brew clubs.

Entry forms for March in Montreal, Regina Ales and Aurora Brewing Challenge will be available at the March Guild meeting and should soon be posted or linked to our web site [www.ehg.ca](http://www.ehg.ca).

### **Notices, and Other Stuff!**

Jim Scott

#### **Hops:**

The Hops are in! So, it is important that you get out to Monday's meeting! Why? Because, the vultures will be there, and any hops not picked up, will be auctioned to the highest bidder!

This includes the English hops that we have all been waiting for! They will all be packaged and waiting for us – be there! By the way, cost is \$1.25 per package for the English!

#### **Scotch Ale:**

Our noble Brewmaster, Mr. Herbst, has asked that I advise that he is brewing a scotch ale at the brewery, on Monday the 5<sup>th</sup>, starting at 5:30 (he used the 24 hour clock! and has invited all to attend who might be interested! I highly recommend, mainly because I am Scotch!!!

#### **Help!!!**

By the way, if you haven't noticed, our esteemed leader has done most of the newsletter!! Not good, we will soon be the

subjects of the "Rant"!! Not fun!!

Contribute, recipes, ideas, mistakes, tricks, -  
- please!

#### **Ramblings.....**

I just returned from the east – Saskatchewan that is! I was there on personal business. Surprise! While there, I was approached to invest in a malt plant!! A local entrepreneur has raised \$4.3 million, of the required \$5.5 million, to open and operate a specialty malt plant. He is for real!! He has a great business plan, and, he has purchasers in –place. His product is to be specialty malts, for brewing and baking! His long range plan is to then develop a brewery next to the malt plant – there is a great supply of excellent water, and, of course barley!!! There may be hope for this old farmer, yet!

On another note, tonight, after returning, I racked about 5 carboys from primary to secondary – two wines, and four beers! One of the mistakes was the Stout I brewed about 10 days ago – read a recipe for 10 gallons, and went to work on it! Alas and alack, I forgot to half the hops!! Wow, are they strong when they are fresh, and double what they should be!! So, a day or two later, I brewed the same recipe, and added no hops!! Tonight, I racked them to secondary, and split them half and half! Quite wonderful, indeed, as I type, I note many mistakes – thank god for spell check! Anyway, I find it beneficial to keep notes, and to try to build on each brewing experience, for me, it has worked! I would really enjoy sharing some of your brewing experiences in the *Worthouse News*

By the way, have you shared your brewing experiences with a buddy, family member, and friend? I recently had the son of a friend of mine, visit at my office. Michael gave me a great hand, by grinding about 5 pounds of two row – I will be ready to brew again!!

And, the great part, he is only 11, and therefore, didn't drink a beer!! The moral, he loved it, and learned a lot, so he will be the next generation!

Finally, we need to energize the membership! I propose a couple of things – tastings every meeting – bring your beers, let the experts rank them, and let us taste them!!! And, the second part of that is, can we fool the experts? Can we ask them what the ingredients of our beers might be? Oops, I forgot, I also propose that we do some “kit” challenges!! Any takers?

### **MCAB Entry Form**

Attached – copies will be at next meeting

Web Sites:

**Just a few this month!!!**

#### **The Cellar Homebrew**

[www.cellar-homebrew.com/](http://www.cellar-homebrew.com/)

**A good site, interesting internal search engine.**

#### **Real Beer Page**

[www.realbeer.com](http://www.realbeer.com)

**Lots of good stuff!**

#### **Underground Homebrewing Supply**

[www.undergrounddigital.com](http://www.undergrounddigital.com)

**I like this one! A very good catalogue, and, a couple of links**

#### **Beer100**

[www.beer100.com](http://www.beer100.com)

**A USA links page touching lots of brewpubs – if you are US bound, this is the one for you!**

## **Cask Conditioned Ale**

Roxanne Hastings

One of the real pleasures of home brewing is in recreating styles of beer that are extinct, virtually extinct or at the very least, unavailable in your region of habitation. One of the cult classics of the beer world that fits into these categories is cask conditioned ale and its more restrictively defined sister, real ale. These were the classic pub beers of Great Britain, that with the rise of the mega breweries of the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, were largely extirpated from their homeland in favour of bland, fizzy commercial shlock ales and more recently, Eurolagers. However, as most of us know, with the rise of CAMRA, Campaign for Real Ales, there has been a resurgence of interest and demand for real ales, although it is unlikely to ever approach its former popularity.

To the mega brewer, cask conditioned ales and real ales are a real pain. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, because they are not served with the “benefit” of CO2 they have a very limited lifespan, only a few days after being tapped. Limited shelf life is a primary concern for modern brewers. Secondly, the beers required knowledgeable publicans who understood beer and knew when to tap it and how to handle it. With the destruction of the Ma and Pa locals, the person serving the beer was likely to be an ignorant bar rat with no understanding of the beer. This forced the breweries to have to take on the job of conditioning the beer themselves. This meant keeping beer on their premise that they had already paid tax on and it meant hiring workers to do that job. Both undesirable for big breweries. Finally, real ale does not travel well. The old rule of thumb was that you could not ship a real ale farther than the distance a team of horses could travel to and return in a day.

Obviously, for mega brewer's intent on capturing national markets, sales districts in the order of a 100 sq. km were not going to be economically feasible. So real ale was steadily weaned out and replaced by keg conditioned ales and bottles.

To capture a national market British brewers have followed a trend of reducing product diversity, focusing on a few national brands. Much of the beer has been dummed down in terms of original gravity of which a significant portion now comes from sugar or molasses.

To fight this loss of product quality and to preserve the heritage of the British brewing industry CAMRA has lobbied both the brewing industry and government. The pressure the brewers to maintain what few real ales and cask conditioned ales they still produce and they lobby the government to prevent takeovers of small and regional breweries by national and international corporations.

What are real or cask conditioned ales?

Because cask conditioned beers are exposed to oxygen once they are tapped, they have a very limited lifespan - often measured in days. The beers will become progressively more dull and tangy. . Because the beers are served so young, usually within 10-14 days of being brewed, they have a fresh character highly prized by lovers of real ale. A beers unique characters tend to stand out as they do not have a chance to blend through aging. Again, to mega brewers trying to appeal to a mass market, they do no want their products to have unique flavor characteristics - another reason for the demise of real ale.

Because cask conditioned ales are served from their secondary fermentation vessel they typically do not have a big hop aroma. British brewers prefer to dry hop for hop aroma, but adding hops to the serving vessel is problematic as they can plug up the equipment and they are hard to clean out.

To my understanding "cask conditioned ales" are a broader class that includes within it "real ale." Cask conditioned ales are any ale in which the beer undergoes its secondary fermentation in the cask it is to be served from. That is, it is literally cask conditioned. Real ale is a cask-conditioned ale in which the cask is made of wood. That simple difference is important because wood will breath whereas stainless steel tanks will not. Air and microbial activity will have a more pronounced affect on real ales giving them a unique flavor profile compared to other cask-conditioned ales. All cask-conditioned beers are supposed to be served only under the influence of air. Carbon dioxide tanks are not allowed in the production of traditional cask conditioned ales. All the carbonation in the beer comes from the secondary ferment in the conditioning tank. Thus carbonation levels of cask-conditioned ales are going to be much lower than in keg beer conditioned with CO2.

This is one of the reasons why traditional British Bitters, no matter how bitter or flavored with hops, are allowed to have little to no hop aroma. The one exception was India Pale Ale. In those beers the benefits of hops antiseptic quality to enhance d product stability on the long sea voyage outweighed the hassle of their serving and cleaning problems. However, most real ales have a relatively low hop character and thus are classically: ordinary and best bitters, milds, Scottish ales, and at the high end, old, strong and scotch ale.

Also, since these beers are served right from the conditioning tank they cannot be filtered. Clarification is done by use of isinglass. The lack of filtration lends itself to maintaining more of the ales original character. However, mega breweries often use sterile filtration, done at an extremely small pore diameter, to enhance product stability. The cost of this practice however is

that it also filters out many flavor compounds. To a schlock mega brewer this flavor reduction is a small price to pay for increased shelf life.

From the above we can derive some of the flavor profile of typical cask conditioned ale. It will be low in conditioning and will have a fresh, clean rich taste. It will lack the crispness that comes from CO2 acidity, but on the other hand its flavors will not be masked by the carbonation level. It will most likely be balanced towards the malt and will have only a light hop bouquet, if any. Further, as these beers are conditioned at cellar temperatures, they will be served at around 55 F (13 C). This relatively warm temperature, compared to modern bar serving temperatures, allows for maximum beer flavors to come through. In a word, these will be the freshest, most flavorful malt dominated ales possible.

#### Home-brewed Cask Conditioned Ales

Since there is no such thing as a bottle conditioned cask-conditioned ale, those of you without a keg are out of luck. Those of you who have a keggling system have the opportunity to recreate these classic

After the beer has cold conditioned rack it into your keg and gently stir in your finings. I prefer isinglass as I find it rapidly gives very clear beer and it settles out fairly well to the bottom of the tank. I gently rock or bang on the container every two days or so for the first week to knock the isinglass off the sides of the tank and ensure that it all settles to the bottom.

In terms of conditioning there is some controversy at this point; and so here you have an opportunity to make some decisions about how much of a purist you are going to be. Hard core real ale purists demand no CO2 in the tank other than what comes from the secondary ferment. To handle this situation you will need to make or acquire a rack to hold your keg. You need

beer styles. They are not at all difficult to do and you can adjust the level of “authenticity” to suit your own brewing preferences.

#### Malts

You want a malt that is going to clear easily and this requires a well-modified malt with a low protein level. Our locally available Westcan Malt works just fine.

#### Conditioning

Start your primary ferment pretty much as normal. Let the beer go until the yeast breaks from the surface or your airlock pops once every 15 seconds. You might want to let the beer have an extra day just to make sure it is fermented. This is because the next thing you ideally want to do is stick the primary in a fridge for 3-5 days. This forces much of the yeast out of suspension and helps clarify the beer. Remember, you are going to be serving from your secondary, so it is desirable to get rid of a lot of sediment and yeast before racking into the tank. The fridge does not have to be really cold. Many brewers cool to only 50 F or 10 C. However, I find that 45 F works very well.

to tip the keg at an angle with the top down and with the short (normally gas in) tube at the bottom and the long (normally beer out) tube at the top. You will then serve the beer by connecting your cobra hose or beer engine to the short tube to let your beer pour out under its own pressure. You will need to periodically release air into the keg by depressing the long tube valve. In this way you are truly making and serving traditional cask conditioned ale. It will be exposed to the air within a few days and will develop some classic oxidized flavors prized by aficionados. Also, your sediment will settle near the lid of the keg and your short tube will likely be above the sediment, yielding clear beer from the first pour. The disadvantage of this purity is that your beer

will go bad within a few days to at most a week. Unless you can consume 5 gallons of beer in a week, (big family, a big party, you're an alcoholic) this is probably not the best choice.

Faced with a relatively low demand for real ales modern brewers will now often put a little corn sugar into the secondary. This allows a thin blanket of CO2 to form over the beer and improves shelf life. It can also yield a bit higher level of carbonation which is more likely to appeal to the modern beer consumer. After much whining, but faced with the reality of losing even more beers to keg versions, CAMRA has relented on this practice and will now accept that a beer can be called cask conditioned if it is conditioned with a bit of sugar.

However, they will still not accept a brewer using a CO2 tank to put a thin layer of CO2 into the cask. To my mind this is ridiculous. There is no effective difference, except to produce less sediment (desirable), between using sugar to condition a beer and using a CO2 tank. Both will carbonate a

As I mentioned above, most cask - conditioned ales are balanced towards the malt so hop bouquet is not a necessary character of these beers. However, there are a number of ways you can get hop bouquet. Firstly, you can late hop in the last 5 minutes of the boil. This produces a soft hop bouquet, similar to Eurolagers, which would seem to be very appropriate for cask conditioned ales. Secondly, you can put leaf hops into your hop back but this tends to be inefficient on a homebrew scale. Thirdly, you can dry hop in your primary for the 3-5 days the beer is in the fridge. As ferment activity will be very low you should not have the risk of the hops plugging up the airlock. I would use pellet hops as they will "dissolve" into the beer. Leaf hops are likely to just float on the surface. Lastly, you could put the hops into a hop sock and throw it into the cask. It has been suggested that a

beer and both will produce a protective blanket. In fact, by injecting CO2 into the tank you can better control your gas level and keep it low. A number of breweries are arguing this point.

For myself, I follow the latter method. Product stability is more important than absolute purity of purpose. I set my regulator to the lowest point where I can inject CO2 into my tank. I then add my finings, pump in some gas and let it settle. Then I release the pressure, open the tank and rack in the beer beneath the gas cloud. I then pump in the gas again and let the beer sit until it is conditioned.

I let my casks condition about a week before I start to consume the beer. You can see that from the time you brew to the time you consume is about 14 days, or about 2 weeks faster than normal keg conditioned beer. A real advantage of cask-conditioned beer is that you can whip one up on pretty short notice.

Hopping

very large tea ball could be partially filled with pellet hops and put into the cask. I like that idea but have not yet tried it. Leave space in the ball as the hops will expand when soaked with beer.

That's all there is to making cask conditioned ale using homebrew methods. The practice can easily be adapted by anyone who has a keggings system. A fridge may not even be necessary if you brew them during the winter and you have a cold room in your house.

## Gold And Other Medals:

Nothing New that I am aware of, however, these EHG members are all representing Canada with their brewing prowess!

Jim Beebe

Harry Wagner (4)

Dean Fikar (2)  
Maurice Lemieux  
Frank Kuzemski  
Roxy Hastings  
Ian MacLaren (3)  
John Tyler  
Joe Lindsay  
Dwayne Dunn  
Ken Nybeck  
Jim Scott  
Greg Burns  
Shawn Scott

Of course, some of the above are not our members, but simply won at our competition! Well done crew!

MCAB is being held on April 27<sup>th</sup> in sunny California! Anyone planning to attend?

Finally, AHA memberships, and Zymurgy can be subscribed to at: [www.beertown.org](http://www.beertown.org)

That's all for now!