

Froth

Message from B.O.C.K.'s new Primary Fermenter

Froth is the publication of the Brewers of Central Kentucky (B.O.C.K.): a non-profit organization dedicated to homebrewing.

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As I take my pen in hand (being somewhat technologically challenged) to address the members of the Brewers of Central Kentucky, my thoughts are buzzing in my head like a hive of bees, and I have not touched a drop! I have been a member since 1994 and have always enjoyed our activities. The tastings, raffles, discussing brewing, brew-offs, cook-outs, pub crawls and many other occasions of which I have no memory at all. As your newly elected president, I want the members of the club to tell me what they have enjoyed and what they want from the club because I truly don't know what I want the club to do. Some president, huh?

This is a weird sort of club that we have. It should be fun and it is, but do we need to feel there should be something else? Do we need to be planning or working on some project? Sometimes I'm really quite satisfied with the direction that we've gone (aimless, right?) while at other times I read about what other clubs have accomplished in competitions or participating in festivals and the like and think, you know it would be cool if we could have our club represented at the AHA annual meeting. And it would be cool, It would also be a great deal of work which a lot of folks would have to commit to, but certainly not impossible. The thing is, let's try and key in on something that we want to do with the club and make it go. This is no more my club than it is yours, but don't complain if you aren't willing to work.

I am grateful to you all for this opportunity and am looking forward to this year with B.O.C.K. As a first order of business, I would like to use the January meeting to brainstorm ideas on what activities you would like to have and what direction you would like the club to go. Please come prepared to contribute your thoughts (and your membership dues) on how to make our club a success. Feel free to contact me directly with whatever ideas you may have regarding the club or brewing or whatever (no BDSM please). Daytime

phone (859) 987-1915. Brew well, drink well and see you on Wednesday, January 8th at Sawyers.

Bill

BEER AND NUTS: A GREAT MATCH

Pairing beer with food is something to be considered just as seriously as pairing wine with food -- and that can be pretty serious. It's a subject we'll get to soon, but meanwhile we appreciate that there are times when you want to keep it a little more basic.

Like when you are sitting on a barstool at happy hour and there's a bowl of nuts in front of you. You may never have asked yourself what nut to have with what beer, but maybe you should. Consider Beer Nuts, the incredibly well known brand of snacks produced in Bloomington, Ill.

A few years ago, members of the ABNormal Brewers homebrewers club, which meets in Beer Nuts' hometown, tried a variety of different beers with each of the products and came up with these conclusions:

Beer Nuts peanuts go best with lagers and lighter beers; clovy, German-style wheat beers; and the yeasty sweetness of Belgian ales; and tend to get lost with stronger-flavored, malty or roasty beers.

Beer Nuts cashews work well with sweet beers, such as English-style barley wine and bock, and provide a nice contrast to hoppy beers, such as

American pale ales, but don't work well with beers that pick up a sweetness from their yeast, such as Belgians and some wheat beers, or with drier beers, such as porter.

Beer Nuts almonds work well with strong, malty beers, such as winter ales, and complement roasted beers, such as porters and stouts, but overpower lagers and some hoppy ales.

For tasting notes on the nuts themselves and notes about how they tasted next to specific beers go to:

<http://www.realalefestival.com>

Beer Humour

A doctor made it his regular habit to stop off at a bar for a hazelnut daiquiri on his way home. The bartender knew of his habit, and would always have the drink waiting at precisely 5:03 p.m. One afternoon, as the end of the workday approached, the bartender was dismayed to find that he was out of hazelnut extract.

Thinking quickly, he threw together a daiquiri made with hickory nuts and set it on the bar. The doctor came in at his regular time, took one sip of the drink and exclaimed, "This isn't a hazelnut daiquiri!" "No, I'm sorry", replied the bartender, "It's a hickory daiquiri, doc."

REAL ALE: PART II

As discussed in part I of the article, (Froth July 2002), the definition of Real Ale is based on how ale is conditioned and served.

Even though cask-conditioned beer can be served quite nicely via gravity dispense (drained right from the cask) the classic handpump has become a symbol for Real Ale.

Unfortunately, what you get from a handpump in the United States often neither looks like nor tastes like Real Ale in Great Britain. That doesn't mean it can't taste good, but it IS different. Here are some of the American variations on the cask theme:

- Unfiltered beer served via a handpump. Real Ale is "alive" because the yeast hasn't been filtered out, but there's considerably more to the fining and conditioning regimen than sticking beer that may or may not be done fermenting in a keg or tank and serving it. (See more below about keg-conditioned beer.)

- Tank-conditioned beer. Granted, a seven-barrel serving tank is 20 times larger than a firkin (10.8 American gallons), the most common cask size in Great Britain. While the beer certainly won't lay on the yeast like in a firkin (and the tank cannot be tapped and spiled), the tank better lends itself to fining and dry hopping than most American kegs. However,

to ensure that the beer doesn't oxidize, brewpubs will protect it with a blanket of nitrogen. Even though nitrogen is non-soluble and isn't used to push the beer through the beer engine/handpump, CAMRA considers this a no-no.

- Brewery-conditioned beer. Oliver Breweries distributes beer that pubs serve via handpump. This beer is conditioned at the brewery, then racked bright into kegs. "We get it just right and then send it off to them," Oliver said, holding his thumb and forefinger microns apart to indicate what a precise moment in time this is. Mike Hale of Hales Ales in Seattle has been racking ales this way for more than 15 years. "It's not technically cask beer, but it was the best way I could figure out how to do it," said Hale, who trained in England. "I'm pretty happy with what is served, and if a CAMRA member were here, I think he'd pronounce it quite satisfactory if he didn't know the mechanisms we go through."

- Keg-conditioned beer. Some breweries call beer conditioned in kegs and pushed with CO2 keg-conditioned because the yeast remains in the keg. Then they call beer conditioned in a keg "cask beer" when it is drawn through a handpump. Though it is easy to cut the tube in a Hoff-Stevens keg so that the yeast remains in the keg when the beer is served, the final product is considerably different than ale from a firkin. And when the keg isn't altered to keep some of the yeast out of the glass? Well, if it's served to

a British tourist you'll get a startled look when a cloudy pint is poured.

- Keg beer. This is exactly the same beer, quite possibly a British import, that you might be served from a nearby tap. It will have been filtered, and maybe even pasteurized, and won't be a living beer. The only benefit to having this beer through a handpump is that the beer won't be as carbonated as one from a tap.

- Cask-conditioned beer, just like in Britain. It's a niche within a niche, but Real Ale is out there ... in both brewpubs and bars.

If you find yourself in a place with a handpump how do you know what to expect if you order a beer? Ask questions, of course. If the server or bartender claims it's Real Ale or cask-conditioned, ask more questions. Find out if the bar or brewpub is serving from American kegs or firkins (throw the word "firkin" around a bit; that should get their attention). Ask if you can see where they cellar the beer. You may even get a tour.

And if you really want to learn more about Real Ale (without flying to England) then set aside a weekend in March to attend the Real Ale Festival in Chicago. You can see how it's done and -- probably more important -- learn what wonderfully brewed and classically cellared Real Ale should taste like.

Next month we will look at CAMRA's official view on real ale.