March 2014

San Joaquin Worthogs
HOMEBREW CLUB NEWSLETTER

American Cream Ale: Style Profile

Brew Your Own : Mar/Apr 2005

A beer style that can be an ale or a lager -- American Cream Ale.

he universe of beer is neatly divided into two camps, ales and lagers. However there are exceptions — cream ale being one of them. Oddly, in spite of its name, this beer style can be brewed authentically with either ale or lager yeasts, or even with a combination of the two. There is a consensus that cream ale is an indigenous American pre-Prohibition style. It is traditionally (but not always) made from six-row malt and a certain portion of adjuncts such as corn grits, which make for a highly attenuated brew with a dry finish.

Commercial cream ales nowadays are rare. They are invariably light-bodied and usually well carbonated. In appearance, they are usually a very pale, golden color — paler with the addition of more adjuncts. They taste relatively low in diacetyl and estery fermentation byproducts — though estery notes are often detectable in the nose. Cream ales also tend to be low in hop bitterness and in maltiness. Instead, their middle flavor is usually characterized by a grainy sweetness from the adjuncts. In the finish,

(Continued on page 3)

Next Meeting: October 13th

Next Meeting: April 26th
Location: Lawrence Washington's House
17247 Bonita Road
Madera, CA 93636

Schedule:

10:00 Brewing Demo
12:00 Club Business
12:30 Style Lecture— Flanders Red
1:00 Open taps

Please bring a side dish to share at the potluck and some homebrew or some nice commercial brew to share with the other beer lovers.

March Pubcrawl

Stops at Dust Bowl, Lagunitas and Faction Brewing!











(Continued from page 1)

cream ales can be slightly fruity and end on a note of pronounced dryness.

Subjectively, this beer is best when chilled and served as a thirst- quencher. The above description is admittedly vague. Yet, for those in search of a more precise brew-technical definition of cream ale there is next to no definitive documentation available that would tell us how cream ale ought to be brewed. Even a glance at the medalists in the cream ale category at the Great American Beer Festival does not advance our understanding: In 2004, for instance, the cream ale gold went to Red Dog, a pure lager with an ABV of 5%, brewed by the SAB/Miller subsidiary Plank Road Brewing Company. Special Export from the Pabst Brewing Company, a brew that is usually considered an American adaptation of a Dortmund Export, took the silver, while the bronze medal went to what many people consider the classic, hallowed cream ale, Genesee Cream Ale from the High Falls Brewing Company in Rochester, New York. Introduced in 1960 and often falsely identified as a malt liquor, good old "Genny" has a certain nostalgia value for the baby-boom generation. It is a pure ale with an ABV of 5.1%. It is well aged and then kräusened before packaging for natural carbonation. In deference to "Genny," our Cream-of-the-Crop Ale also finishes at an ABV of approximately 5.1%.

Cream ale's roller-coaster history

Cream ale came into being sometime in the 1880s. It was an invention by American ale breweries who wanted to compete with the lagers that began to spread from the eastern seaboard throughout the New World after the American Civil War. However, there was no single model that set the new anti-lager style. Rather, like much in American culture in those days, the new brew was a "make-do" beer. As such, cream ale was defined by very broad and general concepts of what it was and what it was not: The brew had to be suitable for an ale brewery, but in terms of appearance and drinkability, it had to be more German "lager-ish" than British "ale-ish."

Because cream ale was made by ale breweries which tended not be set up for cold fermentation, it was probably brewed warm regardless of yeast type, at least until Prohibition. Like many beers in the latter part of the 19th century, it was probably more assertively hopped and contained more alcohol than is common today, but we cannot be sure. Because we have no clear evidence one way or the other, we can speculate that the mash composition was fairly flexible, probably involving a combination of two and six-row barleys as well as various adjuncts. The likely result was a good quaffing ale, but one that was probably more effervescent than a British ale.

What then is cream ale?

What we do know about cream ale's past and present makes it sound like a brew of quite indeterminate specifications, a vagueness of definition that constitutes both the style's strength and its weakness. Its strength lies in the brew's sheer infinite adaptability, its weakness in the fact that you never quite know if you hit the mark or if you missed it. This may be a dilemma for a commercial brewer, but it is also the reason why homebrewing a cream ale can be fun. With so few prescriptions to follow, formulating a cream ale recipe is a creative challenge with more improvisation and experimentation than reconstruction of a recipe. Because cream ale can apparently be fermented with lager or ale yeast, our Cream-of-the-Crop Ale uses both types to recreate that hybrid character of a brew that cannot decide if it is an ale or a lager. The resulting brew tastes cleaner and crisper than might be expected from its list of ingredients.

Because of its topsy-turvy history and meandering fortunes, this "retro" ale with lager overtones is clearly much misunderstood and perhaps not as well appreciated as it should be. But, if made with care, cream ale has the potential to be made well at home. To turn a

(Continued on page 5)

Become a BJCP Judge

Ever wanted to know more about beer, be a better brewer, and help out other brewers? Then becoming a BJCP Judge is for you. Check on the BJCP website at http://www.bjcp.org/. The first step is to download the study materials, study and take the online **BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination.** Once you pass the exam you will need to take the **BJCP Beer Judging Examination** in the next twelve months. If we have at least 8 people pass the entrance exam Tom Pope can facilitate the Judging Exam!

White Labs

Turn in your used White Labs Vials at the next Meeting...when we get 5000 vials Chris White will brew with us! Every meeting we get closer…

Bencomo's Homebrew Supplies

Bencomo`s Homebrew Shop was started in 1991 in Mike's Liquors on north Palm Ave. Julian Bencomo has been brewing since 1988, is a nationally recognized beer judge, and has won numerous awards for his beers. The shop is located on the northeast corner of Olive and Arthur between Palm and Fruit at . Hours of operation are M-F 10-4; Sat. 9-5 we also take appointments after hours and on Sundays. Bencomo`s is a full service shop with great selection of grains, hops, yeasts, extracts and equipment. Homebrewing advice is always just a phone call away. Phone 559-486-3227

Address: 234 W Olive Fresno

BENCOMO'S HOME BREW SUPPLY

(Continued from page 3)

cream ale into a beverage for a contemplative moment, try blending half a pint of it with two shots of plain scotch or rye and a good dash of hot sauce (such as Tabasco). This cream ale shooter is a slammer.

Regardless of its stature in the annals of beer styles, incidentally, cream ale can lay claim to a much ignored yet very consequential "first" in global brew history: Almost exactly seven decades ago, the very first beer in a can hit the market, and the beer inside that can was...Krueger Cream Ale! It went on sale in Richmond, Virginia, on January 24, 1935 —exactly 13 months and 19 days after the ratification of the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which ended Prohibition and made the (legal) sale of beer, including that of cream ale, possible again.

Brewing ingredients and process

With that kind of a genesis and with the large variation of brews currently marching under the cream ale flag, no clear recipe prescription presents itself for this brew. Obviously, there are so many different ways of brewing this style that composing a cream ale recipe is like giving structure to an amoeba. Any choice of recipe leaves much room for debate and none can claim exclusive authenticity. Thus, you should feel free to experiment with this brew. Depart from the recommendations given here with a clean conscience. Just remember these few prescriptions:

•The ingredients for this classic American beer style should be all-American.

•The brew should be warm-fermented and then cool-conditioned (lagered).

•The brew should obtain its uniqueness from a combination of both ale and lager characteristics.

•The brew should be effervescent, sparkling and dry.

The recipe suggested here takes a simple, pragmatic approach. It relies on a grain bill of about 60% enzyme-rich six-row brewers malt (such as Briess) and 40% two-row pale ale malt. The recipe also calls for an addition of corn sugar as an adjunct in the kettle to bump up the alcohol content and to create a dry finish. Feel free to alter, even reverse, these grain ratios or to drop the corn sugar in favor of other adjuncts or more malt. In our recipe, the mash is composed from the two malts to yield a wort with an OG of 1.048 (12 °P).

Extract brewers need approximately 6 pounds (2.7 kg) of liquid malt extract (LME) to create 5 gallons (19 L) of wort at a gravity of 1.048 (12 °P). Note that this quantity varies somewhat in either direction depending on your choice of malt extract brand. Unfortunately there is no LME on the market that is known for certain to contain a significant portion of malt from six-row barley. In fact, with very few exceptions, extract manufacturers tend to be very secretive about the grain composition of their liquid malts. Extract-only brewers, therefore, cannot replicate the all-grain recipe precisely. Instead, they should make the entire brew with regular American pale ale extract. The result will still be a cream ale!

Extract-plus-grain brewers, too, have a problem, because it would be difficult to achieve the required gravity of 1.048 (12 °P) by merely steeping (instead of mashing) the large amount of six-row malt. As a compromise, therefore, extract-plus-grain brewers should rely entirely on their LME for fermentables and just steep about 2.75 lbs. (1.3 kg) of American six-row pale ale malt — an amount of steeping grain that is still reasonable to handle — for that slightly tannic six-row flavor. These variations in the cream ale malt department for extract-only and extract-plus-grain brewers make the beers no less authentic than the all-grain recipe, principally, because no single, uniformly accepted model for cream ale has come down to us through the decades. Considering that even modern commercial cream ale brewing practices are so varied, dogmatism in the formulation of a homebrew cream ale recipe would be completely out of place.

To follow the all-American theme for ingredients, the

(Continued on page 7)

2014 "Worthog of the Year"
Official Rules

Worthog of the Year" (also known as WotY) is an honor bestowed upon an individual who brews the best beers through a single year. To honor this member, a trophy is given to the highest scoring Worthogs to highlight their outstanding brewing skills. Please read below for official rules.

Official Rules

1. Only actively paid members may participate in the competition.
2. The competition consists of brewing 4 different styles of beer between the dates October 31st and the September general meeting.
3. Each contestant must register their beers at http://sjworthogs.org/woty
4. Competition entries will **only** be accepted at the general meeting listed below **no later than 12:30 pm**. Beers will be inventoried by the current acting Executive Vice President or any person on the board who will not be participating in the judging.
5. All entries must be submitted in two - 12 oz. or higher bottles with the competitors name clearly printed on them. You may also use the bottle ID generated for you when registering your beer at http://sjworthogs.org/woty. Any bottle that does not specify a first and last name will be disqualified.
6. Each candidate may only enter in one beer per style.
7. All entries will be judged by two or more judges based on BJCP guidelines using the official BJCP score sheet (http://www.bjcp.org/docs/SCP_BeerScoreSheet.pdf). Entries that are out of style will be disqualified.
8. Depending on the number of judges, scores will be averaged between the score sheets to determine the value for that particular entry. For example; judge one gives 40 points and judge two gives 42 points. Your official score value for that competition will be 41. The participant with the highest cumulative amount of points at the end of all four competitions will be awarded WotY.
9. The styles for 2014 and their due dates are as follows:
    a. **Mild Ale (Category 11A)** will be due at the **January** general meeting.
    b. **Belgian Dubbel (Category 18A)** will be due the **April** general meeting.
    c. **Cream Ale (Category 6A)** will be due at the **June** general meeting.
    d. **Oktoberfest/Marzen (Category 3B)** will be due at the **September** general meeting.
10. The Worthog of the Year winner will be awarded the trophy at the annual Hogtoberfest event.

May the best Worthog win!

recommendation for hops in our recipe is Cluster, for both bittering and aroma, but again, you can use just about any hops you wish. In the 19th century, Cluster was a common hops cultivated in New York and New England, before hop growing moved west. Cluster is a classic American type, which is reputedly a cross between a British cultivated and an American wild variety. Nowadays Cluster comes from the Pacific Northwest and usually has about 6% alpha-acids.

In the beginning, cream ale was obviously brewed with ale yeast and submitted to a cellar regimen that made it more lager-like, but nowadays it can be brewed with either yeast. This gives the homebrewer a complete range of choices. You can pick any one of the yeasts listed below or follow my idiosyncratic practice of using a combination of both American ale and lager yeasts simultaneously. Take your pick among the following American strains: White Labs WLP 001 liquid California Ale yeast, Wyeast 1056 liquid American Ale yeast, Fermentis Safale US-56 dry "Chico" ale yeast and White Labs San Francisco liquid lager yeast WLP 810. Using both an ale and a lager yeast creates some of the ale fruitiness and some of the lager crispness in the finish. Use a fermentation temperature of 65–70 ºF (18–21 ºC) and a conditioning temperature of approximately 40 °F (5 °C).

Recipe

Cream-of-the-Crop Ale

(5 gallons/19 L, all-grain)
OG = 1.048 FG = 1.008
IBU = 18 SRM = 3–3.5 ABV = 5.1 %

Ingredients
5.1 lbs. (2.3 kg) American six-row pale ale malt (1.7–2.0 °L)
3.1 lbs. (1.4 kg) American pale ale malt (3.2–3.6 °L)
1 lb. (0.45 kg) corn sugar
4.75 AAU Cluster hops (bittering, 60 mins) (0.79 oz./22 g of 6% alpha acid)
1 oz. (28 g) Cluster hops (aroma)
1 tablespoon Irish Moss
1 package each of White Labs WLP810 (San Francisco Lager) yeast and/or Fermentis Safale US-56 dry "Chico" ale yeast
1 cup corn sugar (for priming)

Step by Step
Using 3 gallons (11 L) of hot brewing liquor, mash in at 148–150 °F (64–66 °C) for a one-hour amylase rest. At this temperature, the enzymes produce mostly fermentable sugars. This helps create a dry finish. Then increase the temperature, using a combination of hot-water infusion and direct heat, to 168 °F (76 °C) for the mash-out.

Recirculate the run-off for 15–20 minutes, until it runs very clear. Then start lautering and sparging, until the wort in the kettle reaches a gravity of roughly 1.048 (12 °P).

Add the corn sugar and boil for 75 minutes. Add the bittering hops after 15 minutes and the aroma hops and Irish Moss after 70 minutes. After shutdown, check the gravity and add cold water to adjust for evaporation losses until the original gravity measures 1.048 (12 °P). Then let the brew rest for at least 15 minutes to let the trub settle. Siphon the wort off the trub and heat exchange it to the pitching temperature of 70 ºF (21 ºC) or slightly below.

Pitch the ale or lager yeast of your choice, or pitch both yeasts simultaneously. Primary fermentation at this temperature should be rapid, probably lasting no more than three or four days. Check the final gravity. Once it has reached about 1.008 (2 °P), let the brew rest for another two days to allow the lees (yeast sediment) to settle. Rack into a clean fermenter for conditioning at a temperature as low as your equipment allows, but at least down to approximately 40 °F (5 °C). Let the brew mature for about 10 days and rack again. Finally, prime the brew with corn sugar for packaging. The cream ale is ready for drinking after another two weeks.

Flaked maize option:
Replace corn sugar added in kettle (not the priming sugar) with 2.0 lbs. (0.91 kg) flaked maize. Add another 0.5 gallons (1.9 L) of water to mash to hit proper mash consistency. Flaked maize will add more corn flavor to the beer. Corn sugar is flavorless.