

The Great Northern Brewers

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Homebrewing Ethos and Ethics

Is High-Gravity Brewing a Sign of Low Moral Character Development?

The integrity of a homebrewer can come under scrutiny if several brews in a series initiate sufficient motor impairment after just two twelve ounce imbibes of each. A brewer who consistently produces beers in excess of seven percent alcohol is bound to be accused of questionable character and integrity. A homebrewer engaged in the practice could lose status as a craftsman among those who take pride in the homebrew endeavor.

Brewing gravities in excess of 1.060 are considered *high-gravities*. The implication that this always results in a high alcohol content is a misunderstanding that leads some to shy away from crafting many excellent styles of beer that are *full-bodied* beauties. The craft of balancing fermentable sugars and unfermentable dextrins is a science, if not an art!

Steve Meschke

The uncontested master of high-gravity fermentables, this TGNB member is noted for a particular brewing concoction affectionately named "BEGGAR'S BLEND" (recipe; pg.2).

The specific gravity is undisclosed but I imagine the hydrometer could be mistaken for a floating panfish slip-bobber.

When approached for questioning about his brewing ethics for this article, Steve was not

the least bit defensive in describing his homebrewing philosophy and reputation.

"Enngh. What? Oh, my philosophy of brewing. Yes. Quite. Well, first of all, always brew with a good buzz going. I've found that my best brews always result from a good

drunk. Many purists may argue this point, 'Brewing while intoxicated?! Why there ought to be a law!'. Well, here's my response: Mind your own damn business!

"That's the problem with beer today, everybody else knows what's best. Screw 'em. That is the whole



The aftermath of a Meschke brew-judging competition?

purpose of homebrewing: individuality. And as an ardent supporter of individuality, the devising of full-bodied, extremely potent homebrews is a personal mission to restore traditional beer drinking values.

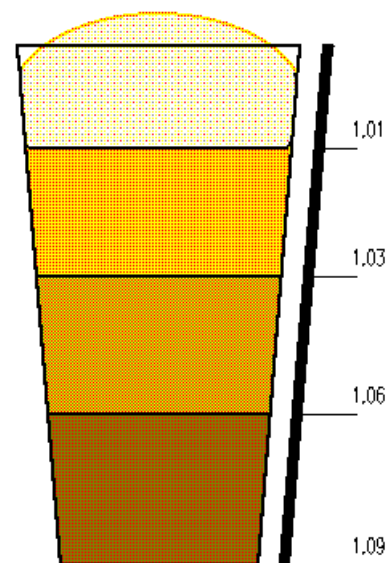
"Contrary to the new pop vision of beer-drinking (lite beers; trendy, active guys surrounded by babes; ("good, potent beers"; page two)

The Award Winning Club

The Great Northern Brewers

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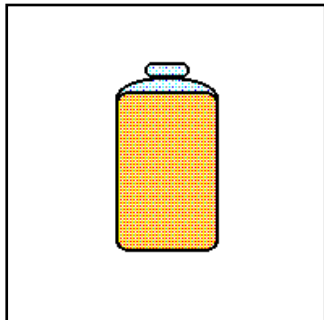
Homebrewing Ethos & Ethics

The theme of this issue is dedicated to illuminating the diversity of brewing philosophies

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BEGGAR'S BLEND

This recipe is to the best of Mr. Meschke's recollection. He admits to variance from batch to batch, but believes the given amounts are within a half-pound of the usual dosage, that is unless his cat is making a contribution when his back is turned.

5 Gallon Brew

2 cans John Bull Amber (hopped)
2 1/2 lbs (40 oz) honey
1 Hairball (optional)

Use the basic fail-safe brewing procedures and boil the ingredients for 25 minutes. Proper *Meschke* protocol requires the implementation of a "Category 1 Buzz" prior to step one. It is assumed you will have achieved a "Cat3B" by the time you pitch the yeast. *This *condition* can lead to additional ingredients in the brew! But your brew is a canvas, of course, and each brew is a crafted labor of love.

Relaaaax, and brew freely!

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"good, potent beers"

even clear beer for the love of all that is holy!), traditional beer-drinking has but one true purpose: to enjoy a good beer that gives a good buzz. Everything else follows naturally, like yelling at the T.V., blowing off yard work and annoying your significant-other for fun.

"Darker, full-bodied beers are a true pleasure and are in danger of



The infamous Neameyer Extraction Centrifuge™

being forgotten in the "LITE" age. It is a well known fact that the 'lightening' of beers occurred during the roaring twenties in an attempt to lure the fairer sex into drinking beer. The trend still continues to this day, resulting in the abomination of 'clear' beer. The horror.

"This *feminization* of beer may be all right for some sheep-like conformists but not for this bearded urbanite. Some may think I seek to exclude women from the joys of true beer. Perish the thought! We need to expose everyone to good, potent beers, so they may learn and grow (spiritually and physically).

"Time is of essence. We can no longer depend on commercial structures to preserve the beer halls of our fathers. We, the homebrewers, must unite to restore beer to its true glory: Proud, Full-Bodied & Potent, just like the people who brew it.

David Neameyer

This Aryan adonis may be of German descent but you can be sure he has the framers of the *Reinheitsgebot* hitting the 'hot break' in their graves.

Known as a classic *Pantry Brewer* in the TGNB circle, this member has recipes that read like Cub Foods inventory listing. When he hands you a brew, it's best not to inquire of its contents. Raisins, peach pits, hash

browns, leeks; well I'm sure you see the big pitcher.

Basically, it's whatever works (and doesn't work) but I just couldn't resist asking him to define his home-brewing ethos in the chance that some boundaries might actually exist in his brewing pathology.

"I feel that the harder you have to work to extract the essence of an adjunct, the richer the reward upon its release.

"Successful homebrewing is the ability to evoke moods with crafted elixirs. In order to do that I often must violate G.P.L. [German Purity Laws] by adding strange spices, fruit, vegetables, mystic Asian aphrodisiacs, and much etc!

"One must always have on hand the more 'domestic stuff' as *radical brewing* is plagued with inevitable miscues. The risk is worth it when you hit that *obscure* brew.

"The very essence of homebrew enjoyment is the patience in labor. Knowledge of zymology chemistry and experience in adjunct additions can well endow an evening on the porch or by the fire.

"Basking away on a late fall day, lawn chair underneath, tipping gentle mouthfuls of labored elixirs...ahhh... NIRVANA approaches!



It has been estimated that one out of every seven people may indeed be a Great Northern Brewer. Your doctor, dentist and hairdresser haven't a clue, but you can check with us free of charge!

"Do I have what it takes to be a Great Northern Brewer?"

Do you have fifty bucks? A lead on an old warehouse full of six gallon carboys? A close friend working at the malting company in Shakopee? Perhaps a distant relative in Czechoslovakia growing Saaz hops? Maybe you're just looking to invest those LOTTO winnings?

Some organizations have stiff requirements for membership. Not us! We're still working on the expectations!

Most of those questions may never even come up in your first week as a new member. In the meantime we're seeking out homebrewers that want to focus their energies into a homebrewing organization with a flair for the *unusual* (read that! - anywhere did I say "illegal"?).

One requirement is absolute and must be met by all members of The Great Northern Brewers (TGNB) organization: YOU MUST RESIDE AND BREW AT OR ABOVE THE THE 43RD PARALLEL NORTH.

For lackeys out there unable to give Scotty their *beam up* coordinates, the 43rd parallel north runs roughly on a line from Concord, New Hampshire west to just south of Eu-

gene, Oregon. All of Minnesota is above the 43rd parallel, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin just edges in by a slim two minutes.

Minneapolis is at 44.59 - well within the legal membership boundary. More importantly, all of the great beer capitals in Europe are included in this membership designation.

At present there is no discussion to limit membership by longitude, so if you live in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and you're getting tired of fermented mare's milk - we could be the organization for you!

We are relying on new membership to *define* our vision and goals. It is our hope that enthusiastic, creative involvement is in your character!

*Contact us at the address on the cover of this publication.

Scott Newcomb

For you homebrewers who are hiding in the *high-gravity closet*, you can come out - we've located your king!

Discreet brewers like Scott often blush when mentioning gravities above 1.060. He has circumvented this problem by eliminating the ritual of hydrometer readings altogether.

However, a seasoned homebrewer like Scott well knows what a pound of "X" will conjure in batch of brew. His closet is loaded, literally!

Nonetheless, he is the professed *Pure Brewer* of TGNB. He has great respect for the integrity of "traditional beer styles" and holds their recipes as gospel! One would expect no less of a philosophy from a lover and brewer of *stouts*. He does



*King Cobra, Colt 45
Hmm, the Newcomb closet I presume?*

admit, however to some discretionary (creative) deviations.

"Well of course I dabble in the high-gravity arena," he defends, "some stouts require high-gravity to achieve the full-bodied character that distinguishes one stout from another."

"Other beers, like your doppelbocks and barley wines carry potency to the extreme, but that is their inherent and traditional style. However, molesting the integrity of pure pilsners and lagers with 'party adjuncts' should be discouraged.

"Preserving the heritage of zymurgy by brewing with discipline is really my brewing ethos.

("Styles are laws unto themselves"; page 4)

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"styles are laws unto themselves"



Filling empty carboys with award winning brews is second only to depleting their volume with friends

"Learning and brewing the many styles of beer provides for the satisfaction of brewing within the boundaries that exist with each style.

"Styles are laws unto themselves; perfection guides for preserving the unique character associated with each type of beer.

"In that framework, I believe certain *ale styles* provide plenty of freedom for adding abusive measurements of *party adjuncts*!

"But to brew ignorant of historical styles, techniques and their ingredients is at the very least squandering an admirable opportunity to learn and preserve centuries of a distinguished craft.

Dean Daniels

So far, this brewer's shoes are the only ones experiencing high gravity. His only known attempt at a high-gravity brew may have to be delivered to Chivas Regal for oak barrel aging!

Chalk it up as one of those *learning experiences* - and there are many! As one of the newcomers to homebrewing, Dean has had some fine luck with low-gravity brews; but of course, who would stop there?

"I found it hard to relax while giving birth to those first brews," he

wined, "nothing of my experience was going exactly by the book. Of course the brew that seemed to abide by the common noted experiences is the one that failed miserably.

"My first experience with beer was hating it. After attending a 'beer-bust' in 1973 and after seventeen pitchers of the swill, I decided it was tolerable at best.

"After mistaking a pitcher of dark beer for cola in 1982, I was enlightened of

my ignorance to the fact that there is much more to beer than pale-colored pitchers of warm 3.2 domestic swill.

"My enlightened beer-buddies doused my ignorance with the import list at a local watering hole that numbered some 200 selections. Thoroughly wisened after months of study, I joined the ranks of beer-drinkers, with a proud palate.

"My recent induction to the homebrewing craft has whet my appetite all the more. The information is astounding, there are so many styles and techniques - and you can take it as far as you wish to go.

"My brewing ethos is still in the 'steeping' stage, however I tend to do things 'by the book'. I can definitely see the wisdom in maintaining the integrity of *styles*.

"Yet, I never could resist venturing into the unknown. I'm bound to exploit my acquired brewing knowledge, and it is my commission to 'exploit' within the acceptable boundaries of each style of beer with all hope of success. To brewers everywhere -- GOOD SUCCESS!

Mark Duenow

TGNB welcomes this new mem-



Mr. Duenow's first carboy!

ber who just bottled his first batch and has a second one ready to bottle. One member had to hold back the tears while watching Mark lovingly cradle his first carboy - it was a beautiful sight!

It's too early to tell which path Mark will take into the philosophical fields of zymurgy. His primary ethos at present is, "I just wanna brew some beer!". Even grand philosophies lack such a good pure cornerstone as that!

Some TGNB members suspect Mark may be a carrier of northern suburbanite genes - specifically those found in Blaine.

Blaine, of course, is a chunk of north-central Wisconsin that was deposited in Minnesota by the last glacier and the gene pool from that area of Wisconsin is known for its indiscriminate palate when choosing beer preferences - also an infamous tolerance for shotgunning beer by the keg.

Mark has pointed out our intolerant stereotyping and even offered up his front row seats to the "Super Combo Monster Truck & WWF Mega-Mat Mania '94" to allow us to witness our error in judgement. We rescinded the offer, of course, preferring our intolerance.

Mark is right in his view, however, Homebrewers ARE BORN brethren! In all of our diverse brewing ethos and ethics we all strive for that great beer.

Adherants to the *Reinheitsgebot* and *adjunct artists* clearly differ in policy, but really -- doesn't our product show the battle of adverse ingredients together in fermentation?