

# BREWER'S GUILD NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER CROWN

A.S. XXXIII

# Brewers' Guild Ranking System

## DEFINITIONS:

**Style** - beer, wine, mead, cordial, or non-alcoholic beverage.

**Public Service Work** - teaching a workshop, submitting articles or art to newsletters, holding a contest or tasting, etc.

**Proficiency** - competency in a style, as judged by fellow brewers from a sampling of at least four different brews.

## RANKINGS:

**Apprentice** - Anyone who wants to play and participate in the Brewers' Guild activities. (Is entitled to wear the Guild badge on a green field.)

**Journeyman** - Someone who is proficient in at least one style of brewing and has performed at least one public service work. (Is entitled to wear the Guild badge on a blue field.)

**Craftsman** - Someone who is proficient in at least two styles of brewing, and had performed at least three public service works. (Is entitled to wear the Guild badge on a red field.)

**Master Brewer** - To achieve this rank you must have attained the previous rank of Craftsman, be nominated by your fellow Craftsmen, and be approved by the other Master Brewers. (Is entitled to wear the Guild badge on a purple field.)

All members of the Guild are encouraged to donate bottles of their beverages to the Guild for use as "taxes" given to the reigning Royalty during court presentations. Brewers outside of the central Kingdom, or in the more distant regions of the Marches, may achieve awards up through Craftsman by participating in their local events. Such individuals should write to the Guild Master to inform him or her of their level of participation.

**The Guild badge is as follows: "Fieldless, A tun palewise Or charged with a laurel leaf vert.".** The tun, as generally depicted, is a wooden barrel.

**The Kingdom Brewer's Guild newsletter is an unofficial publication and is printed and published through donations and unofficial subscriptions. It is published at no cost to the Brewers' Guild or the SCA. Members who would like to have a newsletter mailed to their home (vice hoping to pick up a spare copy during Kingdom events) are welcome to donate \$ 5.00 per year to the Guild Chronicler. Both stamps and suitable coins of the realm will be gleefully accepted!**

# West Kingdom Brewers Guild Contest List

1999

October Crown	<u>Brew off</u> of a period recipe.
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2000

12th Night	Small beer/ weak meads
March Crown	Period gruits
Beltane A..S. XXXV	Infused/ flavored wines or meads " Maywine anyone?"
June Crown	Medievaloid soda - fizzy non-alcoholic drinks derived from period sources
A&S Tourney	Brewing Paraphernalia Attn: wood and metal workers! Please have documentation and picture of period source if available.
Purgatorio	Open Western European beverages
October Crown	Winter Warmers Brews over 12% alcohol. Please provide specific gravity measurements and details of process used.

2001

12th Night	Spiced Meads (metheglins and mead based cordials)
March Crown	Beverages served warm (caudles, mulled ciders, ales and wines)
Beltane A.S. XXXVI	Period beverages from any non-Western European country
June Crown	Fruit beers
A&S Tourney	Medical Medievallia - documented Medical cures using wine or ale as a component.
Purgatorio	Scented waters (Rose water, Orange Blossom, Jasmine, Sage water, etc.)
October Crown	Hypocras or Clarrey made with at least two kinds of peppercorn.

**The Brewers' Guild competitions for Mists Coronet level in A.S. XXXIV will be:**

Fall Coronet (10/99) Metheglins

Fall Investiture (11/99) Beer with adjuncts or flavorings

Spring Coronet (3/00) Cordials with medicinal properties

Spring Investiture (4/00) Non-alcoholics from European recipes



# Gruits in Pre-scientific Brewing

By Henry an Eynhallow

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Uncovering the ingredients that made up the flavoring and bittering concoctions used by brewers before the 17th century can be a difficult task. In England gruits, also called grut and grout by some writers, were generally under the control of the church, or in some circumstances a local landowner. The patent, or right to use a specific recipe, was usually granted by the Crown in return for gruit taxes. Ownership of the right to brew with gruit was a major financial advantage in pre-17th century Europe. Taxes and fees were significant in England until hops became a widely accepted ingredient in the late 1500s.

Conversely, the relative importance of gruit in the low countries dropped dramatically as hops replaced gruits in beer production by the early 1400s. In most cases, the actual gruit recipe was a closely guarded secret. But some period authors did reveal some information about what was used in these concoctions, handed down from generation to generation or passed from one manor brewer to the next. Seventeenth century writers collected many general descriptions of gruit as it was used at various times. The reliability of seventeenth century and earlier reporting of recipes may be questionable depending on the source. For example, Harrison's book on England in Shakespeare's time consists of stories that he repeats without verification. Other anecdotal reports by non-brewers seem to be close to factual, but suffer from a lack of details. Regardless, these sources do provide some insights into brewing practices.

Hops were used as a bittering agent during Charlemagne's reign, and were well-established in the low countries by the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century hops had mostly displaced gruits as the primary flavoring and preservative agent on the continent. English brewers were generally slower to adopt the

more powerful preserving hops flowers, with gruits remaining the preferred flavoring until the late sixteenth century.

Gruits survived late into the middle ages in England and on the continent as a means to administer herbs for medicinal purposes. Indeed, there are numerous ale recipes whose primary purpose seems to be as a curative or preventative. For example, Cock Ale was one such curative. Many of these recipes rely on the special properties of the ingredients. Red cocks warded off lightning strikes - thus the rooster weather vane. Red cocks also improved virility, and had many other curative effects. Parboiling and pickling the cock with sack posset imbued the ale with the magical properties of the cock. The ale was consumed over a short period of time.

Brewing in Medieval England was women's work. Except for books written specifically to train young wives how to run a manor house, there is little written about the detailed procedures used to brew ale. Brewing implements can be discovered through probate records since brewing utensils were taxed. Grain bills can be recreated by following the size of bread and ale, local regulations, and manor records. But gruits were a closely held secret for the most part - or specially blended by the brewster according to the then-current beliefs of medicine. The degree of mystery surrounding brewing in England was summed up by an 18th century philosopher Lorenz Crell. Crell, who noted "Every rural brewer, every publican in a village pub, every tenant farmer's labourer wants to understand the art. Educated men gape at the insuperable difficulties the common brewer faces while old women are able to make good beer with such ease, for even the number of brewers who commend themselves is most limited." (Crell, L. Vorschläge zu neuen Vortheilen beim Bierbrauen - from an English edition by J. Richardson, Berlin 1788)

Thanks to the efforts of several scholars we do have a primary source for gruit from the fourteenth century low countries. This

anonymous manuscript offers some specific information about gruits. It is important to keep in mind that early writers did not necessarily define the ingredients very carefully. For example, some herbs might be used in seed, flower, or root form but still be simply described by the name without specifying the form. Since women provided medicinals for their family, they would be expected to know what form to use in brewing for any specific purpose.

Fritz Sommer translated many Medieval Low German recipes from original manuscripts. His translations have formed the basis for several modern books, including Clive La Pensee's "The Historical Companion to House-Brewing" published by Montag Publications. One of Sommer's translations was from an anonymous 15th century Low German manuscript. None of these recipes includes boiling the gruit in the wort. Instead, gruit was a late addition, sometimes during fermentation, sometimes in the cask, and other times shortly before the ale was served.

From a 15th century manuscript

"Those who want to make Old Beer, which is also called Shavings Beer, let him take and plane shavings from dry fir wood, put them in a pot and boil them well and lay them afterward in a loft and dry them well, but not in the sun. Then bind them in a small bundle and put them in the beer. In any case, the shavings make every beer pure and clear. If you want to make herb beer, then take Marjoram, Buckbean, and Woodruff and from these three make a small bundle and put them in the beer.

If you want to make Sage, Hyssop, or Lavender Beer so pick these herbs between the days of Our Good Lady's Ascension and Birth and dry these herbs completely in a loft, but not in the sun but in the air. When they are dry, rub them and put them in a bag and hang them half depth in the beer. If you want to keep the herbs then take the bag out and hang it in the air to dry

completely and hang it in another beer. This way you will make a strong beer which keeps for every occasion.

If you want to make Cherry Beer then let the cherries become fully ripe and black and beat them to pieces in the beer vat and leave them in the vat overnight. Squeeze the cheery meat through a sieve so that the stones are removed and the fruit is made smaller. Then put the cheery fruit into a cloth and pull this through the beer to give the beer color. Then take the stones and dry them in the air but first rub them thoroughly between the hands. When they are dry break them with a stone and bind the pierces in a bag and hang them halfway in the beer. If you want the beer right strong then take many bags for the stones give the beer the strength and color it strong. Then the beer stays strong but you must shake it every year.

If you want Sloe Beer so pick the Sloes at Michaelsmas when they are not too ripe. Wood Sloes are best. Break the Sloes with a stone and beat them until they are soft. Put them as they are, with their skins into a bag with some salt, into the beer. If you want to do a whole barrel of beer then take three bowls of sloes and put them all in.

If you want Valerian Beer then dry half a pound of good Valerian roots, put them in a bag and put this in the beer. They should remain in the beer for three weeks. Take the bag out in the third week, let it dry and then hang it again.

If you want Elecampane Beer, the dig the roots between Ascention Day and the birth of Our Lady, clean them and put them in a bag. According to how strong you want the beer hang more or less of the root in. The roots must be clean and dried, not in the sun, but in a loft or cupboard where there is no draught.

If you want to make Mugwort Beer, then pick wild Mugwort and dry it as described, not in the sun but in a loft where much

air goes through. Bind it in a little bundle and hang this in the beer.

The same should be done to make Wormwood Beer. Pick it between the two Feasts of Our Lady, fully dry it away from the sun and leave it in the beer a half, or even a whole year and look often to see that it does grow no mould.

All these beers should be served every evening. The beer should not be cloudy but clear and not too young. If you do this well and you have a good beer then you will always be a good host.

If you want to clear a cloudy beer, then take dry beech wood with the bark still on and dry it in the air in a loft or chamber, but not in the sun. Plane as thin shavings from it as you can and bind them to a bundle and lay this in the beer and it will become clear and pure."

Thomas Tryon documented English herbed beers in "A New Art of Brewing Ale and other Liquors" published in 1691. Two methods of spicing ale were advocated by Tryon. The first is to mix the herbs with an uphopped young beer about 15 minutes before it is served. From the description the herbs were hung in the cask in bundles if they were sufficiently large. For leaves and other preparations, the herbs were placed in a bag (cotton or linen) and then left to steep in the beer for 15 minutes. The second method of spicing beer was to immerse the herbs for 30 minutes in the wort while it was warm. According to Tryon, spicing with many herbs required that the herbs be hung one after another and not in mixed bundles. Evidently the order and time between additions was important, but it is not included in Tryon's book.

Both of Tryon's methods were used for a wide variety of herbs, many of which enjoy a modern following. Herbs steeped in this manner included pennyroyal, balm, ground ivy, fennel, caraway, and coriander. Tansy, wormwood, eyebright, betony,



sage, dandelion and hay are best steeped in the warm wort before fermentation.

The late infusion method of adding herb flavors to beer is the easiest to experiment with. Brew a brown ale without hops, ferment the wort and bottle in large containers for future use. Unlike hopped beer that will skunk if exposed to light, the unhopped beer may be stored in clear glass containers such as one gallon juice jars. Make certain to sanitize bottles well before use. When you are ready to herb the ale, steep an amount of herbs in the one gallon jar. Adjust the amount and length of steeping to taste.

## Collected List of Herbs for Ale/Beer

**Caution:** *some of these herbs are **poisonous**, can cause abortions, hallucinations or other side effects. Consult with a competent herbalist or herbal encyclopedia such as Culpepper's Herbal before using unfamiliar ingredients. Be certain of your plant identification if harvesting from the wild. LABEL every brew made with herbs with the types and quantity of herbs used in preparing your beverage.*

- Alecost *Chrysanthemum balsamita* - also used in soups and meat pots.
- Alehoof *Glechoma hederacea* commonly called Ground Ivy or Creeping Jenny. The most commonly referenced non-hop bittering agent. Documented in Gerard's herbal in 1597 as the bittering agent used in Wales and Cheshire.
- Aloe *Aloes* - not a native to England but is found wild in Greece and other locales.
- Balm *Melissa officinalis* - said to be an anti-depressant.
- Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* - a main ingredient in Germanic gruits. Also used in linens to repel fleas.
- Buckbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*
- Carduus *Carduus benedictus* - sometimes called wild saffron, said to provide bittering very close to hops.

- Centaury *Centaureum minus* or *Gentiana centaurium* - roots are main source.
- Comfrey *Symphytum officinale* - from Gerard "The slimie substance of the root made in a posset of ale, and given to drink against the paine in the backe, gotten by any violent motion, as wrestling or over much use of women, doth in fower or five daies perfectly cure the same, although the involuntarie flowing of the seed in men be gotten thereby."
- Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* - the young leaves are used to spice beer, but roots may also be used.
- Elecampne *Inula helenium*
- Eyebright *Eurphrasia officinalis*
- Hops *Humulus lupulus*
- Horehound *Marrubium vulgare*
- Hyssop *Hyssopus officinalis* - popularized by the Benedictine monks in liquors.
- Lavender *Lavandula vera*
- Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* - used with buckbean and woodruff in Low German recipes. Related to oregano.
- Mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris*
- Nettle *Urtica dioica*
- Pennyroyal *Metntha pulegium*
- **Sage** *Salvia officinalis*
- **Sloes/Blackthorn** *Prunus spinosa* - leaves make tea, fruit and juice of flowers in medicine, fruits into gin.
- Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare* - said to reduce miscarriages.
- Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*
- **Woodruff** *Asperula odorata* - picked in May, dried for a day and then put in with wine to make Maibowle. Also used in gruits.
- **Wood Sage** *Teucrium scorodonia* - leaves were used
- **Wormwood** *Artemesia absinthium* or *Absinthium vulgare*
- **Yarrow** *Achillea millefolium* - used in "thin" ales.

## Narcotic Herbs

- Darnel *Lolium temulentum* - grows as a weed in grain fields. Probably an admixture in barley.
- Melilot *Melilotus altissima*
- Thorn Apple *Datura stramonium*

# Elderberry Wine

By Thea of Midvale

It's Fall again and the elderberry bushes hiding along the byways of the Bay Area are putting up their purple umbrels of berries. This is a wonderful opportunity to find a period fruit right at our own doorstep.

According to A Second Handbook of Anglo - Saxon Food & Drink by Ann Hagen, settlers in the foothills of the Alps were making wine from elderberries as early as the second millennium B.C. .

George Ordish in his book Wine Growing in England mentions elderberry wine as being a feature of country life until the age of sugar rationing.

The Elderberry has been called the English Grape because of its popularity in wine. As late as the eighteenth century, laws in Portugal were passed requiring the destruction of all Elder trees in the port wine growing regions because large quantities of these were finding their way into the Port wine.

Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery c. 1550-1625 describes the making of elderberry wine:

3 ½ gallons water                      1 peck elderberries (1 peck = 8  
quarts or 2 gallons)  
1 pint honey or ½ lb. sugar per quart strained juice  
1 pint ale yeast per 2 qts. strained liquid

Take three gallons and a half of water and set it on the fire, and when it is warm, put to it a peck of elderberries very ripe. Bruise them well and strain them and measure the liquor and set it on the fire again and let it boil a quarter of an hour and scum it very well and to every quart of liquor put a pint of honey or

half a pound of sugar. Boil and skim it till it will bear an egg, than take it off and when it is cold as ale, put yeast to it and put to every two quarts a pint of ale that is working. Let it work a night together and tun it into a runlet.

After it is done working stop it up and at Christmas broach and bottle. It will keep a year. (per Cindy Renfrow's A Sip Through Time)

This is how we do it:

Elderberries grow in large flat umbrels at the top of the elderberry bush and are cut off in clusters that include the stems. Since elderberries are so small, it is impossible to remove them individually. I place the clusters of elderberries into a large cookpot with a quantity of water. As the berries come to a boil, they are crushed with the potato masher. The stems and seeds are then strained out leaving only the clear run juice. Elderberries **MUST** be cooked and the seeds removed as the seeds are poisonous. A large five gallon plastic pail of elderberries yields approximately (depending on the amount of water used) 3 to 4 gallons. In the case my house wine, I bring the level to five gallons by using mixed fruit juice leftover from jam making or some apple juice. Elderberries have a very distinctive flavor that overrides most other fruits.

To five gallons of juice I used approximately 15 lbs of sugar. To make a drier style wine, as little as 10 lbs will work, but more sugar will produce a dessert style wine. As noted, Elderberries were occasionally added to Port wine as a color additive and flavor enhancer.

An appropriate amount of citric acid is used to balance the juice, Campden tablets are added to retard the growth of unwanted yeasts and a small amount of tannin is added to enhance the flavor and aging. I prefer to use Cote de Azur Wine yeast.

Enjoy.

*Your  
Article  
Could  
Appear  
Here!*



# Brewers' Guild Leadership

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Private  
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This newsletter is an unofficial publication prepared by and for the members of the Brewers' Guild of the Kingdom of the West. The articles, opinions, and recipes published herein are strictly the responsibility of their authors and not of the SCA or the Kingdom of the West. (Now that the lawyers are happy... relax and have a home brew!)