

Brewers' Guild Newsletter



*"God in His goodness sent the grape to cheer both
great and small. Little fools drink too much
and great fools none at all."*

(Anonymous)

March Crown, A. S. XXXI



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 laurel leaf Vert on a tun Or". 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!

Upcoming Brewing Competitions: Enter Your Best Brews And Have Fun!

March Crown	Bring your favorite brew!
Mists Spring Coronet	Preparations - period mixed drinks, wassails, and such...
Beltane	Dark Beers
Mists Spring Investiture	Open! If you think it's good and period, bring it!
Cynagua Spring Coronet	(TBD)
June Crown	(TBD) will be decided at March Crown
Cynagua Summer Investiture	(TBD)
Purgatorio	(TBD) will be decided at March Crown
Mists Fall Coronet	Beers - light or Octoberfest
October Crown	(TBD) Also, bring your Octoberfest beers!
Mists Fall Investiture	Soft Drinks - all types!
Twelfth Night	(TBD) will be decided at March Crown
Twelfth Night (Lochac)	(TBD)
Mists Spring Coronet	Anything with an unusual ingredient
Mists Spring Investiture	Cordials



"NOTICE: THIS SPACE AVAILABLE!"

I want to thank our incoming Guildmaster, Lady Crystal of the Westermarck, for her contributions to this issue, and she sent in enough stuff that I saved some for the next issue, too! Huzzah! So now it's *your* turn! And as noted in the Twelfth Night issue, I am still looking for a deputy chronicler who can take over the publication of the newsletter maybe around October Crown or so. Thanks!



Sumerian Ale

An experiment in ancient brewing techniques.

As noted in the Twelfth Night's issue, I proposed a special Brewers' Guild tasting at March Crown for Sumerian and/or Egyptian style ales. Following the ancient beer recipe from "The Hymn to Ninkasi" (as published in this very newsletter about one year ago) I made 2.5 gallons of Sumerian ale in this manner:

Bappir (barley-wheat date bread)

2 pounds of pale malted barley (crushed finely) plus 2 pounds unmalted wheat (also crushed finely) were mixed with 1/2 cup buckwheat flour (which is produced from a Middle Eastern seed that is not related to barley, oats, rye, or wheat) in a bowl. Then 1/2 pound of unsulfured dates were very finely chopped and mixed with about 2 cups of hot water, then allowed to cool to body temperature. This sweet water was poured into the crushed grains and mixed, with additional warm water being added until a tough (!!!) dough was formed. At this point a package of brewers' yeast was added and the dough allowed to raise for 3 hours, although the "raise" was mostly in my hopes rather than the dough.

I then formed the dough into 7 round loaves and baked them in a 400°F oven for about 1 hour, at which time the bottoms were caramelizing and the tops dry. However, the centers will still quite moist and uncooked, which is exactly as described by the ancient Egyptian chemist Zosimus of Panopolis: "*Next grind it and make it into loaves adding leaven, just like bread, and cook it rather raw and whenever (the loaves) rise, dissolve sweetened water and strain through a strainer or light sieve...*" The loaves were allowed to cool overnight.

The next morning the loaves were broken up and mixed with 2 more pounds of crushed pale malted barley, and 2.5 gallons of 175°F water and allowed to mash for 3 hours. At that point an additional gallon of very hot water was added to the mash and the liquid slowly drained off into three one-gallon glass "iced tea" style jars. The resulting wort was *not* boiled or otherwise sterilized, and the significant amount of particulate matter was also left in the wort. Another package of brewers' yeast was reconstituted and divided between the three jars, which were then placed in a water bath (to simulate being partially buried in the ground), covered with towels, and allowed to ferment until still, about 7 days.

When the fermentation was complete, the jars were transferred to the refrigerator until March Crown.

While I am having to write this article before the Sumerian ale is ready to drink, I suspect that it will be rather sour (from the naturally-occurring *Lactobacillus* which is found naturally on all malted grains) but may be quite drinkable. The sourness should be balanced by the sweetness of the malt. In any case, it was a lot of fun trying to reproduce an extremely ancient brewing technique totally unlike anything commercially produced in the past 3,000 years! For the brave souls who will join our Brewers' Guild meeting at March Crown, there will be plenty of Sumerian ale to go around! We will drink the beer directly from the fermentation jars using straws...

Duncan Saxthorpe of Alnwick

The Medievalist Maltster

"The grain was steeped and germinated, by which its spirits were excited and set free; it was then dried and ground and infused with water, when after fermentation it produced a pleasant, warming, strengthening and intoxicating liquor." (Translated from the Geoponius)

When we modern brew hounds trek off to the local brewing supply store for a sack of malted barley, we rarely give any thought to the 3,000+ years of technological evolution that was required to develop the many varieties of malt that are currently available for commercial and home brewers. So the next few paragraphs are an effort at both educating and amusing our readers with some of the historical elements of malting technology from the pre-Roman Britons through to the late Middle Ages.

Modern archeological digs in northern England have uncovered large, stone and/or brick floors that were inside of some unusually large buildings. These floors were built so as to be heated with fire and had flues and vents such that the fire was never in direct contact with the stones (as an oven would be), but rather to create an indirect heat. The design of these floors baffled archeologists for a while as the fires would still produce far more heat than any living quarters could justify, yet would not be hot enough for the baking of foods or commercial goods.

Finally, someone recalled that around 400 BCE Pytheas wrote about an unusual building design of the early Britons, and which included detailed descriptions of this very same combination of floor, flue, and vents. *"The plan of these kilns and their flues varied considerably, now bowl shaped, now T-shaped, now H-shaped, now forked. But the principle of construction was always the same, to create a fire whose hot gases passed through flues and gently heated a floor, never itself in direct contact with the flame."*

Pytheas also wrote that the Britons gathered their grains while still slightly green and then preserved them by parching (heated drying). So it became apparent that these large enclosed buildings with indirectly-heated floors were likely built for the drying of malted grains! While the picking of green cereal grains may not produce a quality malt, if the seeds are allowed to germinate for a while before they are dried, a malt suitable for brewing is produced nonetheless. So we possess both written and archeological evidence that the ancient Britons were producing large quantities of malt. But were they using the malt for making beer?

Discorides, who lived in 100 AD, wrote about the barley beverages which were fermented and consumed by the Hiberi (or ancient Irish peoples). He noted that they called these ales *cuirum* or *coirm* ("corn", a general term used for any grain) and drank them in a *coirn-thech*, or ale-house. The grains used were mostly *brac* or *braich* (barley) which was steeped in water for a while, then drained well and laid out on a level floor to dry. He also documented that workers raked and turned the grains while drying. Finally, the drains were kilned (roasted) prior to use or storage. This exactly describes the process of malting, even as practiced today, for which its principal use has always been the brewing of beer and ale.



A later book, *Senehus Mor*, documented three tests the Irish peoples used to determine that the malt was being properly prepared. These early "quality control" guidelines were very important since improperly made malt will produce undrinkable, or at least inferior, ales. The first test, done right after the kiln-drying, was to place a grain of malt between the teeth and see if it was firm and free from bitterness; the second taste test time was after the malt was ground but before use or being compressed into hard, brick-like cakes for storage; and the final test was once it was being mashed.

Today we know that malting was certainly practiced even before the rise of the great cities of the Mesopotamians, and by all civilizations since that time. Even the Briton's Roman conquerors, as well as the ancient Greeks, were skilled in the making of cereal malts and used them to brew alcoholic beverages. Xenophon (400 BCE) wrote that "wine made from barley is very strong and of delicious flavor, but the taste must be acquired." Pliny (23-79 AD) wrote that the Greeks learned how to make beer from the much older Egyptian civilization. However, for the most part, both of these cultures considered beer to be a crude and barbarian drink when compared to that of a civilized man: wine. It should be noted, though, that many of the lower-class Romans and their slaves drank beer and even had a preference for beer made from wheat rather than barley. The Romans also noted, with some admiration, the tremendous quantities of beer that their traditional barbarian enemies consumed before going into battle!

The Romans even gave beer the name "cerevesia", after *Ceres* (the goddess of agriculture) and *vis* (for strength). But their considerable knowledge of the brewing arts and respect for their beer-swilling enemies did little to lessen their disrespect of beer. In 361 AD, Emperor Julian the Apostate wrote: *I know Bacchus, the god of wine, for he smells of nectar; but all I know of the god of beer is that he smells of billy goat!"*.

Among the Greeks, Aristotle, (384-322 BCE), the great observer of humans and natural events, wrote *"They who drink beer fall on their backs, for they who drink other intoxicating liquors fall on all parts of their body... it is only those who get drunk on beer who fall on their backs and lie with their faces upwards"*. (Editor's note: it is rumored that some of our Kingdom's brave squires conducted a highly successful experiment on this very subject during the recent Estrella War ...)

So, getting back to the subject at hand, malting was widely practiced at the start of the Middle Ages. Perhaps one question to address is "why malt barley?" First, barley is a difficult grain to use as a cereal food and is very hard to digest as harvested. While barley grows very well under harsh conditions, it also contains a tough, and somewhat astringent, husk which is hard to mill (grind or crush). Even today, the barley used in foods (such as soups and stews) has been processed in such a way as to remove all of the husk without crushing the grain itself and is called "pearl barley". Second, barley contains very little gluten, the plant protein that, when combined with water, forms a sticky compound that allows air to become trapped within a dough. This trapped air causes a dough to rise during the baking processes.

Thus, bread made from barley alone does not rise significantly and turns out so hard and dense as to be almost inedible. Fortunately, barley does have one abundant property that few other grains do: lots of diastatic enzymes which can convert large and difficult-to-digest starch molecules into easily digestible sugars.

Wheat has almost none of these diastatic enzymes, and also a much softer, more easily removable husk. While the characteristics of this husk makes wheat very friendly for the miller, it conversely makes the malting of wheat almost impossible. (Even today, malted wheat is rather rare, relatively expensive, and used only sparingly in recipes.) Wheat is also high in gluten, which makes it the ideal candidate for bread dough but also produces cloudiness in beer. (That is one of the reasons why *weissebier* is always so hazy...) Even uncooked wheat is easy for animals to digest. Rice has very little diastatic enzyme activity and is traditionally "malted" with the digestive enzymes from a fungus rather than via germination. (This is how sake is made, and will be the focus of a future article...)

Rye, like wheat, can be malted only with some difficulty, contains a little more diastatic enzyme, but the making of malted rye can also be very dangerous. During an improperly controlled malting process the rye undergoes a process we now call butyric fermentation, which produces awful tasting chemicals (like rancid butter) that are also poisonous. Wet rye is also prone to infection with food-spoiling molds such as the ergot fungus, which itself produces a highly toxic and hallucinogenic by-product: ergotamine. (Ergotamine is the base chemical in the manufacture of LSD, and can cause convulsions, seizures, miscarriages, and death in addition to hallucinations. Some historians believe that many of the witch hunts of the Middle Ages and beyond may have been started when the people of a village consumed ergot-infected bread or beer. The resulting disorders could easily have been seen by the people as evidence that witches and Satan were walking among them!) Thus, rye was very rarely malted and even then only during times of severe shortages of other grains. However, *unmalted* rye was, and still is, widely used as an adjunct in many beer recipes.

During the early Middle Ages, brewing technology in general received a tremendous boost from an unlikely source: the Church. While the Church had been selling ale to the masses for a long time, and possessed the first large-scale brewing operations seen in Europe since the fall of the mighty Roman empire, it took one of western history's greatest men to provide the real impetus for change: Charlemagne.

When he began to piece together the Holy Roman Empire in 768 AD, Charlemagne realized that two he had available two powerful forces which could help him maintain control over the people he now ruled: the Church and beer. So he brought Saint Gall back to his own abbey, fresh from Gall's work with the pagan, but beer-loving, Celts (aha!, another connection...) and told him to make better beer.

Gall brought with him a great knowledge of malting, mashing, fermenting, and storage of beer. He also built upon this considerable knowledge during his stay at the abbey, in the process both improving upon existing technologies and developing entirely new ones. Gall truly refined the art of brewing and the knowledge shared by him made the quality of the Church's beers far superior to their competitors. And the Church, in turn, distributed this knowledge throughout their various abbeys and monestaries. While many other factors certainly played a role in the tremendous growth of beer drinking during the Middle Ages, including the horrific pollution of drinking water in the 14th Century, no other single individual had such a great impact in the evolution of medieval brewing technology as did Charlemagne.

Now fast forward to 1482, when English brewers petitioned their Guildhall to pass regulations controlling the manufacture and also the quality of malt. In 1493 the Guildhall decreed: *"That no one of the Craft send any wheat, malt or other grain for brewing to the mill to be ground... unless it be clean and sweet, under penalty of 20/-."* And nearly a century later, the City of London passed a law in 1548 called "True Making of Malt", which laid out the required procedures for making malt and also set forth punishments for violating same.

The Act of 1548 also established a minimum drying time of three weeks for malts, except for those made during the warmer months of June, July, and August. The desired effect of these decrees and official acts was to prevent the manufacture and sale of incompletely dried or too-rapidly dried, malts, both of which produced malt which was often rotten inside. Improperly dried malts also gave much heavier measures (weights) per volume due to their excessive water content and thus cheated the brewers. All of these problems were, and still are, highly undesirable in the making of quality beer and ale.

So where does this leave the medievalist who wants to try malting his or her own barley? The basic technique is relatively straightforward, but its application is also rather difficult due to both the timing and space requirements. The following brief description of the malting process is summarized from *The Historical Companion to House-Brewing* by Clive La Pensee, which gives an

excellent and detailed description of exactly how to malt your own barley and even describes how to make your own home malting equipment.

First, soak unmalted barley in cool water (8-10°C) for 72 hours. To prevent suffocation of the barley from the CO₂ that is produced, the steep water needs to be changed after the first 2 hours then every 12 hours thereafter. When the weight of the wet grains has increased by 45% (2.5 kg. of barley will now weigh 3.6 kg.) they are drained and allowed to germinate for several days, during which time the barley needs to be kept between 12-15°C and must never exceed 20°C at any time. Also, the germinating grains produce large quantities of CO₂ which must be carried away by gentle air flow or else the grains will suffocate and die. When the acrospire (rootlets) have reached 2/3 the length of the grain itself the green malt is ready for drying. At this point the green malt will have a water content of about 30%, and needs to be kilned at around 45°C for 2-3 days until the water content is between 4-6%. This is the most difficult part of the malting process because too high of a temperature will destroy the enzymes in the grain that allow subsequent conversion of the unfermentable starches to fermentable sugars. Too low of a temperature, or too long of a drying time, and the grains will begin to decompose inside. Once properly dried, the grains must be stored for at least 4 weeks before being used for brewing, or may be immediated roasted to produce special malts for flavoring and coloring the beers, such as crystal malts and brown or black malts.

So the next time you pick up a handful of sweetly aromatic, malted barley take a moment to remember the ancient brewers whose devoted efforts helped raise the craft to its current level. Happy brewing!

Duncan Saxthorpe of Alnwick, O.P., G.A.



Did you know that as recently as the last century, white wine was used as a diuretic, port wine was used for people convalescing from illnesses, and burgundy was used as a remedy for dyspepsia (indigestion)?

(Postgraduate Medicine, Vol. 101/No. 2; February 1997.)

The following recipes were researched and contributed by our new Head of the Guild, the delightful Lady Crystal of the Westermark. Having tasted several of her brews I give a wholehearted "Huzzah!" for her wonderful brewing talents!

Spring Ale

2 pounds light malt extract
1/2 pound of roasted barley grains
1 ounce fresh ginger, peeled and sliced thin
1 teaspoon ground long pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
Wyeast® German Ale Yeast
water to one gallon



Crack and place grains in a grain bag. Soak bag a quart of water over low heat. Place at a quart of water in a large pot and heat to a near-boil. Add the malt extract and heat thoroughly, stirring constantly to prevent boil over. Boil for at least 20 min., then add spices and stir. Turn off heat and cover the mixture while cooling. Turn off heat and cover grains as well. When cool decant the mixtures into a sanitized fermentation vessel. Add water to one gallon. Add yeast. Wait. Transfer to secondary. Wait. Bottle. Age as little as possible (see notes below).

This ale is loosely based on ales described by C. Anne Wilson in her text, *Food and Drink in Britain from the Stone Age to the 19th Century*. Published by Academy Chicago Publishers, Chicago, IL., 1991. ISBN 0-89733-264-0.

I have included pepper and cloves, as described in a malt-based beverage recipe found in *Curye on Inglysch: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century (Including the Forme of Cury)*. Hieatt, Constance and Butler, Sharon., editors and translators. Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press. London, England 1985 ISBN 0-19-722409.

Page 149-150

8 Ad faciendum brakott. Take xiiii galouns of good fyn ale that the grout therof by twies meischid, & put it into a stonen vessel. & lete it stonde iii daies or iiii, til it be stale. Afterward take a quart of fyn wort, half a quart of lyf hony; & sette it ouer the fier, & lete it sethe, & skyme it wel til it be cleer. & thut therto a penywoth of poudir of peper & I penyworth of poudir of clowis, & sethe hem wel together til it boile. Take it down & lete it kele, & poure out the clere therof into the forseid vessel, & the groundis theof put in into a bagge, into the forseid pot, & stoppe it wel with a lynnyn clooth that noon eir come out; & put therto newe berm, & stoppe it iii dayes or iiii eer thou drinke therof. Put aqua ardente it among.

My interpretation:

8 Braggot. Take nine gallons of clear ale that be malt thereof be twice mashed and put it into a standing vessel. Let it stand for three or four days, till it be stale. Afterward take a quart of clear wort, half a quart of honey and set it over the fire and let it steep and skim it until it is clear. Put thereto 2/3 oz. of powder of pepper and a 1/4 oz. of powder of cloves and steep them together until it boils. Then take it off the fire and let it cool. Pour out the clear liquid thereof into the forsaid vessel and the grounds there of put into a bag into the forsaid pot and stopper it well with a linen cloth that none will come out and put thereto a new barm (yeast). Keep it three or four days before you drink thereof. Put aqua ardente (wine brandy) in it.

As many period cookbooks* refer to drinking ale and mead 2-3 days after the yeast settles, this Ale has been only 2 weeks in the bottle (3 weeks in secondary fermentation). The longest aging time for period malt-based beverages I've seen is a month (Digby's cock ale).

*"To make mede. & thanne lete it stonde a few dayes wel stoppid, & this is a good drinke."

Hieatt, Constance and Butler, Sharon. editors and translators. *Curye on Inglysch: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth Century (Including the Forme of Cury)*. Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press. London, England 1985 ISBN 0-19-722409. Page 150

"Alos loke your composte be fayre and clene / and your ale fyue dayes olde or men drynke it / "

Furnivall, Fredrick J., editor. *Early English Meals and Manners: John Russell's Boke of Nurture, ... William Vaughan's Fifteen Directions to Preserve Health ... The Babees Book...&c.* Published for the Early English Text Society by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., England 1894 (section of *The Boke of Kernyng* as Published by Wynkyn de Worde) Pages 154

“32. Diverse excellent kinds of bottle-ale.

I cannot remeber, that ever I did drinke the like Sage-ale stoppe your bottle close, and drink it when it is stale.”

Delights for Ladies, To adorn their perfons, Tables, Clofets and Diftillatoriess with Beavties, Banqvets, Perfumes & Waters. By Sir Hugh Plat, Published London, 1609. Reprinted in A Collection of Medieval and Renaissance Cookbooks: First Compiled by Duke Cariadoc of the Bow and The Duchess Diana Alena, Sixth Edition (1991) Volume One, published privately. Page 79

Easy Non-Alcoholic Beverages By Crystal of the Westermark

When I first started researching into period nonalcoholic and low-alcoholic beverages, I thought it would be a long battle to get people to drink them. Boy, was I wrong on that one. Following are recipes for the beverages served during the dessert remove at the last Westermark Anniversary Feast. All three are concentrates, intend to be diluted with water for serving. Why make concentrates? Because 1) when there is more sugar than water the concentrates will not spoil at room temperature, and 2) you only have to transport one bottle instead of a dozen.

Sekanjabin

Adapted from *Elizabeth and Craiadoc's Miscellany*. Page 73-74.

2 cups water

4 cups white sugar (or 3.5 cups clarified honey)

1 cup white wine vinegar (or lemon juice)

1 handful (about 6 stems' worth of leaves) mint or 2 TBS chopped fresh ginger

Bring the water to a boil and add sugar, stirring until dissolved. Reduce heat, add vinegar (or lemon juice) and allow the mixture to simmer (steaming but not bubbling) for 30 minutes. While wating, gently wash and pluck the leaves from the stems of mint (or peel and chop fresh ginger). Remove from heat and add mint leaves (or ginger). Allow the mint leaves (ginger) to remain in the mixture

until cool (perhaps an hour) and remove before bottling. To drink, dilute about 1 parts Sekanjabin to ten parts water. Period recipes for Sekanjabin (or a related beverage Oxymel) call for sea salt, making it a good drink for sweaty fighters. Sekanjabin was used as a way to make medicinal herbs palatable, so you can replace the mint with other herbs found in period for different flavors.

Rose Syrup

Adapted from *The 'Libre de Diversis Medicinis' in the Thornton Manuscript (MS. Lincoln Cathedral, A.5.2).*

2 cups water

4 ounces fresh edible rose petals

1 tablespoon rose hips

4 ounces sugar

1 teaspoon rose-flavor extract

Find organically grown, edible roses. Remove the petals from the stems and cut off the bitter white part at the base of each petal. Bring the water to a boil, remove from heat. Add rose petals and rose hips and allow to soak overnight. Strain through cheesecloth to remove all rose parts. Squeeze out the rose parts to get all the flavor possible. Put the fluid back into the pot and add sugar and rose-flavored extract. Stir to make sure all sugar is dissolved. Simmer over low heat for several hours until it is reduced to about one cup. Bottle. When ready to drink, dilute about one part syrup to three parts water. - You may use dried rose petals, available by at some health food stores.

Stepponi

Adapted from *The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digbie Kt. Opened: Whereby is Discovered Several ways for making of Metheglin, Sider, Cherry-Wine, &c. together with Excellent Directions for Cookery: As alfo for Preferving, Canferving, Candyng, &c.* Published by his Son's Consent

1 pound of seedless raisins

1/2 pound of sugar

2 lemons

water to one gallon

Remove the zest from the lemons and squeeze all the juice from them. Place the raisins, sugar, zest and lemon juice in a large bowl that will not crack when the boiling water is added. Boil one gallon (less one pint) of water. Pour the boiling water over the sugar, raisins and lemon. Allow the solution to cool. Strain and pour into sanitized bottles. Store in a cool place.

If you have questions or would like more information on non-alcoholic beverages, please contact me at xtal@rtfm.com.

In the Basement with a Queen

I had an illuminating experience this last fall and feel a need to share. I was invited to help make a cider with a former Queen of the West. After we were done, she asked a further favor, and lead me to the basement of her house. She opened a box, pulled out a bottle of red stuff and handed it to me. "What's this?" I held the bottle up to the light, moving it a little to see if there was yeast in the bottom and looking to see if the liquid clung to the sides. "It's probably a raspberry cordial, not heavily spiced." I handed the bottle back to her. She reached in the box and took out another bottle. "What's this?" I did the same routine. "Looks like a bottle-conditioned pale ale, but it might be a darkish sparkling mead or cider."

Another bottle appeared "What's this?" I was losing patience quickly, and the basement was cold. "How many of these do you have?" She grinned in a fashion I can only describe as wicked, and shoved the box towards me. It was FULL of unlabeled mystery brew. "I didn't know you brewed that much" I said. "I didn't." said the former queen, taking my sleeve and dragging me towards another box. That one was full too. And another and another and another. She has *six* boxes full of unlabeled brew. Nearly all of the brew had been given to her during the course of her reign. As I began babbling incoherently about the waste of good brew, she dragged me to the other end of the basement and showed me four more boxes, all belonging to a former Princess of the Mists. I learned then, that while Royals often have a court member to record who gave them what, when all the bottles end up in a box at the end of an event, there is no knowing what is in any one bottle.

Lesson:

If you do not want all of the work and devotion you put into your brew to end up sitting, dusty and unloved in somebody's basement, PUT A LABEL ON IT! Even if it is a bit of paper taped to the bottom, write what it is (mead, beer, cordial) what's in it (spices, honey) and who made it (your name). If possible, use water-proof ink.

(And now an article from our Mists Brewers' Guild Representative:)

Hi. I assume a less than serious piece would be appropriate for the Newsletter? Great! Here's a submission. I think you'll like it; there's supposed to be just enough actual historical information to tweak the mind.

A Brief History of Civilization

by Peyre de Barat

It all began in hunter-gatherer societies, where life was difficult and sober. The people had to drink water from rivers, lakes, and so forth, from which they were constantly catching dysentery and other nasty diseases, and so they couldn't get anything done. Then one day someone discovered that if you get some grain wet, then cook it, add leaven (that's caveman for Fleischman's), let it sit for a few days and then drink it, you can get all kinds of things done. And so civilization was born.

Writing began in Mesopotamia, where for centuries various kingdoms rose, fell, and fought over the fertile barley-producing farmland. Meanwhile, the Egyptians founded a redoubtable empire based on the beer they could make on the banks of the Nile. In China, a civilization arose when tehuo (rice beer) was invented. It declined in the sixth century, however, as Buddhist monks convinced people to drink tea instead of beer. A civilization arose in India for a time, but was destroyed by the beer-drinking Aryans.

In the eighth century BCE the Romans founded an empire on the drinking of wine which conquered many sober peoples of the Mediterranean. It never conquered the beer-drinking Germans, however, who eventually overran West Rome. The Arabs assailed East Rome in their search for beer; they attacked its territory until one day they discovered that the Byzantines drank wine instead. They conquered and searched the Persian Empire, but without avail, and they went through all North Africa and Spain, finally reaching France. The French, as wine drinkers, managed to stop them, and the Muslims, in disgust at having come all that way for nothing, swore off alcohol altogether.

Charlemagne built on the large kingdom he inherited from his father Pepin, eventually being crowned emperor by the Pope. (This annoyed the Byzantines no end, as their emperor's title was basileus, a Greek word meaning "Great Wine Drinker".) His kingdom dominated western Europe, but began to weaken under his son, Louis the Pious, who preferred a sober life.

Decades later Charlemagne's descendants ruled what had become known as the Holy Roman Empire; it grew strong through the drinking of beer in Germany. Eventually, however, it weakened as its rulers started ignoring Germany in favor of Italy, where wine was drunk instead, and the local German nobles grew strong in their own right. As a result it became a phantom Empire, creating a power vacuum that started to be filled by the wine-drinking French.

In 1066 William of Normandy grew tired of wine and set off to acquire England, where beer was made in plenty. He beat the English, who had force-marched south from Stamford Bridge without their ale, but he never did defeat the Scots, who were as fond of their beer as were the English.

A couple decades later, the Muslims were again making inquiries of the Byzantines, who called on Western Europe for help. The knights of the West, deep in their cups and strongly fortified with beer and wine, charged forth and occupied the Holy Land. Unfortunately it proved to be a desert, and without the ability to produce beer the Crusaders weakened. Soon they reached a point where the teetotaling Muslims could expel them through force of numbers.

One day in 1209 the Mongols decided they were sick and tired of drinking kumiss, and set out to acquire the rice beer of China. They were so angered by centuries of drinking fermented mare's milk that they had conquered both empires there before they discovered that since China's conversion to tea, the beer wasn't made there any more. It was still being brewed in Japan, however. So they decided to attack, but the Japanese didn't want to give up their sake, and fought off both invasions. In their anger the Mongols overran Central Asia and the Middle East. Then, hearing about the beer that was made in Germany, they made their way through Russia and Poland but were stopped by the beer drinking Austrians. Having acquired a vast amount of territory but no new beverages, the Mongols couldn't hold their empire together and it soon fragmented.

Beginning in the twelfth century, the English began their occupation of Ireland; they needed the robust Irish porters to complement the light beers that were made in England. Progress was slow, however, as the Irish were strengthened by their local brews. The English developed a strategy of enticing various chieftains to send their sons to be raised and educated in London. There the young fellows were raised on light-bodied ales and were told, upon their return to Ireland, that their supply of English beer was dependent on how well they followed orders from London.

In the 1590s, one of these English-educated nobles, Hugh O'Neil, Earl of Tyrone, in events leading up to his revolt against the Crown once complained that Queen Elizabeth had so many spies around him that he could not get drunk in his castle without her hearing about it. Well of course he couldn't; the English had to monitor his consumption, to keep track of how strong he was and how much control they had over him. Years later, when he was leading half the Irish chieftains in open revolt, Elizabeth sent several military expeditions against him. However, since she always skimped on her soldiers, she sent them off without sufficient supplies of beer, which caused them to sicken and die by drinking from the rivers. Only when she began to provide them with enough beer (oh yes--and fortresses) did they turn the tide and defeat the Irish.

In 1492 Christopher Columbus contracted with the Spanish monarchs to seek a western passage to India. This journey was seen as so hazardous that few were willing to sign on as sailors. This changed when Chris displayed the large quantity of wine that would be taken aboard to sustain the crew on the long voyage. Of course the provisions ran out eventually, and when they reached the Caribbean they discovered that the local drink was made by chewing manioc root, spitting the juice into fermentation pots, and adding chilis and fish bones. At this point a large part of the crew rebelled and immediately sailed the Pinta back to Spain.

Numerous kingdoms and empires had come and gone in the Americas, built on such brews as corn beers, mesquite-tree wine, bark-flavored mead, and cactus beers. These beverages, unfortunately, were unable to strengthen the great empires of the day, the Incas and Aztecs, against the new diseases brought by the Spaniards. As a result, epidemics broke out and the population dropped until the Spanish Empire had set up large-scale vineyards to produce wine.

Thus ends the history of civilization through the end of our period, with proper emphasis given to the beverages that made it all possible. It required a tremendous amount of research (urp) to uncover these prime movers of our history, for generations of sober historians have worked to keep them hidden. But I remain dedicated to continuing this research, in the interest--of course--of furthering our understanding of history.

Finis! Thanks for all of the wonderful contributions!

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No phone calls after 9 PM, please...

This newsletter is an unofficial publication prepared by and for the member 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!)