



# THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

FEBRUARY 2010

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## The Prez Sez

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**Second Call-Snow Goose Breakup Homebrew Competition**

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**The Smoke is Rollin'**

## Prez Sez

*By Dennis Sessler*

**W**ell, I think I have recovered from Alaska's unofficial beer week. I have a feeling that

Dr. Fermento's constant prodding with the members of the Alaska Brewers Guild paid off; they will no doubt have

their ducks in a row January 2011. I want to personally thank all Alaska Brewing Guild members and all of our distributors for their participation in Beer Week and the Great Alaskan Beer and Barleywine Festival. You have made all the events surrounding the festival a true joy to be part of and on behalf of our club members, we thank you all. Special thanks go to Todd, Jason and Candice Alstrom from Beer Advocate. Your passion and spirit for beer and the geeks who love it made it a very memorable week. I am looking forward to the GABBF and the new "Alaska Beer Week" in 2011.



As you can see the Prez Sez picture has changed. I'm still flabbergasted by the ability of the photo contest winner, Joe "Alaska Joe" Michael. The original photo was taken at Café Amsterdam on Friday night during the Brewer's Appreciation Party. From what I remember we were discussing the demise of Alaskan Brewing Co. Baltic Porter. I was holding my arms up to the Beer Gods after recreating the chalice of life. It is my favorite beer that they brew, and from an inside source I learned it is also their most expensive. Well, they do have a business to run, I hopefully have procured my fix of Baltic Porter and pray it will last until they bring it back or they release a clone recipe. Thank you Joe, you did an awesome job. Next time you're at the house you get your pick from the cellar.

If you thought we were going to slug through the late winter months and wait for spring to arrive you have another thing coming. Our club calendar is packed with upcoming events. Here is a short list, check out the corresponding articles for all the specifics. Please feel free to contact each event organizer and volunteer to help them out. Our great club can't be run on the backs of only a few.

Our next event will be the Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition. Soon after that we will be having our February 16<sup>th</sup> GNBC club meeting, our special guest will be Kyle Beus of Matanuska Creamery. He will be giving us the skinny on process of making cheese and sharing his wisdom on how we can make our own artisanal cheeses. We will also be doing the judging for the American Ales for the AHA COC competition. See the article elsewhere with all the particulars on what you will need to bring.

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In the month of March we have a couple of club events; our club meeting will be on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The AHA National Homebrew Competition entries can be submitted between March 22 and April Fool's Day. Later that month we will be invading Talkeetna; check out the article "Beer Tripping". The following weekend April 3<sup>rd</sup> it's time to celebrate the Annual Snow Goose Spring Breakup Homebrew Competition. Catch Dan Bosch's article about the competition. You still have plenty of time to knock out a few batches of beer. Don't forget about the Brewers Challenge, a black wit.

The month of May will bring us back to John and Rose Craig's home for Brewathon. We will be having a double showing of the movie "Beer Wars" on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. See Tim Bisson's article for the breakdown of the double showings. I am tossing around the idea of adding an AHA Rally to coincide with the showing of "Beer Wars" and various homebrew demonstrations scattered between showings. All club members please set this date aside and don't forget to invite a friend or two. It will be a great opportunity to introduce them to homebrewing. We have a capacity of around 500 people for the combine showings. It would be great to see a large turnout, so invite everyone you know.

John Trapp has an article this month on the secrets of extract brewing, so all of you new brewers take note. John has perfected the process, and his article coincides with the next AHA COC, which follows the American Ales competition. Stay tuned for dates in which the club will judge and forward the GNBC submission.

Julie Mc Donald has written a wonderful article on one of the latest commercial beer dinners/ pairings. Julie is the club's foremost expert in the art of food pairings with either beer or mead, so get hold of her and get on the spam list for club dinners.

I want to wrap up this Prez Sez article by thanking everyone for all the hard work over the last month. For everyone who made last month's club meeting a total success to those who coordinated and judged the GABBF Barleywine and Winter Seasonal Competition, without your dedication none of this would have been possible. To all of the club members who stepped up and volunteered to serve in one form or another, I personally thank you. Until we meet again "Respect Beer" as BA would say, please think before you drink and Brew On!



# Talkeetna Beer Tripping: GNBC's Winter Campout

By Dennis Sessler

I know what you must be thinking, but it couldn't be further from the truth. Prior to the start of Alaska Beer Week, Boe Barnett, part owner and brew master of Alaska's newest brewery, Denali Brewing Co., contacted me. Long time club member John Craig was at the brewery in early January and the two of them came up with the idea of possibly setting up a GNBC winter event.

In previous years, the club has enjoyed many winter camp-outs in Willow. Kerri Canepa has also organized the Kenai beer trips for the past two years. With Kerri's intended departure to the motherland of beer this spring, we will be shifting focus north instead of south.

Boe and I have slated March 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> for the trip and it will go something like this. Each individual party will be responsible for their own transportation. You can arrive on Friday night or Saturday morning /afternoon.

The events for Saturday March 27<sup>th</sup> have been tailored around GNBC club members. Brunch will be served between 10 am and 1 pm. Following brunch, Denali Brewing Co. will be having a little HOMEBREW competition. No, this won't be the usual AHA/BJCP sanctioned competition. There won't be any feedback forms and you won't have the opportunity to accumulate any BJCP points. This competition will be judged by the locals that patronize the Twister Creek restaurant and Denali Brewery. Boe is looking for a beer to brew and have on tap that his daily patrons will really enjoy, so they get to pick the winner. From what I understand, Boe already has six judges lined up to sample all the beers and pick the winning entrant. Boe said there's no need to define your beer by a particular BJCP style. They just want to sample our tasty suds and pick a winner. The winning homebrewer will be invited up to brew the batch at Denali Brewing Co. All entrants will have to submit three bottles just to make sure the judges have enough to sample.

After the competition, dinner will be served between 5 and 8 pm. At the conclusion of dinner, the lights go down and the music turns up Talkeetna style. This event will be filled with local style and flair. I asked Boe to come up with some kind of award for the winner, something eclectic and as special as our brethren who call Talkeetna home. As a bonus, Boe already has a line on getting t-shirts made up for this event.

Boe will be contacting local lodges, hostels and hostels for current rates for all who wish to attend. This event will be family friendly. That's right; **children are more than welcome at this event.** As a homebrew club, it is sometimes hard to involve members with younger children.

This will be a great opportunity to take the family out for a wonderful springtime event. Temperatures should have moderated a bunch by then but there still should be plenty of snow to cross country ski, snowmobile or snowshoe into a part of Alaska where few venture.



# EVENTS

Every First Thursday

*Moose's Tooth First Tap*

Every Thursday

*Midnight Sun Brewery Tours*

6:00 PM 344-1179

03.....*Spenard Roadhouse: Midnight Sun Rony Brew Release: 5 pm*

05.....*Midnight Sun Brewing Company Rony Brew Release: 5 pm*

10.....*Kassik's Beer Tasting Embassy Suites 5 - 8 pm*

16.....*GNBC Meeting: Club Only Competition Entries Due for Pale Ale Category*

16.....*GNBC Monthly Meeting at the Goose 7 pm*

7.....*Cafe Amsterdam: Celestial Meads Mead Judging Class: 4 pm*

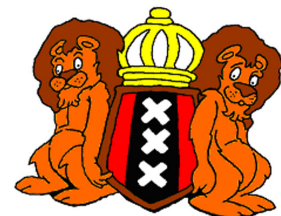
22-4/1.....*Nationals Beer entries Due*

26-28.....*GNBC Winter Campout in Talkeetna*

03.....*Snow Goose Breakup Homebrew Competition at the Goose*

15.....*GNBC Monthly Meeting at the Goose: 7 PM*

CAFE



AMSTERDAM

Please email me at [sessak@mtaonline.net](mailto:sessak@mtaonline.net) to get your name on the list. Let me know the number of people attending and if you plan on entering the competition. Boe mentioned that costs for lodging range from \$20 per night for the hostel accommodations and from \$ 50-\$110 per night at the various lodges. There are a few cabin/B & B that have multiple rooms (perfect for the larger families) and their prices range around \$125 per night. Boe will be firming up rates in the near future which I will send out to all club members so you can make reservations. This will be a great winter event and an opportunity to show our commercial friends to the north some patronage.



## **AHA / COC American Ales Submissions: February 16, GNBC Meeting**

*By Dennis Sessler*

The American Homebrewers Association (AHA) has a monthly/bimonthly Club Only Competition (COC) and the next one will be judged by the Carolina Brewmasters of Charlotte, NC. Tim Bisson wrote a wonderful article in the club's January newsletter on American Ales. I hope a few of you had the opportunity to crank out a batch of beer that would fit in that category.

As GNBC intends to send entries to this competition, this is how our club will be handling the judging of entries to select beers to enter. If you would like to enter your beer(s), you will need to attend or have someone else bring your beer to the February 16<sup>th</sup> GNBC monthly meeting. All you need to bring is one bottle. Just make sure that if your beer is selected as the winner, that you have three more bottles to be sent down to the competition in North Carolina.

The following Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) categories will be accepted: Category 10 A (American Pale Ale), 10 B (American Amber Ale), and 10 C ( American Brown Ale). Go to <http://www.bjcp.org/2008styles/style10.php> for more details on the specific styles. The judging panel which will consist of BJCP certified judges. At the meeting, they will collect all entries and will find the best example to forward to the competition. The club will then package up three bottles and ship the entry to the main competition's collection site. The GNBC will pay for the entry fees and the shipping costs.

### **2010 Homebrewer of The Year Categories**

#### **Fur Rendezvous HBC**

- Category 12
- Category 18
- Category 19
- Category 23
- Category 28

#### **Snow Goose HBC**

- Category 1
- Category 3
- Category 4
- Category 6
- Category 16

#### **Anchor Town HBC**

- Category 7
- Category 10
- Category 13
- Category 15
- Category 27

#### **Equinox Mead HBC**

- Category 24
- Category 25
- Category 26

#### **Humpy's Big Fish HBC**

- Category 2
- Category 5
- Category 9
- Category 14
- Category 22

If you were unable to brew a beer for this AHA COC competition, don't fret because the next one we plan to enter is "Extract Beers". See the article on Extract Brewing by John Trapp elsewhere in this newsletter; John is no doubt our club's most awarded extract brewer. This is a great way for new members of the club to get involved in competitions. As new homebrewers many of you are most likely brewing extract only and I look forward to seeing a ton of entries for that competition. And, of course, from John Trapp as well.

## BeerAdvocate Loves Alaska

*By Candice Alström*

**A**nd we want you to love us back. After recently visiting Alaska for the Great Alaska Beer & Barley Wine Festival, we have discovered that we need more of your kind on BA.

Now, we had a chance to meet a lot of you at the Great Northern Brewers Club meeting on Jan. 14. It was a big crowd, and a lot of good beers being poured. A lot of people didn't get a good chance to meet us or ask us more detailed questions about BA.

### Quick Facts

BeerAdvocate was founded by Todd and Jason Alström in 1996.  
There are over 300,000 users on BeerAdvocate today.  
There are upwards of 300 new users a day.  
There are over 700 users from Alaska.  
And thousands of active users who are homebrewers and traders.

### Community

I am here to tell you that we need your kind on BA. What do I mean by your kind? I mean we need your beer attitudes and sense of community. We liked your whole vibe up north and we challenge you to join BA if you haven't already.

Alaska really impressed us. The beer scene is tight, the beers are great, and the homebrews we tasted were like drinking professionally made beers. You all just get it up there. And because of this, we want you to join BA and bring your sense of community with you.

In a blog post I wrote about Alaska, I wrote this about Alaska, in general, and Midnight Sun Brewing Co.

"Alaskans are living in their own quiet little world up there... Only it's not so quiet. They are making some noise up there and when you come into town, you either get on board or get out of town. It isn't hard to get on board with the delicious beers being produced up there. I love that kind of mentality. Who says you have to play by the same old boring rules? Midnight Sun is a perfect example of do what you want. Make the beer you intended to make no matter how big, or obscure, or undefined and the masses will follow you. It's so American, and I love it."

## MEETING SETUP

A - J Cleanup  
K - P Food  
R - Z Setup

A - J Food  
K - P Setup  
R - Z Cleanup

A - J Setup  
K - P Cleanup  
R - Z Food



## **Review, Review, Review**

Review Alaskan beers. Get some of these beers on the BA map and give them the scores they deserve. Let everyone know that you are not effing around up there and your beers are to be reckoned with. Review your brewpubs and beer bars. There may not be that many, but what you do have is great and they should be represented. If they are already listed on BA show your pride and boost their scores, but remember to be fair. Give it the score it truly deserves and not a super score simply for hometown pride.

## **Trading**

Get involved with our traders from the lower 48 and plant the seeds that Alaska has the kind of beers that should be talked about. You should even share your homebrews with good traders as a special treat. We have a whole section dedicated to trading and many helpful BA's who will help you get it all sorted out and become regular traders.

## **A Haven For Homebrewers.**

Join our homebrewing forum and school the novices or share recipes and tips with the seasoned veterans. With what we tasted from the homebrewers in Alaska, I can safely say that most of you will be an asset to our forums.

## **Connections With The Lower 48**

Get to know our users. We also have a tight knit community of users. Ones who will open their doors to you if you are traveling. Get to know them so that you can inform them about the great beer community you got going on up there. More beer lovers need to come up there and visit your towns. Try your beers, and pay respects to your favorite beer haunts. Help make Alaska a sought after beer destination.

For being so welcomed in your neck of the woods, we invite you into our house on BA.

Respect Beer

## **Beer Wars- Coming to a Brewery near you!!**

*By Tim Bisson*

Date: Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Times: TBD (Two Showings- matinee around 2pm and evening around 7pm)

Price for GNBC members: FREE!!! (Bring your membership card.)

Price for Non GNBC members: Probably \$3-5

What: GNBC will be presenting *Beer Wars* ([www.beerwarsmovie.com](http://www.beerwarsmovie.com)). Come learn the struggles that many of your favorite breweries are up against. From the website:

"Beer Wars begins as the corporate behemoths are being challenged by small, independent brewers who are shunning the status quo and creating innovative new beers. The story is told through 2 of these entrepreneurs – Sam and Rhonda – battling the might and tactics of Corporate America. We witness their struggle to achieve their American Dream in an industry dominated by powerful corporations unwilling to cede an inch."

There will be homebrewing activities between the showings. Also, the winning beer of the Snow Goose Break Up competition is scheduled to be released prior to the evening showing. More updates will be posted as details are worked out.

So, mark your calendar for *Beer Wars* on May 15! This should be a fun and educational day. We will need volunteers for selling tickets, collecting tickets and more. If you are interested in helping out, please email me at [tbisson123@yahoo.com](mailto:tbisson123@yahoo.com).



# Brew Quickly, Brew Easy, Brew Extract

By John Trapp

As a home brewer of almost 18 years now, I'm often asked what my brew system is like and how I have it set up. Most people are pretty surprised to find out that it consists of a 22 quart pot and a grain bag and that I brew on the stove top. You see, I'm an extract brewer, and I don't have any plans on changing that any time soon. Now don't get me wrong, I have nothing against the all-grain brewers and I've brewed up a number of batches with friends that have more room in their garages than me. But after all these years I just haven't found a need to convert to all-grain.

I will be the first to say it, there are a few instances and styles of beer where extract brewing simply can't compete with all-grain. However, the majority of styles can. For those of you playing along at home or just starting the wonderful hobby of home brewing, malt extract is the honey like substance that comes in a can or bulk out of a drum at Arctic Brewing Supply. It comes from barley (or wheat) and is reduced from the coating of malt on the malted barley. Basically, the malting companies are taking the place of the mash tun and concentrating down the wort to a honey consistency. This knocks off around 3 hours of brewing time, which may or may not be a bonus for some.

Back in November when Jason Ditsworth talked about the brewing process in the educational portion of the meeting, he mentioned something called "Extract Twang". The twang refers to a certain taste from "other" fermentable sugars that were supposedly added to the malt extract by the malting companies, kind of like an adjunct. I use the word "supposedly" because no one really knows for sure if this takes place unless they worked at the plant. Over the last 10 to 15 years the quality of malt extract has been top notch and basically guaranteed pure. With the competitive market and demand for brewing supplies, no malting company would risk throwing in adjuncts and tainting their reputation.

Just as there is malt extract, you've probably also seen dried malt extract (DME) in the brew store or read about it in a recipe. It's the same thing just taken one step further and dried to a powder. The more the malt is processed the more the price goes up. Brewing all-grain is cheapest, followed by extract, and finally using DME to increase the malt body. This is why most breweries are all-grain; it is the most cost affective method. The reason I didn't say all breweries do this, is because I still remember the tour I took at the now defunct Bird Creek Brewery. They were brewing with extract because they didn't know what to do with the spent grain. I think they converted to all-grain near the end, but it was a little too late by then. But for the home brewer producing a 5 or 6 gallon batch, the cost of using extract is minimal.

When I first started brewing back in 1992, the only malt I knew of was the hopped malt in a can (John Bull & Cooper's), so I wasn't even using purchased hops in the boil. This was an all-in-one method that, believe it or not, produced some tasty beer. I then bought Charlie Papazian's book and started educating myself, but most of the recipes he had were all extract and even called for certain cans of hopped malt to duplicate a desired style. As I brewed more and started playing around with recipes, Arctic Brewing Supply opened its doors and I began brewing a more traditional style, using bulk malt extract and bags of hops.

If you're just starting out brewing, or maybe you don't brew that much because of the time commitment to brew all-grain, give extract a try. I've won many competitions and taken home plenty of prizes with extract brews. The real key is making sure the brewing process is clean and sanitary and that the fermentation process is temperature and light controlled. And just a final reminder, when adding the extract to your pot of hot water, turn off the heat and let the pot sit for a few minutes. Add the malt extract and stir until it's all dissolved in the water. Then and only then do you turn the heat back on. If you don't follow these direction you'll have a much burnt bottom of the pot and the beer will taste like that too. So good luck and get that malt pouring.



## Early Notice: Mead Judging Class in March

By Mike Kiker

Celestial Meads and Café Amsterdam are putting together a Mead Judging Class on Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup> starting at 4:00p to be held at Café Amsterdam. If you like mead and would like to learn more about judging it, or if you want to enhance your appreciation of this most exalted beverage, this is the class for you. There will be a fee for attending but it will not be exorbitant. Details are still being worked out but the class should last 3-4 hours. Check next month's newsletter for additional information or go to [www.CelestialMeads.com](http://www.CelestialMeads.com) and sign up for Meadmail to get the latest details as soon as they are available.

## Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition, LAST CALL

By Dennis Sessler



The competition will be held on **Saturday, February 6th** at the Snow Goose. This will be the first competition in 2010 to garner as many points as possible towards the 2010 GNBC Homebrewer of the Year Competition. The categories which will garner points towards the year long competition are Categories 12 Porter, 18 Belgian Strong Ale, 19 Strong Ale, 23 Specialty Beer, and Category 28 Specialty Cider. But by no means are you restricted to enter only in those categories; enter as many beers, meads and ciders as you like.

Judging will begin at **10:00 a.m.** and as always there will be a need for plenty of judges and stewards. This competition is an AHA/BJCP sanctioned competition so all beer, mead and cider categories will be open for entry. You can find the current style guidelines at <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.html>. Entry forms can be found at [http://www.bjcp.org/docs/SCP\\_EntryRecipe.pdf](http://www.bjcp.org/docs/SCP_EntryRecipe.pdf).

Entries will be accepted at the Snow Goose in the basement on Friday February 5<sup>th</sup>, from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. There will be **no fees** collected with your entry; that's right **FREE!** You will need to provide three 12 oz. bottles for each beer entry. Mead and Cider entries can be three 12 oz bottles or one 750 ml bottle. If you are unable to drop off entries during that time please feel free to contact me to make other arrangements.

This year's competition will award a Best of Show Beer and a Best of Show Mead or Cider. There will be unique prizes for both of the Best of Show winners plus all the great Fur Rondy medals and notoriety. I will have all the leftover beer/meads and ciders along with all the judge evaluation sheets and the awards at the February 16<sup>th</sup> homebrew club meeting.

After the dust finally settled from all the events during Alaska Beer Week, I was able to solidify the attendance of the Kassiks to attend and help judge in the Best of Show round. Frank and Debara Kassik owners of Kassiks Kenai Brewstop have offered to brew one of the Best of Show beers with the homebrewer assisting. The beer that they'll choose will be one that will not tie up their brew system and will be an easy seller. That beer will also be eligible to be entered at the Great American Beer Festival Pro-Am Competition in September 2010 in Denver CO. I talked with Debara Kassik the other day and they will offer a \$150.00 gift certificate to the Uptown Motel and Louise Restaurant to cover most of the food and lodging costs for the lucky homebrewer when they come down to Kenai and brew that award winning beer. Debara did emphasize that the selected brewer would have to come down in early to late Spring in order to brew this beer before their busy season. I want to personally thank Frank and Debara Kassik for their wonderful offer. This will be a great opportunity for a homebrewer to have your creation scaled up, brewed commercially and judged in a national event. Here are a couple of web links to give you some more info on the brewery and accommodations.

<http://www.kassikskenaibrewstop.com/> <http://www.uptownmotel.com/>

Let's make this a great competition. Dust off your meads and ciders, brew those beers and let's get ready to "Rondy!" For more information contact me at [sessak@mtaonline.net](mailto:sessak@mtaonline.net).



# Beer! It's What's For Dinner!!

*By Julie McDonald*

A few years ago some of us at the Great Northern Brewers Club set out to introduce other members to the joy of cooking and pairing food with beer. I am pleased to say that our monthly beer dinners are still going strong and have increased in frequency from a bi-monthly dinner to a monthly dinner. (For more information on these, contact me at [juzy@gci.net](mailto:juzy@gci.net))

This beerilicious hobby is well represented by many of our homebrew brethren. Their passion shines through in their creativity with menu preparation and pairing skills and I applaud them.

But this passion is spreading and many local breweries and restaurants have taken to offering some of the finest food and beer combinations they can create.

Alaska Beer Week (as we are unofficially calling it) was proof of that. There were many gastronomical events happening around town; I only wish that I could've been in two places at once! As it was, I had an event to attend every single night! But the one that most stands out in my mind was the first event I attended during that week: The 6 x 6 Beer Dinner hosted by Midnight Sun Brewing Company.

I am happy to say that Midnight Sun Brewing has opened their kitchen and now offer some wonderful menu items for you to enjoy on your next visit. I highly recommend the Cheddar-Ale soup with the garlic croutons. Their menu offers pairing recommendations, including a complimentary pairing and a contrast pairing! Rock on! But to get to my point for this article, I want to showcase the incredible beer dinner that they hosted on Tuesday, January 12.

Let's start with the title: The 6 x 6 Beer Dinner - This refers to the six 6 ounce pours that were served over the course of the dinner. As many of you are aware, Alaska law allows no more than 36 ounces of product per person per day to be consumed at the brewery. However, this is perfect for a beer dinner! You don't want to be filled up midway into the dinner!

The dinner featured 6 courses with 6 beers from the Crew Brew Series. When we arrived we were treated to a pour of Fahrwasser Pilsner. I love this beer, with its soft, citrusy hop character, and just a touch of biscuity malt goodness. And that's just the aroma!!! The taste, and there is tons of it, is crisp with a clean hop bite, just a touch of lemon and a hint of earthiness. Great carbonation! The perfect beer for preparing our palates and creating anticipation of things to come.

While the wait staff hustled to get the first course on each table, Gary Busse, General Manager of Operations, schooled us on the first 3 beer pairings. Chef Scott followed Gary with a brief description of the dishes being served. It went something like this:

First Course: Cosmic Black Witbier, spiced with coriander, orange peel and chamomile 6.2% ABV & 17 IBUs. This was paired with Alder wood-roasted Alaskan Oysters, fresh from Cordova, served with Pistachio Arugula Pesto and Serrano Tomatillo Hot Sauce. This course was a favorite for the night for Barb Miller, VP of Sales and Marketing. She's hoping these show up as their WILD AK WEDNESDAY "HOT DISH" at The Loft very soon.

Second Course: Bathtub Gin Gruit, spiced with juniper berries, angelica root, orris root, lemon peel, orange peel, grains of paradise, & coriander 8.0% ABV & 00 IBUs. Kabucha Squash Soup served with a Ginger-Lime Crème Fraiche was its mate. What they didn't tell us was that this soup was expertly seasoned with a bit of cayenne pepper. Mmmmmm. I loved how the ginger-lime crème fraiche interacted with the cayenne. It offered a moment of cooling power....but just a moment!

Third Course: Anchor Witbier, spiced with orange peel and coriander and conditioned with Brettanomyces 6.25% ABV & 20 IBUs. Perfectly matched to a Field of Hops Salad which consisted of arugula with hop-infused Orange-Cumin Vinaigrette and topped off with Coppa and Parmesan. I enjoyed the peppery arugula with the earthy notes of the beer. A very nice pairing!

At this point we all got a little bit of a breather while Gary and Chef Scott introduced the final 3 courses.

Fourth Course: Rumbah Double Rum Bock, aged in pirated rum barrels 10% ABV & 30 IBUs. Put this with Roasted Alaskan Elk & Root Vegetables and you become a drooling fool. Well, maybe it was just me. The elk, locally raised at Pitchfork Ranch, Lazy Mtn, in Palmer and veggies from Vanderweele Farms, also in Palmer, were braised in a Rumbah glaze.

Fifth Course: Big Slick Barley Wine at 11.9% ABV & 100 IBUs. Not one of my favorite Crew Brews, but pair it with this Farmstead Cheese Plate and it takes on a whole new life, and a delicious one at that! The plate was served family style and consisted of a generous wedge of Huntsmen and some creamy camembert, accompanied by caramelized nuts and dried fruit. (sorry no picture, I got sidetracked)

Sixth Course: My favorite course, dessert!!!! And it ended up being my favorite pairing of the evening, too. Descent Imperial Abbey Ale brewed with raisins and grains of paradise 8.3% ABV & 25 IBUs. Garnet Yam Crème Brulee was its partner in crime! All I can say is take me to jail! This was fantastic. The garnet yams may have been from Mexico but the cream was fresh from Matanuska Creamery. Served alongside this delightful dessert were spiced candied pecans. I could barely speak! So good. As fast as it arrived on my table, it was gone!

And finally, ending the evening with a special surprise from the fine folks at MSBC, we were treated to a generous pour of the final release in the Planet Series, the long awaited Jupiter. A Belgian-Style Champagne Tripel. Get yourself some of this for your next special occasion!!

In closing I want to say that the kitchen crew and wait staff at Midnight Sun's Loft did a great job on their first beer dinner. Job well done to Head Chef Scott Caddell who was accompanied by two of their other chefs, Morgan Ross and Kimo Jardin ...plus Scott's catering friend Dave Thorn. And to the wait staff, thanks for keeping up with it all!

We will definitely be back for the next beer dinner at Midnight Sun Brewing. And, yes, there will be more to come. In fact, Barb has said that they hope to have another 6x6, **perhaps** the same one, on FEB 02 but including Brewtality and Because to showcase them and to change up the menu just a bit. Stay tuned for further details on that. **ALSO** in the planning stage at MSBC is a "Beer Brunch" for Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14. They will have an après fixe menu with set price [TBD]. Probably 4 courses with some options and beer pairings. No reservations needed, but I would suggest coming early as they will have limited seating. Starts at 11am. Keep your eyes and ears open for more details as they develop.

That about covers it in the food and beer section this month. Ooohhh, one more thing....yes, the GNBC February beer dinner is full, but we do have two more in the works. March and April are in the planning stages as I type this. As soon as I get the final details from the hosts I will get them out to the group, so be on the lookout!!!



# Talkeetna Times

*By John Craig*

**T**onight is January 8th, 2010. As I listen to Talkeetna Radio, with the wind blowing it's minus 20 and the wood stove is glowing. It feels good being at the cabin in the woods with no one around for miles. As the Honda generator keeps the lights on, it's time to give you an update on what's happening up north.

I thank the beer gods for growlers of beer to go. As I left Anchorage with two jugs of Moose's Tooth's Smokin' Willie Smoked beer, I contemplated my cups. This is my beer of the night. It's a wild and smokey treat as I write. It reminds me of being around the campfire with smoke in my face. It sort of makes the eyes water as the smoke hits my taste buds and makes me howl like a wolf all night long. You were safe that night; no fear. There was no full moon; just the northern lights dancing above in the sky. This year, I'm a year older but I'm still exploring all the beers of the world. My dad was a homebrewer and beer drinker and I carry on my family's roots. With over 5,000 breweries in the world, each one making about five different styles, that's about 25,000 beers for me to figure out how to drink in my lifetime.

With a music break on the radio, I learned that it was 22 below zero in downtown Talkeetna. I also picked up the latest gossip and local chatter on Denali Echos on the local radio station. "So and so at Trapper Lake: your sled dogs are on the loose and headed toward the Big Su. Your neighbor Mary-Sue," and "Moose Jaw Jim over in the Dutch hills got fuel and groceries; see you this weekend, your friend Earl," for example. And of course, "Suds John at Bald Mountain; what kind of beer are you drinking? Stop by Benali brewing when in town; we need to talk," signed by Patrick in the brewhouse. At the cabin, this made my ears perk up. I had to go into town to pick up a month's worth of mail including a Christmas package.

My regular routine in town at the end of the road, with fifty beers on tap is a destination. I needed to hit Nalley's Grocery for a bag of salted peanuts in the shell, a morning paper, and of course a pint of beer (or two) at the Twister Creek Restaurant. They have one of my favorite stouts on tap this year. That's Chuli Stout named after the Chulitna river. This is one of three rivers that runs into the Talkeetna and Big Su Rivers. This beer is served using nitrogen which makes it hang on to the side of the glass as it's consumed and has a grainy, gritty feeling between my teeth. It's simply super great! Again, while having a pint, my friend Patrick is around. He's now an assistant brewer at Denali Brewing Company which is right next door to the Twister Creek Restaurant. He invited me for a brewery tour next door and I was introduced to Head Brewer Boe Barnett. Boe knows a lot of our homebrewers and attends many of our homebrew club meetings.

The Boe and Patrick told me they are interested in a meet and greet type of event with our club. They may even host a judging where the winning batch will be scaled up for full production at the brewery to be sold this summer. Of course, a brewery tour would be in the mix and possibly a beer dinner at the restaurant next door. This would take place on April Fools and Good Friday weekend and would probably be an overnight event. This would be during the non-tourist season, but as always there would be mountain climbers around. With lots of lodging available in town, I don't think it would be a problem finding somewhere to stay. This sounds like a ton of fun. I won't be too involved in this since Rose and I are leaving town after the Beer and Barley Wine Festival. We will be in Truth of Consequences New Mexico for a couple of months. I know you can make plans for this to happen. Beer is what we are, so enjoy!

Looking ahead, Rose and I would like to sponsor this year's Brewathon at our house. We'd like to schedule this for the first Saturday of May. We are never sure about anything as Rose and I are getting older. The way I feel, after our last homebrew club meeting and the Beer and Barley Wine Festival, seeing our friends of years past, it's such a wonderful feeling, and we want it to work.

I love beer. Everything it has to offer tells me that life goes on. Fast forward ahead to this post script. Tonight, I'm drinking a Dale's Pale Ale from Lyons, Colorado. It sure tastes good tonight. Oscar Blues, the brewery, only packages in cans. This is important for me; a traveling man.

Oh, one more idea. I'm thinking about a crazy Fourth of July Weekend at Yoder Road at Mile 3 on the Talkeetna Highway. This is my home. I have lots of tent camping space. I have four outhouses and the famous "Moose Snort Saloon and Beer Garden" for your enjoyment. Let's see how it goes. Love you all! Suds.

# Snow Goose Break-Up: April 3, 2010 Second Call

By Dan Bosch

The fog is just starting to clear from the Beer and Barelywine Festival; as I write this we're three days removed, so I must have had a good time. I'm nursing my liver back to health with something light and not so chewy; a Pils.

By the way did anyone try the Witte Noire at the Ommegang booth? I don't know why Ommegang uses all those extra "t's and e's in their spelling of white black, but my French consultant tells me they are not needed. My French consultant also only works for beer (not wine), so maybe her French is suspect too? In any case, it was a very tasty beverage, but other than it being tasty all I can recall is sampling it several times.

This rare beast happens to be the Brewers Challenge for the Snow Goose Break-up Competition and I was pleasantly surprised to discover it at the festival. That's what's so great about the festival – exploring the wild life, something new and unusual. You can always find something there that you haven't tried before.

Just a reminder that the Snow Goose Break-Up Competition is only open to the following BJCP categories: 1 (Light Lagers), 3 (European Amber Lagers), 4 (Dark Lagers), 6 (Light Hybrids) 16 (Belgian and French) and the Brewers Challenge (see above). The Snow Goose sponsors this competition to find that special beer that they can produce and their patrons can enjoy during the summer months. That's right, another opportunity for us fledgling homebrewers to brew on a commercial scale and then invite all your friends down to the Goose, sit out on the deck and enjoy your beer.

Look for all the entry information in my Last Call article next month. It should be fresh off the press on or around March 1<sup>st</sup>. Till then get brewing!



## Secretary's Corner

By Jennifer Bisson

### What we learned at the last meeting?

At our last meeting, the kick off for "Beer Week", we all had a great time listening to stories from brewing professionals like Shawn Loring from Lazy Boy brewing who left us with a valuable lesson, "Don't make a Peach Wheat." We also got to meet Todd and Jason Alstrom, the founders of beeradvocate.com (BA). For those of us who are BA members, the meeting was a wonderful place to meet the wizards behind the web-site curtain as well as the long list of other brewing professionals who came up to hang out and celebrate with us.

Most importantly, we learned what a strong beer community we have up here in Anchorage. The passion and commitment of our community and our club members made "Beer Week" a great success with events including tastings, meet and greets, dinners, and after parties. Raise your hand if you are already looking forward to next year!

Oh...and once again we learned that John Craig has some great moves on the dance floor. Keep dancing John!



## What happened since or at the last meeting?

Flash Lubitsch-White was awarded "Homebrewer of the Year"

Aaron Crist was awarded "New Homebrewer of the Year"

Steve Schmitt was honored for his years of dedicated service to the GNBC

## What is happening now?

The first home brewing competition of the year, Fur Rondy, is coming up on February 6 at the Snow Goose at 10am. Check out Dennis' article for more information. Start reeling in those "Homebrewer of the Year" points.

## What does the future hold?

The Snow Goose Break-Up home brewing competition is planned for early April. Take a look at Dan's article for more information.

*Beer Wars* is coming. Directed by Anat Baron, this is the tale of small, independent breweries taking on Corporate Beer America. The GNBC is sponsoring two showings at the Snow Goose Theater on May 15, 2010. So, check out Tim's article for more information and take a look at the movie's web-site at [www.beerwarsmovie.com](http://www.beerwarsmovie.com)

Do you like pairing beer with your meals? Join in the fun at one of the upcoming in-home beer dinners or host one at your own home. Contact Julie at [juzy@gci.net](mailto:juzy@gci.net) for more information.

Do you like trying new beers? If you have plenty of experience or none at all find out how you can be a beer judge at one of the 2010 homebrew competitions. Make this year your year to get involved!

## Important Dates in Beer History

On October 14, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed H.R. 1337, which contained an amendment sponsored by Senator Alan Cranston creating an exemption from taxation for beer brewed at home for personal or family use. This exemption went into effect in February 1979; however, the bill left individual states free to pass their own laws limiting production. Today, Oklahoma, Alabama and Mississippi are the only states where home brewing beer remains illegal.



## The Smoke is Rollin'

By Dennis Sessler



Dena and I try to make at least one smoked beer a year; it has become an annual tradition for us. With a slew of commercial smoked beers being produced each year, a beer connoisseur can try everything from our native Alaskan Smoked Porter to the authentic Rauch Biers of Germany. Every year we get a few new samples that show up at La Bodega and our local retailers. If you are looking for a particular smoked beer and our distributors don't carry it, think about becoming a member of "Beer Advocate" and doing a little horse trading to secure that special beer. Check out the article about Beer Advocate elsewhere in this newsletter.

I am in the process of building a vertical collection of Alaskan Smoked Porter. Every winter I purchase a case of this award winning beer. I enjoy doing verticals of the various years; comparing the level of smoke flavor and how each vintage seems to age and vary in flavor and smoke intensity from year to year. My favorite accompaniment to this beer is some Wisconsin Smoked Cheddar or Smoked Baby Swiss cheese that my parents have mailed up to me or that I manage to stuff in my luggage while on vacation visiting family.

This past fall Breck Tostevin gave an educational talk during one of our club meetings on smoke beers. I will not try to duplicate the content that he covered; instead I will concentrate on how I smoke my own grains and prepare it for my upcoming brew sessions. I once saw an idea while either surfing the web or reading an article in one of the beer magazines I receive on a monthly basis and it inspired me to build my own smoker. It wouldn't work to smoke salmon or halibut; this baby was built to smoke about 3-5 pound of base malt grain only.



The total cost to build this beauty was around \$20.00. The most expensive part was the electric hot plate. The whole smoker consists of 2 strong cardboard boxes of the same size. One is used as the bottom that will contain the hot plate and the pan that will hold all the wood chips. About 3-4 inches from the top of the box are 5 wooden dowels that are pushed lengthwise through the box. Make sure to fold all the flaps into box before poking the wood dowels through both ends, you will need the added support to hold up the large amounts of grain. A piece of metal screening bought from AIH, or your local hardware store will suffice as the screen. Make sure that the screening is metal and not fiberglass mesh. Cut the ends and sides a few inches larger than the box and form it into a dished screen, this will keep all those grains cradled on the screen instead of falling down the side onto the burner.



The bottom box will have a hole cut to route the burner's electric cord out of the box and another one as an access door in front of the burner plate to either regulate the burner, or to remove the wood chip pan to dump spent chips and to reload with a fresh charge of wood chips. The top box is placed over the bottom box to create the smoke chamber. It is removed to both load and unload the grain and to spritz water on the grain to both keep it moist which will allow the smoke to permeate the husks and to cool down the grain as to not change the toast level or the enzymatic enzymes of the grain. This is very important when making a light colored beer, that requires little to no toasted malt flavor.

There are ways to insure that the heat doesn't get too high when smoking. The wood chips must be pre-wetted so that you don't end up with charcoal. What I do is dump the chips in a large stockpot and put about a quart

of water in the pot. I stir all this up to make sure everything is wet but not drenched. The idea is to create smoke not steam. I load up a pan full of chips and put it on the burner. The temperature is set to medium-high on my burner.

I then take another pot and add the grain, usually Marris Otter two row malt. I add water to the pot and stir it up to make sure all the grain is completely moistened. I then dump it into a strainer and allow all the excess water to drip off. By the time I have done this the smoke is rolling in my box. I take off the top box and quickly dump and spread the grain over the screen. The box lid is reset and all gaps are minimized in order to provide as much concentrated smoke to the grain.

I usually smoke my grain for about 4-5 hrs. I perform this during the dead of winter usually when temps are around zero or lower. Maybe that's why it takes so long. I rotate out the chips about every half hour to an hour. I then dump them back into the stockpot with the unused chips, stir them up and reload the pan. I am able to pretty much keep the smoke rolling during this extended session.

Periodically I check the malt to make sure it's not too hot. If it is, I spritz with water to cool it. The occasional wetting will also allow the grain husks to absorb more smoke. When you finished smoking the grain, remove it from the screen and placed on a cookie sheet in the oven on low heat.

This will insure that the malt is dry. DON'T bake the grain, you are only trying to eliminate any excess moisture so the grain won't mold. I then place all the grain in a large Ziploc type freezer bag and store in the freezer. On brew day I remove the grain and taste it for strength of smoke flavor. There is no exact ratio of smoked grain that I add; it's kind of a trial and error thing. The weighed smoked malt is added to my grain bill and is milled and mashed along with all the other grains. I brew the beer as I





would any other all grain beer. The wort is sweet and smoky and I begin to wonder what the finished beer will taste like. Only time will tell.

To date we have brewed three smoke beers. The first was a smoked braggot; the base beer was a mesquite smoked doppelbock that we added about 6 pounds of mesquite honey to prior to fermentation. This was a smoke bomb that took about two years to mellow. This was okay since a braggot is a beer/mead hybrid. The mead part needed the added aging time to mellow. The braggot was named Alaskan Smokenator, but it didn't take long to earn its nickname "Pork chop in a bottle". I sure wish I would have bottled more of this



to enjoy later, it seemed to have gotten better with age. My next beer was Jack's XXX Stout. An American Stout smoked with Jack Daniels oak chips; yes, chips from recycled JD barrels. This was a co-brew with fellow GNBC member Don Lewellyn. This was no doubt the bomb; it was gone before we could count to three. It was a ten gallon batch that was kegged on Jack Daniel soaked chips. We transferred 3 gallons into a cornie and brought it to a GNBC Holiday party where it vanished within an hour. By the time you read this article, there will be 6 gallons of an alder wood smoked doppelbock perking away in a carboy in my garage. A portion of this will be used for that Eisbock I've been writing about.

In closing I wanted to mention the safety issues of smoking your own grain. Yeah, there is a health concern of the carcinogens of smoked anything. You all can Google that issue if you want. My concern is you don't burn your house down. The electric plate is hot and remember you will be doing this in cardboard boxes and outside I hope! You must keep an eye on the whole process. Also the chips will be blackened and could be charred. Don't throw them in the garbage or you'll have other things smoking besides your grain. **"ATTENTION", WAIT UNTIL ALL OF THE CHIPS ARE COOL BEFORE DISPOSING!**



I hope you found this article informative and it inspires you to brew your own smoked beer. Through trial and error, you will learn soon enough the limits on how much smoke is enough. If you brew your own please save me a bottle or two and we will all share it with our good friend John Craig. Till then get smoking.

**tapRoot**



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*The Great Northern Brewers Club and the American Homebrewers Association remind you to.....Savor the Flavor Responsibly*



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**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, February 16th: 7 pm at the Goose**