



THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

FEBRUARY 2011

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Prez Sez

by Dennis Sessler

This is a first; I'm sitting here fighting off a wicked head cold which feels like something between a sinus infection and pneumonia. The shitty thing is I am unable to enjoy a great beer, heck I don't think I could stomach it. You see: that is my spark;

my inspiration. I always manage to find some interesting nuance in every beer that sparks a one sided conversation between me and all of you. Soooooo instead I will highlight all the wonderful articles submitted by all the club members. Thank you all for the submissions, and if you're interested in writing and submitting anything for our members to learn and enjoy please shoot me and email, attach your article in something like a word document and I will take care of the rest.



January has drawn to a close and we all survived. At least I hope we did. It's amazing how seven days of was it more than that could make the rest of the month a blurr. As always I was unable to attend any of the associated beer dinners this month that encompass Alaska Beer Week. A promise to myself: someday I will attend at least one of these during a future fest week. I've asked Dr. Fermento to take care of the GABBF recap for anybody who missed it. The Dr. does a wonderful job articulating with words and pictures just what you have missed. His article will no doubt have your mouth watering.

Julie McDonald has cranked out another informative Secretary Corner article; she hit on all the big club stuff at our GABBF meeting on the 13th. She has shined a bright light on the future for all those who want to know what lay ahead and if you didn't already know she is the GNBC coordinator for all the wonderful beer dinners. I'm not talking about those expensive dinners held at the restaurants that pair our favorite commercial beers. These beer pairing dinners are put on by GNBC club members at their homes. If you like food and beer, (duhhhhh no brainer here right) and would like to get on her email list, check out her article and drop an email. Beer dinners are open to all members, so give it a try and see what all the rage is about. Julie has also resubmitted an article on how to buy clothing that you can have our fancy GNBC logo on. Her husband Tim was flashing his bling at our last meeting and from what I heard there were quite a few members who commented and wanted to find out how to get shirts, jackets all that stuff. She's also submitted a nice picture of Tim and fellow GNBC member Jim Hitchcock where Tim is sporting his bling!

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Breck Tostevin has cranked out the needed changes to the GNBC bylaws. We don't mess with this essential club document that much, but from time to time we do suggest and vote to amend it. Please take notice and come informed at the February 15th club meeting. We will be voting on this manner and would like to put this behind us. In a nut shell, all the changes are membership related, mostly due to the issuance of membership cards and when the new membership year begins. All these changes will make the Treasurer and Membership Coordinators job much easier to accomplish.

The next event is the Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition. Check out my last call article and stop on down on Friday the 4th of February. I'll be in the basement at the Snow Goose taking entries. Saturday morning at 10am, the judging will begin. This is another reminder to all members to come on down and get in on the judging. It doesn't matter if you have never judged before; I will pair you up with those who have more experience. There is so much to learn about judging beer, and I must admit it is so rewarding to judge and give fellow homebrewers real feedback on their beers, meads and ciders.

In March we have a couple of events, first I've included in this newsletter an AHA flyer for the National Homebrew Competition. Entries will be accepted from the 21st thru the 30th of March. If you're interested in submitting get your entries ready. Check out their website for more details pertaining to online registration and shipping locations for Alaskan entries.

Next and much more enjoyable is the Second Annual Talkeetna Beer Trippin' event. Denali Brewing Company and Twister Creek Restaurant have invited the GNBC up again for this relaxing fun filled event which I might add is family friendly. Check out Jim and Lisa Lambs (Da Lambs) article on this lively event guaranteed to make lasting memories. The new shirt design has been blessed and ordered and will be on hand for all Trippers to purchase while in the warm town of Talkeetna.

While we're on a rant about upcoming competitions, Dan Bosch has firmed up the dates for the Snow Goose Spring Break-up Competition. Check out his article and get brewing. This competition is limited to only a few select BJCP categories. Dan has a run down on this and one additional challenge, the "Brewer's Challenge". I'm already formulating my recipe for this event.

Club brew 2011 has been proclaimed! Yes that's right. The stars are in alignment and we are gearing up for another club brew. Check out my article and decide if you want to be part of this or not. It's gonna be BIG, really BIG!!! As of the end of January, I've contacted our local barrel supplier and the barrels should be in town around March 1st, give or take a couple of weeks.

The logo for 'tapproot' is written in a stylized, black, hand-drawn font. The letters are thick and irregular, with decorative flourishes. The 't' has a long, curved stem that loops back up. The 'p' has a similar stem that loops back down. The 'o' is a simple circle. The 'r' has a long, curved stem that loops back up. The 'o' is a simple circle. The 'o' is a simple circle. The 'o' is a simple circle.

Our last two articles are submissions from the Board of Directors. Vice Prez, Joe Michael is starting a new monthly feature titled "Q&A". So simple and yet soooo intriguing. Joe will be delving into the hearts and minds of fellow homebrewers and the Pro's that surround us. I look forward to this article every month. It will be interesting to see what kind of responses (secrets) Joe is able to pry from everyone.

Our last submission is from our newly elected board member Matt Wallace. He has written a wonderful article on how he brews all grain on the "Cheap and Simple", check out his interesting read.

In closing I want to thank all GNBC members who made our last meeting a true success. Of all the years I have been a member I cannot remember a January meeting that had so many members and guest in attendance. Everyone was respectful to our special guests while they spoke and it was much appreciated by all members and guests alike. I truly enjoyed both Ken Grossman and Lyn Kruger presentations. I've sent personal thanks you letters on behalf of all GNBC members to not only our special guests but also to the Alaska Brewers Guild for everything that they have done to not only make our January meeting a success but Alaska Beer week and enjoyable time for everyone.

I will see you all at our next meeting on February 15th, 7pm at the Goose; keep an eye out for updates in your email, I love to send those last minute reminders. Also the GNBC has its own Facebook Page, hunt us down and become our friend. Don't forget to think before you drink, and keep the flame to your kettles and BrewOn!

Secretary's Corner

by *Julie McDonald*

Meeting Minutes: January 13, 2011, 7p

*Meeting was called to order by Prez, Dennis Sessler at 7:23 pm. This was our annual Alaska Beer Week Meeting, leading up to the Great Alaska Beer and Barleywine Festival.

*Attendance rounded out at about 250 people, which may be conservative.

*We kept club biz to a minimum as we had several guest speakers that we wanted to get to. Here is a brief rundown of what we talked about.

- All members, new and old, were welcomed
- Welcome to distributors and brewers
- Jim Roberts rattled off a long list of people to thank for bringing Alaska Beer Week together
- Lisa Lamb roamed the room selling raffle tix for the drawing

Old Biz:

By laws weren't really discussed, but we do plan some changes to them. Specifically annual dues, memberships, etc. Watch your emails for more details.

Fur Rondy Homebrew Comp – Judging on Feb 5, entries by Feb 4, see newsletter for more details.

EVENTS

Every First Thursday

Moose's Tooth First Tap

Every Friday

Midnight Sun Brewery Tours and

Brew Debut: 6:00 PM 344-1179

03.....*Last Frontier Brewing Company
Open For Business!*

04.....*Midnight Sun Brewing Company
First Firkin Friday - XXX Black
Double IPA*

5:00 pm: Pay As You Go

14.....*Midnight Sun Brewing Company
Geek Out Session #3*

5:30 pm : Cost TBA

15.....*GNBC Meeting at the Goose
7 pm (Downstairs)*

21.....*SubZero Microlounge*

BigFish Homebrew Award

Ceremony: 7 pm

26.....*Spenard Roadhouse*

Midnight Sun Rondy Brew

Firkin Tapping: 4 pm

25.....*Twister Creek Restaurant*

Meet The Brewer's Dinner

5-8 pm: Pay As You Go

25.....*Twister Creek Restaurant*

Homebrew Taste and Share

3-5 pm: Pay As You Go

Talkeetna Roadhouse

Brewer's Farwell Breakfast

10 am: Pay As You Got

DIMOND LIQUOR

Talkeetna Beer Trippin' – Jim Lamb updated us on this coming event.

- March 24-26
- Denali Brewing will take entries for any beer style
- NOT BJCP sanctioned event
- Judging will be done by some of Denali Brewing Company regular customers
- Winning brew will be brewed by Denali Brewing Company

Update on Ira Edward's condition – Ira's wife Kara gave us an update on Ira and said that he is getting stronger every day and can't wait to get back here and to get back to life. Monetary donations were accepted at the meeting.

Homebrewer of the Year Award went to Steve Jayich! Congrats Steve!

NEW Homebrewer of the Year Award went to Kevin Sobolesky. Congrats Kevin!

Awards of Lifetime Memberships were given to Debbie Grecco and Jim Roberts for their continuing efforts with our newsletter.

Guest Speaker Presentations:

- **Ken Grossman, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, gave an amazing presentation on his history with homebrewing and creating Sierra Nevada Brewing. Too much info to post here. Suffice it to say that if you missed it, you really missed it. I've never heard our meeting so quiet during a guest presentation! Great job!**
- **Lyn Kruger, Seibel Institute, gave us a brief history on the Seibel Institute. She also talked a bit about the Sensory Evaluation class being held during GABBF. For more info you can go to their website at <http://www.siebelinstitute.com/>**

New Biz:

Spring Break-up competition to be held at Snow Goose in early April. Details will be forthcoming. For categories see the newsletter. Winner gets to brew their winning brew at Sleeping Lady Brewing. The side challenge is SMaSH (Single Malt and Single Hop) beer.

Next meeting is Tuesday, February 15, 2011, 7pm., Snow Goose, I think we plan on being downstairs. We will keep you updated on that.

- Assigned duties are as follows: A-J = Cleanup, K-P = Food, R-Z = Setup

Meeting adjourned at 8:48p at which time The Roiling Boil Blues Band took over and really got things rockin'!

MISCELLANEOUS:

Upcoming TAMs classes held at CHARR's new Charlie H. Selman Training Center located at 1503 W. 31st Avenue, Suite 101 Anchorage.

- **Remember this is required if you plan to volunteer to steward at any fests or competitions this year.**

02/07	Monday	1:00 pm
02/09	Wednesday	9:00 am
02/15	Tuesday	1:00 pm
02/17	Thursday	9:00 am
02/22	Tuesday	5:30 pm
02/26	Saturday	11:00 am
03/01	Tuesday	1:00 pm

2011 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



Announcing the 2011 Big Fish Side Challenge – The Belgian Specialty WTF Challenge.

This competition will be judged during the Big Fish Competition, the first Saturday in December, 2011. Points will be awarded according to the following:

- 50 points – Standard BJCP scoring in regards to aroma, appearance, flavor, etc. Base beer recipe is Belgian Specialty – whatever that means to you.
- 10 points – size of entry - that's right, the judges like things on the large side of life
- 20 points – entry name – innuendo tends to score big
- 20 points- WTF factor – Judges are looking for the unique nature of your specialty ingredients. The usual orange peel, star anise, and coriander aren't going to cut it this time.
- 100 points total available

Monthly Beer Dinners

- We have a February beer dinner planned and announced. Chances are by the time this goes to press the dinner will be full and ready to roll. The Michaels are hosting a sequel to their past Bacon Beer Dinner: Beer Trek II, The Wrath of Ba-Kahn!
- Stay tuned to your emails for upcoming information on the March beer dinner.
- If you are interested in hosting an April beer dinner, please contact me ASAP so we can get the ball rolling.
- If you are not part of the GNBC Beer Dinner group and would like more info, please contact me at juzy@gci.net. We can get you on the email list and you'll be kept up to date on all dinner announcements and related info.

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



Free Beer Shipping Boxes

by *Jim Roberts*

For some strange reason, breweries like to send me beer. Seems like on a weekly basis, I'm getting a package at work that contains beer from somewhere in the Lower 48. Although this probably doesn't mean Bo Diddly to you, the boxes that the beer comes in are pretty skookum as they are designed for shipping beer and have these nifty Styrofoam inserts in them.

I've offered these to a number of members that might be interested in shipping beer to competitions, but so far no takers. I sure hate to throw these out, but am getting to the point where I need to get rid of them. I probably have about a dozen or so of boxes similar to the one in the accompanying picture.

I'll give it about a week or so before I jettison them to the curb for recycling if no one wants them. They're free and we can arrange to an exchange if someone wants them. Call me at (907) 337-9360 or email me at jroberts@peakalaska.com if you want them. They are officially up for grabs.



National Homebrew Competition



The 2011 National Homebrew Competition

Here are the important dates for the 2011 National Homebrew Competition (NHC) that you will need to know.

2011 National Homebrew Competition – Important Dates

Entry Deadline Monday, March 21 - Wednesday, March 30, 2011

Online Registration mid February 2011

First Round Competitions April 2 - 23, 2011

AHA Mailing for Final Round before May 20, 2011

Final Round Entries Due Monday, May 23 through 5 pm Monday, June 6, 2011

Final Round Competition Thursday, June 16, 2011

Awards Ceremony Saturday, June 18, 2011 in San Diego, CA

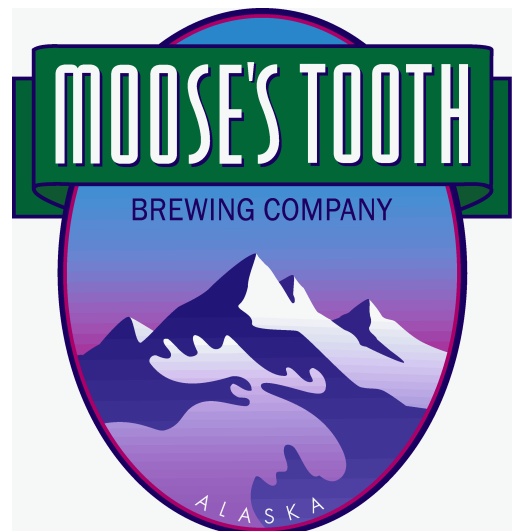
Is 2011 your year to medal?

What is the NHC?

The National Homebrew Competition (NHC) is the world's largest international beer competition recognizing the most outstanding homebrewed beer, mead, and cider produced by amateur brewers worldwide.

The First Round of the National Homebrew Competition (NHC) takes place at nine judging locations in the USA during the month of April. The best of the beer, mead, and cider entries in the regional competitions advances to the Final Round of the competition at the AHA [National Homebrewers Conference](#). NHC winners receive gold, silver or bronze medals in 28 style categories.

The American Homebrewers Association is a division of the Brewers Association, established 1978 in Boulder, Colorado, USA. In 1979, 34 entries competed in the first National Homebrew Competition held in Boulder, Colorado.



Another GNBC Club Brew ??????

by Dennis Sessler

Hell yes!!! I wish we could make a club brew twice a year. Who's got some spare room in their garage, or anyplace else for that matter? Club members have been begging, pleading, and wanting to know when the club is going to do another massive-collective brew.

The idea was tossed up to the GNBC board during our last board meeting in early December. It was unanimous that we do it again. Last year's Club Brew produced about 80 gallons of Flanders Red, which is sitting very comfortably in my garage in a Burgundy wine barrel on its way to a very happy place. For all those who are keeping score it's doing fine, I think. The first club brew was named "Garage Orgy." I am hoping this batch will be ready to transfer out of the barrel and into awaiting corney kegs sometime later this spring or early summer. We just don't know when it will be ready. Sometimes it's just what this style beer needs.

On to our next project. An idea was thrown around about brewing up a **BIG** (and I mean **BIG BIG**) batch of Russian Imperial Stout. When I mean Big, Big we are talking like enough to fill two; you read that right **TWO** retired whiskey barrels. We're looking at brewing around 120 gallons of (RIS), mass fermenting and barrel aging this monster beer. My plans are to have this brewed, and fermented and into the barrels before the end of May.

I think this would be a wonderful beer to serve at the GABBF meeting next January. So, logistically, here is where we are at. The order for the two barrels has been submitted, we will be formulating a recipe, and I personally would like to see this beer weight in at around the 11-12% ABV level. Much like our last big brew, we will be mass fermenting it. We will need to come up with some additional fermenters: the bigger the better. I have a 75 gallon monster, anyone else out there able to ferment maybe 25-30 gallons at once???? I'm throwing the bait out, let's see who bites.

Anybody who is interested in being part of this historic brew, please send me an email at sessak@mtaonline.net. Put in the subject line "RIS Club Brew", I will add all the email addresses in to one blog email, so as not to bother the rest of the club members. Much like our last big brew, there will be several required brew houses, which will crank out a given recipe; we will meet at my home and get it fermenting. After fermentation it will be transferred into awaiting barrels and aged during the summer in my temperature controlled garage, that's right it's so well insulated it rarely hits 60-65F all summer long.

So here is a visual for you all to start drooling over.. More info on this to come, till then.....



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Three Days Of Peace, Love, & Beer

by *Da Lamb's*

Mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual Talkeetna Beer Trippin', "Three Days Of Peace, Love, & Beer" March 25 - 28. Hosted by Boe Barnett and Ty Schommer of the Denali Brewing Company and the Twister Creek Restaurant, this springtime outing is the perfect way to welcome back warmer temperatures and longer days.

Denali Brewing hosts a no-holds barred, open competition that has no restrictions on style, ABV, or risqué beer names. This is a non-BJCP competition and no judging sheets will be provided. Local Talkeetna residents will sample our creations and choose the one they like best. That beer will named "Best of Talkeetna Beer Trippin'", awarded the coveted Golden Carboy, and brewed by the Brewery.

Another item returning from last year's event is the commemorative Beer Trippin' t-shirt. Every year has its own unique design, and will be available at Twister Creek/Denali Brewing beginning that weekend. Those in attendance last year showed off their tie-dyed pride, and this year, you'll see shades of a trippy history-making event. Check out the unveiling of this year's shirt design accompanying this article in this month's newsletter.

Activities in and around Talkeetna include snow machining, Nordic skiing, sampling the finest of Talkeetna's cuisine and beer, and enjoying the company of both GNBC members and Talkeetna residents. We have confirmed that the Carhartt Brothers will be performing on Saturday Night. These musicians are a lot of fun so it should be a great time. We will also be tapping last year's winning beer and making the announcement of this year's winning beer.

Many cabins and rooms are available at this time, but make your reservations early to ensure that your first choice of lodging is available. Lodging choices include (but are not limited to) Talkeetna Roadhouse, A B&B On C, Chinook Wind Cabins, Main Street Suites and Talkeetna Cabins. All of these are within walking distance of the Brewery and Restaurant, and many other cabins and lodging choices around town. Check some of them out online to learn more about these distinctly Alaskan places to lay your head:

Talkeetna Cabins: <http://www.talkeetnacabins.org> 907-733-2227
Main Street Suites: <http://www.talkeetnasuites.com> 907-733-2694
Chinook Winds Cabins: <http://www.talkeetna-alaska.net> 907-733-1899
A B&B On C: <http://www.abbonc.com> 907-354-7836
Talkeetna Roadhouse: <http://www.talkeetnaroadhouse.com> 907-733-1351

Another great informational website that gives a well rounded review of Talkeetna is the popular TripAdvisor. TripAdvisor offers information, ratings, and reviews on Talkeetna area lodging, and does the same for area dining options and activities. You can find TripAdvisor online at <http://www.tripadvisor.com>, and can link directly through to information about Talkeetna at http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g31136-Talkeetna_Alaska-Vacations.html. Many travelers from all over the world use this particular site for trip planning prior to setting their itineraries in stone. It would be a nice thought to take a few notes reviewing Talkeetna's wonderful businesses and activities if you have a good experience, which would benefit the local economy.

Information about getting your beer to Talkeetna in time for judging on Saturday, as well as any updates on other activities related to this event will be announced as it is available. Keep a watchful eye on your email for these informational updates, and also on the February and March club newsletters.

This event was a great way to put winter behind us last year and we are excited with the plans that are shaping up this year!



Talkeetna Beer Trippin' 2011 Schedule of Events

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

5:00-8:00pm | **Meet the Brewers Dinner** @ Twister Creek

Join the Denali Brewing Company brew crew for grub and gab at Twister Creek. They'll be slingin' ale, drinkin' ale and talkin' ale, their new brewery and who knows what else.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

10:00am | **Keg fill drop offs** @ Denali Brewing Company Tasting Room.

Continuing throughout the day, drop off your kegs, let us know what you want in them and we'll have them cleaned, filled and ready to take home on Sunday.

11:00am | **Deadline for entries in the Golden Carboy Homebrew Contest.** *Entries should be turned in at the Denali Brewing Company Tasting Room.*

Noon | **Beer + Pizza** @ Mountain High Pizza Pie

You can't resist this classic combination. Not to mention DBC will tap up a couple of special brews available nowhere else and never again!

3:00-5:00pm | **Homebrew Taste + Share** @ Twister Creek

Bring your best, as a section of Twister Creek will be devoted to homebrew, homebrewers and the magic that happens when the two collide.

5:30pm | **2011 Golden Carboy winner announced** @ Twister Creek.

Your chance to see the trophy you want your name on.

6:00pm | **First Tap of 2010 Golden Carboy winner** @ Twister Creek.

Last year's winner was Lisa Lamb's apricot wheat. Get your first taste here.

7:00pm | **Carhartt Brothers** @ Twister Creek.

The boys bring their down-home sounds and a mighty thirst for suds to Talkeetna.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

9:00am | **Keg fill pick ups** @ Denali Brewing Company Tasting Room

Continuing until 6:00pm, pick up growlers and filled kegs before heading home.

10:00am | **Farewell Breakfast** @ Talkeetna Roadhouse.

The Roadhouse's world-famous breakfast soaks up your hangover blues.

**Talkeetna is also a great place for outdoor activities of all kinds.
Town and trail maps will be available at Twister Creek & Denali Brewing
throughout the weekend.**

Alaska Beer Week Review

by Jim “Dr. Fermento” Roberts

As most of you know, I write a weekly blog in addition to my weekly column for the Anchorage Press and the bi-monthly piece for the Celebrator Beer News. Why the weekly blog? Because Alaska beer and Alaska beer events are just too great and too big for scant, measly coverage in a boring 950 word, buried-i-the-middle-of-a-free-weekly-paper piece. So, rather than find another pulp that would put up with my brand of drivel, I decided to grow my own.

Dennis Sessler, your Club president and mine, asked me to provide what I did in last week’s Blog for the monthly GNBC Newsletter. Dennis must love pain. Anyway, here it is. If you don’t get my blog and want to, I only send it right now via a .pdf file and only to people that ask for it because trust me, next to shitty beer, I hate spam as much as the next guy. If you want to get it automatically each week, email me at jroberts@peakalaska.com and ask to get put on the list.

Oh, and just for the record, I am a homebrewer. It’s just that right now I can either drink the stuff and write about it, or make it and drink it. I just don’t have the time to do all three at once, although I miss the joy of homebrewing immensely. BNC (Beers N’ Cheers) - Fermento

I survived Alaska Beer Week (AKBW). This is no easy task considering the formidable array of both beer events and beer that come with this exciting, fun filled expansion of local beer all over the state. Like anywhere else, this is truly a “spare liver” event punctuated by the usual debauchery of beer drinkers gathering for a good time. I always go into the festivities a little nervous. I don’t have the luxury of taking the entire week off, so I have to balance that pesky work thing in with what I’d really rather be doing. In the end, I came out no worse for the wear, unless you ask my liver doctor (I purposely don’t have one). I’m sure I fared much better than others, but sure gave the entire week a run for the money.



Alaska Beer Week started off for me with a big bang. That came in the form of visiting Glacier Brewhouse to indulge in some of their seven specially selected barley wines to be showcased in celebration of AK Beer Week. The barley wines went up on December 6th and will hang there until either they run out, or December 19th when the celebration ends, three days after the official end of AKBW.

I’d pushed Glacier Brewer **Kevin Burton** pretty hard to move the brewery’s annual **12 Days of Barleywine Celebration** (December 10-21 this year) to coincide with Alaska Beer Week and the Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival. I mean, it made perfect sense to me, but for whatever reason, the brewery remained stubborn for at least two years. Burton acquiesced by creating yet another event, which is even better yet.

Burton says he wanted to put on more and in fact contemplated filling the entire draught line up with the formidable brews, but this didn’t make sense from a business standpoint considering that Glacier diners (the bulk of the business) can be pretty pedestrian drinkers overall. Still, Burton was able to commandeer seven of the taps (which is more than are devoted to the 12 Days celebration, so kudos to both him and the brewery for stepping up and directly supporting AKBW.

Usually when I got to visit Kevin at the brewery, it leads to my premature demise in terms of continued ability to function properly much after any session with him. I guess I’m an easy target. Well, a “willing accomplice” is probably more accurate.

This was what I was facing: The line up includes the **brewery’s 2008 Russian Imperial Stout**, aged 2.6 years in virgin Czech oak barrels (9.0 percent alcohol), the **2009 Big Woody Barleywine** aged 1.5 years in virgin American oak barrels (9.0 percent alcohol), the incredible 2010 **Eisbock**, aged 8 months in Maker’s Mark bourbon barrels (9.0 percent alcohol), the **2010 Big Woody Barleywine** aged 1.5 years in American oak wine barrels from the Honig Winery (9.76 percent alcohol), this year’s **(2011) Big Woody Barleywine** aged in Maker’s Mark barrels for 10 months (9.0 percent alcohol), the dark, deep and oh-so-smooth **Beam Stout** aged 7 months in Jim Beam bourbon barrels (5.6 percent alcohol) and a cask-conditioned **Beam Porter** aged six months in Jim Beam barrels (6.22 percent alcohol).

This was enough to get Alaska Beer Week started for me! I was also anxious to see if any of these brews would make it toward this year's **Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival's Barley Wine Competition** and the **Winter Beer Side Challenge**.

With AKBW behind us, I checked in with Glacier Brewer **Kevin Burton** to see what's happening. In addition to his announcement that starting on Tuesday, January 25, Glacier will be featuring **Growler Tuesdays** which for you translates to \$5 growlers (plus the jug fee if you don't have your own glass). The higher end growlers are \$10 and the jug fee. Sounds like a deal to me! And, on tap as of Friday (1/21) some of the big stuff remains. This was the line up:

Blonde
Amber
IPA
Hefeweizen
Stout
Imperial Blonde
Raspberry Wheat
Double IPA
Cask IPABeam Stout
Export Lager
2009 Big Woody – American Oak Aged
2010 Big Woody – Honig Winery Oak Aged
2011 Big Woody – Makers Mark Oak Aged



My next AKBW challenge was the Tuesday, January 11th **Café Amsterdam/North Coast Brewing Company Beer Dinner**. There were other Tuesday night venues to choose from, but I know that Café's **Ken Pajak** custom designed this dinner to directly support AKBW and I wanted to support it. **Midnight Sun Brewing Company** also hosted a beer and cheese **Geek Out Dinner**, but knowing that the brewery's cult following and the awesome pairing of beer and cheese from **Fromagio's** would lend plenty of support, so I opted for the Café gig instead.

Mark Stratton of **Pacific Beverages** arrived in Alaska to participate in GABBF and represented the **North Coast Brewing Company** at this dinner. Stratton spent the evening talking about the brewery and introducing each of the beers that were aptly paired with the fine fare at Café made specifically for this dinner using the beers as ingredients in many of these dishes.

The 22 year old brewery has been an icon in the Northern California bustling craft beer industry and over the years, I've managed to visit the brewery a scant two times, but I'm still proud to say I've been there. Today the brewery remains world class and highly supportive of the small surrounding community of Ft. Bragg where it's located and the overall Mendocino County where its beers find great favor with locals and visitors alike.

The gig kicked off with North Coast's **Scrimshaw Pilsner** as a warm up beer. This 4.4 ABV light brew was named for the delicate engravings on ivory popularized by 19th century seafarers. Scrimshaw is a pilsner style beer brewed following Euro tradition using Munich malt and a mixture of Hallertauer and Tettnanger hops. The light, but crisp and refreshing beer with a good, noble hop zing was indeed welcoming.

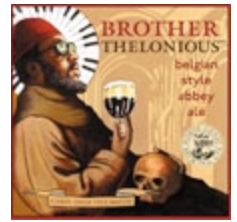


This was followed by North Coast's **Red Seal** paired with Café's red lentil soup with andouille sausage. The soup was flavorful and a bit spicy and although not "hearty" from a thickness standpoint (by design). Red Seal Amber Ale is more of an amber colored pale ale, according to Stratton and afforded a nice marriage of malt and hops with a long, spicy finish. The beer's advanced hoppiness helped cut the spiciness of the andouille sausage in the soup which made for another apt paring.



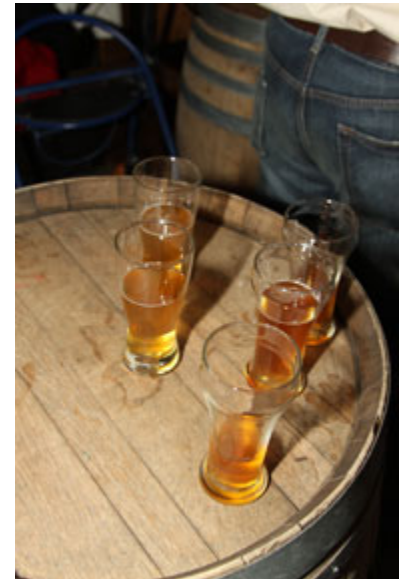


A salad course followed featuring king crab with mixed greens and avocado with balsamic/citrus vinaigrette. This was paired with **Pranqster**, a Belgian-style golden ale. Pranqster is a Belgian style golden ale that weighs in at 7.6 percent alcohol. A unique blend of yeasts, malt and hops is used to produce the beer resulting in a delicate floral nose, a significant fruit contribution and a clean, light, refreshing finish. The base of the salad imparted some bitterness with the cress used and a nice tang was provided by the balsamic vinaigrette. Pranqster's Belgian twang and soft palate made a great compliment to this tasty dish. The entrée consisted of an exquisite alder smoked flank steak with garlic mashed potatoes and gravy and sided with broccoli and sweet peppers. This was paired with **Brother Thelonius** a Belgian style abbey ale. This dark mahogany 9.4 percent brew was made as a tribute to jazz legend Thelonious Monk. The label on the cork and bail finished bottle features the jazz master himself from a painting by local Mendocino County artist **Eduardo Smissen**. For every case sold, North Coast makes a contribution to the **Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz**, so the beer delivers more than just great flavor. It worked extremely well with the entrée that participants agreed was perhaps the highlight of the dinner.



Dessert consisted of a chocolate brownie with raspberry topping on a bed of anglaise. This is going to be paired with both North Coast's **Old No. 38 Irish Stout** and **Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout**.

Old No. 38 was a defining stout for me years ago when the now folded **Inlet Distributors** was bringing North Coast beers to Alaska. This was perhaps my first exposure to a heady dry/American style stout with a beautiful Pacific Northwest hop character with toasted and coffee characters and notes of the dark malts and roasted barley. The beer is named for a retired California Eastern Railroad steam engine on the Fort Brag to Willits run through the redwoods. I've actually ridden this train when I was a child and back then enjoyed



Cracker Jacks that my father bought from the authentically dressed vendor that walked through the train during the leisurely ride. I'll never forget this childhood experience but wish for a repeat, especially knowing that this exact train is now occasionally used for beer rides through the tall trees.



The legendary Old Rasputin is produced in the tradition of 19th Century English brewers who supplied the court of Russia's **Catherine the Great**. It's rich, intense and warming, weighing in at 9.0 ABV and a healthy 75 IBU's.

Both beers complimented the richness of the brownie and the tartness of the raspberry topping.

The wrap-up beer was supposed to be North Coast's **Old Stock Barley Wine**, but attendees were in store for a beautiful surprise. There's been some argument as to whether Old Stock is an old ale or a barley wine, although the brewery currently describes it as a barley wine. I recall years ago when studying within the **Beer Judge Certification Program** (BJCP) that it was considered a classic example in the old ale category. Now it resides in the barley wine category, so I won't argue with the distinction.

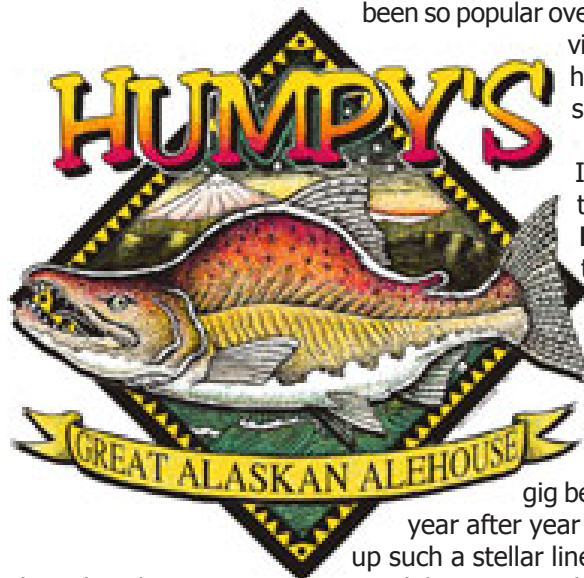


What followed in the form of a surprise beer was the **2009 Oak Aged Old Stock** which definitely fit within all of the parameters of a true barley wine with beautiful hints of leather, caramel, treacle, tobacco and a rich, fruity, almost vinous character. The oak influence was well in the background and entirely complimenting. In retrospect, almost a week later, this turned out to be my all time favorite beer of AKBW. Sadly for you, only

three bottles of this rich, alluring wonder were hand carried for the dinner by Stratton, but he hinted at more to follow. Surprise, surprise! It did! Get your VERY LIMITED bottles of this incredible stuff at the **La Bodega Liquor Store** in the University Mall while it lasts.

Wednesday January 12th found me at the annual **Humpy's Great Alaskan Alehouse Belgian Dinner**, proudly presented by Humpy's owner **Billy Opinsky** and chefs **Randy Paul Barry** and **Tim Farley**.

Examining the beer line up, the first thing I noticed was that aside from the **Unibroe Blanche de Chambly**, the youngest beer in the all-vintage line up was seven years old. The reason this event has been so popular over the years is because Opinsky methodically pulls an incredible array of these vintage beers from his private collection to support the event. Arguably, Opinsky has the most extensive line up of vintage beers in the state but is generous to share with guests and friends on special occasions.



I would have also enjoyed participating in the other noteworthy events around town that night including **Pike Brewing Company's** presentation at **McGinley's Pub**, hosted by brewery owners **Charles** and **Rose Ann Finkel**, the **Kassik's Brewery** beer dinner at **Suite 100**, the **Kenai River Brewing Company Beer Dinner** at **The Spenard Roadhouse**, or the **Anchor Brewing Company** and **BrewDog Ales Beer Dinner** at **Kinley's Restaurant and Bar**, but I've long learned that you can only slice and dice a liver so thinly on any given night.

about the other events while visiting with folks throughout AKBW, so I know they were welcome and successful.

The **Blanche de Chambly** welcome beer at the Humpy's dinner was followed by a **2003 Hanssens Oude Gueuze**, an incredible beer that held up superbly through the years and was paired with a baby arugula salad with granny smith apples tossed in a Hanssens Oude Gueuze vinaigrette and finished with toasted pine nuts and crisp bacon.



Although the salad was stellar, of course, the vintage gueuze stole the pairing. The tartness of the ale complimented the salad perfectly and rounded out the apple and vinaigrette contribution nicely.

The next beer up was designed as a palate cleanser. **Cantillon Vigneronne 2004** was paired with brie and grape bruschetta. The beer also commanded the greatest respect in this pairing. The bruschetta came out a little cold, but that was okay given that everyone was lost in the vintage beer.

An appetizer followed featuring one of my all time favorites, **Anchor Brewing Company's 1998 Christmas Ale**. I think at this time, the beer was called **Our Special Ale**, but I won't quibble over details because no matter what it's called, I've long been a fan of Anchor's seasonal specialty beers given that I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and was weaned on the stuff.

I have a number of bottles of this vintage, but was excited just the same to get a generous serving of one of my favorites. It held up well over the years, just like most of Opinsky's vintage beers, having snoozed



peacefully in a caged off area in the **Moose's Tooth Brewing Company's** brewery, that used to be an ice cream plant with a luxurious huge drive-in cooler. The beers have been in cold storage and in the dark since they were obtained. Nice, spicy peppery notes and some enhanced bitterness greeted the palate with subdued spiciness that is sort of signature in Anchor's winter seasonal specialty. This was paired with grilled curry chicken and fresh melon with blood orange coulees.

Next came an oxtail soup with braised root vegetables and star anise. The aptly paired **Het Ankor Gouden Carolus Noel 2003** was perfect with this easily consumed, hearty, beef-infused dish.

The long-awaited entrée was the chef's famous **Duchess De Borgogne** braised lamb in Duchesse demi glace and white cheddar potato gratin. A 2000 vintage Duchesse was served with this dish. Attendees agreed that his cloth wrapped, tender dish and the beer were the star of the show.

The dessert, and I'm not talking about the food itself, was the grand finale. Opinsky graciously awarded attendees with an incredible **1996 Thomas Hardy's Ale**. Where else do you go to a tasting and get to drink a meticulously-aged vintage benchmark beer like this? And, not only did everyone get a sample, most got more than one. I semi-hazily remember carefully sipping through not one, but THREE goblets of this fine elixir. Each bottle was slightly different, but with very little age-related defect in a beer that's boasted to be good for 25 years.



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If anyone bitched about the \$75 price for attendance, I'd challenge them first to FIND one of these beers, then price it. Oh, and lest I forget, the magical, swirling warm banana and Thomas Hardy's compote over vanilla ice cream with dark chocolate and candied walnuts was perfect to explore these beers with. Many attendees confessed to picking out individual elements within the rich dessert to pair with sips of the world class beverage they'd been given for this experience.

Earlier in the evening, I couldn't help jokingly chide Opinsky with "hey Billy, don't you think that with this crowd of brewing greats, you could serve something a little fresher to your esteemed guests?" This was met with approving applaud from the audience. In Humpy's traditional and purposeful slow and calculated presentation, I think I got home at 12:30 in the morning. It was well worth it, and this is one Humpy's tasting that

goes down on the books as (is usual) world class.

Thursday, January 13's AKBW event was the private **Great Northern Brewer's Homebrew Club Brewer's (GNBC) Reception** at the **Snow Goose Restaurant and Sleeping Lady Brewing Company**. This annual event is reserved for homebrewers that host the influx of brewers, distributors and beer luminaries that descend upon our increasingly popular and world renown Great Alaska Beer and Barley Wine Festival. This gracious event is packed and boisterous from the minute the first folks arrive until the wee hours when the **Celebrator Beer News** publisher **Tom Dalldorf** belts out the last tune using local music talent to assemble his rag-tag, crazy, rollicking **Rolling Boil Blues Band**.

This year, as president of the **Brewer's Guild of Alaska**, I was in charge of building the "who's who" list and sort of introduce the folks at the gig. At last count, my non-inclusive list contained 97 beer and brewing greats from here and around the world that crowded in to listen to keynote speaker **Ken Grossman** of **Sierra Nevada Brewing Company** chronicle over 30 years of re-shaping America's palate to accept, understand and thoroughly enjoy beer with substance. Substance means the post-prohibition application of all malt and hops back into beer and Grossman is generally credited with launching America's beer renaissance as far back as the mid 1970's. When I was doing introductions and got to Grossman, I wanted to sum it up by saying that if you didn't know who Ken Grossman was, you needed to head out back and pound 40 ounce tall boys in paper bags with the other Anchorage degenerates.



After my rather lengthy introduction and thanking not only the Goose and the GNBC for hosting not only the guild but the event's visitors, and much aplomb, Grossman began a stellar presentation that chronicled both his struggles and successes as he inadvertently converted America's palate from the mainstream into truly flavorful and enticing brews.



What I appreciated most was Grossman's seamless encompassing of the art of homebrewing and commercial brewing and talking equally to both contingents in the gathering. I loved watching the crowd's reaction to his eloquently produced multi-media presentation. When recounting his early days and featuring a clunky assemblage of scrap materials and turning them into what would become one of America's most prominent brewing forces, the homebrewers oohed and aahed, thinking that with Grossman's noble but humble beginnings, it was demonstrated that anyone with real aspirations can be successful in the industry with a lot of creativity and hard work. At the

same time the commercial brewers had a "man, I know what you went through" reaction, looking back at their own tireless struggles to make both a difference and contribution in today's increasingly competitive industry.

Quiet, and somewhat reserved, Grossman's presence was illuminating for anyone that makes beer, but at the same time added huge credibility to AKBW. This vote of confidence is another great shot in the arm for our fledgling, but increasingly renown beer presence in global suds.

The Rolling Boil Blues Band cranked up shortly after and the meeting dissolved into a happy, swirling party with both commercial and home-brewed beer aplenty. This event is a reunion of sorts, and for the most part, this is the only time of the year than many of our geographically dispersed brewing greats first gather in anticipation of the upcoming festival. I see more hugs and love per square foot at this event than any other in the state every year and almost get teary-eyed at the genuine caring and camaraderie our local brewers extend to each other. Sure, brewing remains a competitive industry, but this isn't the time for politics or posturing. Alaska Beer Week is truly a celebration of all that's great in beer in our state. This was a real top-notch event and I look back on it fondly and at the same time look longingly ahead to next year's gig.

Friday was a big day for the Fermz. I'd like to take the whole week off for AKBW, but with my day-to-day work trappings, this just wasn't possible, so I rewarded myself with taking Friday off so that I could attend the 10 am – 2 pm **Siebel Institute of Technology's Sensory Analysis Seminar**. I wasn't sure what to expect of this Brewer's Guild of Alaska contribution to the week. As certified beer judge, this would be my third exposure to a sensory analysis exploration. The first time was years and years ago before I took the **Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP)** which offers an abbreviated version of this same professional course. After taking the BJCP course, I wondered if I'd find value in what might turn out to be a repeat performance.



The course was taught by the president of the Siebel Institute, **Lyn Kruger**. **Glacier Brewhouse's Kevin Burton** did all the legwork in bringing the institute to Alaska for this and I was glad I didn't miss it.

This course went into significantly more professional detail than the previous elements I'd experienced and Kruger delivered the goods with an ease and candor that made the complex material easily understandable by both novices and professionals alike. The guild provided tickets for each licensed brewing entity in the state, and the remaining tickets were sold to the general public by **Arctic Brewing Supply**. It was a sell out event,

and the audience was a mixture of homebrewers, industry types and yes, professional brewers.

What interested me as president of the guild is that the brewers initially discounted the potential for the upcoming course because, like me, they questioned the value of a "repeat performance." And, like me, they came away surprised and tuned up. I learned more than I forgot at the earlier two presentations I'd attended in the past.

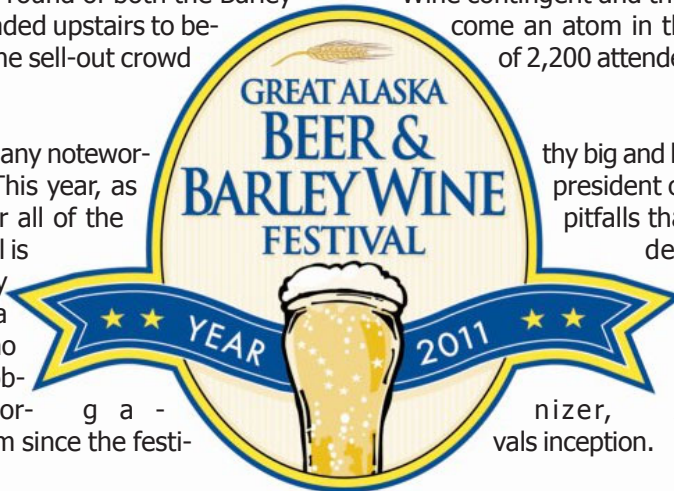
I learned, among other things, that nothing replaces human analysis when it comes to evaluating beer. In effect, the human palate becomes a sensory analysis instrument that's finely tuned, but requires frequent calibration to operate proficiently. I also learned that sensory analysis and beer judging are vastly different talents. For example, in pure sensory analysis, samplers are provided their beer in obscure colored cups so that color does not influence perception. Although all five senses are used in beer judging (yes, you listen to a beer's release of carbonation to get an overall sense of quality, depending on the style), sight and sound are not integral to pure sensory analysis.



I also came away with a much deeper chemical and biological understanding of the interaction between beer and the human palate. I found myself as rapt throughout the presentation as I was at any of my courses within my Master's program in Human Resources, something I make a living by every single day. I don't think I was alone in my appreciation for this top notch brewing course. The guild may have quibbled about it before, but in a follow up meeting members were excited about the prospects of another educational component in next year's upcoming Alaska Beer Week.

I dashed out of the seminar, grabbed a quick lunch at **Humpy's Great Alaska Alehouse** where I enjoyed a cask conditioned **Deschutes Brewery Jubelale** and it was suddenly time to drop the Fermentomobile off at home and get a ride back to begin the meticulous judging process as part of the Barley Wine Competition within the GABBF. I judged the first round of both the Barley Wine contingent and the first round of the Winter Beer Competition and headed upstairs to be-drinking particles within the sell-out crowd-tion of the festival. come an atom in the seething mass of beer of 2,200 attendees at the Friday night por-

As usual, I walked around and sampled many noteworthy and local, but all of stellar quality. This year, as my eye because I was on the watch for all of the guests at the gathering. Although the festival is a once-a-year event, the festival is a once-a-year event, and not taking tickets has been cited as a problem. I judge out overly-intoxicated participants who are a fire for effect. This is an age-old problem for its participating brewers, and the event organizers have struggled with the inherent problem since the festival's inception.

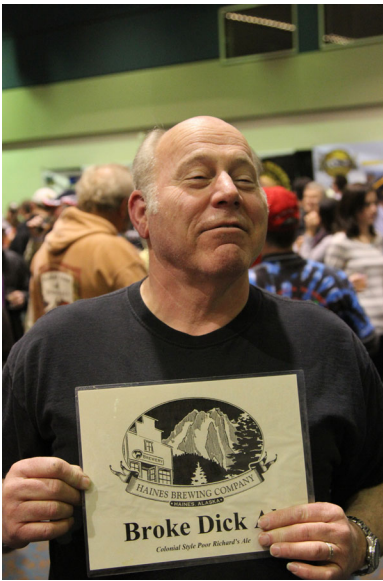


thy big and little beers, foreign, domestic, president of the Guild, I had a different set of pitfalls that could ruin Alaska's big beer festival. The festival is designed to provide two attendees, over-pouring prime contributor of sending attendees to the festival simply because of the beer, and both the Guild and **Aurora Productions** have been instrumental in the festival's inception.

I found that over pouring took place. But I also came to realize that the well-trained, vigilant cadre of volunteers did not do this purposely for the most part. Instead, harried servers worked rapidly and quickly to pour thousands of samples to people in lines that often were 30-40 people deep. Instead of over pouring by intent, as was previously thought before, the over pouring is more a product of trying to juggle expediency and dealing with often foamy beers to fine that perfect line in the sampling glass. I found very few examples where a ticket wasn't taken for a sample of beer.



Note that it's the intention of both the producer and the brewers to deliver a solid sample of good beer to what should be an interested, curious sampler. Feedback from a following Brewer's Guild meeting on Saturday morning revealed that subtle, purposeful improvements over the last year have started to have effect. Sure, the gig is just as crowded as always. Because it sells out, nothing can be done to change this. Sure, a good portion of the attendees remained in that "21-1/4" demographic that were indeed there to get hammered and stare at the rampant eye candy that wanders around flaunting goods on the festival floor, but this is something



that can't be changed without drastically modifying the structure of the event. But, guild members (brewing entities) most of all agreed that this year's Friday night festival was a bit more disciplined and in control. This is good news to both me and Aurora Productions.

Saturday turned out to be another whirlwind day for me. I met with the Guild, then transitioned immediately into judging the final round of the Winter Beer Competition while one table away, other, more prominent judges evaluated the Best of Show beers within the barley wine competition. This got done just as the Connoisseur's Session of GABBF kicked off.

The Connoisseur's Session is generally the least crowded session within the three-session festival because it's more expensive for one and because it's shorter. But those that don't indulge in this session truly miss out. Each Alaska brewery turns out a session-only brew in support of the gig, and this is where the winners of both competitions are announced.

I was very pleased to stand on stage and announce that once again, **Glacier Brewhouse** took the award in the Winter Beer Competition with brewer **Kevin Burton's Glacier Ice**. This is truly a noteworthy beer. With rich, swirling dark malt complexity, a huge, wonderful balance, and a squeaky clean finish, not to mention the formidable 9.0 percent alcohol, this is one easy drinker indeed. It took the four of us on the panel a significant amount of time to come to decide between the two finalists we conjured up in that round. Of course, we

didn't know what we were drinking (in both competitions) so standing there on stage and being handed gold pans (the award plaques) for each of the winners, is always a real treat for me.

I then got to announce that **Black Raven Brewing Company** of Seattle took first place in the barley wine competition with their **Old Birdbrain Barley Wine**, followed by our own **St Elias Brewing Company** of Soldotna's **Moose Juice Barley Wine** for second place and none other than **Glacier Brewhouse** scoring third place for their **Big Woody Barley Wine**. Immediately the crowd in front of the stage dispersed to chase these award winning beers before the taps ran dry.



I was genuinely pleased for Black Raven, but more than tickled that St. Elias scored so well. I'm always excited when new, ambitious breweries do good in this festival. The brewing staff and their guests at St. Elias took the award in stride, so much in fact, that by the time I recovered from the presentation and talked with a few folks at the base of the stage, I moved toward the Alaska side of the festival to discover the St. Elias folks

standing in line at the Black Raven table.



I ducked out for dinner with **Beer Drinker of the Year Bill Howell**, Ms. Fermento and Bill's wife for dinner. We thought oh-so-mistakenly that we could get a table at either **Glacier Brewhouse** or **Orso**, but as is typical during festival days, we could expect a wait of a couple of hours.

These are a couple of many downtown merchants that actually complain about the effect of the barley wine festival from the standpoint that their establishments are crowded with fest revelers that come to them with buzz-on and expect immediate, uncompromising service. I'm both sympathetic and disdainful of this attitude because it's a double edged sword for all of us. I think that the merchants should (by now) be able to predict and prepare for the influx of happy customers, but at the same time

understand that due to oppressive laws, have to turn away folks that already have had too much to drink and sully their reputation.

Unfortunately, there are the rotten apples that spoil the bunch. There's no disputing that this festival baits both the fire-for-effect crowd and the discriminating, respectful beer aficionado. It's the rotten eggs that run out between sessions, and especially after the final session of the evening is done, and attempt to grab one more (or many more) libations at a nearby pub. Often these pricks are indiscriminate. Any bar stool in any establishment will do. Who wants drunks in their establishments when they take away from more discriminating patrons wanting to enjoy a quiet, respectful evening on the town.

Both the Guild and Aurora Productions are taking strides to mitigate this effect, so expect some sweeping changes at next year's gig.



My party ended up having a very quiet, un-crowded wholesome meal at Anchorage's long standing, homey **Lucky Wishbone** where I enjoyed a perfect burger and Ms. Fermento opted (as always) for a big plate of fried chicken, of which I always get (by design) one piece. The warm and comfortable atmosphere was soothing for my tired dogs. I'd spent the last number of days on my feet for extended periods which also affects my back in my waning years.



I returned to the fest after dinner to mop up a few more rounds of world class beer before calling it an earlier night. I find the Saturday night crowd at the fest a bit too boisterous (even more so than the Friday night gig) and always try to call it quits by about 8:30 or so. True to form, I gathered up my winter survival gear and moseyed toward the exit doors just after 8 pm.

I had one more AKBW event to master before calling the week done and coming back to write about it. On Sunday morning (January 16th) I headed toward **The Spenard Roadhouse** for a hangover breakfast. Okay, I didn't have a hangover, but wanted to be in place for the departure point for folks headed out after the week long event.

Here I opted for a **Silver Gulch Brewing Company Osculum Infame** **Winter Warmer**. I figured if I hadn't punished my liver enough, this 10.5 percent knee knocker would polish things off nicely. What a nice breakfast beer at 10:00 in the morning!

This winter warmer of sorts boasts a Belgian yeast inspired beer that if not so sweet, might fall into the Belgian strong golden ale category. The nose boasted booze; there's no hiding behind the formidable alcohol content in this brew which partially masks the complex grain bill that boasts, in addition to pale malts, a dose of wheat and rye. Any hops in this brew are well in the background in aroma, flavor and even bitterness. My suspicion is that the hops are infused for balance only.

The flavor follows the sniff in this beer. Big booze notes dominate the first sample, but the hit is more gentle than a roundhouse to the palate. As the booze subsides, the pale malt, Belgian yeast, wheat and rye step forward, but tentatively. The beer is predominantly sweet. Still, it paired well with my **Hangover Helper**, a 1/2 pound all beef burger topped with an egg, bacon, cheddar, tomatoes and of course, on the side, the Roadhouse's signature tater tots.



When Ms. Fermento and I arrived, we were the only "festivus" attendees there, but were quickly joined by a contingent from **Midnight Sun Brewing Company**, **Haines Brewing Company**, **Kodiak Island Brewing Company** and **Homer Brewing Company**, to name a few.



I was very proud that these folks made this the final stop and made sure that one more AKBW event was populated.

I thought that a nap might be in order after concluding beer week, but instead, I've been putting my fingers to work ever since. Of course, I'm accenting this with still more great, local beer selections from my trusty refrigerator that warehouses my favorite goods. I came out of the fest with a ton of brewery information, hand outs, coasters, and of course brewery stickers that I intend to plaster across my trusty garage beer fridge like badges of courage. Okay, let's call them merit badges!

Moving on, at the festival, I learned that there's perhaps another new Alaska brewery in the mix. Although unconfirmed, it looks like Palmer might be seeing a new brewery that's named **Coho** and might be the brainchild of former Glacier Brewhouse brewer Steven Gerteisten, the brewhouse assistant. Naturally, I'm going to follow up on this, so again, keep your mug to the wall for updates.

Cheap and Simple All Grain Brewing Or, How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love to Make Beer

by Matt Wallace

I've been experimenting with a brewing method that lets me brew high quality all-grain batches with cheap, minimal equipment, little cleanup, and in about the same time as it would take to brew an extract batch. It's a no-frills approach to all grain brewing pioneered lately by Australian homebrewers under the heading Brew-In-A-Bag. In full on geek-mode homebrewer jargon, you might call it Single Infusion, No Sparge, No Chill, Single Vessel, Stovetop Small Batch All Grain. For the remainder of this article, I'll just call it Cheap and Simple.

Here's a basic outline of the process for a batch, 3 or 4 gallons:

Heat ALL of the water for your batch in a kettle on your stove to strike temperature, and turn off the heat.

Put your grains in a mesh bag, add it to the water, stir and cover. Let it do its thing, man. Then heat it up to 165f or so for a mash-out.

Pull the grains, but squeeze the hell out of that bag. This is what you do instead of sparging, and you'll be glad you did.

Boil it up. Add hops.

Don't bother chilling— Either transfer it to your fermenting vessel, or just cover the brewpot and let it cool (setting it outside is optional, but recommended).

Transfer/pitch, ferment, and package as usual.

Why bother?

Well, if you've already got your single-tier all electric Reticulating Infusion Mash System (R.I.M.S.) and a glycol-jacketed stainless steel conical, no good reason. But, if you're looking to simplify, or if you're just thinking about getting in to all-grain brewing, there are two fairly obvious (eponymous, even) advantages.

Advantage the first-

It's cheap. With a little diligence, the interwebs will send you a 32 quart aluminum stock pot for about \$35, shipping included. That's it. Seriously, that's the only extra equipment you need if you've been doing partial boil extract batches on your stove top.

Ok, that's a lie. You'll also need a mesh bag. Try a \$2-\$3 5 gallon "paint strainer" bag from the Home Depot. Also, you'll want some way to squeeze all that tasty raw beer juice out of your grains, since you're not sparging at all. If you can wrangle the rather heavy bag between two big pot-lids over the kettle, that works. I think there's a more elegant solution out there, and I plan to think about over a bottle or two.

Oh, and optional but highly recommended: Insulation for your tun/tank/kettle, especially if you've got a crummy apartment stovetop like I do. I use aluminized bubble-wrap and some high heat aluminum tape. If you like, you could track down some high-heat resistant insulation at the auto-supply store. Either way, double up on the kettle lid, and it'll get you to mash temps, and a rolling boil, a lot quicker than the stove top alone, and a lot cheaper than a dedicated burner (especially if you'll be filling a propane tank every few batches).

Advantage the second-

It's simple. No sparge, no chill. Saves time, saves money, saves hassle. I don't know what else to say about it except that this method cuts 2+ hours off my brew day, and I've only got one vessel plus a nylon bag to clean at the end. What's not to like?

What's not to like?

Nothing's perfect. To illustrate some of the Pros and Cons, I present to you a Classical Greek Dialogue, between those stalwart rhetorical opponents that I just made up, Skestikos and Hypnus.

DIALOGUE STARTS NOW.

Skestikos: Your efficiency must be terrible! You're not rinsing that barley, even a little. Those slacker batch-spargers are bad enough, but this is ridiculous. There's just gotta be a ton of delicious fermentables you're leaving behind.

Hypnus: I'm gonna pull a number out of the air, and guess that most all-grain homebrewers get about 80% efficiency. And honestly, that's pretty generous given the dead space in most mash tuns I've seen. This no sparge method, with the grind from your local HBS, can easily get you 75% efficiency if you squeeze those grains out a little. Maybe more!

S: Squeeze the grains!?! That's homebrew heresy, I say! Tannins! Astringency! Disaster!

H: I'm just sayin' that I heard one of Alaska's premier breweries employs a grain press... I mean, it's expensive to ship barley and hops where they don't grow (even if they do, but that's a subject for another beery conversation)! And if tannins are an issue, I bet dollars to donuts you could account for that with a few tweaks in recipe formulation.

S: But I want maximum efficiency! Why flush money down the compost heap?

H: Touché. You can get better efficiency with a sparge, probably. Again, my guesstimate is 80% average. But riddle me this: How many batches with 5% better efficiency will it take you to recoup the cost of that mash tun, false bottom, sparge arm, etc? I ain't gonna do the math or anything, but I'll wager it's quite a few. What's more, you might get a little more flavor goodness out of your grain bill if you quit rinsing that barley to 7-beer-whiz consistency. It seemed to work for those partigyle cats in jolly old England.

S: You're spargeless technique is strange but intriguing. But no chill? You're out of your mind! Infections! Spoilage! Botulism!

H: Keep a lid on it. Put it outside. There are breweries all over the world, AK included, that STILL churn out tasty, consistent beers with open fermentation vessels. Relax, just rack and pitch it tomorrow. Heck, you can even whirlpool the cooled wort, which according to will cut back on the nasty cold break proteins that some beer mavens'll tell you is a real boon for your fermentation.

S: But what about *dimethyl sulfide (DMS)*! I don't want my beer to taste like refrigerator box, and if you don't cool that wort down to 180f within 20 minutes, you'll end up with cardboard ale!

H: Ooh, you got me there. Maybe. Further study is needed. Try compensating with a nice long boil. I read reports from folks on the interwebs that it ain't a problem, and frankly this level of brewing science is way over the head of a fictional beer-spirit such as myself. Maybe the author of this article will brew up a pilsner or two and bring 'em to a meeting and you can decide for yourself.

Interjection from the author/narrator: That's the plan. And I ain't no certified beer judge (yet), but the few ales I've made this way aren't noticeably cardboardy as far as I can tell.

S and H, in unison: This is a dialogue, not a trialogue.

The author: My mistake. Please, go on.

S: So, err, back to the subject at hand. What about hops? Aren't you gonna lose all that wonderful aroma from the last addition if it sits around at 200f for a zillion hours?

H: Dial back on the hops a bit. Pretty much every homebrew IBU formula is WAY OFF anyway. Seriously, look it up. And dry hopping will basically eclipse any aroma hop addition at flameout anyway. And don't ask me to back that up. Everybody's got a beer bias.

S: I remain skeptical.

H: I am sleepy.

END OF DIALOGUE

OK folks. Thus concludes the rambling. In all near-seriousness, I'm pretty excited about this new minimalist approach to all-grain. I'll continue my experiments, and if it strikes your fancy, I encourage you to do the same. Maybe we can compare notes. If it holds up under scrutiny, I might even encourage new brewers to skip extract altogether, as the extra equipment outlay over your basic introductory homebrew kit amounts to some bubble-wrap, a plastic bag with holes in it, and a thermometer.

See ya at The Goose.



2011 Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition LAST CALL

by *Dennis Sessler*

The competition will be held on **Saturday, February 5th** at the Snow Goose. This will be the first competition in 2011 to garner as many points as possible towards the 2011 GNBC Homebrewer of the Year Competition. The categories which will garner points towards the year-long competition are Categories;

1 Light Lager
4 Dark Lager
5 Bock
19 Strong Ale
22 Smoke Flavored/Wood Aged Beer
23 Specialty Beer.

By no means are you restricted to just enter those beer. Enter as many categories 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>. And entry forms can be found at http://www.bjcp.org/docs/SCP_EntryRecipe.pdf.

Entries will be accepted at the Snow Goose in the basement on **Friday February 4th**. From **11:00 am to 6:00 pm**. There will be **no fees** on your entries as long as you have a current GNBC membership card. Otherwise it will cost you \$5.00 per entry for the first 5 entries, after that no additional fees. Better yet might as well pay the cost of a membership its only \$25.00. 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. Bottles should be clean and void of commercial beer labels.

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 have contacted Kassiks Brewery and they will be helping on the Best of Show Panel and will be selecting a beer to brew at their brewery with the homebrewer. This year Frank and Deb Kassik have added the additional bonus of providing a \$150.00 gift certificate to defer the cost of lodging/food while the winner goes down to the Kenai Peninsula to brew his/her batch of beer. That beer will be eligible to be entered at the Great American Beer Festival Pro-Am Competition in September 2012 in Denver CO. I will have all the leftover beer/meads and ciders along with all the judge evaluation sheets and the awards at the February 15th homebrew club meeting.

Let's make this a great competition. Dust off your mead and ciders, bottle those beers and let's get ready to "Rondy!" For more information contact me at sessak@mtaonline.net.





2011 Snow Goose Break-up Homebrew Competition

by *Dan Bosch*

This is the first call for entries for the 2011 SNOW GOOSE Break-up Home Brew competition. The date for drop-offs will be April 1st, and the competition will be held on Saturday the 2nd at the Snow Goose. The categories for this competition are brand new this year and the competition is only open to these BJCP categories, and also the "Brewers Challenge":

European Amber Lagers	(category 3)
Light Hybrids Beer	(category 6)
English Pale Ale	(category 8)
American Ale	(category 10)
German Wheat/Rye	(category 15)
Fruit Beers	(category 20)

And the "Brewers Challenge" is a SMaSH. A SMaSH is a single malt, single hop beer. All grain brewers should make their challenge beer out of base malt alone, and one hop variety. Extract brewers are similarly delegated using one extract and one hop. You can get creative in a number of ways to add depth to SMaSH like – a long boil, drawing off a gallon of wort and boil it down to one quart, etc... On the hops side of the beer try some hop bursting; make all additions after 20 minutes. A SMaSH can be a complex beer, it does not have to be simple, but sometimes simple is better.

Once again this year's "Brewers Choice," may or may not be the overall "Best of Show (BOS)" beer in this BJCP sanctioned event, but it will be chosen by the head brewer at the Snow Goose and the BOS panel. The Brewers Choice award will be served at the Snow Goose this summer, so it must conform to some criteria. It must be a quick turn around beer for brewing economy, so a beer ready to go from kettle to tap in several weeks.

For the brewer of the Brewer's Choice, this is a chance to work with the pros at the Snow Goose, as you can help them expand your recipe from your meager unworthy home brewing system with a capacity measured in gallons to the Snow Goose system measured in barrels. I don't know about you, but I would sell my soul to the devil for a chance like this. The Brewers Choice will most likely be an ale – even though a lager may win the BOS. If the stars align and brewing gods smile upon you the BOS and Brewers Choice may be one and the same. Look for an update on the exact date for this competition in the next news letter.

Club Logo Gear! Brew in style this spring!

by Julie McDonald

Recently, during Alaska Beer Week, Tim McDonald was sporting his Great Northern Brewer's Club logo gear. A men's dri-
lite mesh t-shirt with the club's logo on the left side of the chest. He got plenty of comments on the shirt, mostly people
wanting to know where he got it. This particular shirt we purchased at Land's End. You can find all ordering info for club
gear listed below for Land's End as well as for Alaska Textiles.

Alaska Textiles - The GNBC logo is on file for application to tee shirts, jackets, hats, etc. They are located at Fireweed and
Spenard, next to Alaska Cleaners.

Call them at 265-4880

check them out online at <http://www.alaskatextiles.com/>

Embroidery cost varies, depending on the number of stitches. For example a baseball cap with front logo and back logo will cost
the price of the cap plus an additional \$16.29. For a shirt, the price of the shirt and an additional \$21.56. If things are ordered
in multiples the cost of embroidery is discounted.

Land's End Business Outfitters – Get hats, fleece, Ts, bags, water bottles, scarves, aprons, etc. Our Company Store is up and
running... all YOU have to do is use it! Here's how:

Log on to your Internet Explorer browser, their websites do not run on Mozilla Firefox, they run best on IE.

Enter this URL: ces.landsend.com/gnbclub there is no need to add the http:/ prefix to this, just cut and paste it as is.

You will need to register before you can order, it's a simple procedure, doesn't take long. Just click on "Sign In". It brings you to
a sign in page, click "register with us" and voila, enter your info.

There are no restrictions on what we can order. But keep in mind that some products are only available in bulk quantities. So
be aware of that before placing your order.

Embroidery cost is between \$13.00 and \$14.05 per application depending on which fabrics/products we order.

Now get busy getting your club gear ordered and on it's way just in time for springtime brewing sessions!!



Q&A With Alaska Joe

by Joe Michael

This is the beginning in an ongoing series of Q&A style interviews with Great Northern Brewers Club members and Alaska craft brewers. Ideally, I will profile one club homebrewer and one professional craft brewer from Alaska in each newsletter edition. Hopefully, it will give new and old club members alike a fun insight into the homebrewers that walk amongst us, and those currently residing on Mt. Beerlympus amongst the Alaska craft brewing immortals. I will attempt to pose the same questions to all participants in an effort to keep a uniformity of style. Think GNBC-meets-“Inside The Actor’s Studio”. I hope everyone enjoys reading their answers as much as I did! ~Joe Michael, Vice-Prez.

GNBC Homebrewer Profile: Jason Ditsworth

How long have you been a homebrewer?

I’ve been home brewing for 15-1/2 years. I brewed my first batch on June 11, 1995.

What is the first homebrew you ever attempted? How did it turn out?

My first batch was a Scottish Export. I used two cans of pre-hopped Scottish Ale malt extract (can’t remember the brand) and no additional hops. I thought it was good. It wasn’t sour and tasted like beer so what else could I ask for?

What is your favorite style to homebrew?

This varies depending on what I’m in the mood to drink, but if I had to pick one style it would be IPA because I love the aroma of the hops rolling off the boil kettle.

What is your least favorite style to homebrew (or something you may never brew again)?

Without question any beer with pumpkin as an ingredient. A large percentage of pumpkin in the mash tun is a nightmare!

What is your preferred method of homebrewing (extract, all-grain, etc)?

I brew almost exclusively all-grain. I truly enjoy creating my own recipes. I’ve been creating my own all-grain recipes since 1996. However, from time to time I will crank out an extract beer at the GNBC brew-a-thon, and contrary to popular belief, a quality extract beer can be brewed even at brew-a-thon.

What is the strangest thing you have ever brewed or fermented?

No question: Two Scoops Raisin Bran Baltic Porter for the Big Fish Side challenge. The beer only took third place in the Big Fish side challenge, but it won Best of Show for the overall competition and went on to win second place in the Baltic Porter category at the National Homebrew Competition in 2004.

Is there something you would like to attempt to brew that you have not yet tried?

Yes, several. I would like to brew a dry stout, an Eisbock, a Belgian Dark Strong, and a Roggenbier along with numerous other experimental beers.

What is the strangest/kitchiest/most unique or interesting item relating to beer or homebrewing that you own?

A digital, temperature correcting, refractometer.

Alaskan summers, winters, or fall?

Brew in the winter for sure. Summer and fall are for growing fermentables, golfing and fishing.

What is in your “desert island six pack”?

This is one of the toughest questions there is when it comes to beer. Do you pick beers that are everyday quaffable styles or do you pick some of the big classics? Maybe need a few of both. Here goes...



Spaten Premium Lager
Sierra Nevada Pale Ale
Bell's Two Hearted Ale
Rodenbach Grand Cru
Les Bons Voeux de la Brasserie Dupont
Westvleteren 12
What is your "I'm slummin' it" beer?

Well, typically that would be ice cold Coors Light, but only when it's hotter than hell or I'm feeling dehydrated when I'm on the golf course.

What is your proudest moment or achievement in homebrewing so far?
Tough question... My proudest moment was when the GNBC presented me with their annual appreciation plaque. My "greatest home brewing achievement" would probably have to be winning home brewer of the year 4 years in a row.



Alaska Professional Craft Brewer Profile: Ben Johnson, Midnight Sun Brewing Company

How long have you been a brewer?

I started brewing in January of 2000. So 11 years.

What is the first brew you ever attempted? How did it turn out?

The first beer I ever made was a hemp ale from a kit that was gifted to me for Christmas. Much to my surprise it turned out great and I never looked back.

What is your favorite style to brew?

I really enjoy brewing anything with unusual ingredients. I used to be a chef and using different herbs, spices, or anything else not traditionally found in brewing intrigues me.

What is your least favorite style to brew (or something you may never brew again)?

While I may not enjoy drinking every style I love to brew all of them. If there was one beer I really don't ever need to brew its Dunkelweizen. Not a fan.

What is your preferred method of homebrewing (extract, all-grain, etc)?

I was primarily an extract homebrewer. Heck I still extract brew from time to time with a buddy of mine. I think I may have only homebrewed all grain 3-4 times in my life. Extract was always easier in an apartment setting and while you do lose some of the control over process you can still make awesome beer. I'm convinced of that.

What is the strangest thing you have ever brewed or fermented?

To this date MSBC's Hot Mess is the strangest beer I have ever brewed. In addition to the 4 main beer ingredients we added: cocoa nibs, ancho chillies, chipotle chilies, guajillo chilies, allspice, clove, cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, nutmeg, black pepper, and ginger.

Is there something you would like to attempt to brew that you have not yet tried?

We are getting ready to brew a sour brown in the very near future. I have never performed a turbid mash before so it should be a learning experience.

What is the strangest/kitchiest/most unique or interesting item relating to beer or homebrewing that you own?

For some reason I personally own a bung sided sanke keg from Kona Brewing half filled with Old Blowhole Barley Wine from 1999. I should really go to Hawaii and bring it back to them. I'm also very fond of this vintage Old Milwaukee tap handle I own. It's just cool.

Alaskan summers, winters, or fall?

AK summer all the way.



What is in your "desert island six pack"?

This one is tough: MSBC Kolsch (The day we filter it), Pilsner Urquell, Orval, Green Flash West Coast IPA, Anchor Liberty, Russian River Pliny the Younger.

What is your "I'm slummin' it" beer?

PBR, and I don't even feel like that's slummin'.

What is your proudest moment or achievement in homebrewing or craft brewing so far?

Being awarded The Glen Hay Falconer Scholarship to attend class at The American Brewers Guild was by far the proudest moment I have had thus far in brewing. It was an amazing and incredibly educational experience that has had an impact on every aspect of how I brew. I feel truly honored.

Where do you see yourself in the world of craft brewing in 5-10 years?

In 5-10 years I still plan to be at the helm of MSBC pumping out more innovative and high quality beer than ever. I love the Alaska brewing community. There is not a better place to brew in the world...well maybe Hawaii. I need to return that keg.



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



The *Northern Brewer* welcomes letters, opinions, articles, ideas and inquiries. You can contact the editor, Debbie Grecco at:

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**NEXT MEETING: February 15th 2011
7:00 PM at the Goose**