



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

## Brewer's Log

*By Mike Fisher*

Even more so than in other years, it is nice to turn the page to a new year. (And here I thought "2019 was an interesting year," to quote myself from the January 2020 issue. (The "opportunities [2020] presents" were interesting, though certainly it didn't present "more stability.")

You read the results of our Autumn Harvest Homebrew Competition in last month's newsletter. With this results in, I want to congratulate Christophe Venot for winning GNBC's Home Brewer of the Year for 2020.

We held our virtual holiday party on December 11. Thanks to those who took part in the meeting, participated in the gift exchange, and donated items for the raffle. Special thanks to our PayPal donors who helped to support the event financially: Joseph Bablonka, Mike Cragen, Thomas Huling, Steven Johnson, Rick and Eileen Levinson, Fil and Tim Spiegel, Robert Trosper, and Christophe Venot.

With the annual beer and barley wine festival not happening this month, our traditional industry meeting will not happen either. Instead of that meeting, which we hope we'll be able to put on later this year in coordination with the festival, we are going to hold a club meeting on the usual third Tuesday of the month (January 19) on Zoom at 7:00pm.

We have a few things in mind for the meeting, but we also want your input. Please send me an e-mail to let me know what you want to see at our January meeting as well as ideas for meeting topics and talks and competitions and other events you'd like to see. E-mail ideas and suggestions to me at [president@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:president@greatnorthernbrewers.org). If you have already e-mailed me, please rest assured that I have captured your ideas and the board will schedule them in the future.

As we start this new year, I am optimistic about our ability to meet again. While it may still be several months until vaccinations are widespread enough to start returning to in-person events, each new day brings us closer to that time (and also gives us more daylight, which always helps to lift one's spirits). We also have some events coming up that will be fun. We are planning competitions for the year and expect to have one or more virtual competitions like we had in November. I'm confident we'll be able to have our Brew-a-thon, in one capacity or another, on the first Saturday of May. We also have our club campout coming up in July. More details on everything as we sort it out.

For this month's flame-out, I was productive in carrying out brewing plans and throwing in some second runnings batches as well. I made a Baltic Porter and Belgian Dark Strong, which I plan to tap next fall, along with second runnings beers from each. I usually do not collect second runnings, but with such large malt bills, I did not want to leave all the residual sugars behind. I will look forward to sharing these beers when we are able to meet in person again.

## January 2021

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### NEXT MEETING:

January 19, 2021

Club meeting on Zoom at  
7pm

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*Contact information via our website*

## Secretary's Corner

*By Jordan Couture*

Happy January Club Members,

Welcome to the new year. I hope the holiday season was great for you all. With covid numbers still high, it appears we will not be able to have our normal January meeting. Instead, we will be hosting a regular monthly meeting.

A link to this month's meeting is on our website.

Happy New Years Everyone,

Jordan M. Couture Secretary

## Reading about Beer and Brewing

*By Steve Johnson*

Among all the beer and brewing related blogs, books, discussion forums, podcasts, and websites I encountered in 2020, I keep returning to one book and one two-word phrase.

The book is *Historical Brewing Techniques: The Lost Art of Farmhouse Brewing* by Lars Marius Garshol (Brewers Publications, 2020).

The two-word phrase is "var. diastaticus," first read by me at mid-year on a packet of Belle Saison yeast.

*Historical Brewing Techniques: The Lost Art of Farmhouse Brewing* provides backstory and context for the use of the fast fermenting, and heat tolerating Kveik yeast in Nordic and Baltic countries and Russia. The book also examines grains, malting, and brewing techniques as mentioned in historical sources or by contemporary informants. In no other book about brewing have I read about the practice of screaming at the wort when pitching yeast, in order to drive off evil spirits or the variety of homespun methods for preservation of yeast.

I have not tried any of the numerous recipes included in chapter nine, the seventy-odd page section on Styles and How to Brew Them. Even if I never attempt Sahti, Gotlandsdicke, or Sur, I've enjoyed reading about them and the many brewers who gain desired results from use of Kveik yeast or even bread yeast. The book includes charts and diagrams summarizing data and processes and many old and new photographs as well. I keep returning to this book for context and amusement.

As for "var. diastaticus" a quick Internet search informed me of what most of the brewing world already knows: var. diastaticus is a gene occurring in some strains of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Var. diastaticus is associated with the dry finish of traditional Saisons, which I love. In other context, var diastaticus is a contaminant, causing "insidious beer spoilage" including off-flavors, turbidity, over carbonation, gushing, and exploding bottles and cans. Some of these faults are familiar to me and I most often brew with Saison yeasts from all of the major producers.

Saison and related yeasts now declare the presence of var. diastaticus. My internet query led me to a 2018 article in the journal *Yeast Research*: "Saccharomyces cerevisiae variety diastaticus friend or foe?" In the new year, I will ponder that question as I plan the year's brew schedule.

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