

OBC Brewsletter

February 2024



Presidential Pint

Is it summer yet? Boy that was a doozy of a January, and a pretty sketchy time to kick off a (mostly) outdoor group brewing project. But before we get to that, a huge thank you to Abram Goldman-Armstrong for helping us kickoff 2024 with his tales of Norwegian Brewing. We had over 10 OBC presidents in attendance, going back to the early 90s with Alan Sprints. We hope to continue the momentum with a year long slate of fun activities, topics, meetings and other adventures. We just might outgrow our new dining table meeting layout sooner than we thought if this keeps up!

I am happy to report that we completed 5 of our planned Tropical Stout brewdays, and will have them on hand to taste, discuss and pair with all of your [amazing fudgy creations](#) on February 8th. I still have a few bottles and cans of the examples I smuggled from Florida: [Lion Stout from Sri Lanka](#) and [Dragon Stout from Jamaica](#). I am happy to share with those who come to the meeting early to help setup. There will be both group tasting and blind judging upstairs to pick the winners. More on that below.

The 2024 OBC Board had our annual "Board Brew" at the end of January. Jeff Orr hosted us again and we brewed a [Double Cold IPA](#) for the March meeting, featuring a bunch of atypical IPA hops like Topaz, Anchovy, Ekuanot and Enigma. I pushed the board to pick hops that were not just "Juicy" and try to lean into newer flavor profiles like "Berry" and "Watermelon Candy". We plan on canning a bunch of this Cold IPA and giving them out to attendees at the March or April meeting.

Upcoming Events

February Meeting @ FHS

Annual Fudge Competition
Tropical Stout Tasting
Feb 8th at 7pm

B-Meeting @ Fracture Brewing

Feb 22nd at 6:45pm



Beyond brewing, we had another “Board Retreat” of sorts which we found to be really productive a year ago. We laid out a plan for 2024, aligned on budgetary issues and goals, debated ways of recognizing members for extended active membership, and much more. We have a good working calendar for upcoming meetings and events which will remain focused on brewing education (basic AND advanced), tasting and sharing homebrew, and giving back to the community. Sadly we may have missed our window to reserve our regular camping spots for Memorial Day Weekend, but our new Events Chair Nico is on the case and looking for some alternatives! Stay tuned.

National Homebrew Competition, GABF and Homebrew Con

OBC will be hosting one of the first round competitions for the annual [National Homebrew Competition](#) **June 28th through June 30th**. We last did this in 2018 and plan to continue alternating years with our friends in Seattle/Woodinville. We are still finalizing the details, but this looks like it will be slightly larger than Fall Classic, and will draw judges from across all of Oregon and Washington. The entry fee is still a lofty \$29 per entry, but we hope that each of you who are AHA members will participate to whatever extent you can justify. I believe strongly in the AHA's mission, and in conjunction with the BJCP, pull off a seriously impressive national competition that highlights homebrewing excellence. We are happy to do our part in sending up the best from our region to the final round in San Diego. And for those who didn't know, Homebrew Con will be a component of GABF this year, interspersed with other BA activities and events, running **October 10th - 12th** in Denver. Meagan and I will be attending. We will need volunteers to help run this competition in late June, including stewards and cellar staff. Please reach out if you are able and willing to participate.

Update on Team Brewing, Style Challenges and Group Tastings

I am really encouraged by the excitement and participation in our [Team Brewing program](#). We have had 34 people register for the program, including 15 potential team captains/hosts. Our intention all along has been to have a scoring system which runs through September, ending after our 4th and final group tasting meeting. We have decided for 2024 to award each participant points for coming in 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the blind judging portion of each “Style Challenge/Team Brew/Group Tasting” meeting. **We seriously need a new name for these meetings, can anyone help!?** Since team captains and members may change and not brew each style, every participant is awarded the same points.

After Tropical Stout, our April style challenge is Belgian Pale Ale, so please read Scott's seriously excellent article on the style below! Our good friends at Imperial Yeast will be growing a custom pitch of Belgian “Antwerp” (Deconinck) ale yeast for our competing teams. Scott will be revealing the final two styles as the year progresses, but each will be a unique challenge for the brewing teams, and should make for a fun tasting event at our June and September meetings.

Jim Thompson, President

The VP Sampler

We had a great kick off to the New Year, it was great seeing such a packed January meeting and I would guess our awesome guest speaker Abram had a lot to do with it. I hope you enjoyed the different Kveik beers that were brewed for the event. I was able to record his talk and I am working on getting it edited and posted to our site for those that were not able to attend. For those of you that don't know, I am an insurance adjuster... and with all that crazy weather I had to deal with a lot of trees crushing RV's, sunken boats from frozen sea strainers and the such...needless to say I have not had a chance to edit the video but will work on getting it up in the next couple of weeks.



We had a great time brewing up our Anchovy Cold IPA at our board brew last weekend. I mean I think we have to call it that with such an odd name for a Hop. Looking forward to seeing how it turns out.

Looking forward to trying out a bunch of great stout and fudge next week! See ya there!

Cheers,

Jeff Orr, VP

Competition Corner

Future Competitions

Welcome to the new year, hopefully you are all brewing again after the holidays, and it's always good to have an assignment for inspiration. So following is the calendar of known competitions for the year. It's good to enter competitions, it helps out us and our fellow Oregon clubs, and it gives a motivation to brew a beer more than "I need a keg to drink." (you still get to drink the keg minus 3 bottles, so it's a nice bonus) It can keep you brewing beers year round, and can be fun if you don't take it too seriously.

You all make a lot better beer than I usually end up judging, so if you haven't entered comps, consider doing so in 2024. It's 10 bucks, and 3 bottles, you are going to FH Steinbart anyway. Represent the OBC, help our fellow clubs, share your favorite beers with the judges. The judges appreciate when you send them beer made with love, even if it ain't always perfect.

Here are all the comps we know of in Oregon for 2024:

First competitions of the new year

- **Midwinter Madness** by CBS in Eugene, replaces KLCC on 2/3/24 entries due at Steinbarts 1/26. All styles accepted. Still time to brew an English mild, they love their English styles. Please enter something, and consider going down to Eugene to judge, they are lovely people and could use our support.
- **Stout Bout** 3/2 - Portland. Run by our friends at PBC. Entries due 2/25 at steinbarts/baders. Stouts only. Any stouts. All stouts. Make a stout. Some of you are entering tropical stouts. It would be hysterical if we bombarded some poor judge with 10 tropical stouts when they were expecting 1 or 2.. It would deeply amuse me.
- **SheBrew** 3/3 - Portland. Female identified brewers only, all styles, sponsored by OBC. Entries due 2/24. Please brew or help out and support this comp. There is also a beer festival on 3/10 (shebrew.beer)
- **Heart of Cascadia (OBC) 3/24** - Portland. IPAs only, all IPAs, any IPAs. Entries due mid march. The new website will be live after SheBrew entry window closes.
- **Spring Fling**, Bend, by COHO, Late April. All Styles accepted, entries due mid april
- Oregon Homebrew Festival, by HOTV, corvallis, Late May, All Styles accepted, entries due the week before.
- **AHA National Homebrew Competition** 1st round. Portland! June 28-30th. Save the date. We will need all the help we can get, even if you don't enter NHC.
- **Your Honey or your Life**, Portland, Early July, Mead only, make mead now.
- **Lagerdays (OBC)** Portland, OBC, Early September, all lager and german ale styles accepted.
- **Fall Classic (BC)** Portland, OBC, First weekend in November, all styles accepted.

So there's something to brew for all year long, anytime you need an excuse to make a beer we are here for you. Let's make 2024 a good year for brewing and a good year for OBC in the comps.



SheBrew Competition and Brew Festival

SheBrew will be holding its 7 th annual homebrew competition on Sunday March 3 rd with judging held at Zoiglhaus Brewery. Entry fee is \$10, and requires 3 12 oz. bottles. Drop off or ship to F. H. Steinbart, Co. 234 SE 12 th Ave Portland, OR 97214; Bader Beer & Wine Supply 711 Grand Blvd, Vancouver, WA 98661 or The Hoppy Brewer 328 N Main Ave. Gresham, OR 97030 by Feb 24 th . Register at:

<https://shebrew.brewingcompetitions.com/>

This is a unique two-part event with a competition on the 3rd followed by a brew festival the following weekend on Sunday, March 10 th , featuring more than 40 female professional brewers from around the Pacific

Northwest. The festival highlights and showcases the work of female-identified purveyors of beers and ciders. Also attending are 10 homebrewers with unique creations. You will be able to vote for the best of the homebrews for the fest's People's Choice award! SheBrew Festival is 100% nonprofit, and all proceeds go to The Human Rights Campaign to fight for Equality <https://www.hrc.org/>. The Festival will be held at The ReDD on Salmon St: 831 SE Salmon St., Portland, OR. Get tickets at: <https://www.shebrew.beer/fest> There are two packages: general admission for \$35 and VIP for \$65.

Follow the Facebook group at: <https://www.facebook.com/shebrewpdx/> for updates. Contact female identified brewer and encourage them to enter beer. Join in the celebration of some amazing female brewer whose beers will be served at the Festival. Several former and current members of OBC have served their beer at the festival and won medals at the completion, so enter and join the prestigious ranks of these female bada** brewers.

If you want to assist, help is needed for the bottle sort at Zoiglhaus (date and time TBD), judging, stewarding and anything else you think you might help with. Volunteers are also needed at the festival. Contact Jenn McPoland at jenn.mcp@gmail.com

Style Corner

Belgian Pale Ale

Background

When I turned 21 in New Jersey, I was a short train ride from New York City, and would go into the city multiple times a week, just to get out of New Brunswick, to wander Manhattan, see some terrible band for \$5 and just walk through the rain, through the neighborhoods, through all the architectural weirdness, and complexity, and see all the side streets of Manhattan.

Now even at that age, I was a burgeoning beer geek, always trying weird imports, and starting homebrewing, whatever was available in the late 90s. Once when wandering Manhattan I saw a weird bar, lit dimly in pink, like down an alley in a courtyard. I wandered in, it was a Belgian beer bar, the bartender mostly spoke French, and it was dark as sin, with worn wood tables, and people eating french fries out of paper. I ordered a Dekoninck, as it was the "cheap" option (nothing was cheap there from my college student budget, it was like \$5 instead of \$8, but at least on par with a craft beer of 90s quality at the college bars) it came in a bolleke, a chalice, with a lake of dense foam, and a beautiful amber color that glistening in the candlelight. I remember taking a sip and instantly melting, it was one of those beautiful moments, dry spicy, complex, orange, plum, toast, it was beyond lovely. The bartender smiled.

Sure they had other beers which were more traditionally exciting, triples, doubles, golden strongs, all fresh, on tap. But I would always start with a Dekonnick. I would often drag people there, to this



semi-secret bar in the back of a courtyard, hidden in a busy part of the West Village, a few blocks from NYU, but with only ever like twenty people there, and always a seat. If people were arguing or in bad moods, or it was a rough night, I could duck down that alley, get a couple of bollekes and people would relax and melt into their chairs like I did. I loved that beer.

[According to Google Maps the bar still exists](#). They still have a Belgian pale on tap as the cheap option. (it's "Palm Speciale" as of today) I haven't been in 15-20 years. I hope it's still the same. If you are ever in the West Village it's called Vol de Nuit and it's worth a stop. And get a Dekonnick or Palm for me.

Sensory description

My memories of this beer are vivid. Toasty malt, toasted high quality bakery white bread, slight cookie, spicy floral Saaz on the nose. A touch of jam. The malt is so smooth and soft, with layers of detail and breadiness, fading quickly to a crisp dry snappy finish full of Saaz flavor. Think of prunes, a whiff of orange in there somewhere, some pear esters. Complex but nothing too strong or aggressive. Unfortunately whenever I have found Dekonnick or palm in the bottle it has been in terrible condition. Unfortunately draft is always best, and draft is rare, unless you are in Belgium or the West Village.

History

While beers in Antwerp were brewed since the 1700s and Dekonnick has been brewing from 1880, this style came into existence after World War II. Dekonnick claims the beer is from 1953, Palm and others are similar. The style arose out of two things in the post war reconstruction period. The desire to compete with English Bitters, which were popular at the time and the largest import to the port of Antwerp, and hiring German brewers and brewery consultants who were out of work. This style was born out of German and Belgian brewers trying to copy an English Bitter, with continental ingredients and processes. There is no Maris Otter, so you'll see Vienna malts instead. No invert sugars, Caramalts take their place.

Like most large continental breweries they modernized in the 80s after the changes in brewing science in Germany in the 70s, similar to the trappist breweries and other large Belgian breweries, which maintain modern German style brewhouses.

Misconceptions

The big misconception here is that this style is an American Pale ale with a Belgian yeast. Those can be delicious, and some craft breweries make them. Those can be entered into [34B Mixed style beer](#). This style is an Antwerp specialty, and is best thought of as a Belgian English Pale Ale or a Belgian English Bitter. Dekonick and Palm both describe themselves as "Special Belge". So it's a bad name these days, and has led to a ton of both misentered beers and bad judging of the one or two people trying to make the actual described style.

The Guidelines

24B. It's rare that I say this, but these guidelines are good. Read them. The guidelines are meant for styles you can't get fresh. Don't read them for IPA. [Click here to read the style guidelines right now.](#)

Palm is a touch more phenolic than Dekoninck which has very background phenolics if at all. I've never had [De Ryck](#), but I assume some of these notes describe it. 24 is an odd category of odd ball Belgian/French beers which are unlike Trappist beers in most ways, or what we think of as Belgian. It's an interesting category as a whole to explore, as well as under-entered and under-brewed. Usually there's only 2-3 in a large competition.

A few things to focus on: **Balance. Toasty malt, Subtle fruit notes. Dry/attenuated. Spicy hops.** Again everything is in balance.

What's known for certain

There are some facts we know for sure about De Koninck. (And I'm mostly going to talk about Dekoninck here cause I like it better, and there's more info out there.) Because they have written it down on the website, mostly. (or otherwise documented):

It is all malt. It is 12P (1.048 OG) 5.2% ABV (1.008 FG; 83% attenuation) 26 EBC (13.2 SRM) mid to deep amber. The hops are all Saaz at 23 IBUs. There is no dry hopping. They have a unique yeast strain that they give out in their cafe so it's available from some yeast companies. It contains some percentage of an unspecified crystal malt.

Some things we can infer from this. 83% attenuation is dry for an all malt amber caramelly beer. They are a German influenced small macro brewery. They are mashing for attenuation, this is a dry beer, with a lot of caramel flavor. Looking at the size of their fermentation tanks they are likely fermenting under 1.5 to 2 bars of pressure from hydrostatic pressure. They are a macro, so they are likely going to get a few SRM lighter from their grain bill than the average homebrewer using the same grains due to square cube law, and macro procedures to limit O2 uptake in the mash.

It has a rocky dense white head of very fine bubbles that lasts for days. Like a German Helles. This is a process beer, in which you need to get every ounce of flavor out of your base ingredients, and treat them well.

There is a yeast strain they use, it is available from most suppliers as a seasonal. Imperial has it for their commercial pitches as "B38 Covenant". White Labs "Antwerp Ale" and Wyeast "Belgian Schelde" also exist seasonally. It is very mild/neutral for a Belgian strain, with low fruit esters, and next to no or no phenolics. If you can't get it, subbing US-05 would be closer than subbing a Trappist strain.

What I can guess about and rumors

There are two grains that are rumored to have been developed mainly for them. One is Malteries Franco Belge (or "MFB") Special Aromatic. This is not what you usually consider an aromatic malt at all, be careful here. Most aromatic malts are 30-40L super munichs similar to a melanoidin malt. Special Aromatic is a 3.5-5L Vienna style malt, completely, completely different. It's like a Vienna malt but less of that doughiness and more of the toastiness of Vienna. Be very careful when getting this malt in a bin at a homebrew store. Some places I have found don't get the difference and just throw any aromatic malt in the bin, and you can get drastically mislabeled malt.

The other, surprisingly, is Special B, which they may use in a very small amount in the 1-3% range. We know they use some caramel malt and no sugar adjuncts. It could be special B in a small amount. Or it could be something in more quantity like a caramunich.

Be careful with homebrew recipes out there. There are some like [Brew Like A Monk](#) that make no sense. It says all Pale and Vienna. How do you possibly get that color on a 1.048 beer with a macro process? The beer would be piss yellow. Others say all Vienna. Also, yellow.

In my notes I have two conflicting transcriptions of brewers logs that someone on a defunct forum took a picture of. Take this with huge grains of salt. One was 35% Pilsner, 40% Special Aromatic, 23% Munich, 2% Special B. The other was 40% Pale, 50% Vienna, 10% Caramalt (color unspecified). At least those get to the right color. And both look like someone tried to make a Marzen look like an English Bitter. At least you can get to the correct color with these. If anyone has other data, I'd love to know.

Also be careful when they indicate that they ferment at 72F. Remember these are huge tanks, and they are fermenting under pressure which reduces ester expression. If you're not fermenting with pressure, you should not ferment this high and expect the same results.

Strategies and focus for making this beer

There are some things which are defined and the judges should expect, such as spicy noblisch hops. The yeast strain. High attenuation. Amber color. A touch of fruitiness. Dry, and complex malt, with a pilsner level of hop aroma. There are many ways to get there. The malt bill should be the focus and there's a lot of room for interpretation.

Personally, I follow a German style mashing regime like a [Hochkurz step infusion](#). You need the beer to attenuate to 80-85%, much more than an all malt English single infusion beer. Watch your pH, don't abuse your malt, keep boil off rates to 10%, and treat the beer delicately to preserve as much malt detail from your base malts as possible.

As far as hops, whether you use Saaz or Tettnang, or some American noble-style hop, there probably aren't dry hops or whirlpool hops. It's very likely all in the boil. Ferment in the lower end of the range, or with pressure. For being a belgian beer this is not a yeast focused beer.

I hope you give this beer a try. It is a rare style, and one I think should get more attention from homebrewers. It's a good challenge, and it's a beer you can get easily, locally. It is also a great beer that's sessionable, yet complex, thirst quenching, and full of flavor. (Also has a pretty glass which, just makes you feel classy while drinking a 5% beer)

Scott Nieradka, Competition Chair

Come taste multiple homebrewed Belgian Pale Ales at our April 11th meeting!

It's All About The Events

Hello OBC Fam! Nico here, your Events Chair and boy do we have a stellar year planned ahead for you! We are currently working on securing campsites for our OBC Group Camp Out and putting the finishing touches on a charter bus trip to tour Corvalli-Salem area craft breweries. That being said, we need YOUR help! Over the next several months we will coordinate with our local craft breweries and taprooms to serve as hosts for our monthly "B" meetings. Recently we've had the opportunity to tour and learn from Sonia Leikam in December as well as Charlie Gorman in January regarding both their solid establishments.



We had also had the pleasure of gaining some industry perspective and craft beer trends from Marc Martin while socializing and enjoying some delicious brews. Now this is the part where YOU come in: we've had AMAZING turn out at both our last "B" meetings and we need your support to continue to help make them a success. We need you to utilize your connections and are enthusiastically open to suggestions for local craft beer establishments we can reach out to that are open to hosting us, sharing their knowledge, and pouring some of the very best beer in Portland.

Our "B" meetings aren't just an opportunity to socialize and drink beer, it's a chance to support small craft breweries (during what has been an incredibly challenging market) right in our backyard as well as learn what has helped make them successful. We will be heading to Fracture Brewing later this month and would love your ideas for further "B" meeting locations!

Please reach out to me anytime at nico@oregonbrewcrew.org!

Many THANK YOUS for your continued support of our club and I look forward to sharing a beer with you at our next meeting.

Cheers!

Nico, Events Chair

Burgermeister Time!

Well cor blimey – dress me in taffeta and bolt me to the mizzenmast because *somehow* it is already February and *somehow* it is time for yet another installment in Alex’s Burgermeister Corner. I hope everyone survived our Lovecraftian “the entire world is suddenly entombed in ice” week we just had there, and I hope everyone is ready for February, which is inherently the worst month - yes, we have just gotten through the ten darkest weeks of the year, and yes, we have survived the ice, and yes, it just so happens to be sunny *right now* (though surely not for long) but as a reward for surviving January we are now given the opportunity, nay, the privilege, to slog through the shortest yet gnarliest month of the year: February. And thanks to none other than Pope Gregory XIII, that jerk, February is *one day longer* this year, which is a minor tragedy that honestly at this point just feels like the world is piling on. Leap years are 100% the “but what’s this? Pope Gregory has just jumped into the ring... with a folding chair!” of the wrestling match we call “a year,” and frankly I think they’re just rude.



So now you’re thinking, hey Alex, I’m not sure what all that first paragraph was all about but that’s cool I guess, glad things are going well in your world, but what about the February meeting? You know what? Wouldn’t it be cool if on leap years we had two February meetings? Actually, you know what? That wouldn’t be cool at all. That would mean we had 13 meetings and as we all know, 13 is a *terribly* unlucky number and no we won’t be doing that. One February meeting. Well, and a B-meeting. You could come to that if you wanted a second February meeting. If what you *actually* wanted from a second February meeting was the chance to hang out in a cold warehouse, well, I can’t help you there, but I’m sure you can find something abandoned on google maps and chill out there with your mittens and a six pack. Wait. What was I talking about?

Oh yes! The one February meeting. Well folks, aren’t you in for a treat on this one, because we have two, yes that’s right, TWO food themes for the meeting. First and foremost is the **Merle Gilmore Memorial Fudge competition**, this year moved from our Hair of the Dog (of blessed memory) meeting to our February stouts meeting, because why not? Everyone will get tickets to vote on their favorite fudge, with prizes for first, second, and third place, and we will have a bonus prize for “audience favorite spicy fudge” - a jar of Alex’s homemade lacto-fermented sambal oelek, made from experimental murderpeppers from his garden. And folks, let me tell you, sambal is more of a weapon than condiment - it’s *stiff*.

The second food theme for this meeting will be macaroni and cheese. Why, you might ask, are we having two themes? Well, the fudge competition is a tradition, and we want to keep it up, but also I don’t know about you but I personally cannot live on fudge alone. So we’ll be having a second theme, with a standard random drawing, two tickets for mac and cheese, one ticket for other food, zero tickets for fudge (because fudge is going in a different category). So bring your best mac and cheese and

bring your best fudge and maybe you – yes you! – will take home the top spot in both competitions/drawings/things!

Finally – FINALLY – let's talk about a recipe, but let's talk about a simple and easy one since I've yammered for so long at this point. This has been a go-to for me for years, and it maintains the name my college housemate gave it: MUSHROOM MUSHROOM. Here's what you're gonna do: you're gonna get a pack or two or however many of whatever sort of mushrooms from the store, and you're gonna wash those mushrooms, and then you're gonna quarter them. Next, you're gonna toss some butter and chopped garlic in a pan and sauté it just until it's fragrant, then you're gonna sock those shrooms in the hot pan, add salt and pepper, and slap a cover on it for like 3 minutes. Then you're gonna take the lid off and cook it until the liquid that comes out of the mushrooms evaporates and things start to stick... then you're gonna crack a can of crappy mass market lager (PBR is a favorite here) and you're gonna dump it into the shrooms and reduce it again. Once it's at a texture you think looks good - then you're gonna kill the heat, slap those shrooms over a big pile of mashed potatoes, and then you're gonna eat the hell out of it and you're gonna be happy.

See you in February!

Alex , Burgermeister

Oregon's Oldest and Largest Homebrew Club

Oregon Brew Crew

c/o FH Steinbart

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