



The Barleycorn Press

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Surprised Masher Gets "Tapped" as Amateur Judge at TAP-NY Festival

by Ruth Miller

I've been interested in attending the annual TAP-NY Hudson Valley Beer & Food Festival, now held at Hunter Mtn. Ski Area in the Catskills, for a couple of years. Notably, it is the most comprehensive gathering of NY craft brewers in one place. Excellent food prepared and served by the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) of Hyde Park, NY during the festival serves to sweeten the deal. Although I have been able to visit a number of NY breweries in my travels, I knew this would afford me the opportunity to sample the offerings of many I would never get to, especially in the western part of the state... so off your loyal correspondent went to investigate.

This is a two-day event, and runs from noon - 5pm each day. For Vermonters, it is a significant distance to drive (over an hour from Albany) so having a stop over enroute helps a lot, particularly if you're going for only one day. I was going for both days so I stayed over Sat. night nearby, a good thing to do if you take your sampling seriously!

I arrived on Sat. only a little late, and I hooked up with Rich & Linda Evans. Rich was serving as one of the many judges for the Matthew Vassar Cup, awarded to the best commercial microbrewery in the Hudson Valley, and the coveted F.X. Matt Memorial Cup, given to the best in NY State. Out of a long list of 40 invitees from all over the state

and Long Island, 27 were in attendance both days.

Hunter Mtn. is situated way up in the Northern Catskills, and the ski area is actually at a substantial altitude even at its base. The 23-mile drive from the Northway includes a long, twisty and extremely beautiful climb alongside the Kaaterskill River. The dramatic views are tempting to take in as one negotiates the narrow, steep and curving road with drop-offs and waterfalls on either side. The dude in the BMW behind me from NJ was having a blast, but I really had to pay attention, and they were predicting snow that night - yikes! It's the closest ski area to NYC, so there is a lot of local pride evident on-site for the many fire-

fighters and police families that recreate there. The mountain has found a way to draw tourists with this event, even in the doldrums of a ski season long-over in late April. There is local lodging available, but I found it quite overpriced for what we got, if not downright dumpy.

No worries though. The brewers on site made up for it, and the food made it all the better. You pay one price (\$35 for a single; \$30 for a couple) each day, and that includes limitless beer sampling and all the food you can manage in a constant, unending stream. Obviously, self-control, discrimination, and the ability to pace oneself are useful in this scenario! As the cloistered judges dutifully went through nearly 300 submissions, the public made the most of the opportunity to taste, chat, eat and famil-

iarize themselves with the state's commercial microbrewerys. The sunny, crisp day pulled people out of the main tasting hall and onto the warm patios facing the ski runs, the smell of grilling sausage wafting by. Brewers were friendly and happy to chat. There were two beer-themed cooking demos each day, with samples for all at the end. There were also vendors selling extraordinary (and pricey!) collector-quality glassware & steins; handblown glass "beer pipes" (interesting concept, but why bother?); arm-made fresh sausages containing everything from pork to buffalo and Belgian beer; an artisanal bakery; nuts, mustards & condiments; and info on local restaurants incorporating "beer cuisine" into their menus. Approximately 1,000 people attended on Sat., but having the exhibitors spread

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue!

TAP-NY Festival	Pages 1-4
Staff Box	Page 2
Masher Calendar	Page 3
Next Meeting Info	Page 5
Dear Mash Maven	Page 5
Scottish Grozet Ale	Page 6

(Continued from page 1)

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The food is as good a reason to attend

took long to find out! The ensuing dilemma was to choose which beer would best complement the latest offering.

And the main reason to attend? The beers, of course. Each of the exhibitors had at least 3 beers available, and over two days, I managed to taste a lot of NY's finest, and some that were indeed less than fine. Here's a compendium of some of the most notable I tasted; perhaps you'll be encouraged to patronize their establishments or purchase their product at their brewpubs, or a local one near you.

Gilded Otter, New Paltz: a magnificent, strong Weizenbock that was the talk of the judges.

John Harvard's Brewhouse, Lake Grove, LI: one of a respected chain, they won the FX Matt Cup on Sat. for one of their beers. They had a good bock on, though only 4.5%.

as the beer. The CIA is one of the oldest schools of its kind in the US, churning out some of the most notable alumni in the restaurant and food purveyor industry. Central stations were set up in the middle of the hall that featured food themes: hot items like soups, canapes, sausages, and little morsels of heavenly things too numerous to describe. Cold items were set up separately, with items like platters of cheeses, sandwiches, veggies, fruit and an unending supply of various pates and terrines with good bread to accompany them. These were constantly refreshed with changing items. Meanwhile, CIA employees circulated the room with trays, offering yet more delights fresh out of the kitchen. The smells wafting out the huge kitchen doors were the prelude of what was to come - everyone began to try to guess what was coming out next based on the aroma that preceded its appearance. Coconut-fried shrimp? Wood-fired gorgonzola pizza? Chicken empanadas? Corned beef & kraut on rye? It never

Brooklyn Brewery, Brooklyn: an old favorite of mine, always has something fine in bottles. The Blanche de Brooklyn Wit won a gold medal and the bronze for their Weisse last year there, to capture last year's FX Matt cup for best in NY state. The wit ran out first day this year - that good!

Black Forest Brewhouse, Farmingdale LI: another great offering in the form of a nice malty Oktoberfest. I've searched for brewpubs in LI on family visits there and never knew these places existed - happy discovery!

Brewery Ommegang, Cooperstown: everyone's favorite domestic Belgian Brewery. In addition to the usual Rare Vos, Hennepin, and Ommegang, they were serving a special re-fermented, 10% version of Ommegang called Three Philosophers. I noticed there was an awful lot of philosophizing going on

(Continued on page 3)

Staff Box



The Barleycorn Press is a monthly publication of the Green Mountain Mashers Homebrew Club. The Barleycorn Press appears in the final week of each month. **Contributions are due by the 25th of the month of publication or two Thursdays prior to the next meeting (which ever comes first).** Please send contributions via e-mail (preferable) or send on a 3.5" IBM compatible diskette (hard copy as a last resort) to:

Tim Cropley
235 East Main St., Richmond, VT 05477
(802)434-7293 (hm)
t_cropley@yahoo.com

Contributions on any subject even remotely associated with the brewing and/or enjoyment of beer and related beverages are happily accepted by the editors. The editors reserve the right to edit any contribution as a function of available space, while making every attempt to maintain its integrity. The views expressed by contributors to the Barleycorn Press are not necessarily those of the editors or of the Green Mountain Mashers Homebrew Club.

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Note: The yearly dues of \$10 should be paid by the end of January. Please mail your check or money order made out to the "Green Mountain Mashers" to Treasurer Lewis Greitzer at the following address:

Lewis Greitzer
33 Harbor View Road #1201
South Burlington, Vermont 05403
(802)658-2621
lewis@together.net

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View the Official Web Page of the Green Mountain Mashers at:

<http://www.mashers.org>

Officers not listed above:

President - Rich Evans, Ph # (802) 899-3006

"Evans, Rich" <evansrj@us.ibm.com>

Secretary - Ernie Kelley Ph # (802) 434-3674

"Kelley, Ernie" <epopmafs@together.net> OR

"Kelley, Ernie" <erniek@dec.anr.state.vt.us>



Green Mountain Masher Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Information
5/11/02	May Meeting - hosted by Andy and Terry Hunt topic: brewing Oktoberfests	Andy and Theresa Hunt (h) 899-1817 - Underhill Center
6/3/02	June Meeting – hosted by Monk topic: BBQ and wheat beers	Rich Evans (h) 899-3006 (email) evansrj@us.ibm.com OR monk@together.net

Please contact Tim Cropley at (802) 434-7293 or by email at t_cropley@yahoo.com if you have any beer events that you think the membership would like to know about. It is our hope that we will also list other regional competitions as they are announced. We also hope to list AHA sponsored Club Only competitions in an effort to remind people to consider bringing beers that fit the competition style to club meetings so that the membership can pick one for entering.

(Continued from page 2)

amongst the happy imbibers of it! Also introduced that weekend was Pale Snail, a rather mild Wit with a low spice profile and the palest of hues.

Middle Age Brewing, Syracuse: The Kilt Tilter Scotch Ale was outstanding and potent. The Druid Fluid barleywine was too young and harsh, though.

Ramapo Valley Brewery, Suffern: risen from the ashes of a former brewery, now making a fine Maibock that was quite the thing to have on a fine spring day on the patio!

Lake Placid Pub & Brewery, Lake Placid: our buddies across the lake are still making some of the best beers. Although their strong UBU Ale remains their most popular, I enjoyed a brand new creation unveiled for this event called Golden Rule Belgian Ale. Described as a belgian pale by the brewer, it was strong, tasty and had a nice tint due to the use of dark, rather than light candi sugar. They were kind enough to fill my growler with it on Sunday as they were shutting down - what a treat!

Heartland Brewery, NYC: a place I've tried to get to in NYC several times when I'm there & never made it. Enjoyed their Grateful Red Lager which was featured as an accompaniment to the Thai Beef Salad cooking demo.

Scored "yum" for both!

High Point Wheat Brewing, Butler, NJ: when I asked how a NJ brewery made it into a NY-only event, they pointed out they were indeed located in the Hudson Valley! I'm glad that's so, because they had unequivocally the best selection of wheat beers there: a Hefe, a Munich Amber Lager, and a Dunkel - all superb. Their label name is "Ramstein" - if you can find it.

Hyde Park Brewing, Hyde Park: they had a Schwarzbier which I found to be a little thin, but the Winkle Pils was delicious (and as you'll see later in the article - an award-winner.)

Troy Pub & Brewery, Troy: after watching a fantastic documentary on PBS about the history of the Hudson Valley the previous week, I had gained newfound respect for the City of Troy, and made a point to pass through it on my way to the festival. The Kolsch served by these guys was first-rate, and I still hope to visit their pub on the banks of the Hudson in what used to be a pretty run-down area, now thriving.

Chelsea Brewing, NYC: notable for being very close to Ground Zero and raising a lot of money for local firefighters' & cops' families after 9/11, I tried their Extra Stout - rich, creamy and a whopping 7.6%!

Great Adirondack Brewing, Lake Placid: the other guys in L.P., with a thriving brewery and restaurant business on Main St. Their Smoked Porter won the Vassar Cup on Sat., and their John Brown Pale Ale got them even greater glory (stay tuned!)

Malt River Brewing, Latham: this is my old standby near the Albany airport, in a mall of all things! But location doesn't belie the fact they make great beer, have Firkin Fridays with cask-conditioned ales, and craft a superb Oatmeal Stout, among many other offerings.

Wagner Brewing, Lodi: located in the wine-making area of western NY, this is also a vineyard and winery. Their Doppelbock was fantastic, but as for the Maple Porter, I could barely detect the maple flavor - however, the judges found it just fine (stay tuned for more!)

Rohrbach Brewing, Rochester: They had a lovely Scotch Ale on at 6.5%, rich and full of malt and a gorgeous dark garnet hue.

Big House Brewing, Albany: another travel standby near the airport as well as at a downtown location, I went nuts over their Prohibition Porter aged in Jack Danel's casks with a whiff of Bourbon vanilla. Their Vice Hefe-Weizen (as

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

you will soon find out) is a knockout as well!

Albany Pump Station (CH Evans Brewing), Albany: they had a wonderful Hefe on among other things. The owner is one of the original organizers of TAP and looked delighted to be there, chatting with the crowd.

Overall, if you're a fan of wheat and German beers, this is a good place to try them. Every year a guest brewery is invited to attend, and this year it was our old buddy Unibroue. They were fully stocked with bottles of "10", La Fin du Monde and Trois Pistoles. I got the feeling the locals were very impressed with what we Vermonters take for granted from our Canadian neighbors!

So by now you're probably asking "what's up with the subtle hints here she keeps dropping?" Well, on Saturday afternoon, president and co-

founder of TAP-NY Bill Woodring (and friend of Rich Evans) asked if I'd be interested in sitting on one of the judging panels on Sunday to determine the overall winners of the festival. I asked why he wanted me, a non-judge to take on such a lofty responsibility? His response was that the final panels are typically comprised of beer writers, people in the food & beverage industry, and knowledgeable craft brew consumers. My credentials as a correspondent on brewpub reviews for our newsletter, an avid purveyor of beer-cuisine, and an informed and enthusiastic homebrewer and craft-brew consumer made me right for the job. All I could say was....YIKES! Now burdened with this responsibility, I began to take detailed notes on what I was tasting and from who, all the while in major disbelief of what I was expected to do the following afternoon. "No biggie," said Rich, "just o with the flow." Easy for him to say! Deep down though I took confidence in the fact that I know my styles,

I know what I like, and I'm an observant taster.

So, as we gathered at the podium on Sunday to do our duty, I was assigned to the panel of 4 to determine the overall winners of the Matthew Vassar Cup, best craft brewers in the Hudson Valley (thank god NOT NY State!). My fellow panel members were a rep from a large gourmet food purveyor with a passion for micros; an editor from Yankee Brew News, and a local chef and beer-cuisine restaurateur. On the other panel that would determine the winner of the FX Matt Cup (best in NY State) were beer writer Greg Glaser, the female proprietor of a popular upstate homebrew supply store; and geez - I'm drawing a blank on the other two. That's what happens when you're stressing out about doing the right thing in the task before you. For this reason, I'll never go pro!

We were served a total of 7 beers, all pre-judged the day before by the pro

judges. The only info we were given was the style. First task was to knock out 3 that didn't really stand out. After much tasting and conferring, we eliminated a Strong Ale, an Old Ale, and a Maibock for lack of complexity or deviation from style. Next we individually chose another to knock out - this was harder. I axed the Kolsch, though it was good. The three remaining however, were such stellar, spot-on examples of their respective styles, they simply stood out like blazing beacons. Now the hard part - try to agree on the ranking of the top 3. Amazingly, we were all in absolute agreement - I simply couldn't believe it! The hefe was perfect in every respect; the pale ale's hop nose made it decidedly domestic and somewhere in between the two, (although it wasn't designated either an American or IPA) but perfectly balanced. The Pils had all the delicate complexity and balance the style requires, so it was easy to identify it as a perfect example even though I am not a big fan of them. The

other panel worked away at their choices, and soon the results were announced. Drum roll please:

Winners of the medals for the best beers in NY State: GOLD: Wagner Brewing's Doppelbock. SILVER: Wagner's Sugar House Maple Porter (OK, maybe I'd just ate something really spicy & I couldn't detect the maple??). BRONZE: Rohrbach's American Lager. Best Craft Brewer in NY State: Wagner of Lodi, NY.

Winners of the medals for the best beers in the Hudson Valley: GOLD: Big House Brewing's Vice Hefe-Weizen. SILVER: Great Adirondack's John Brown Pale Ale. BRONZE: Hyde Park Brewing's Winkle Pils. Best craft brewer in the Hudson Valley: Great Adirondack Brewing Company.

There were so many winners there, it warrants a return visit next year for sure. My first experience as a judge-at-large

was educational and gratifying, and I hope to do it again some time. In the interim, I will continue to discover, enjoy and make note of the wonderful beers the craft brewers of NY State are putting out. How about a similar event in Vermont??

Your Faithful Correspondent,

Ruth Miller



Next Meeting Saturday May 11 at Terry and Andy Hunt's in Underhill

The next meeting of the Green Mountain Mashers will be held Saturday, May 11th at the home of Terry and Andy Hunt.

Time & Date: May 11th @ 7pm

Agenda: Fun, I plan on having a bonfire. We might want to dip into some Of the better leftovers from the competition.

Directions:


Take Vt 15 from Essex thru Jericho until you reach Underhill Flats. If you are coming from Richmond, take Browns trace from the stop light through Jericho Center, past the High School and till it ends and Rt 15, then turn right.

When you reach Underhill Flats here is a Mobil Station (BIG JOHN's) on the left, and a sign (on the right) will point to Underhill State Park, head this way by keeping right at the 'Y' in the road leaving Rt 15 at this point onto River Rd. Go 3 miles until you cross a bridge into the village of Underhill Center.

Turn right at Wells Corner Market onto Range Rd go up the hill past the cemetery then we are the 1st drive was on the left, Number 23, you should see a Red VW Beetle and a Purple MiniVan in the drive way.

Our home phone number is 899-1817. We have to dogs and a cat for anyone concerned about allergies.

I would like to have a few stout lads (or ladettes) come and help me pile up the brush. If you are interested please send me a note ahead of time and plan to arrive about 5pm.

Andy Hunt (andyhunt@us.ibm.com)
(802) 769-6363 Tie 446 

Need Homebrew Advice? Ask The Mash Maven

Dear Mash Maven,

Ah spring. After a long winter of brewing stylistically correct ales & lagers, one occasionally finds oneself in a bit of a quandry. "What else can I do with this "special" beer in my hand?" In my own particular case, I found myself to be the lucky possessor of some cherry "not quite a wee heavy" ale. Hmmm-mmmmmmm....what to do?????

Signed,
I'm a fruitcake

Dear Fruity,
Poor you. A cherry not quite wee heavy? Goodness, that was a long, cold, dark , lonely, sad winter for you, wasn't it? Try these ideas:

1. How about a braised duck? This actually sounds good, doesn't it? Luckily I have my own herd of Ardennes poofy crested-neck fowls. Snap a few necks, pop open a few long-necks, and can you say "Mash Maven, what is that amazing aroma emanating from your kitchen?" Sure you can.

2. I know it's early, but how much Bud can a slug imbibe? Try cherry ale! They'll be dragging themselves miles or a step or two just to get into your potager.

3. I hear it makes an amazing gas substitute for Kia Sportages.

4. Try the ancient Pict sport of cherry bowling..use 10 bottles as the pins. If you break one, you win/lose, whatever you decide!

5. Christen a ship! Ahoy mateys.

6. Have fun with beer judges...if you have any friends in similar circumstances, you can all enter the same competition. What fun? Imagine the furrowed brows as they contemplate all those Cherry Whatever!

My, my, that's all I can come up with. And remember, friends don't let friends brew cherry beer.

The Mash Maven



Beer Tip from TipWorld.com TASTING NOTES: GROZET ALE

by Susan Reigler

"G

rozet" is Old Scots for "gooseberry," and indeed gooseberries are among the ingredients in this unusual and oddly tasty ale. It pours a hazy yellow-green color that's not very inviting, but you should overcome any visual prejudice and have a sip. The bouquet is lightly floral (which may come from the unusual ingredients: bogmyrtle and meadowsweet). The first taste is a bit of a shock, given all the flavors zooming around in this ale. But it's a light-bodied brew, and after sip number two, you may find that this is a beer worth seeking out. Look for the brown and green label based on a first-millennium Celtic maze design. Grozet is brewed by Heather Ale Ltd. of Glasgow.

Its Web address is: <http://www.heatherale.co.uk>

Susan Reigler is a proud graduate of Oldenberg Beer Camp (where she was introduced to the glories of weiss beer) and Oxford University where, in addition to earning a Master's degree in zoology, she discovered the virtuosity of British Brewers' Art). As restaurant critic since 1992 for The Louisville Courier-Journal, she has written extensively on food, wine, beer, and spirits.



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Green Mountain Mashers
c/o Tim Cropley
235 East Main St.
Richmond, Vermont 05477
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