



# The Barleycorn Press

Monthly Newsletter Published by the Green Mountain Mashers of Vermont



February 2007

Volume 18 Issue 2

## Cheese and Beer Reign at VPB's Tasting Event

By Ruth Miller



On a very cold, icy and wild Monday night in January, owner/brewer/beer author Greg Noonan hosted his 2nd Annual VT Cheese & VT Beer Tasting. Greg's co-host for the event once again was Dr. Montserrat ("Montse") Almena, a judge for the American Cheese Society's annual national competition, and a member of the VT Institute for Artisan Cheese at the University of Vermont. The bad weather did not deter what guests had come for - to experience the wonderful symbiosis between craft-brewed beers and local artisanal cheeses.

Greg had the foresight to make available a selection of handy "study materials" for our use during the presentation. Included was an article from notable brewer and foodie Garret Oliver of Brooklyn Brewing, who is a huge beer & cheese fan. Garret makes a solid case of why cheese & beers partner much more successfully than cheese & wine (something I've known all along!). Also helpful were copies of a standard beer-judge flavor wheel to guide us in potential matches, and a similar one for describing the various flavors present in cheeses.

The presentation started with each person being served a plate of 9 different VT cheeses, along with accompaniments of apple and neutral VT Common Crackers used to clear the palate between selections. Montse related that it's best to serve fresh, mild cheeses before the stronger, more assertive ones to preserve the palate. We were served one at a time a taster-sized glass of 7 different beers and one hard cider, carefully chosen by Greg for each

cheese. One cheese at a time, we moved at a leisurely pace through the tasting, while Greg and Montse described the individual characteristics of each, and how they came to choose the beer for each cheese. Comments and observations from the participants were encouraged and discussed. The pairings proceeded thus:

**"Bonne Bouche"** (VT Butter & Cheese Co.), an aged, bloomy-rind, runny goat's milk cheese paired with VPB's **Burly Irish Ale**. The name of this cheese means "tasty morsel" in French, and indeed it was. Creamy and rich, with a tender rind redolent of mushrooms, it had a fruitiness that married well with the beer's malty, caramel profile. Low hopping helped to make it even more companionable, and its rich mouth feel really complemented the richness of the cheese.

**"Tomme"** (Twig Farm), an alpine-style, dense, natural-rind goat's milk cheese presented with VT-made Green Mountain Beverage's **Cider Jack**. The tomme style is a very old traditional style indigenous to the French Alps, and this local interpretation was exquisite. It was presented with the semi-dry, slightly carbonated cider whose crisp apple notes melded well with the fragrant nuttiness of the cheese. This was the only non-beer pairing, and we all agreed it worked very well.

**"Timber Doodle"** (Woodcock Farm) an aged, washed-rind sheep's milk cheese with a buttery, tongue-coating middle was presented with VPB's **Ethan Allen VT Lager**. Here was a real contrast - a very ripe and fragrant cheese mated with a clean, crisp lager. I

found that while the beer clashed with the rind alone, it was a perfect foil for the rich, barnyard-y interior. This was like a lambic of the cheese world, but the lager pulled it out of the 'yard and into the front parlor. Very tasty.

**"Organic Champlain Triple"** (Champlain Valley Creamery), a triple-crème style with a delicate bloomy rind paired with VPB's **Beetle Juice**, Greg's interpretation of a Weiss bier. This cheese was similar in taste to its producer's flagship simple cream cheese, but aged for 2 weeks and has a very thin, mild rind - I was pleasantly surprised that it had a lot more character and panache than familiar cream cheese. An extremely rich style, the citrusy notes of the wheat beer cut right through, and the carbonation scrubbed the fat from your tongue, allowing you to experience the exciting initial flavor combination renewed each time.

**"One Year Old Cheddar"** (Shelburne Farms), a young, nutty and familiar cow's milk cheese presented with Trout River **Scotch Ale**, served from 12-oz bottles. Here was a very taster-friendly

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## NEXT MEETING

### Monday, February 5

### Andy Ferko's, Bolton

**T**he next meeting of the Green Mountain Mashers is Monday, February 5 at Andy Ferko's in Bolton. Arrive around 7:30pm and the meeting will start shortly after that.

- 1) Green Mountain Homebrew Competition Update
- 2) March Meeting Update
- 3) Old/New Business

Directions,  
RT 2 from Richmond or Waterbury to the Bolton Valley Access Road (road to the ski area). The driveway is up the hill about 3/4 mi. You will pass the ski barn and round a curve. The driveway will then be the next on the left. Go up driveway, plenty of free parking at the top around the circle. Phone is 434-6165.

## Cheese and Beer Continued from page 1

combo - a cheddar that is far and away better than any "commodity" cheddar ever made in VT and has won numerous awards; paired with the very malty, slightly sweet beer style with hints of caramel. Greg suggested the beer was a bit old & slightly oxidized (it had been purchased locally off-the-shelf) but the style was so full of big round flavors that it hardly mattered when consumed with the cheese. Two of us, without conferring, came up with an identical description of the pair - hazelnuts!

"**Two-Year Old Cheddar**" (Shelburne Farms), the older brother of it's predecessor, was presented with the same beer to solicit comparisons by the cheese maker who was attending as a tasting participant as well. Unfortunately, whoever in the kitchen that plated the slices inadvertently placed them right on top of the next selection, a smoked cheddar. It absorbed so much of the smoke flavor that my taste buds were confounded for the task of comparison. Some more of the isolated cheese was brought out, and we had another go. What a deep complexity an extra year can make in a cheddar! Yet, the freshness of the younger cheese had its own charms. The nuttiness of both worked well with the ale, but I preferred the older one for its extra nuance.

"**Smoked Cheddar**" (Grafton Village Cheese), a fragrant maple wood-smoked cheddar paired with VPB's **Dogbite Bitter**. What I can say about smoked cheese & beer together is that whichever product contains the smoke flavor, it simply dominates by default. The smoke flavor in the cheese was not at all excessive, but it is so upfront that pairing it with a smoked beer would be overkill, and conversely mating a smoked beer with a regular cheese would have the same effect - smoke rules! So instead of being complimentary, the bitterness of Greg's beer proved to be a good contrast, and the hops refreshed the palate for the next taste. In general, I find smoked cheeses an overpowering bunch, but they are great with an assertively hoppy or dark beer.

"**Blue Moon**" (Willow Hill Farm), an organic, buttery-rich, blue-veined sheep's-milk cheese with a rather scary rind (!) presented with Trout River's **Chocolate**

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## 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:

Melissa Levy  
345 Billings Farm Road,  
Hinesburg, VT 05461  
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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.

This publication is made available free of charge to all dues paying members of the Green Mountain Mashers. Subscriptions are available to all other interested parties at \$7.00 yearly (US funds).

Note: The yearly dues of \$20 should be paid by the end of January. Please mail your check or money order made out to the "Green Mountain Mashers" to Treasurer Anne Whyte at the following address:

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## Green Mountain Masher Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Information
2/5/2007	February Meeting—Andy Ferko, Bolton	Andy Ferko, 434-6165
3/17/2007	March Meeting—Brian Werneke, Father in Law's sugar shack —Sap Beer, Sugar/Beer on Snow? At 2 pm.	Brian Werneke, bwerneke@gmail.com
4/2/2007	April Meeting—Tom Ayers and Anne Barrett, Essex Junction—Masher Challenge and Hoops n' Hops	Tom Ayers and Anne Barrett, 655-5587
5/6/2007	May Meeting— Tim Cropley, Waterbury	Tim Cropley, (h) 244-1683, (email) <a href="mailto:t_cropley@yahoo.com">t_cropley@yahoo.com</a>
5/12/2007	Tentative Date for the Green Mountain Masher Competition	Lew Greitzer, 658-2621, lewis@together.net
6/1 or 8/2007	June Meeting—Rich Evans, Underhill—Beer BQ, food made with beer.	Rich Evans, (h) 899-3006 (email) monk@together.net

**Please contact Melissa at 482-7400 or [melissa@vt.bitxbit.com](mailto:melissa@vt.bitxbit.com) to add items to the Masher Calendar**

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**Oatmeal Stout.** OK, I'll confess - I have a hard time with blue cheeses! I enjoy the stinkiest, skankiest, runniest cheese out there, but something about the hit of mold & tongue-scouring saltiness and acid I get from blue cheeses I'm working to

overcome. Fortunately, blue cheese for wimps exists - they tend to be the ones with a lot butterfat that softens the acid blow. Next admission - I really liked this one! Between the butterfat (a signature of sheep milk) and the creamy properties that stouts brewed with oatmeal possess, this had a tongue-buffering effect that really worked to make me appreciate the flavor of the cheese without all the aforementioned distractions. The rind had a flavor all its own - it smelled and tasted of leather. Salty cheeses often clash with beers, but this pairing worked together to showcase the attractive properties of both in tandem.

**"Winnemere"** (Jasper Hill Farm), a soft, cow's-milk, aged cheese belted with a strip of spruce cambium;

washed with Shaun Hill's Belgian Quad "Cruella" and paired with Long Trail's **Hefeweizen**. This cheese is, and may always remain, my hands-down favorite. The care and handwork that goes into creating it, from its hand-shaved spruce belt around each wheel to the joint effort with the farm's neighbor-brewer makes it truly special, and the buttery, woody flavor it exudes is exquisite. Most of the entire batch is pre-sold to 4 of the most famous restaurants in the US, with a few wheels left for us lucky locals to purchase. The beer it was paired with was, in my opinion, the only downer of the lot: an in-your-face Hefe that on its own, would thrill you with its huge banana-bubblegum profile, but had no business trying to "hook up" with this debutante of a cheese! We're talking about a shotgun wedding here. If only the Cruella the Quad had been the maid of honor, she could've stepped in and talked some sense into them!

Greg and Montse put a lot of thought into this event, and their desire to showcase local farmstead cheeses and VT craft brews demonstrates high regard

for sustainable agriculture, local foods, and craft-brewing in the State of Vermont. Greg reminded us that not only does Vermont have the highest number of cheese makers per capita, it also has the highest number of craft brewers. Coincidence you may ask? Doubtful. Tannins in wine, the component that makes them acidic are far more harsh than hops in beer. National opinion has changed significantly: cheese & beer are a far more harmonious marriage than those with wine. Reasons? It could be their common origins: beer from grain, milk from grass & grain. Or, their similar catalysts: in beer, a live yeast culture that is nurtured; in cheese, a live bacteria and/or mold culture. In essence, cheese & beer are both "living" communities of organisms that help them achieve their unique and delightful potentials. And some of the best of each is produced right here in VT - kind of makes you proud, eh?

## January Meeting Minutes By Ernie Kelley

**T**he January meeting was hosted by Anne & Matt Whyte at their home in Essex Junction.

Courtesy of your dues, a tray of wraps, pepperoni, cheeses, crisps, and crackers was provided by the club.

Ruth Miller kicked-off the meeting with a Trub Trek update:

- Woodstock Station Brewery has been dropped from the itinerary due to the logistics of getting there and elsewhere in one day.
- 17 persons have reserved spots on the bus (as of the meeting date). Still lots of space open. The bus holds 47 people.
- \$25/member, \$35/non-member. Pick-ups: Burlington 8:00 am, Richmond Park & Ride 8:30, and Middlesex Park & Ride 8:50. Home by 10:00 pm.
- Ebenezer's, Maine's Belgian heaven, appears to be becoming the gathering stop. Bruce Stevens and any number of the Mainiacs are planning to meet us there.
- Tracey Aguilar may meet us at The Moat.
- RSVP by e-mail to Ruth and reserve your place ASAP.

Homebrew Competition update:

- The Multi Generational Center does not appear to want us again this year. They will charge \$300, and the club may have to hire them to cater the event.
- The K of C hall is available only on May 5, not the planned May 12 event date. Cost would be \$500 + \$200 deposit. It was noted that May 5 is Kentucky Derby Day.
- Darryl Whittaker cannot attend (he is Steward Coordinator) on May 5. Terry volunteered to help out organizing the stewards.
- Other venues were suggested and will be looked at: Monitor Barn in Richmond, Moose Lodge in Winoo-

ski, and the Champlain Fairgrounds in Essex.

Much to President Cropley's frustration, the above business was continually interrupted, first by Monk's 18 year old barley wine, then by Tom Ayres arrival, again by another of Monk's ancient brews (which was quickly fed to the sink), and yet again by another 18 year old imperial stout of Monk's (which was not fed to the sink).

Dues: \$15. Due now. \$20 after Feb. 1.

BJCP Study Group:

- Five people have signed up, plus one current judge for an upgrade score.
- Tom Ayres volunteered to administer the test.
- It was suggested that Paul Saylor at Flatbread be advised of the group, as he may have staff that are interested in participating.

Tim Cropley will retain maintenance of the club's web site.

The Norwich Inn is hosting a six course beer dinner on January 28. \$60/person (plus tax and tip).

Anne Whyte announced that a beer that she had crafted with Ruth, Nancy, and Terry – a 10 gal. partial mash, sour mash, that had received periodic additions of various Belgian yeasts and finally adulterated with about every flavor of cordial and schnapps available to them (primarily peach schnapps), and appropriately named "Impeachment Ale" – won the blue ribbon in the Queen of Beers Competition. Congratulations to the four of you. It was, actually, a very nice beer.

March Sugar Meeting at Brian Werneke's father's sugar house in Milton update:

- Raw sap will be available at no charge, maximum 10 gallons each.
- Syrup will be available at cost.
- Let Brian know how much/what you

want, by e-mail:

[bwerneke@gmail.com](mailto:bwerneke@gmail.com)

- Plan on the meeting being in the afternoon (around 2 or 3) on Saturday, March 10 (NOTE: The meeting is March 17 at 2 pm)
- NOTE – this is a change of date, due to 3/3 being school vacation week.

Reminder – this year's Masher Challenge is wit beer, due to be judged at the Hoops 'n Hops meeting in April at Tom Ayres home in Winooski.

Lastly, Matt Whyte gave a big "THANK YOU" for twelve years of Masher support for Vermont Homebrew Supply.

**Don't forget  
to pay  
your dues.  
Dues are  
\$15, or  
\$20 after  
February 1.**

## Vermont Legislative Report By Greg Noonan

# T

here is a bill in the Vermont legislature that proposes to increase the Alcohol-By-Volume allowed in malt beverages sold in Vermont to 16% (the same limit as wine). It is Senate bill #28, and you can track it's progress at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/database/rintro/results.cfm>

The bill doesn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of passage against the Department of Liquor Control's concerns about opening the door to 40's of stronger malt liquors and "malternatives" (stronger Zima, Smirnoff Ice, etc) unless there is a groundswell of responsible-consumer support. If Vermont beer drinkers really want convenient access to beers over 8% ABV, consumers are going to have to be very active letting committee members and their legislators know that they support it, and why.

Interested persons can track the bill at the website above - when it is scheduled for a hearing by any committee it will be posted on the page for S.0029. Most legislators have e-mail addresses, available at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/alpha.cfm?Body=S> (Senate) and <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/alpha.cfm?Body=H> (House)., and the committee members are listed at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/comms.cfm?Body=S> (Senate) and <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/comms.cfm?Body=H> (House). If enough interested beer drinkers track the bill and contact their legislators supporting it, the bill might even pass.

Vermont brewers will be supporting the bill and doing their part, but it looks real unlikely that the bill will get passed on our efforts alone. (Consumers got North Carolina to raise their limit two years ago - if it worked there, you have to figure it will work here too). It was homebrewers (and most especially the efforts of Anne Whyte and Robin Orr) that got the limit raised from 6% to 8% a dozen years ago, and it will take the same kind of consumer support to get it raised this time

Morgan Wolaver of Wolaver's/Otter Creek [morgan@ottercreekbrewing.com](mailto:morgan@ottercreekbrewing.com) and Paul Saylor [brewpaul@gmavt.net](mailto:brewpaul@gmavt.net) at Burlington Hearth/Zero Gravity are leading the effort by the Vermont brewers. If beer drinkers join their push and organize among themselves to push for passage, we might all be picking up our favorite barley wines, Imperial Stouts and IPAs at the corner store this year or next.



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