



# The Barleycorn Press

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## Brewing the Biere de Garde Style

*By Bill Walker*

**C**lassic Biere de Garde is a French beer style generally considered to be an ale, although, as you will note later in this article, the brewing process more resembles a lager. These beers were usually brewed in the fall or winter and cellared until the warmer months. Biere de Garde literally means “keeping beer.” The style came about in the Pas-de-Calais region of France that borders Belgium and became quite popular in that region’s city of Lille. It is closely related to the Saison style and both are considered “Farmhouse Ales.” Commercially there are three styles of Biere de Garde brewed today; blond, amber and brown. Some of the more well

known commercial brands are Jenlain Ambre, Castelain Blonde, St. Amand, La Choulette and Saint-Sylvestre.

The style is known for its malty profile, often with kettle caramelization present from an extended boil. Hops are only used to balance the malt enough to avoid the sweetness becoming cloying. Hops that are used are generally of French variety with Brewers Gold used for bittering and French Strisselpalt for flavor or aroma. As mentioned above though, the profile is toward the malt and hop aroma is rarely detected. The commercial examples often exhibit a “musty,” “earthy,” “cellar like” quality.

This is caused by the fact that most commercial examples are sold corked with wire cages like Champagne. There is a chemical, (2,4,6 – trichlorasinole), in natural cork that creates this “musty,” “earthy” quality. The chemical is a result of molds found in the bark of cork oak trees (*Quercus suber*). Interestingly a “corked” quality detected in wine is a sin in France but not so for this beer style.

The brewing process closely resembles a lager in that fermentation is done in temperatures at the low range of ale yeasts (62-64 degrees) so as to not create the fruity esters that these yeasts normally create when fermented in

the 70 degree range. Once primary fermentation is complete the beer is cellared (lagered) at cold temperatures for an extended period before bottling and serving. The final gravity is usually fairly low resulting in a fully attenuated beer that exhibits a dry finish. Alcohol is usually around the 6-7% ABV range.

Typical recipes for this style use a Belgian Pilsner as the base malt with some Munich, Belgian aromatic and possibly some CaraVi- enne if shooting for the amber

variety. An extended boil of 90 minute or more can add the kettle caramelization characteristic mentioned above.

Well, there you have it! Try brewing a Biere de Garde sometime, you will be glad you did.



### In This Issue!

Brewing Biere de Garde	Page 1
Next Meeting Info	Page 2
November Mtg Minutes	Pages 2&3
Staff Box	Page 2
Masher Calendar	Page 3
Brew Stories/Mishaps Part I - Todd Metcalf	Page 4

## NEXT MEETING 7PM at Magic Hat Monday Dec 8th

**T**he next meeting of the Green Mountain Mashers is Monday, December 8 at Magic Hat Brewery in South Burlington.

Please bring some homebrew to share with the folks at Magic Hat.

The agenda for the Magic Hat Meeting is:

- 1) Dues due starting in January
- 2) Green Mountain Homebrew Competition
- 3) Trub Trek Discussion
- 4) Old Business
- 5) New Business
- 6) Elections?
- 7) Tour of Magic Hat

Magic Hat is at 5 Bartlett Bay Road in South Burlington. Contact them at 658-2739 for directions if for some reason you don't know where it is.



## 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 CD-Rom (hard copy as a last resort) to:

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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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## November Meeting Minutes by Dave Clark

**T**he Mashers November meeting was held in Huntington on November 3rd. The normal tasting, sharing of beers, swapping of lies and idle banter preceded the meeting.

Club members were notified about the Knickerbockers homebrew competition to be held on November 8th.

The beer for the Masher challenge this year is German Pilsner which is listed in the 2008 guidelines. Below is a description of this style from the BJCP website.

2A. German Pilsner (Pils)

**Aroma:** Typically features a light grainy Pils malt character (sometimes Graham cracker-like) and distinctive flowery or spicy noble hops. Clean, no fruity esters, no diacetyl. May have an initial sulfury aroma (from water and/or yeast) and a low background note of DMS (from Pils malt).

**Appearance:** Straw to light gold, brilliant to very clear, with a creamy, long-lasting white head.

**Flavor:** Crisp and bitter, with a dry to medium-dry finish. Moderate to moderately-low yet well attenuated maltiness, although some grainy flavors and slight Pils malt sweetness are acceptable. Hop bitterness dominates taste and continues through the finish and lingers into the aftertaste. Hop flavor can range from low to high but should only be derived from German noble hops. Clean, no fruity esters, no diacetyl.

## Green Mountain Masher Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Information
12/8/2008	Annual Magic Hat Mtg (provided they can handle us).	Todd Metcalf - (h) 598-5057 (email) toddmetcalf@gmail.com
1/5/2009	January Meeting at Todd's	Todd Metcalf - (h) 598-5057 (email) toddmetcalf@gmail.com

**Please contact Tim at 244-1683 or [t\\_cropley@yahoo.com](mailto:t_cropley@yahoo.com) to add items to the Masher Calendar**

**Mouthfeel:** Medium-light body, medium to high carbonation.

**Overall Impression:** Crisp, clean, refreshing beer that prominently features noble German hop bitterness accentuated by sulfates in the water.

**Comments:** Drier and crisper than a Bohemian Pilsener with a bitterness that tends to linger more in the after-taste due to higher attenuation and higher-sulfate water. Lighter in body and color, and with higher carbonation than a Bohemian Pilsener. Modern examples of German Pilsners tend to become paler in color, drier in finish, and more bitter as you move from South to North in Germany.

**History:** A copy of Bohemian Pilsener adapted to brewing conditions in Germany.

**Ingredients:** Pilsner malt, German hop varieties (especially noble varieties such as Hallertauer, Tettnanger and Spalt for taste and aroma), medium sulfate water, German lager yeast.

**Vital Statistics:**

OG: 1.044 – 1.050

FG: 1.008 – 1.013  
 IBUs: 25 – 45  
 SRM: 2 – 5  
 ABV: 4.4 – 5.2%

**Commercial Examples:** Victory Prima Pils, Bitburger, Warsteiner, Trumer Pils, Old Dominion Tupper's Hop Pocket Pils, König Pilsener, Jever Pils, Left Hand Polestar Pilsner, Holsten Pils, Spaten Pils, Brooklyn Pilsner.

The December meeting for the club will be held at Magic Hat on December 8th. The January meeting will be held at our President-for-Life, Todd Metcalf's, house in Essex.

Some discussion of the 20th anniversary glasses for the club. Jerry Gormley will be inquiring about this. The club will be given choices for the glass before they are ordered.

Dues for the coming year are payable in January. Please pay your dues in January but not before (we need to limit the monies in our tax dodging, junket funding bank account). Dues are \$15 if paid in January and \$20 thereafter.

The competition will be coming up in

May. We need certain roles filled including competition coordinator, judge coordinator and steward coordinator. Any member is welcome to fill any of these roles. This is a good opportunity to earn competition points, enhance your social skills and learn diplomacy.

A possible agenda for the Trub Trek was discussed. Potential stops included Brattleboro, Keene, Northampton, and Haverhill.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 as the desire to taste fine beers overcame any possible want to discuss more business.



## Brew Stories/Mishaps Part I

### Todd Metcalf:

1)

I was relatively new to kegging and agreed to bring a keg to a friends birthday party. A day or so before the party I filled up the keg. To sanitize the keg & siphon hose, I siphoned from one keg to another. I realized I was going to fill the extra keg in a week, so I decided to let the sanitizing solution sit. I proceeded to chill & force carbonate the keg the night before the party. The morning of, I decided to taste the beer. It did look a little lighter than I remembered. Took a sniff and it seemed off. I must of been half awake and took a small sip. Yes you guessed it, I successfully carbonated a keg of iodine. Luckily there was time to chill/carbonate the actual beer keg before the party.

2)

For one of the masher challenges we had a year or two ago was an imperial IPA. While brewing, I was too aggressive with dropping the floating thermometer in the kettle. I only realized this about 10 minutes into the boil. Luckily it didn't break the thermometer fluid, but there was 1000 of the little metal balls in the wort. So I siphoned the wort into a temporary kettle, cleaned the main kettle and siphoned back. The brewing day only got worse with the counter flow chiller getting clogged with hops. With chiller getting clogged multiple times, I ended up a gallon short. Since I was going to enter this in the challenge, I bottled a 12 pack and keged the rest. The next morning I found a puddle of beer by my kegorator. It turns out the beer out disconnect was faulty. So for my 8+ hours of brewing I had only a 12 pack to show.



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