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West Kingdom Brewers' Guild Newsletter



June Crown AS XLVJ

<http://www.westkingdombrewers.org/>

Chronicler's Corner:

Wow, June already. My borage has grown shoulder high, and always brings to mind that Celtic warriors placed it in wine before battle to aid their courage. June Crown is also our wine competition, I raise my goblet to the competitors in the hopes it be filled with the tasty fruits of their labor! I'd also like to express my heartfelt thanks to Lord Alfred of Greyvale, whose knowledgeable article submissions keep this newsletter going.

Hip Hip Huzzah!

A Message From our Chancellor:

We had a good meeting at Beltane, and we even held a robust competition. Five entrants brought thirteen cordials, ranging from some that were young or needed fine-tuning, to the odd but yummy butterscotch, to some fine, delicious ones. Of course there was plenty left over for passing around at the meeting, so a good time was had all around.

At June Crown we will be presenting taxes to Their Majesties. A number of bottles have been donated or promised, and it looks to be a reasonable assembly of potables for the sitting royals. Come join us in the presentation if you are able.

"... good company, good wine, good welcome,
can make good people."
-- William Shakespeare, Henry VIII.

Source.

From: Charles F. Horne, ed., *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, (New York: Parke, Austin, & Lipscomb, 1917), Vol. VIII: *Medieval Persia*, p. 15 (Translated by E. H. Whinfield).

Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

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**Medieval Sourcebook:
Omar Khayyam: In Praise of Wine, c. 1100**

Morn's first rays are glimmering,
From the skies the stars are creeping;
Rouse, for shame the goblet bring,
All too long thou liest sleeping:
Open those narcissus eyes,
Wake-be happy-and be wise!

Why, ungrateful man, repine,
When this cup is bright with wine?
All my life I've sought in vain,
Knowledge and content to gain;
All that Nature could unfold
Have I in her page unrolled;
All of glorious and grand
I have sought to understand.
'Twas in youth my early thought,
Riper years no wisdom brought,
Life is ebbing, sure though slow,
And I feel I nothing know.

Bring the bowl! at least in this
Dwells no shadowed distant bliss;
See! I clasp the cup whose power
Yields more wisdom in an hour
Than whole years of study give,
Vainly seeking how to live.
Wine dispenses into air
Selfish thoughts, and selfish care.
Dost thou know why wine I prize?
He who drinks all ill defies:
And can awhile throw off the thrall
Of self, the God we worship-all!

**Meeting Report from Cynagua Spring
Coronet AS XLIIII**

by Johann von Drachenfels, Cynaguan Representative

We had a tasting at the last Coronet Tourney. Most of it was an assortment of Alfred of Greyvale's excellent concoctions, although there were a fair number of cordials represented, as well as mead and cider.

The meeting ended up lasting about three hours, a good time was had by all, and just about all of the liquid disappeared over the course of the day. We must be getting better at what we do...

**Anglo-Saxon Brewing (III). The
History & Brewing of Anglo-Saxon
Beers by Lord Alfred of Greyvale, Greyvale
Brewing**

BEER (BEOR): was a stronger drink than ale, as mentioned above, and probably contained 4-8% abv. The word *beor* itself was used to connote both beer and strong drink, and should probably be taken to encompass both. Thus, beer was a stronger drink than ale. While this could refer to both its alcoholic strength as well as its flavor, it is likely that it really conveys both. In other words, not only was beer a more intoxicating beverage, it also had a stronger, bolder flavor than the sweeter, more mellow flavors of ale. While ale derived into a malted grain beverage from mead, as described above, beer was invented purely as a malted beverage, in more southerly and westerly regions than the Germanic homeland, and its flavor was further augmented by a

Witty Wine Whimsies

gruit of various herbs which were used to both flavor, preserve and bitter the beverage. In the course of time, the knowledge of brewing a malted, bittered, beverage spread to the north, and beer was introduced to the Germanic tribes and their Anglo-Saxon descendants. The *gruit* which provided beer with its bitterness in the centuries before the introduction of hops were many and varied. Monastaries often became the source suppliers of *gruits* to the individual brewers, as they grew the herbs and sold them as part of their financial maintenance (frequently maintaining monopolies on the regional supply of *gruit*). The specific recipes for *gruits* were highly guarded secrets, but chiefly contained one or more of the following: sweet gale (bog myrtle), marsh or wild rosemary, milfoil or yarrow. Additionally cinnamon and other herbs available in England at the time were used complementarily at times for added flavor.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Beer in Anglo-Saxon England had a higher alcohol content than ale, probably being able to attain such a higher malt content because the bittering agents offset the added sweetness sufficiently. The actual flavor, much as a modern beer, would depend very much on the specific herbs used in the *gruit* for bittering and their quantity. Other than these unique flavor characteristics, which I have not sufficient experience to comment on as of yet, beer in Anglo-Saxon England should not be considered as being too far different from some modern microbrews or craft beers. In particular, those modern ales that would be classified today as a *stock ale* or *old ale* should be considered direct descendants of the old Anglo-Saxon beers, with the caveat that the modern versions are made with hops, rather than the *gruit* of old. Due to the malting process at the time, it is certain that it was similar in color to the ales of the time, probably being a light amber at the clearest.

He who drinks wine sleeps well. He who sleeps well cannot sin. He who does not sin goes to heaven. Amen.

- *The Old Monk's Prayer*

Both to the rich and poor, wine is the happy antidote for sorrow. - *Euripides*

It is well to remember that there are five reasons for drinking: the arrival of a friend; one's present or future thirst; the excellence of the wine; or any other reason - *Latin saying*

Quickly bring me a beaker of wine, so that I may whet my mind and say something clever. - *Euripedes*

Drink wine, and you will sleep well. Sleep, and you will not sin. Avoid sin, and you will be saved. Ergo, drink wine and be saved. - *Medieval German saying*

Wine is a constant proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy. - *Benjamin Franklin*

No thing more excellent nor more valuable than wine was ever granted mankind by God. - *Plato*

Sorrow can be alleviated by good sleep, a bath and a glass of wine. -- Thomas Aquinas.

The best use of bad wine is to drive away poor relations. -- French proverbs

When men drink, then they are rich and successful and win lawsuits and are happy and help their friends. Quickly, bring me a beaker of wine, so that I may wet my mind and say something clever. -- Aristophanes c. 450 - 385 B.C

CHARACTERISTICS AND ANALYSIS:

This turned out to be one of the most interesting and excellent beers that I have brewed. It has a somewhat minty flavor, mostly from the Rosemary and Fennel added to the flavoring gruit. I brewed a similar beer the same day using all of the same ingredients except for the bittering agent. For that I substituted 1 ounce of Kent Goldings for an estimated IBU of 18.4. While this one was good, the strictly gruit beer was better. The Yarrow also bitters out somewhat more than hops do, so I have guesstimated a slightly higher IBU for this beer. Also, where the bitterness of hops diminishes over time, the Yarrow seems to actually increase in bitterness. For such a strong beer, there is no alcohol bite so, while you can tell this is not a weak drink, it is deceptively strong and can easily sneak up on you.



MYRCENA GEARWE BEOR (Mercian Yarrow Beer)

It should first be noted that this recipe and the procedures used are not specifically replicating an actual Anglo-Saxon recipe. Rather, based on the research that I have done as to the likely characteristics of an Anglo-Saxon beer, I have used my personal experience as a brewer, and modern homebrewing techniques to devise something that I believe corresponds to a gruit beer that could have been brewed during the Anglo-Saxon period in England.

ESTIMATED SPECIFIC INFORMATION:

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Est. Original Gravity: | 1.100 |
| Est. Final Gravity | 1.032 |
| Est. IBU: | 18.4 |
| Est. SRM: | 22.4 |
| Est. ABV: | 8.0% |

INGREDIENTS:

| | |
|---|--|
| 6.0 pounds | Liquid Liquefied Malt Extract |
| 3.0 pounds | Light Dry Malt Extract |
| 3.0 pounds | Amber Liquid Malt Extract |
| 2.0 pounds | Crystal 40L |
| 0.5 pounds | Crystal 60L |
| 1 vial | White Labs 007 – Dry English Ale Yeast |
| ¼ tsp | Gypsum |
| 1.0 ounce | Yeast Nutrient |
| 2.0 ounces | Yarrow for 40 minutes |
| Gruit – ¾ oz. Yarrow, 0.4 oz. Rosemary, ¼ oz. Fennel, 1 stick cinnamon at end of boil. | |



REASONING:

Malt: As an extract brewer, I needed to find a malt that I felt would be roughly similar to the bulk of the grain used by the Anglo-Saxon brewer. I chose the mix of light and amber extracts to replicate the color and quality of a simple 2-grain wheat, malted to varying degrees.

Specialty Grains: The Crystal 40L and 60L was chosen to replicate the inclusion of some darker, malted grains, which I think were a likely mainstay for flavoring.

Yeast: I chose this yeast firstly because it is an English yeast strain. Secondly, this particular strain attenuates better than most.

Gruit: The gruit ingredients were chosen from among the more commonly used in Anglo-Saxon England. In particular, Yarrow was a very popular bittering and finishing agent and was therefore used as the basis for the bittering and finishing in this beer.

Adjuncts: I added gypsum to soften my local water to something that should be closer to the water of southern England. Since I'm aiming for a higher gravity beer, I added yeast nutrient to help the ferment.

TIMELINE:

August 5, 2006: Brewing Day.

10:00 am – combined specialty grains in stew pot and added c. 1 gallon water. Heated the water to c. 155° F. Removed from heat and let steep for 30 minutes. Sparged into brew pot with 2 gallons of water heated to c. 170°. Added malt extracts and water to 6 ½ gallons.

11:00 pm – placed brew pot on propane burner and heated to boiling, adding gypsum and stirring well.

11:20 pm – pot reached boiling, boiled for 20 minutes.

11:40 pm – added Yarrow, boiled for 40 minutes.

12:20 pm – Turned burner off, added gruit, let steep for 20 minutes.

12:40 pm – Strained into fermenter. Sealed fermenter and placed in bathtub with 10 # blocks of ice to cool.

9:00 pm – When fermenter cooled to between 70° and 90°, removed from tub, checked specific gravity and pitched yeast. Set in laundry room at c. 72° to ferment.

August 15, 2006: I racked the ale into a secondary fermenter.

September 7, 2006: I bottled the beer.

September 20, 2006: I opened the first bottle and tasted the finished, though young, product.

ACTUAL SPECIFIC INFORMATION:

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Act. Original Gravity: | 1.092 |
| Act. Final Gravity | 1.027 |
| Act. IBU: | 20.0 |
| Act. SRM: | 22.4 |
| Act. ABV: | 8.65% |