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Chronicler (and Webmistress)

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West Kingdom Brewers' Guild Newsletter



*June Crown
AS XLJJJJ*

Chronicler's Corner:

Greetings members! You might be wondering "Why the heck is there a picture of little sheep on the cover of a brewing newsletter?" I recently read "The Alaskan Bootlegger's Bible" by Leon W. Kania and there is a fascinating chapter entitled "Father Emmet Engel, the Wine-Making Priest". Why so fascinating? Because his wine is made from whey (milk), cane sugar and yeast. Who knew how versatile those farm animals were! Today's competition is beer from unlikely places, the picture reminded me that wine from an udder is an extremely unlikely "place".

Baroness Aeschine Colquhoun, Chronicler

A Message from our Chancellor:

The summer months are here and June Crown is upon us. That means, of course, it's time for us to pay our taxes. A few brews have been promised, and we hope to gather more at the event and continue our tradition of making a favorable impression upon their Majesties.

In addition, we have a draft charter to consider, and perhaps approve, at Crown. At Beltane we discussed the draft, including changes proposed by Crystal of the Westermark, one of the biggest names among our former chancellors. Should the Guild decide to approve the document at Crown, it will be nice to be under a charter once again. If not, we've functioned without one for many years now, so we can always wait a little longer.

Cheers!

Lord Peyre de Bharat, Chancellor

"A quart of ale is a dish for a king."
-William Shakespeare

Sandy Lists

Mead List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mead>

Mists Brewing List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mistsbrewersguild>

SCA-Brew

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sca_brew

West Kingdom Brewers List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/West-Brewing>

Mundane Festivals & Competitions:

Sept 19 & 20th 2008: Northern California Homebrewers Festival X, Lake Francis Resort, Dobbins CA.
<http://www.nchfinfo.org/location.html>

Sept 26—Oct 11, 2008: Queen of Beer, Women's Homebrew competition, Rescue, CA.
<http://www.queenofbeer.hazeclub.org/index.html>

Great calendar of upcoming competitions and festivals by month, both national and international.

<http://www.beerfestivals.org/index.html>

Engelrude, and to their heirs.

In the year of the Incarnation of the Lord, 1139, etc.

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West Kingdom Competitions 2008

June Crown - Beers from places you wouldn't expect (eg, France, Spain)
Purgatory - Refreshing drinks
October Crown - Cordials

"From man's sweat and God's love, beer came into the world."
-Saint Arnold of Metz, The Patron Saint of Brewers

A Message from the Cynaguan Guild Representative

As you know, we hold meetings only at camping events. Since this summer's Investiture will be a one-day indoor event, we won't have a meeting there. Our next meeting will be at Fall Coronet in October, and I hope to see you there!

Baron Johann von Drachenfels, Cynaguan Representative



A Message from the Mists' Guild Representative

No report this time.

Lord Angino Di Vincenzo
Representative for the Principality of the Mists Brewers' Guild.

How to Make Labels (and What to Put on Them) by Baron Johann von Drachenfels

People are nearly always happy to receive presents of booze. But nothing strikes fear in their hearts like an unlabeled bottle, particularly one that's been found months after the donation. What's in it? How old is it? Did it come from the same batch as that heavenly stuff I had last week, or the really putrid stuff I found last month in my feastware box?

All the bottles look exactly the same!

This problem is aggravated when the bottle in question was given to Royalty. It's probably not desirable, or even possible, for the reigning royals to consume all of the liquid given to them, so a lot of it gets passed out as largesse, or as gifts to other royalty. So the recipient is two stages removed from the brewer, and if the brew is bad, it reflects poorly on the royals and their kingdom or principality.

All of these problems can be avoided if the bottles were labeled. The label doesn't have to have fancy artwork on it (although it seldom hurts), but it should have the following information:

-- The type of brew it is (beer, ale, wine, mead, metheglin, etc.). Some people don't care for a particular type of beverage, and won't appreciate receiving it. So you make the recipient's life a lot easier by stating up front what he or she is getting.

"In my opinion, most of the great men of the past were only there for the beer."

A.J.P. Taylor, British historian

Cartulary of Saint Trond: Folcard of St. Trond: Pledge of a Beer Tax, 1139

Not only could a tax become private property but it could be subject to purchase, sale, and pledge. This particular tax was presumably a market tax.

In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity.

Be it known to both present and future generations that I, Folcard, by the grace of God Abbot of Saint-Trond, in order to bring an end to the striving and contention which was so frequent under my predecessor, Abbot Rudolph, concerning the tax on beer in this town, hereby proclaim, and, with the impression of my seal, confirm in favor of Reyner and his wife Engelrude and their heirs because of their truthfulness and justice—a thing well known to all—this grant of a tax which Reyner and his wife in the first place accepted in pledge from those who maintained that the tax was their inherited right. These were Reyner, Robert, and Hugh, and their children. This pledge was made in the presence of Dom Rudolph, the Abbot, for one hundred marks, to which he, Reyner, later added of his own will as much as they all thought the tax, and every right of inheritance which they claimed to have therein, was worth. And Reyner and his wife Engelrude and their children took it over in hereditary right from the hand of Rudolph, the Abbot, in the presence of the brethren, assessors, and vassals of the church. And let this charter remain valid and inviolable, just as was arranged by my predecessor and just as it has been renewed by us in the presence of the chapter, assessors, and vassals of the church, lawfully and by hereditary right, to Reyner and his wife

Johann's Ale

**Made by
Johann von Drachenfels
of the West Kingdom**

**Ingredients:
Water, Malt Extract,
Malt, Hops, Corn
Sugar and Yeast**

**Alcohol
approximately
5% by volume**

**Bottled on the
seventh of June of
M8 XCIII (2008)**

**NOTE: Bottle
Conditioned ... Please
Decant Carefully!**

-- The name of the brewer, so that the donor can be either congratulated or executed, depending on the quality of the brew. (Just kidding! But if you were the brewer, wouldn't you want to know if the beer turned out bad? And how could they tell you if the bottle didn't have your name on it?)

--The date it was bottled. This is particularly important for beers, quick meads, and other beverages that have a limited shelf life. If such a thing is found a year later, the recipient has been warned that the beverage might be past its prime and undrinkable (or at least unlikely to be enjoyed). It's also important for beverages that take a long time to mature, like some wines and cordials.

-- The ingredients. Here you have a little latitude. If the brew is a beer, it's assumed that it includes water, malt, yeast, and hops, so you needn't list those ingredients. But if you're adding ingredients that are not normally found in that type of brew, you'll want to list them, because the eventual recipient may have a sensitivity to that ingredient. This is particularly true of things like cordials and metheglins, in which nearly any type of herb has been known to be found.

-- If you know the percentage of alcohol, it's nice to put that on the label as well. Again, if that percentage is within the range for that type of beverage (3%-5% for beers and ales 10%-14% for wines, etc.), it need not be noted, since the recipient will assume that fact. But it adds a professional touch to the label.

-- Any other information that the recipient might want to know. When I bottle beer or ale, I like to add a note that it is "bottle conditioned" so the pourer will be alerted to the sediment that will be found at the bottom of the bottle. Again, it's a courtesy to the eventual recipient.

The above list applies mainly to beverages given out as gifts or taxes. Bottles submitted to a competition should have all the above information except one: NEVER PUT YOUR NAME ON THE BOTTLES. If you're using your standard label, be sure to obliterate your name or simply cut it out of the label. (By putting your name either on the top or bottom, you only need to make one cut instead of two.) Also, be sure that nothing in the name of the beverage indicates its provenance. Similarly, don't put your name on the documentation. However, it helps if you give the beverage a name that is specific but doesn't betray its origins, such as "Beer #7C" or "Robin Hood's Cherry Cider" and put that name on both the bottle and the documentation, so that they can be matched up by the judges.

I make my labels on my computer using a graphics program called Print Artist, which I bought for ten dollars many years ago. It has since gone upscale and now costs forty dollars, but similar label-printing programs can be bought cheaply for just about any computer, and there are also probably some share-ware or free-ware programs floating around the Internet. I print the labels out on Avery #5263 shipping labels, available at any office supply store. The labels come ten to a sheet, and are 2" x 4" which is a nice size for bottles. Print Artist allows you to lay out the label in a vertical orientation rather than a horizontal one (you create a block of text and rotate it ninety degrees.) The labels are pre-gummed, so you don't have to worry about adhesives. That adhesive is hell to clean off bottles, so you might not want to use them on bottles that you'll be getting back, but my experience is that 99.9% of all donated bottles end up being dumped in the recycling bin or trash rather than being returned for refill, so that's not really an issue. If you want use labels that are readily soaked off, you can print out the labels on plain paper, cut them apart with scissors, and stick them on with milk or Knox's gelatin (which is basically hide glue). Of course, this is a drawback for bottles that will sit in an ice chest. Those labels need to be taped down with a water-resistant tape like Scotch tape.

Ice-chest immersion involves another danger: if you're using an ink-jet printer to print your labels, you'll find that the ink is very water-soluble, and a blank (or nearly blank) label is as unnerving as no label at all. The solution is to use a laser printer, or to print your labels using a photocopy machine that uses a xerographic process. Or you can do what I do: cover the label with clear 2" packing tape. I've also tried spraying the labels with clear lacquer or acrylic spray, but that method didn't work as well as the tape, particularly with the colored inks.

Of course, your local brew supply place can probably print very pretty labels for you, with fancy artwork and type faces, on glossy stock, at prices that you might actually find reasonable. Labels like this came in handy for a friend of mine when he took some bottles of his home-brew to Lochac. The Australian customs people didn't allow home-brew to be brought in at the time, but the labels were fancy enough for the bottles to be passed off as "boutique brewery" products, which could be legally brought in. That was a long time ago, though; with today's security at airports, I doubt if he'd try it again.

Whatever label format you decide on, remember that it's what's in the bottle that counts, not what's on it. And that's what the label should describe. The illustration shows the label I made for the taxes I'm giving at June Crown, and it should give you some idea of what your label should look like.

Please turn the page to view Johann's label

