

What's on tap?



July 2010

www.pghbrewmasters.com

## A word from the Beer Goddess

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Pittsburgh BrewMasters newsletter *What's on tap?*, a monthly publication focused on the beer culture of Western Pennsylvania from the perspective of the self-crowned Beer Goddess (that's me!). Though I will never claim to be a beer expert, I will do my best to make it both enjoyable and informational. I welcome your feedback and story suggestions. Feel free to contribute an article of your own!

I remember planning our first beer tasting in January 2008, imagining Hart trying to educate me and three of my closest friends about the finer qualities of Belgian brews. To my surprise, 27 of you helped make that night a success. With your continued support we added a second monthly tasting, and our membership now includes well over 500 beer enthusiasts.

Thanks to the Sharp Edge for hosting our group and for providing an awesome venue for our goal of furthering our interest in good brews and good friends. I hope you'll agree that together we offer a casual, yet sophisticated social environment that is both fun and educational.

I'd especially like to thank Hart for sharing his wealth of knowledge and for keeping the tastings fresh and interesting.

It's been an honor to serve as your hostess over the past few years. I've enjoyed getting to know each and every one of you and consider myself blessed to have so many amazing friends. So I raise my virtual glass in a toast to you and to many more successful years!



Christine

## And the Winner is ...

### Local homebrewers take on commercial beers in head-to-head competition

Pittsburgh BrewMasters hosted two Homebrew Challenges in June. Thanks to Mother Nature for cooperating this time. While suspense was in the air, at least we didn't have to run for our lives from the tornadic conditions we experienced last year!

The events each featured four styles of beer (different styles at each location), matching a locally crafted homebrew with a commercially brewed beer.

The Brasserie Edition featured beers brewed by Pittsburgh BrewMasters members. Competition was stiff with each pairing decided by mere hundredths of a point.

Congratulations to Jon Volkwein! His pilsner was the only homebrew to win its pairing. Additional kudos to our own Hart Johnson for finishing first among the homebrews and second overall, nudged out of first place by the Anchor American Porter by two hundredths of a point!

The interesting thing about the overall rankings is that each beer

style also ranked, with members preferring the American porter, the pilsner, the the American amber ale and the Belgian pale ale in order.

Thanks to Jon, Hart, Dick Smith and Jim Stein for providing the beer!



Jon Volkwein

It was a different story at the Creekhouse Edition later in the month when members of Three Rivers Alliance of Serious Homebrewers (TRASH) accepted the challenge.

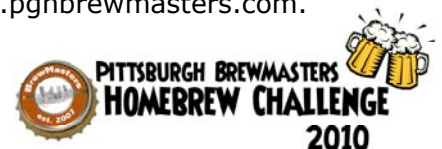


Mike Task

Mike Task enjoyed top honors with his witbier which scored a good margin over the competitors. It was a double big night for Mike as he also had the winning ticket for the 50/50 raffle!

Again, thanks to the homebrewers – Mike Task, Tom Bosak, Keith Kost and Mike Moretti – for crafting the beer for the evening. And thanks to the Sharp Edge for providing us with the great raffle prizes at both locations!

Read more on our website at [www.pghbrewmasters.com](http://www.pghbrewmasters.com).



# Featured Style

## Saison

"Saison" is the French word for season and refers to refreshing, low-alcohol pale ales traditionally brewed in farmhouses in Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium, to refresh farm workers during harvest season.

These ales were traditionally brewed in the autumn or winter for consumption during the late summer harvest for farm workers who were entitled to up to five liters throughout the workday during harvest season. Today they are brewed year round.



As the saison style originated before the advent of refrigeration, Belgian brewers had to brew in autumn or winter to prevent the ale from spoiling during the storage period. After brewing, the ale was stored until the late summer harvest.

Although now most commercial examples range from 5 to 8% abv, originally saisons were meant to be refreshing and thus had alcohol levels less than 3%. Because of the lack of potable water, saisons would give the farm hands the hydration they needed without the threat of illness. The ale had to be strong to prevent spoilage during the long storage, but at the same time could not be so strong as to

incapacitate the workers. These beers were strongly hopped, as hops act as a preservative and have antiseptic properties. Saisons brewed in early spring would often be blended with saisons brewed the previous autumn, or even blended with lambic beers to increase their refreshing acidity. Blending also occurred to reduce the abv, and thus increase its refreshment value.

The type of malt determines the color of the saison, and although most saisons are of a cloudy golden color as result of the grist being mostly pale and/or pilsner malt, the use of darker malts results in some saisons being reddish-amber. Some recipes also use wheat. Despite the spicy character of many saisons, the use of actual spices is uncommon, though not unheard of. Any spice character in a traditional saison is the result of esters during fermentation by the traditionally used strains of yeast. In America, brewers will often add orange zest, coriander, ginger, and crushed peppercorns to a saison to simulate the ester spiciness.

Some saisons to consider include Fantome Saison, Saison Dupont and Ommegang Hennepin.

From Wikipedia

## *So what do you eat with it?*

Experts agree that saison has so much going on with its aroma and flavor that almost any dish will make a good pairing.

Chef Bruce Paton of Beer-Chef.com says, "Saisons go well with ethnic spicy foods. The hop character and crisp finish will stand up to Thai dishes as well as Viet Nameese and the spicier of the Chinese cuisines Hunan and Szechwan. The chile-laden concoctions of Mexico and Central American are also complemented and contrasted by this refreshing brew.

"However ethnic is not a necessity as saisons match up well with a grilled steak or any seafood as long as the fish is not too delicately flavored. Seared salmon, grilled prawns, crab cakes, fried fish ... saison matches up both as a flavor enhancer and palate cleanser. Virtually any

flavorful dish whether it be grilled sausage or a ragout of wild mushrooms will fine a friend in saison."

Bryce Eddings of About.com agrees. "The fruity and spicy notes can lift a simple barbecue to angelic heights. The spicy and peppery notes will really enhance the flavors of any hot or peppery dish. It can transform sausage in ways you just wouldn't believe."

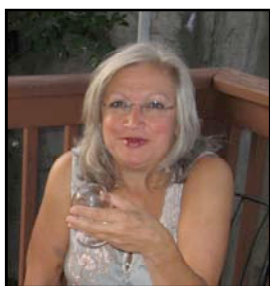
And finally, Garrett Oliver of Brooklyn Brewery and author of *Brewmaster's Table* perhaps says it best:

*"If I were forced to choose one style to drink with every meal for the rest of my life, SAISON would have to be it."*

## Member Spotlight

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Karen



You wouldn't know it by her quiet demeanor, but Karen is always looking for the next party. That might be why she is one of the earliest Pittsburgh BrewMasters members, having attended her first tasting back in February 2008.

Employed as a recovery room secretary at Allegheny General Hospital for a long time (*she'd probably be mad at me if I told you*), Karen has a passion for good beer. One of her activities involves pouring beer for Vecenie Distributing Company at various events around town. "I really enjoy meeting and talking with the different people," she said. "It's always a good time."

Karen is a member of the Brewery Collectors Club of America (BCCA), a group of beer enthusiasts who enjoy collecting beer memorabilia. With over 100 chapters, membership totals more than 4,000 people from all 50 states and 27 foreign countries. The local chapter, which calls itself Olde Frothingslosh, was established in 1973. Karen is not a collector, but she enjoys traveling to the group's annual convention. "It's a great party!" she said. *Do you see a theme here?*

Karen is looking forward to working at the annual Brain Dead Picnic, celebrated by the many area military organizations such as the VFW and the American Legion. Karen says that after years of hosting separate picnics, the groups decided to hold one big event at Riverview Park. Attendance averages 250 people.

If you're interested in attending, the picnic is on July 31st from noon until 8pm. It features games and prizes for kids and adults. One of the grand prizes is a Steelers package that includes game tickets t, a \$75 gift certificate to Jerome Bettis' Grille 36 and \$50 spending money. A mere \$10 buys adults over 21 years of age all the food and drink you can eat. Attendees under 21 are admitted free. "This may just be the best bargain in town," said Karen.

A North Side resident, Karen enjoys the character of the many local North Side bars and has recently taken a liking to blues music. Her current favorites include Pittsburgh bands the Blues Junkies and Yinzie Out. Karen is the proud mother of two children. Lindsay serves with the U.S. Navy in San Diego and Benjamin is employed locally by the 171st Air National Guard.

## Cooking with Beer

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### Spicy Beer Burghers



1/4 cup beer or beef broth	1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce	1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 teaspoons chili powder	1 pound lean ground beef
1 teaspoon onion powder	4 hamburger buns, split
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper	

In a bowl, combine the first seven ingredients. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into four patties. If grilling the hamburgers, coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray before starting the grill.

Grill hamburgers, covered, over medium heat or broil 4 in. from the heat for 6-8 minutes on each side or until a meat thermometer reads 160 degrees F. Serve on buns.

# Mark Your Calendar

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## *Upcoming Events*

### **July 7**

#### **Pittsburgh BrewMasters Beer Tasting**

"Pennsylvania Beers"

Sharp Edge Brasserie

7:00pm - 9:00pm

[www.pghbrewmasters.com](http://www.pghbrewmasters.com)

### **July 21**

#### **Pittsburgh BrewMasters Beer Tasting**

"From the West End to the West Coast"

Sharp Edge Creekhouse

7:00pm - 9:00pm

[www.pghbrewmasters.com](http://www.pghbrewmasters.com)

### **July 24**

#### **Erie Brewing Company's Beer on the Bay**

12:00pm - 3:00pm

4:00pm - 7:00pm

[www.eriebrewingco.com](http://www.eriebrewingco.com)

### **July 31**

#### **Brain Dead Picnic**

Riverview Park

12:00pm - 8:00pm

### **August 14**

#### **Millvale Brew Festival**

Millvale Riverfront Park

1:00pm - 4:00pm

5:00pm - 8:00pm

[www.millvalepa.com](http://www.millvalepa.com)

### **August 21**

#### **Brew @ the Zoo**

Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium

7:00pm - 11:00pm

[www.thezoobrew.com](http://www.thezoobrew.com)



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