



# THE Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

## January 2023

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Jan. 26 – 49<sup>th</sup> State Theatre

## The Prez Sez

*By John Trapp & Liz Greer*

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that we are now kicking off 2023, oh how time flies. We definitely went out with a bang during our Christmas party back on the 10<sup>th</sup>. There was a HUGE showing of members new and old, with lots of great food, drink and comradery. It was so nice to see this event get back to its pre-pandemic size and attendance. A big shout out to all that helped set up and clean up, and more importantly, a huge thank you to Gabe Fletcher and the staff at Anchorage Brewing Company for allowing us to have the party there. Be sure to stop by and buy many beers from them as a way to say thanks (very easy to do).

### Here's the 3 month calendar:

- January 26<sup>th</sup> – Industry Meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company for GABBF 7:00 p.m.
- February 21<sup>st</sup> – Club Meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company 7:00 p.m.
- March 21<sup>st</sup> – Club Meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company 7:00 p.m.

The January meeting is our largest meeting of the year, and one that most all our members look forward to attending. You'll need to be a current member, so I'll remind you one last time to pay your dues so you don't miss out. Also, we will be needing volunteers to help pour the homebrew in the auditorium. If you have a valid TAMS/Tips card for serving that would be very helpful. If you are planning on pouring at the GABBF on Friday or Saturday then you'll need one, so make sure you have that completed. You will receive more informative e-mails on the activities related to the meeting as the big day grows closer.

One of the other e-mails you'll receive is going to be a survey monkey asking if you are interested in taking the BJCP (Beer Judges Certification Program) class. This class will bring your knowledge of brewing to a whole new level. Plus, if you pass the test you'll be a certified beer judge. We have not offered it for the last 5 years and had some questions about when we are going to have the class again. It is a massive undertaking to put this class on so we need to know how many people are interested in taking it. If we can get 10 to 12 members signed up then I think it's a go.

Until next time, keep brewing because life is good.

Cheers

GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB  
GNBC WEBSITE  
[www.GreatNorthernBrewers.org](http://www.GreatNorthernBrewers.org)

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Contact information via our website

## The Secretary's Corner

By Gwen Higgins

For this month's column, I volunteered to recap the Christmas party for those who weren't able to attend. Sometimes a picture really is worth a thousand words, and since I doubt anyone really wants to read a thousand words about a party they missed out on, I chose to share some photos from the event



Table decked out with twinkle lights and plenty of beer to share.



John Craig checks out what he picked in the gift exchange

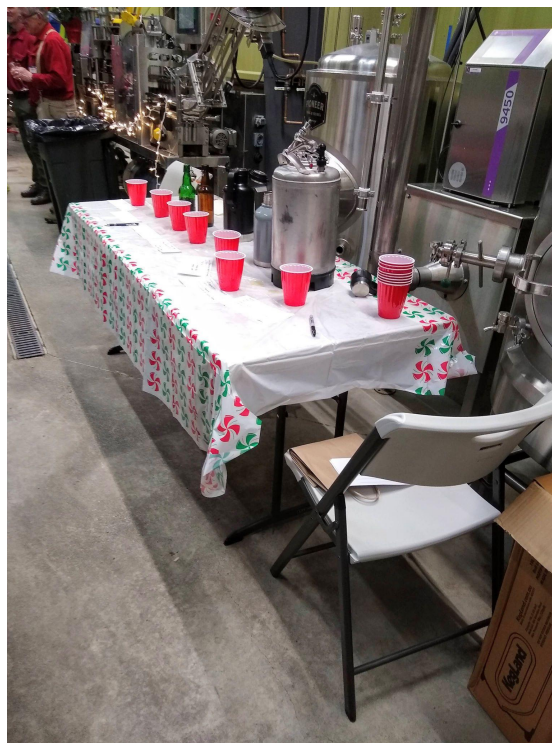


Lisa Peltola shows off her enormous bottle of Relucient from Anchorage Brewing

## The Secretary's Corner-Cont.



We had a fantastic turnout this year, with many longtime members, as well as some new faces.



Guests had the opportunity to judge the beers brewed for the Fantasy Draught Draft.



## Homebrew Equipment Available

GNBC Homebrew Equipment Club Fundraiser. Anchorage home brewer Barry Bruninga has passed away. Our condolences to those who knew him. His family and friends would like his brewing equipment to go to good use so has donated it to the Great Northern Brewers Club. <https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/gnbc-merchandise/> Items are listed at very reasonable prices. This equipment will be open for the public, but will not be advertised until February so club members can have first selections. Some additional equipment available too. To purchase or see equipment contact [president@greatnorthernbrewers.com](mailto:president@greatnorthernbrewers.com)

## Would you like persimmons in your beer?

By Steven Johnson

Reading seems an essential part of my hobby activities. When the hobby is brewing, I am less interested in the details intended for current and would-be professional brewers and more about what has worked for amateurs, even when those techniques are not of obvious value to me. I continue to read books about brewing that are obsolete by any measure. From time to time, browsing that obsolete book leads me down a path unrelated to the reason I picked up the book in the first place. That is a feature, not a bug.

At the recent Friends of the Library book sale, my purchases included *Better Beer & How to Brew It* by M.R. Reese. Copyrighted in 1978, my copy of the 21st printing was issued in 1994 and included half a page on the 1979 legalization of homebrewing in the United States.

In Reese's generally unremarkable book, what grabbed my attention were the paragraphs about the preparation of persimmon beer, a beverage previously unknown to me. The author described persimmon beer in the book's last chapter, a brief summary of the history of brewing in America, emphasizing non-traditional ingredients used by brewers in the households of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and the author's unnamed uncle.



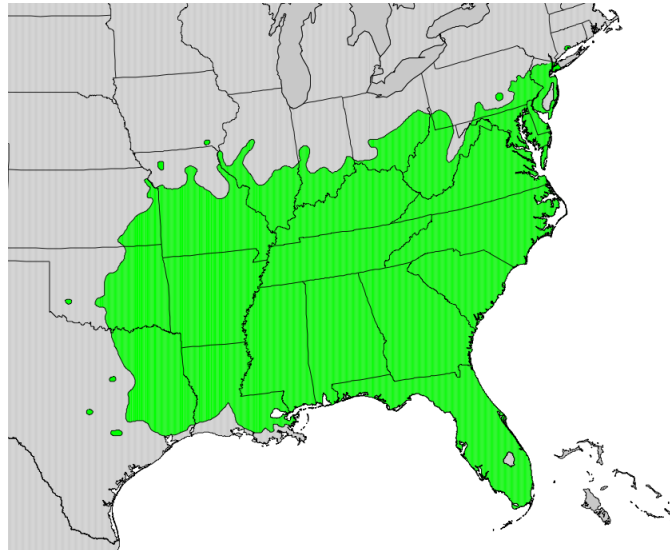
Illustration of common persimmon leaves and fruit. (line drawing)

Quoting the author: "While growing up in South Carolina, I tasted a persimmon beer which was brewed by an uncle each fall. This beer had a pleasingly sharp, zesty flavor with a hint of sweetness and a slight sparkle...."

"The persimmon beer was brewed in a large oak barrel which was turned on end with a spigot inserted at the bottom. The barrel was placed in a shed where it was exposed to outside temperatures. The brew was started in the late fall after the first frost. The ingredients consisted of ripe persimmons, ripe "beans" from the locust tree, water, sugar, and molasses (in what proportions I do not know). The persimmons and locust beans were placed in the barrel in alternate layers separated by a layer of clean straw. The barrel was then filled with a mixture of water, sugar, and molasses, and the open end of the barrel was covered. The fermentation proceeded slowly due to the seasonally cool temperatures. When the beer was judged to be ready, it was drawn off from the spigot, the layers of straw serving as a filter of sorts."

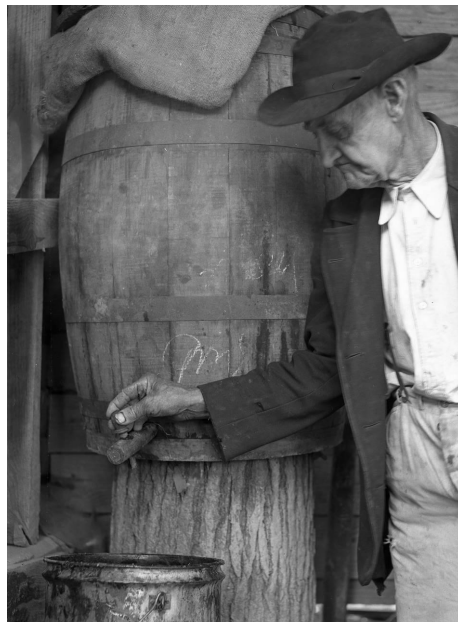
The absence of reference to yeast suggested to me that the historic beverage must depend on wild, cold tolerant yeast associated with the ingredients of persimmon beer or the brewing environment. Following

up in the usual manner, I located no references to wild yeasts and persimmon beer. I quickly learned, however, that persimmon beer, though new to me, is well known. Those who know about persimmon beer may include members of the Great Northern Brewers Club who have lived in the South Atlantic, South Central or Gulf Coast of the United States, where persimmon trees and their fruit grow wild and under cultivation. Lacking even cursory knowledge of persimmons, I turned to the researcher's usual sources.



Range map of common persimmon in the United States.

From the main Google search box, the first of 4,930 results was a 2016 entry on Ediblecommunities.com entitled "How to Make Persimmon Beer." In that version, the brewer combines 10 cups of ripe persimmons, 1 cup of sugar, one half cup of honey, one gallon of water and one tablespoon of unspecified yeast. There is no mention of locust beans. Google Scholar yields about 200 references to persimmon beer. Several references document persimmon beer as a product of Native Americans and African Americans, including the enslaved brewers of Mount Vernon and Monticello. Google Books provides no reference totals, but yields more than twenty screens of references to persimmon beer, some of them dating from the early nineteenth century. Searching Worldcat.org yielded lists of modern books about folk brewing and links to vintage photographs of a man preparing to pour persimmon beer from a barrel. The photographs from 1945, one reproduced here, might illustrate the paragraph in Reese's 1978 publication.



Elderly man about to tap a home-brewed barrel of persimmon beer, Georgia, December 23, 1945.

Searching the internet on “Thomas Jefferson” and “persimmon beer” brought me to an episode of the Gastro Brewing crowdcast featuring Todd Rupp, beer archaeologist of Avery Brewing. The episode discussed re-creations of the porter brewed for George Washington, India Pale Ale brewed in the eighteenth century, and persimmon beer as brewed for Thomas Jefferson. Rupp also discussed the brewer at Monticello: Peter Hemings, brother of the better known Sally Hemings and also one of the enslaved people at Monticello. In *Better Beer & Brewing*, Reese described Peter Hemings as Jefferson’s “servant,” never an accurate description of an enslaved person. The “Thomas Jefferson” and “persimmon beer” search also yielded Diana Hubbell’s interview with Michael Twitty about brewing persimmon beer from his grandmother’s recipe and the role of persimmon beer in Black life before and after the end of slavery.

Given that I have never lived or traveled extensively in the range of the American persimmon, I am not surprised that persimmon beer was unknown to me before I read *Better Beer & How to Brew It*. Nor am I surprised that my follow up searches yielded twenty first century perspectives on persimmon beer quite different from a book written in the nineteen seventies.

Once again, I remain pleased that I purchased and read another obsolete brewing book. I am now also willing to at least taste homebrew or commercial persimmon beer. If any persimmon beer makes it to Alaska, I want to know about it.

### References and Further Reading

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*Great Northern Brewers Club Members*

## **Thursday January 26, 2023**

### **Alaska Beer Industry Reception**

### **6pm – 9pm**

The Great Northern Brewers Club and Brewers Guild of Alaska will be hosting this year's Industry Reception Night at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing's Heritage Theater, 717 West 3rd Ave, Anchorage

- 6pm: Doors will be open for set-up and drop off
- 6:30pm: GNBC membership business meeting
- 7pm-9pm: Industry Reception
- 7:30pm-8pm: Key Note Speaker\*

***\*We request conversations during the Key Note Speaker be taken out of the Heritage Theater in respect of the speaker and audience***

Light appetizers will be provided as well as beer from home brewers, breweries and distributors. Thank you for **bringing your Home brew!** *Homemade food "pot-luck" items also appreciated. We could use some cookies!*

**We need Volunteers to help with check-in and pouring beer. Please plan on committing an hour or more for support. Thank You!**

**RSVP Requested. GNBC membership required, or membership can be purchased at the door for \$30 (Cash/Check preferred).**

RSVP and volunteer: [president@greatnorthernbrewers.com](mailto:president@greatnorthernbrewers.com)

*Special thanks to 49<sup>th</sup> State for their support!*



## A HUGE Thanks to our Supporters!

Present your GNBC card at these suppliers for a members-only discount. See each store for details.



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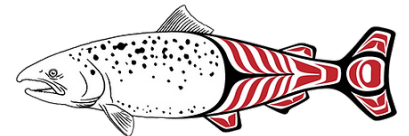
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