



THE

Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

February 2026

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GROUP BREW at Magnetic North
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Steve Johnson 2026-2028

Lisa Saperstein 2025-2026

Cody Baggett 2025-2026

Scott Clendaniel 2025-2026

Contact information via our website

The Prez Sez

By Elizabeth "Liz" Greer and Scott Clendaniel

We are starting 2026 out strong. It was a fun Industry Reception night, good brews at the Beer & Barleywine and lots of events planned for the year!

This year we are going back to having two co-presidents. This will allow us to share the responsibilities better.

From Liz: January Beer Week was a blast! Some folks were able to attend the beer dinner and events around town. Special thanks to all our sponsors and Billy Opinsky for a fun Reception! Beer Week Ended Sunday with a bittersweet goodbye to Midnight Sun Brewing Company Loft. I understand there will still be MSBC brews, but a reconfigured business. I will miss the wonderful food and soups paired with some of my favorite beers. Later this month please join the Group Brew at the February meeting at Magnetic North. And get your gruits brewing for the March meeting! Mine is fermenting after a little convincing! I hope it taste OK.

From Scott: I'll be sorry to miss the first meeting of my term, while out of state, but when I return I'll be happy to talk about what I saw and beers I drunk when I was in Nashville, New Orleans, and Arizona.

Upcoming events:

February 17 (Tuesday) – 7pm Magnetic North Club group brew. See article in the Newsletter

March 17 (Tuesday) – 7pm Gruits! Brew a beer without hops for sharing and input!

April 10-12 Beer Trippin! Get your hotels!

Meantime - If you have thoughts about some fun activities, please let me or one of the officers know.

More information on the club and events on the Facebook page and website: <https://www.facebook.com/Gnbc1/>
<https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/>

Cheers

Secretary's Corner: Industry Night Reception and Barleywine Fest

By Nathaniel Gingery

January is always a big month for beer in Alaska. First, we had our industry reception meeting which was attended by around 80 members and guests. Big thanks to Eileen Levinson for sitting at the door for the duration and checking people in! Billy Opinsky gave an excellent talk about starting Humpy's and getting Alaska on the map as a beer landmark. It was great to get to learn that bit of Anchorage history and meet Billy who is a true gem. He also brought out some very old (and still tasty!) beers from his private reserve.

The Alaska Craft Brew and Barleywine festival was also a big hit. There were more than 60 breweries represented with many delicious brews offered. If you were there Saturday afternoon, you might have caught sight of some beer wizards wandering the floor... The winners were announced Saturday afternoon and the ones I got to try were truly deserving of the crown.

Winners of the Competition

Barleywines:

1. Glacier Brewhouse.
2. Midnight Sun.
- 3 Girdwood Brewing

Winter Warmers:

1. Devils Club.
2. Icicle Brewing.
3. 49th State Brewing

Congratulations to the winners and thanks to everyone who made it out, especially the volunteers pouring for the three sessions!



Membership - February 2026

By Steve Johnson

At the beginning of February 2026, the fourth month of the club's current membership year, GNBC had 87 annual members and 40 Lifetime members. Last year at this time, the counts were 103 annual members and 39 Lifetime members. In December 2025, only 5 annual dues payments were received, compared to 16 in December 2024 and 16 in December 2023. At least in theory, December payments are associated with anticipated attendance at members only events, the Christmas Party and the Industry Meeting in January. Perhaps bad weather in December and "Dry January" had something to do with those numbers.

National and local brewing clubs have reported membership declines for several years. Each year about 30 percent of our members do not renew their annual membership. Of the 147 annual members in 2023-2024, 47 did not renew in 2024-2025 (17 couples and 13 single memberships). Of the 115 members in 2024-2025, 33 have not yet renewed in the current year (7 couples, 19 singles).

People do not renew for many reasons. People quit brewing or quit drinking or drink less. People move or get new, more demanding jobs. Members may drop because they rarely attend meetings. Some may want a

more formal approach to evaluating and commenting on the beers shared at meetings. Whatever the reason that members do not renew, new and returning members typically replace them. These days, however, some people are more interested in less structured groups for socializing and information exchange than with formal clubs with meetings and dues and newsletters. That is a distinct challenge for an incorporated club with meetings and dues and a newsletter.

For my part, I will continue to closely watch our membership numbers from month to month and report what I learn. I will also engage with newcomers at meetings and encourage them to return for the next meeting. I am looking forward to the February club meeting at Magnetic North Brewing Company, a change of pace from our normal meetings. (I will bring an empty, sanitized keg for the wort share.) I am still reading and taking notes in preparation for the discussion of Gruit at the March meeting and determining what I will bring to the the equipment and book swap at the April meeting. For discussions of "How to Help Your Homebrew Club Thrive" the American Homebrewers Associations offers presentations from recent conferences and a forum open to all, including those who do not belong to AHA. Sometime along that timeline, the melting of snow, and some shovel work, will permit me to brew in the backyard again.

Magnetic North – Group Brew – February 17

by Cody Baggett

The February GNBC Meeting will be held on Tuesday Feb. 17 at Magnetic North Brewing, 8861 Golovin St, Anchorage. Brewery will be closed to the public. This is a PRIVATE EVENT.



Owner/brewer Jeremiah Christian will be creating a wort with the club. He will lead preparation of A Kolsch wort from Superior Pilsen and Vienna malt, with Azacca hops. Take home your wort, ferment, and we can share the finished products at the April meeting.

- Bring: Containers to take home 5 gallons of wort. A Keg or Plastic container recommended. Glass at your own risk
- Bring: \$10 donation for ingredients if you are taking wort or just want to help with the cost
- Bring: Snacks & brews

Come by after 6pm if you want to engage in the brew.

Meeting at 7pm!

Beer Tasting and Palate Training Class 2026

by Kevin Sobolesky

What it is:

We are hosting a beer tasting class that will teach you all about classic beer styles and train your palate to appreciate beer!

We'll meet on Sundays for a couple hours to enjoy light, fun lectures on topics covering beer history, ingredients, processes, and off-flavors. During each class, we will have guided tastings of classic beers to train your palate and learn about the wide variety



of beer styles. By the end of the course, you will have tasted over 25 classic beers! This class is perfect for beer fans, homebrewers, servers, distributors, and package store employees.

How to sign up: Contact Kevin at metkonig@gmail.com.

The class is capped at 40 people, on a first come first serve basis. We will start a waiting list if anyone does not show up for the first class (usually a safe bet to have a few no-shows). If you have any questions please direct them to Kevin.

Where: King Street Brewing Co. 9050 King St, Anchorage, AK 99515

Cost: \$50 per person due at the first class

When: Sundays at 5pm, starting on February 15

Current schedule:

February 15, 22
March 1, 8, 15, 22



BJCP examinations are BACK! (Reprint from November)

By Ira Edwards

I took my BJCP class in Anchorage over 20 years ago, and with all of my activities, have been a nationally ranked judge for about that long. It was a great experience, and I have since taken wine and cider judging courses in Alaska and out of state, and I can say that the Beer Judge Certification Program curriculum is the most in-depth thing out there for judging beers, meads, and ciders. For many years, I helped teach a few of the topics in the BJCP courses run by GNBC, but since COVID, I have been living out of town, so I lost touch with the classes. Well, it turns out that we have not run any BJCP exams to get people certified in quite some time. I aim to remedy that.

As a National Level Judge, I am qualified to administer the testing, and so I am going to get rolling on that. It has to be scheduled at least 4 months in advance, and not longer than 24 months in advance. So I am thinking about finding a set of dates after the ski season and before salmon and trout fishing season starts in June. I have some other GNBC members who are qualified to help proctor the exams and tastings, so what I really need now is a pretty solid list of people who have taken the classes and now want to take the exams. I can schedule a maximum of 12 students per exam, but there is a process to get a waiver to host a larger session. Since we have not held an exam for such a long time, I am confident that we can get the waiver. If I get a solid interest in 70 students who want to test, I will need to schedule another exam session later next year, after I am done with field work and hunting. LOL.

BJCP has a pretty awesome online study guide for the exam, and there is an online pre-test to allow you to be qualified to sign up for the certification exam and tasting. Please email me ASAP if you have interest in a spring 2026 exam or a fall 2026 exam, and when you took the BJCP classes. I need that information to register to host an exam session and possibly apply for a waiver to the class limit of 12 students. My Address is rooster.skier@gmail.com. I will be signing up with BJCP before the GNBC Christmas Party in December, so I will repost this article as a reminder a couple more times.

Cheers!

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors!



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