



THE

Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

March 2026

Contents of This Issue

The Prez Sez

February Meeting

Turnagain Tarside Challenge

National Homebrew Day

Beer Research - Gruits

Beer Tripping 26

Talkeetna Tastings

Banff Film Festival

Next Meeting

49th State Brewing March 17

GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

GNBC WEBSITE

www.GreatNorthernBrewers.org

CoPRESIDENTS

Elizabeth Greer

Scott Clendaniel

president@greatnorthernbrewers.org

VICE PRESIDENT

//Ira Edwards

vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org

TREASURER

Zack Quam

treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org

SECRETARY

Nathaniel Gingery

secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Steve Johnson

membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gwen Higgins 2026-2028

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

My gruit is bottled and my Magnetic North "creation" is happily bubbling away. Looking forward to seeing how these experiments turn out at our March meeting!

With Tartside Challenge and Denali Wort share coming up, we should have no problem filling our bottles for some summer fun! Meantime, I am planning brewing a West Coast Pale Ale. I am going to try to clone the discontinued Alaskan Freeride. It may not have been the most impressive beer they have ever done, but it was a solid "go to" for me.

Beer Trippin is coming up in April. A bigger event this year with a film festival and 5k run happening too! See the articles in this newsletter and more information to come on this event.

Don't forget to start collecting your gear for the April SWAP! Always a good opportunity to get rid of some of your excess and take home someone else's!

Scott has been traveling a bit so I expect some good beer reviews from him at the next meeting, -Liz

Upcoming events:

March 6 & 13 - Turnagain Tartside Challenge pickup. See article in the Newsletter

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

April 10-12 Beer Trippin! Get your hotels!

April 21 Meeting (Tuesday) – 7pm Gear Swap

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

February Meeting Magnetic North

The February GNBC Meeting was held on Tuesday Feb. 17 at Magnetic North Brewing. The brewery was closed to the public which let us have a club meeting and social time. Owner/brewer Jeremiah Christian created a Kolsh wort with the club. He led preparation of A Kolsch wort from Superior Pilsen and Vienna malt. Several members took home some wort to create creations of their own to be sampled and compared, and maybe Jeremiah might brew yours!



Enter the Turnagain Brewing Tartside Challenge!

Turnagain Brewing is once again partnering with GNBC to sponsor the Tartside Challenge. The brewery provides entrants with a gallon of the base they use for many of their sour beers to customize as creatively (and deliciously) as possible. The provision of the sour base and small batch size makes this a great competition for those just getting into brewing or competing.



How to Enter:

1. Pick up entry form when you pick up your wort.
2. Come by Turnagain April 4, 5-7 pm or April 5, 3-5 pm to pick up your wort.

Judging:

Sample everyone's creations and vote for your favorite at the May 19 Meeting which will be held at Turnagain Brewing. Turnagain will brew the winning beer, or as close to it as possible, given the larger scale.

Celebrate National Homebrew Day with GNBC and Arctic Brewing Supply

Saturday May 2nd, 2026, 10:00am-4:00pm (more or less)

What will GNBC members brew on May 2nd in celebration of National Homebrew Day, proclaimed and celebrated since 1988? The March-April issue of Zymurgy provides suggestions from the American Homebrewers Association:

- Monk's Ration Trappist-Style Single, 5.6% abv, 75% efficiency
- George & Aaron's Pre-Prohibition Porter, 5.6% abv, 75% efficiency
- Dark Cellar Imperial Stout, 9.9% abv, 49% efficiency.

Beers based on these recipes won gold medals at the National Homebrew Conference. Full recipes for all grain and extract versions are freely available at

<https://homebrewersassociation.org/aha-events/big-brew-national-homebrew-day>.

With a toast to Ninkasi, the event on May 2nd will begin about 10:00 AM, in the driveway behind Arctic Brewing Supply. Participants should bring burners (or extension cords for electric systems), brewing pots, and containers for transporting wort. Metal containers, such as cornie kegs, are recommended. Water for brewing and cooling are available on site, as are grain mills. Brewing and cleanup should conclude by late afternoon. Arctic Brewing Supply has generously hosted celebrations of National Homebrew day. As on other occasions, Lisa Peltola and Peter Dohm have provided advice and on the spot troubleshooting that have spared more than one brewer from partial or complete disaster.

Beer Research

By Rick Levinson

Gruit and the Catholic Church

Well buckaroos, it's Gruit Month here at GNBC. Gruit is enjoying a modern resurgence among homebrewers and at a number of craft breweries. People are re-discovering its virtues, flavors, and health, and pleasurable qualities. But let's go back to an earlier time when gruit was much more popular and much more profitable. And, let's look at who manipulated its strings.

By the time of the Renaissance, the Catholic Church had built up immense power, wealth, and prestige, and it had massive control over society, and took on an outsized role in people's lives. The Church displayed this in many ways: magnificent cathedrals, abundant gold and silver, luxurious silks and fabrics, elaborate painting, wood, and stone art, extensive libraries, and major holidays and feasts. And of course, the Church had a booming business in wine, and herb-spiced beer production. The ancient druids and pagans in Europe may have



developed herb-spiced fermented beverages, but those toiling Catholic monks took those recipes to new heights and marketability. And folks lapped it up.

The Church came to endorse the beer called gruit which incorporated a variety of grains as well as a blend of herbs, spices, and botanicals, but it did not include hops. Adjuncts used included juniper berries, ivy, bog myrtle, yarrow, mugwort, and wild rosemary, as well as other herbs and flowers, but also comprised a number of more exotic spices like ginger and cinnamon. Many of the mostly Catholic southern European countries, supplied ingredients to make gruit. And demand for its spices motivated the need to find more economic trade routes to the Spice Islands in the Far East. We all know what that led to.

In Medieval Europe, the relationship between gruit beer and the Catholic Church was one of financial monopoly and moral authority. The Catholic Church, along with some local nobility, held the exclusive right to produce and sell the herbal and spice mixtures through what was called the *Gruitrecht* or gruit right. The Church had cartel-like control over gruit beer, and held a monopoly over its ingredients, production, and transportation. Gruit herb-spice blend was mandated for all beer, and the Church used it as a primary vehicle for taxation.

Catholic orders of monks were the primary innovators of the gruit craft. Monks brewed beer for sustenance during fasting periods like Lent, viewing it as "liquid bread" that could be consumed while abstaining from solid food. Unlike water, gruit beer was safe to drink, provided needed nutrients and calories, and the spices and herbs had many delicious, healing, and sometimes psychotropic qualities. Monasteries brewed gruit beer for themselves as well as for traveling pilgrims. Soon, word spread about the virtues of gruit, and monasteries began supplying gruit to nearby villages, and then along trade routes. It gained popularity; people appreciated the flavors, and medicinal and pleasurable qualities of gruit. The *Gruitrecht* and associated taxation proved very lucrative for the Catholic Church.



To further popularize gruit, the Church canonized a number of saints, like Saint Arnold of Soissons who encouraged people to drink gruit beer instead of contaminated water during the plague. Saint Hildegard of Bingen, a prominent 12th-century abbess and one of the very few female Doctors of the Church, famously warned that hops "weigh down" the soul and make one sad, while the spice-herbal gruit blends were sometimes associated with more euphoric or aphrodisiac effects. In an ironic twist, she is considered a patron saint of hop-growers, because she may have been the first to write about the role of hops as a preservative to stop putrefaction and lengthen beer durability.

Well, nothing good lasts forever, even for some aspects of the Catholic Church. Church leaders eventually got drunk on their power and wealth (and their gruit). There were abuses, indulgences, corruption, and immorality committed by Church leaders, which caused disillusionment and resentment among many clergy and followers.

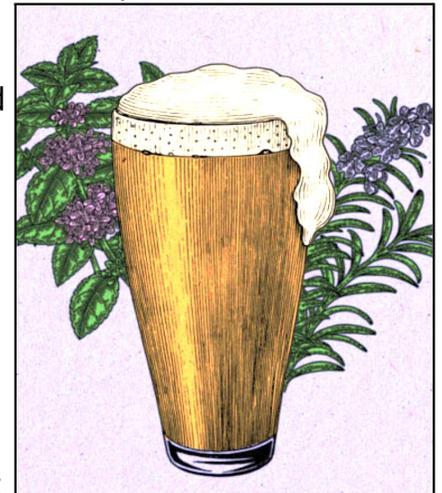
Followers were also tired of paying high prices for their beer and of drinking the same old Church-sanctioned herb-spice blend beer. Those were different times compared to now. Instead of

instigating a wave of homebrewing or stimulating a craft beer revolution, the Catholic Church's abuses led to historically devastating events and permanent change, which included:

- A schism in which many priests, monks, and followers rebelled and left the Church.
- The Reformation movement and rise of Protestant faiths.
- The Thirty Years War in Europe and millions of deaths from battle, famine, and disease.
- An associated economic depression in much of Europe that lasted 200 years.
- The transformation and popularity of using hops in beer instead of spices and herbs.

As part of the Reformation, Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther, and many merchants sought to break the Church's financial power by switching to hopped beer. The Church considered hops "a northern weed", and did not tax them. Thus, hops were not controlled by the Church and were much cheaper to use in beer. Hops grew in the cooler climates of central and northern Europe where much of the Reformation took hold.

The adoption of hopped beer, especially in Germany, became a way to avoid taxing authorities. Making the shift from herbs and spices in beer to hops not only added a variety of flavors and longevity to beer, it also became a form of economic, political, and religious resistance. The *Reinheitsgebot*, or German Beer Purity Law of 1516, decreed that beer could only be made with water, barley, and hops (yeast was added later). Using other herbs and spices in beer was strictly *verboten*. The Hanseatic League, a well-established commercial and defensive network of merchant guilds and market towns throughout Central and Northern Europe, readily traded and distributed hopped beers. The preeminence of hopped beer had begun.



The fall from grace of gruit and rise of Protestant religion in much of central and northern Europe, caused the Catholic Church to backtrack on its widespread promotion of gruit beer. Fortunately for us, it didn't disappear. Many Belgian, abbey, holiday, and other specialty beers carry on the tradition of adding spices and herbs in beer. And, those Catholic orders of monks, and now sisters too, are still brewing, innovating, and tirelessly toiling to bring some of the most heavenly beer ever made to thirsty discerning beer enthusiasts everywhere.

Beer Trippin' 2026: Bigger Brews, Bigger Views, Bigger Weekend

By Mike Cragen

Clear your calendar and prep your kegs. Beer Trippin' in Talkeetna is back April 10–12, and this year's weekend is shaping up to be one for the record books.

If you make it to one out-of-town beer event this year, this is it.

Hosted by Denali Brewing Company, Beer Trippin' isn't your typical beer festival. This weekend is all about homebrewers, creativity, collaboration, and celebrating the art of fermentation in the shadow of Denali. Less velvet ropes, more mash paddles. Less polished taps, more passion.



The Golden Carboy Homebrew Competition

Denali Brewing will once again host the Golden Carboy Homebrew Competition during the weekend. This is not a BJCP competition, so relax and let your creativity roam. We're looking for three 12 oz bottles or the equivalent amount of beer or cider.

You do not need to attend Beer Trippin' to enter.

There are two ways to submit:

- Drop off at the Denali Brewpub Brew Hall (Main Street) from 6–9pm on Friday, April 10
- Bring them to Mike Cragen's house on or before Tuesday, April 7

Call/text Mike at 907-250-4818 to coordinate.

The winner of the Golden Carboy will team up with Denali Brewing Company to brew the headlining beer or cider for next year's Beer Trippin'. No pressure.

How about Free Wort?

DBC is again providing up to 10 gallons of post-boil wort to GNBC members. You finish it your way. Wild yeast? Clean lager? Hop bomb? Belgian funk experiment? Go for it.

If you receive wort, it is expected that you bring your finished creation to the Tuesday, May 19th GNBC meeting (location TBD). Denali Brewing will be there sampling.

To get wort:

- You must collect it in Talkeetna during Beer Trippin'
- Provide your own sanitized vessel (no glass carboys)
- RSVP with Mike at mikecragen@yahoo.com
- Kegs must be delivered to Mike's house on or before Tuesday, April 7

This is one of the most fun parts of the weekend. Shared wort, wildly different outcomes. It's fermentation storytelling.

New This Year: Film, Spirits, and a Marketplace

We're adding even more reasons to make a full weekend of it.

The Denali Arts Council will host Banff Film Festival screenings on Friday and Saturday night.

On Saturday, after Sassan's spirit talk, the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge will host a marketplace and mini beer festival. Local vendors, great pours, mountain views, and plenty of reasons to linger a little longer.

More details on both of these events will be coming in the April newsletter, so stay tuned.

Make It a Weekend

Beer Trippin' is family-friendly and full of energy. Bring your spouse, your friends, even the dog. Talkeetna has plenty of lodging, but book early before your favorite spot disappears.

Good beer, good company, mountain air, film festival energy, and creative chaos bubbling in fermenters across the state.

Beer Trippin' 2025 is already generating buzz. If you have questions, contact Mike at 907-250-4818.

Now go check your airlocks.

Cheers, Mike

Beer Trippin' 2026 - Talkeetna Tastings - Denali Brewing

By Brad Wakefield

April 11 @1pm

at the Foraker Restaurant Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge

23601 Talkeetna Spur Rd, Talkeetna, AK

\$65.00 per person Prepaid *Gratuity Included



About the experience

Élevage is the art of transforming a spirit from its rawest form into its highest expression through cask maturation, blending, filtration, and proofing.

Join Denali Spirits Head Distiller Sassan for a guided journey through the evolution of American Single Malt Whiskey. Beginning with new make spirit, we'll move layer by layer through maturation and cask influence — exploring grain-to-glass production, best practices in barrel management, and the impact of Pedro Ximénez and Oloroso sherry cask finishing across five curated tasting samples.

The evening culminates with the debut tasting of Denali Spirits' 6-Year-Old Distiller's Select American Single Malt Whiskey.



https://www.opentable.com/booking/experiences-availability?rid=1287889&restref=1287889&experienceId=653138&utm_source=external&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=shared

Banff 50th Film Festival in Talkeetna

Although not part of Beer Trippin, this event will also be going on if you need a break from brews! Get off the beaten path and push the edge of the believable with captivating stories from the 50th Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival, coming to the Sheldon Community Arts Hangar. Two separate film screenings on Friday and Saturday evenings, April 10 & 11.

Stand on the highest peaks, ski the steepest slopes, and join the gripping adventures featured in this year's Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour. From remote landscapes to adrenaline-fueled action sports, the films selected for the 2026 World Tour will thrill, inspire, and leave you in awe.

This stop on the World Tour is proudly hosted by Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge, The Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce, and the Denali Arts Council.

<https://denaliartscouncil.org/banff-filmfestival/>

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors!



MAGNETIC
NORTH
BREWING COMPANY



THE **Odom** CORPORATION



TURNAGAIN BREWING
OLD WORLD TRADITION... THE ALASKAN WAY



La Bodega

