



THE

Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

May 2026

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Contact information via our website

The Prez Sez

By Elizabeth "Liz" Greer and Scott Clendaniel

Hello Great Northern Brewers,

April's meeting was a great one, with a decent turnout and plenty going on. As president, I had the pleasure of running the meeting and seeing a lot of good energy from the club.

We kicked things off with a gear swap, which brought out a surprisingly large amount of equipment. Everything from small parts to a half dozen corny kegs and a few kettles! It was one of the more active swaps we've had in a while.

We also heard a review of Beer Trippin' in Talkeetna, with highlights from those who made the trip and a reminder that it's always worth getting out and exploring Alaska's beer scene.

The main event of the night was a wort share tasting hosted by Jeremiah from Magnetic North Brewing. Brewers put their own spin on the same base wort, a Kolsch, and the results were impressive across the board. After judging, co-president Liz Greer took first place with her standout Belgian version.

Looking ahead:

- * May 2 – Big Brew Day at ABS
- * May Meeting at Turnagain Brewing – Tartside Challenge (reminder - no outside beer)
- * June 6 – Brewbies Run
- * 4th of July – Campout at John Craig's, Talkeetna parade float, and Denali wort share contest
- * State Fair Homebrew Competition - August
- * Kodiak Trip – details coming soon

Thanks to everyone who came out, brought gear, shared beer, and made it a fun night.

Cheers,

Scott Co-Prez

Talkeetna Beer Trippin' 2026

By Elizabeth "Liz" Greer and Mike Cragen

Friday afternoon weather was a little rough, but it cleared up just in time for a nice, (mostly) dry weekend. The Golden Carboy drop-off and meet-and-greet at the Denali Brewpub was an enjoyable start, with plenty of delicious homebrews and a chance to catch up with everyone (and quietly start sizing up the competition).



Saturday morning kicked off with Golden Carboy judging and breakfast at the Swiss Inn. This was followed by a bonfire and bottle share at the Cragen cabin, which turned into one of the highlights of the weekend. It was so much fun that three members barely made it to the Whiskey Discussion—cutting it close, but still technically on time. I (Liz) was a little late myself after deciding to "run" (more like jog and walk up the hill) in the inaugural Soggy Sneaker 5K. Yes, the shoes definitely lived up to the name.

A special treat this year was the Craft Marketplace and Mini Beer Festival at the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge. There were some great Mat-Su brews, interesting vendor booths, good music, and even a free sauna—because nothing pairs with a cold beer quite like voluntarily sitting in a hot box.



The Golden Carboy winner was announced Saturday evening at the Denali Brewpub downtown, and Andre Koehrer had an impressive showing, nearly sweeping the awards.

- Golden Carboy: 3-Berry Cider – Andre Koehrer
- BOS: Czech Dark Lager – Andre Koehrer
- 2nd Place: Hazy – Andre Koehrer
- Honorable Mention: St. John's Wort Gruit – Liz Greer

A big thank you to Denali Brewing Company for once again supporting the club in a major way, including providing GNBC members with 85 gallons of pre-hopped Twister Creek wort. That's a lot of potential beer—and we're looking forward to seeing what everyone turns it into.



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After Sunday breakfast at Latitude 62, a few of us wandered around town. I even got to meet the new “mayor,” Wendell (he is a dog, and arguably the most qualified candidate).

Around noon, we had wort pick-up and a tour of Denali Brewing & Distillery. A few of us managed to grab one more brew for the road before heading out—strictly for quality control purposes.



Looking ahead, July 3rd will be the fermentation share during the GNBC campout in Talkeetna. Everyone is encouraged to bring their finished beers, or send a couple bottles along, for tasting and sharing. Bragging rights will go to the People’s Choice winner, so choose your yeast wisely.

More information to come.

Cheers, Liz and Mike

April Meeting Recap: Magnetic North & Gear Swap

The April Meeting was very active, luckily we had the theatre for it. Thanks to Magnetic North and Owner/brewer Jeremiah Christian for the wort share. There were many brews, and very different styles on the people’s choice! Every beer got at least 7 votes - all were good - Tops picks were Cody Baggett’s Kveik (3rd), Andre Koehrer’s Strawberry (2nd), and Liz Greer’s Belgian (1st). Thanks to all who participated and good work! Gear swap was a big success with a lot of people donating used gear and others picking up some needed equipment. Thanks to all who donated!

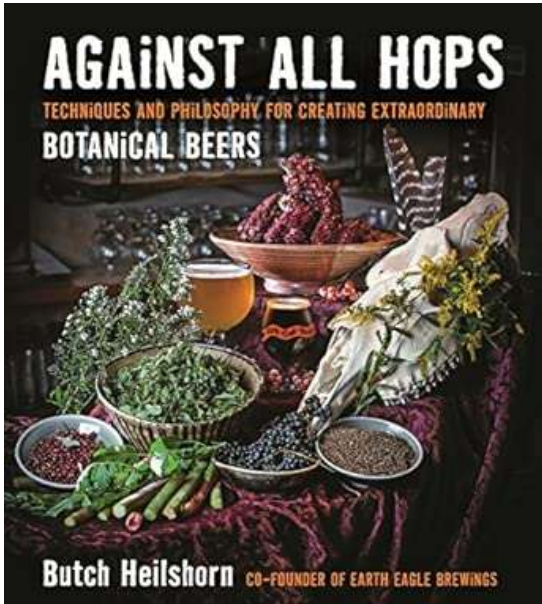


**MAGNETIC
NORTH**
BREWING COMPANY

Reading About Beer & Brewing Gruit Revisited

By Steve Johnson

Stephen Harrod Buhner, *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: the Secrets of Ancient Fermentation*. Isis Books, an imprint of Brewers publications, 1998. 534 p. Chapter 7, Psychotropic and highly inebriating beers.



What was Gruit? Stephen Harrod Buhner provides this description in chapter seven of *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers*, p. 169.

“Gruit (or sometimes grut) was, primarily, a combination of three mild to moderately narcotic herbs: sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), also called bog myrtle, yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and wild rosemary (*Ledum palustre*), also called marsh rosemary. Gruit varied somewhat, each gruit producer adding additional herbs to produce unique tastes, flavors, and effects. Other adjunct herbs were juniper berries, ginger, caraway seed, aniseed, nutmeg, and cinnamon (most, themselves, having psychotropic properties). The exact formula for each gruit was, like that for Coca Cola, proprietary—a closely guarded secret.”

Each chapter of the book includes extensive information on the herbs and other botanicals in each recipe. Chapter seven includes all grain recipes for a generic Gruit Ale, based on a fourteenth century account, and more contemporary takes on Myrica ale, Wild Rosemary Ale, Yarrow Beer, Wormwood Ale, Sage Ale, Clary Sage Ale, (Scotch) Broom Ale, Henbane Ale, Mandrake Beer, Darnel Beer, Safron Ale, and Wild Lettuce Ale.

Other chapters of this 534 page book describe beers prepared using plant and tree sources other than those described as Gruit in chapter seven.

Stephen Harrod Buhner (1952-2022) was an herbalist who wrote more than twenty books fairly described as New Age works on herbs, natural medicine, plant intelligence, spiritualism, and ecology. *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers* is of interest to brewers and beer fans despite Buhner’s background and some of the statements in this book. Buhner was not a graduate of Siebel Institute or a university brewing program or a former employee of a major or minor brewery. He wrote that he had no use for the emphasis on cleanliness and sanitation found in most ‘how to brew’ manuals. In an Author’s Note on the Text, Buhner wrote: “Since so many people keep asking: No, I haven’t made all these beers. But I have made more than one.”

Nonetheless, Brewers Publications has kept *Sacred and Herbal Healing* in print for more than twenty-five years. I purchased a copy, even though I had already read several chapters of the book at the public library. And I am not a New Age kind of guy. I thought the book was well written, a volume I wanted on my shelf of beer books

Buhner does not emphasize Gruit as a mandatory tax on beer brewing. His emphasis is on Gruit purported usefulness in preserving and enhancing beer.



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In a list of "Herbal Brewing Tips" Dave Bonta, author of the website Herbalbrewing.com, wrote about Buhner's book: "kind of unavoidable, but should be used with caution, as it perpetuates a number of historical myths, contains a certain amount of woo, and completely neglects the malt side of brewing--but also includes lots of great old recipes and is a treasure trove of ethnographic material difficult to find elsewhere." To that balanced assessment, I add that I found Buhner's book a pleasure to read – after reading one of his chapters, I was ready to read another chapter, regardless of whether I agreed with everything the author wrote.

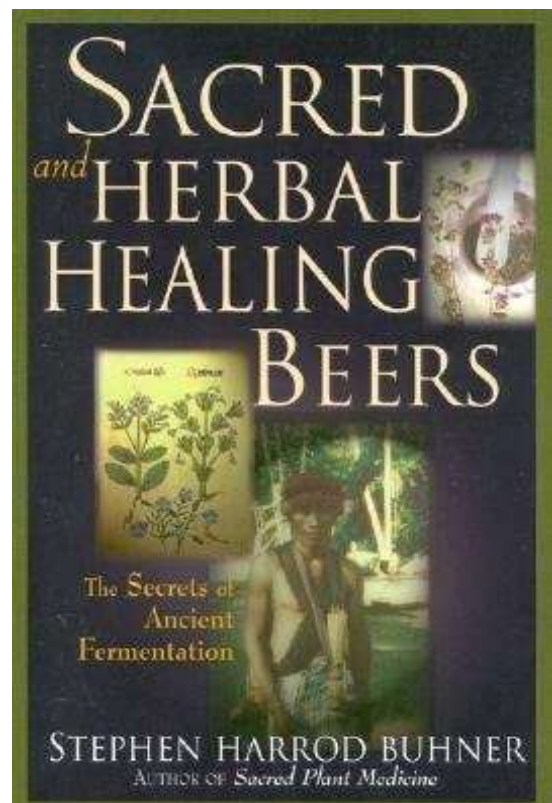
Butch Heilhorn. *Against All Hops: Techniques and Philosophy for Creating Extraordinary Botanical Beers*. Page Street Publishing, 2017. 143 p.

Butch Heilhorn writes from a professional brewer's perspective. He is or was co-owner of Earth Eagles Brewing in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a brewpub that specialized in ales brewed with Gruit rather than hops. The book consists of twelve chapters, each chapter describing a particular brew and the herbs and other substances used in place of hops. The recipes are all grain, as brewed at Earth Eagles Brewing, scaled to a five gallon batch. The book includes tasting notes from the brewer and reviews of beers from beeradvocate.com and untappd.com.

For each of the chapters/recipes, here listed are the herbs and other ingredients used in place of hops, though two recipes include hops. Another recipe includes "boar or pigs head."

Exhilaration – sweet gale, wild rosemary, yarrow
Bloomers –wormwood, elder flowers, dandelion flowers, sage flowers, black locust flowers
Chaga Groove -chaga, yarrow
Monkey Weed-Japanese knotweed, hibiscus, spikenard
Black Adder – milk stout with Labrador tea, star anise; also includes hops
Pop! IPA -an IPA made with cottonwood buds as well as hops
Chinese Rock – juniper berries, sweet gale, wild rosemary
Gallows Harvest-blessed thistle, spikenard, wild betony, gentian
Drakonia – heather flowers, elder flowers, mandrake root
Porter Cochon – boar or pigs head, sage, lemongrass, culinary lavender
Connie Ferale – chaga, spruce tips, pine candles
Birthday Boy – burdock root, immature spruce cones, motherwort, mugwort

Earth Eagles Brewings is now Earth Eagles Tavern and sells a variety of beers from other local brewers. Gruit beers are offered only on rotation. For the homebrewer looking for a selection of all grain Gruit recipes tested in a professional setting and including tasting notes, I recommend *Against All Hops*, rather than *Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers*. As a reading experience, I preferred Buhner's book. I'm happy to own both books.



May 2 - National Homebrew Day

By Steve Johnson

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.

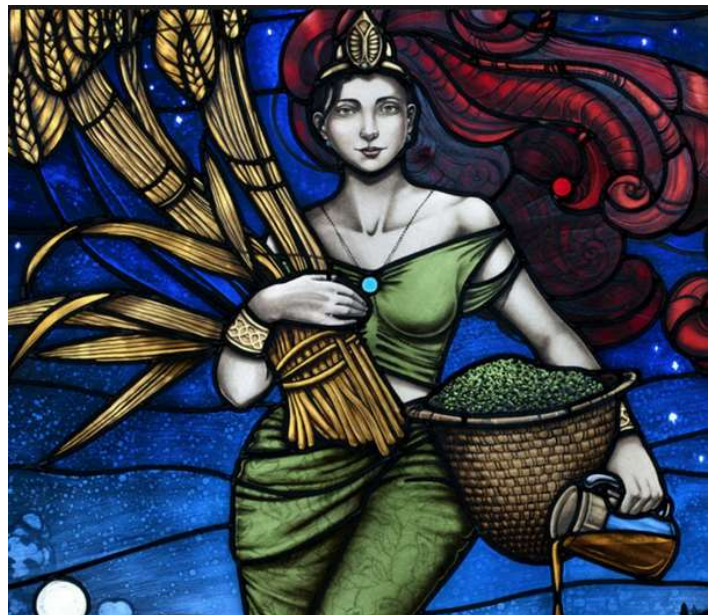
Beers based on these recipes won gold medals at the National Homebrew Conference. Full recipes for all grain and extract versions are freely available at

<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, 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.





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Celebrate National Homebrew Day

Saturday May 2, 2026

with the

Great Northern Brewers Club

and

Arctic Brewing

Supply!



8401 Sandlewood Place



In 1988, May 7 was announced before Congress as National Homebrew Day, and every year, the first Saturday in May recognizes this day!

Tentative Schedule: 10am to 4pm

10:15 am - Beer Toast

10:30 am – Brewing start including the Group Batch

1:00 pm – Beginner Batch

All skill levels welcome! Brew your own batch or join a group

RSVP: President@greatnorthernbrewers.org if you would like to **LEAD** a brew batch, **JOIN** a brew batch, **LEARN** to brew, or **DROP-IN** for the toast and/or support. Also if there is someone you would like to brew with.

What to bring: brew pot, brewing supplies, snacks/pot-luck, a drinking vessel, brews to share, and if weather is nasty – canopies appreciated.

The group batch will be a pre-Prohibition Porter: "Commercially brewed in Philadelphia during the revolutionary period, the beer gained wide acceptance in the newly formed mid-Atlantic states and was endorsed by President George Washington". More information on the recipe at:

<https://homebrewersassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-Official-Big-Brew-Recipes.pdf>

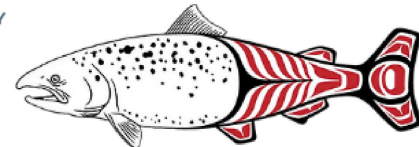
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