



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB  
APRIL 2018

## State of the Brewnion

by *Mike Cragen*

March had all of the ingredients for a phenomenal beer month. We started off with the Fur Rondy Homebrew Competition, which had an extremely impressive turnout with 54 entries and 26 judges. Congrats to the following brewers for a great showing:

Best of Show – Christophe Venot – Berliner Weisse

2nd overall – Hanseath (Dan & Geno) – Imperial Stout

3rd overall – Jeremiah Christian – Golden Sour

Brewer's Choice – Christophe Venot – Berliner Weisse (49<sup>th</sup> State has graciously agreed to make the Berliner next fall/early winter)



Talkeetna Beer Trippin' was completely revamped this year and was a blast for all! We owe a huge thanks to Denali Brewing Company for hosting the weekend and being so incredibly supportive of GNBC and Alaska's homebrewers. There were two competitions in Talkeetna. Equinox Mead & Cider Competition received 36 entries. Here's the winner's circle:

BOS - John Trapp - Raspberry Mead

2nd Overall - Christophe Venot - English Cider

3rd Overall - John Trapp - Sarsaparilla Vanilla Spiced Mead

The Golden Carboy Beer Competition in Talkeetna was organized by DBC. This was a non-BJCP competition that also received 36 entries. Four awards were presented:

BOS - Rick Levinson - Czech Amber Lager

Golden Carboy - Mike Cragen - Weizenbock

Most Creative - Brian Hall - Beet Lambic

Honorable Mention - Brian Hall - Imperial Stout with coffee & honey

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During Beer Trippin' DBC generously provided each club member with up to 10 gallons of their Grove IPA wort. They are interested to see what magic we can impart into their creation. Combined, we collected 110 gallons from DBC in this collaboration. I've heard talk of all sorts of plans for this wort . . . spruce tips, juniper berries, sour, funky, and more. DBC is coming to our May meeting to try our creations and compare/contrast with their Grove IPA. Be sure to put the May GNBC meeting on your calendar, whether you're bringing your creation to share or just there to sample others' brews.

Our gratitude goes out to John Trapp for organizing and overseeing the Equinox Competition. The breakdown of specific categories for all three comps were emailed out to the club. Current HBOTY race results can be found at: <https://greatnorthernbrewers.org/hboty/>

Here's a complete list of all upcoming GNBC events:

April 17<sup>th</sup> – Monthly meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Co. 7pm - Educational session with Brian Hall on NEIPA's

April 28<sup>th</sup> – Spring Breakup Open Beer Competition at Resolution Brewing Co.

May 5<sup>th</sup> – Brew-a-thon hosted by Kevin Sobeleski

May 15<sup>th</sup> – Monthly meeting at 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Co. 7pm – DBC will be attending to try our Beer Trippin' collaboration brews

May 17<sup>th</sup> – Haines Homebrew Competition entry due date. Bottle drop-off at Arctic anytime on/before May 17.

May 25-26<sup>th</sup> – Haines Beer Festival and Homebrew Competition

June 15-17<sup>th</sup> – Camping at Trail River (Moose Pass)





A huge shout-out goes to Christophe Venot for his terrific educational presentation on sour and funky beers during our March meeting. I learned a lot . . . and was impressed that he could work in a slide of a goat eating a lemon. The April educational speaker is Brian Hall, who will be presenting on New England IPAs. Although he probably won't be discussing lemon-eating goats, he will be bringing a vast knowledge of the history, ingredients, processes, and common characteristics of this immensely popular style.

The first annual Spring Breakup Open Homebrew Competition at Resolution Brewing Company will go down on April 28<sup>th</sup>. This is not a BJCP comp, so beers do not have to fit within specific guidelines. The judging at this event will focus on creativity, drinkability, and overall impression. All are welcome and encouraged to come judge. If you haven't been a part of any competitions before, this is the perfect starting point. No time like the present! Specific details about drop-off location, quantity, and judging format will be emailed to club members soon.

The Final Wort (the last batch I brewed) is a Belgian Witbier. Brewing Witbier is an obvious sign in my house that summer is right around the corner. This recipe is 50% wheat based, Willamette hops at 60 and 15 minutes. It's high on sweet orange peel with accompanying crushed coriander seeds. Fermentation temperature was set at 65°F and OG rang in at 1.054, while FG ended at 1.013. I'll have The Final Wort at the April meeting for you to sample and critique. Last month's Final Wort, the Weizenbock, was the Golden Carboy beer in Talkeetna. I'll have that for you to try at the April meeting as well.

Hope your brew is the yeast of your worries,  
BrewMikester Cragen



## Secretary's Corner



by *Jim O'Toole*

**A** good buddy of mine mentioned that he's always put Sears Diehard batteries in his cars and he wondered what he was going to do now that the Sears store here is closing.

My daughter-in-law is hoping the newborn accessories she got from Toys r Us when my first granddaughter was born on January 8 (you can congratulate me and buy me a beer at the next meeting) last for as long as she needs them because that store won't be around much longer for exchanges or refunds.

Will Amazon come and pick them up and refund their money? They do just about everything else in retail, except for helping the local guy and the communities where they do business.

I was thinking about this and, though I have purchased a lot of stuff through catalogs and on-line over the years, I really like the "Buy Local" idea. I think everyone does but, for some reason, there comes a time when we think in terms of our short term needs when making almost any kind of purchase these days.

I brewed a saison last year - my first - and it turned out pretty well I think. It was also the first beer I've brewed that did not contain a majority of locally bought ingredients. Like a lot of us, I subscribe to a number of on-line beer sites and one of them advertised a kit of everything needed to brew their most popular saison, except for the yeast, for \$31.99. I clicked through their checkout process and the shipping price was less than \$8.00 so I clicked that "Buy now" button really quick. A couple of months later they advertised another good deal on a kit but when I got to the shipping price it was \$34.00, something we here in Alaska are not unfamiliar with. I backed out of the deal and contacted the company by email and was told that the first deal was a "mistake" and that Alaska shipping prices should have applied. The next thing I clicked was the "unsubscribe" button on their email.

I'm not immune to the lure of saving a few bucks, but recently something I heard got me to wondering what I would do if I got to the point where I was a more meticulous brewer, checking specific gravity through every stage of a step mash, and being extremely precise about it all. Half way through, I drop and break my hydrometer. I live about 11 minutes from Arctic Brewing Supply and I know that because I have hustled there a couple of times in the middle of brewing when I absolutely couldn't do without because I either forgot, broke, or ruined something. So, I head to the shop on Sandalwood and, at 2:00PM on a Wednesday afternoon I find the door locked, the lights are off, and there is a note pinned to the door saying they are out of business and the owners have moved to Cuba. Amazon ain't gonna help me then.

The day after the January meeting of the GNBC I amazed myself by remembering a conversation I had with Pete Dohm, the owner of Arctic Brewing Supply. After that night, that conversation with Pete is about ALL I remember. I remembered having a great time of course.



I asked Pete how business was and he mentioned that a couple of years ago there were around forty customers in the store on a Friday and the Friday before the meeting there were four. He wasn't all that worried about it but I seem to remember that he was using "Amazon" almost as a cuss word. So, working around a hard-earned trip to Hawaii, I managed to corral Pete and his partner Lisa Peltola at Arctic Brewing Supply on a Saturday morning to talk about what we might have to face in the future regarding having a local business to provide us with things we need for our favorite hobby.

I got there at a little after their 10:00AM opening time, the "OPEN" sign was on, and the parking lot was empty. Pete and Lisa were there and Pete was putting an amazing device on the counter. For \$999.99 he'll sell you a stainless steel Grainfather, the same price you will get it ANYWHERE because the manufacturer subscribes to a Minimum Advertised Price (MAP) policy and would refuse to sell anymore product to Arctic Brewing or any of their buyers if they drop the price below the MAP. But that's not what I'm here for. Of course, it just occurred to me that having a shop like Arctic Brewing Supply around to browse around in and find things like this is one of the benefits of having a brick and mortar business to work with. You might find a Grainfather on line for cheaper than what Pete and Lisa sell it for but aside from having to live with your conscience after dealing with an unscrupulous scoundrel, what are ya gonna do when it breaks?

## MEETING SETUP

A - J Cleanup  
K - P Food  
R - Z Setup

A - J Food  
K - P Setup  
R - Z Cleanup

A - J Setup  
K - P Cleanup  
R - Z Food



That was one of the things the Pete and Lisa mentioned when they talked about the problems they have seen with the growth of Amazon and other on-line retailers. They pride themselves on their service and feel it is the number one thing they have to offer. For a few bucks they will even work on equipment purchased elsewhere. But I'd bet most of us haven't even noticed the small grimace they might expose when we tell them about how we are only in there to pick up some yeast for an on-line kit we bought.

You'd be surprised how many people go in there and admit they are comparing prices and you would be surprised to know how many of them admit that the prices at Arctic Brewing Supply are not all that far out of line with on-line prices. Pete mentioned that they sell a one-pound bag of corn sugar for \$1.99, the same price when they opened the original store on Lake Otis Parkway in 1992. Look THAT up on Amazon. Pete said that they used to get a lot of business from the bush but "Internet in the bush had a real effect." Consider what someone has to pay to ship 50 pounds of malt to Kotzebue and, if Amazon ships there for free, you might be considered foolish or worse if you didn't buy it from them. But that's the bush.

Pete and I talked about what some of what those few extra dollars we spend at Arctic Brewing might be buying. "Potholes filled in, Police Department, Fire Department, snow removal" were a few that Pete rattled off the top of his head. Lisa mentioned the number of jobs that are leaving the community with the closing of major retailers and, being astute business people they recognize the snowball effect of those losses and know how that can affect them.

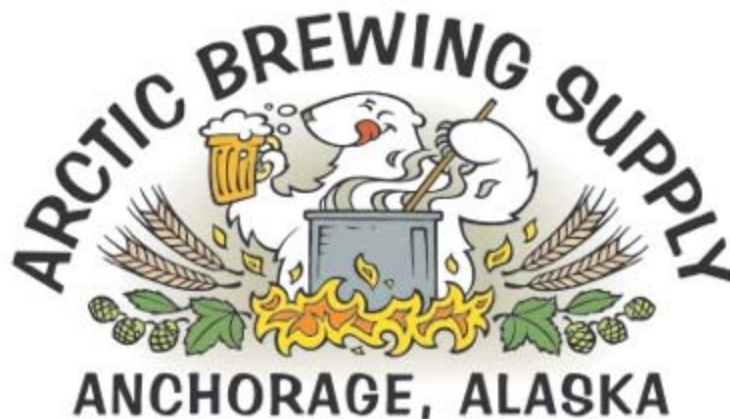
But when they told me that there are very few GNBC members shopping in their store, I was a little astounded. My kids are in their forties so I'm far beyond the point of trying to tell people what to do but...c'mon. Nearly every brewer in this town is using Amazon? For nearly everything? Pete and Lisa have been phenomenal supporters of the home brew movement in Alaska for 26 years. They offer us a discount on purchases. They give us fresh, quality ingredients. They give us friendly, personal service. They have taught many of us how to be better brewers. Do we want to lose this?

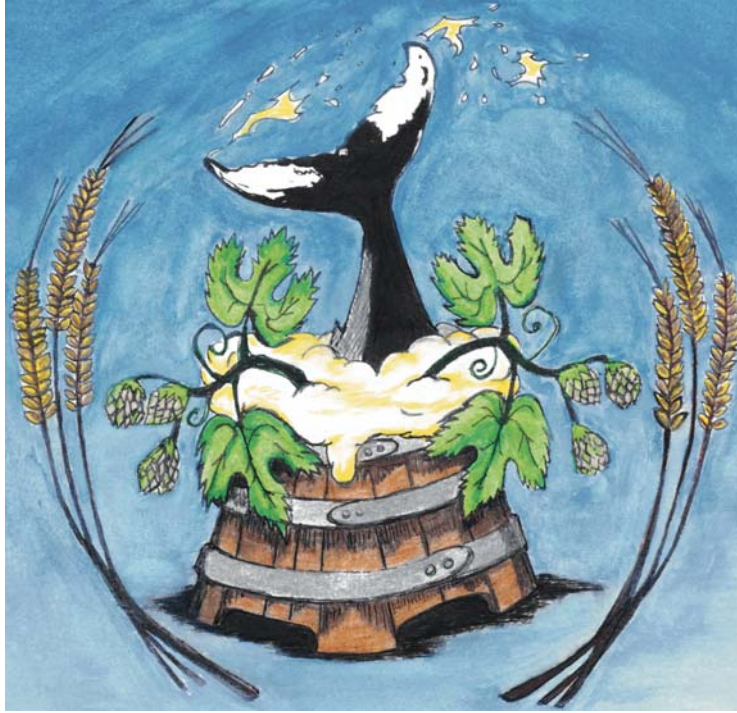
They don't.

Pete and Lisa are offering deals on pallet loads of base and specialty malts, both domestic and imported and hope people will take advantage of the deal. Keeping in mind that much of the market for what we use to brew beer is now owned by a single foreign, multi-national corporation, cutting the local guy out of a piece of the action is beginning to seem almost un-patriotic to me. I'd rather see my money go to fix potholes on Tudor Road than buy a Belgian company owner another box of Cuban cigars. But that's me.

I was in the store for about 45 minutes and three customers came in during that time. I hope that's a good sign for a good day. Although he was a little less positive in January, Pete says they will survive as businesspeople and that they don't want to change anything their customers don't want them to change.

They would just like to see a few more people stop by and talk to them about it.





## Brewathon 2018

*by Kevin Sobolesky*

Hello Brewers!

This year's Brewathon will take place on Saturday May 5th. As some of you know, and others might not, Brewathon is where homebrewers gather to brew beer outdoors, share their skills, knowledge, and even a homebrew or two.

Anyone who is interested in bringing their gear and brewing a batch is welcome! Anyone who wants to observe and learn about beer making is welcome! Random passers by and stray pets are welcome!

As is tradition, we will be grilling up many savory treats and food items. We encourage attendees to contribute to the potluck with a side dish for your fellow brewers.

Free yeast will be available for people to use (It will be a neutral Ale yeast).

The event is being held at 9551 Emerald Street. This is at the very west end of Dimond Blvd in South Anchorage between Jewel Lake Road and Sand Lake Road. Turn onto Emerald Street heading south (left turn if you're heading west coming from Jewel Lake) and it's the one-story split level where Emerald Street ends at Jade Street. We will have some extension cords for pumps as well as a network of garden hoses for cleaning and filling. Note that we will have a carbon filter on the hose bib but separate hoses for cleaning, so if in doubt, please ask "is this water dechlorinated?" We have no desire to produce any chlorophenols if we can help it.

We will start setting up at 8AM, with the invocation and kick-off at 9AM, and tear down and clean up at 5PM.

If you are interested in teaching or partnering with a new brewer or a couple of brewers, please email me at [metkonig@gmail.com](mailto:metkonig@gmail.com) with the style of beer you are making, whether it's All-Grain or extract, and how many people you would be interested in hosting. It's fun to share our hobby with new people, and there are people out there who don't even know they want to brew their own beer yet! Let's give them the chance.

Likewise, if you are looking to be taught how to brew and/or have no gear, please email me at [metkonig@gmail.com](mailto:metkonig@gmail.com) and I will do my best to set you up with a brewer and/or gear.

This is also a great place to get feedback on your homebrew (or commercial brew for that matter). We will have numerous beer experts and ranked beer judges to give you careful, thoughtful, and most of all, thorough, examinations of your brews. If you don't know what went wrong, or what hard-to-articulate character should be there, someone here might. Please be considerate to the neighbors when parking! That includes blocking mailboxes and driveways. There should be plenty of spots along Jade, Emerald and Byrd lane. There will room to pull up in the driveway to offload as well.

Also if you wish to volunteer to help set up or clean up, please let me know! We can't have the event without some helping hands. [metkonig@gmail.com](mailto:metkonig@gmail.com)

Summary:

May 5th, 2017 (1st Saturday in May)  
Set-up at 8:00AM, Toast at 9:00AM, Break-down by 8:00PM  
9551 Emerald Street  
Bring your brewing gear, home-brew, food and good cheer!

If you have any questions, shoot me an email at [metkonig@gmail.com](mailto:metkonig@gmail.com)





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*The Great Northern Brewers Club and  
the American Homebrewers Association  
remind you to....Savor the Flavor Responsibly*

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**NEXT MEETING: April 17th, 2018  
7:00 PM at 49th State Brewing Company Anchorage**