



THE

# Northern Brewer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

## May 2021

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### Next Meeting

May 18, 2021

Club meeting, location TBD, 7pm,  
with Denali Brewing and featuring  
our wort share creations

### GREAT NORTHERN BREWERS CLUB

PMB 1204

3705 ARCTIC BOULEVARD  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503

### GNBC WEBSITE

[www.GreatNorthernBrewers.org](http://www.GreatNorthernBrewers.org)

### PRESIDENT

Mike Fisher

[president@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:president@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

### VICE PRESIDENT

Christophe Venot

[vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:vp@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

### TREASURER

Thomas Huling

[treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:treasurer@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

### SECRETARY

Jordan Couture

[secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:secretary@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

### MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Steve Johnson

[membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org](mailto:membership@greatnorthernbrewers.org)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Phylcia Christian, 2020-2021

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John Trapp, 2021-2022

Robert Trosper, 2021-2022

Contact information via our website

## A Return to Form

*By Chaven Davidson*

As the roads are once again dry and dusty and the bright sun shines mercilessly upon my small deck where I sit in my lawn chair, I can finally feel it - the end of this long season of isolation and inconsistency. While I do not expect this summer to be without caution and an air of conservative apprehension, it finally looks like events will take place, meetings will be held, and life will regain a semblance of what it was some fifteen months ago; at least for the most part anyway- I cannot exactly brush over the lifechanging arrival of my ten-month old son. Yet if you are like me, this return to social interaction awakens a hunger within you- the desire to compete.

Throughout the summers of the past, I have been somewhat of a try-hard when it comes to ultimate frisbee, foot races, and lawn games of all sorts; and while it is all in good fun, that competitive drive is an important part of who I am. I live for the big plays, the perfect shots, the calculated strategies that provide those coveted moments where you get to rib your friends. Whether it is ripping down a floating piece of plastic in the midst of a few defenders, reading the ice and curling the stone perfectly through a gap to steal an end, or crafting the perfect recipe through trial and error to finally score a few HBOTY points against the big dogs, it is fun to try your skills against others and grow from the experience.

As life shifts back up a few gears, I find that along with my desire to get outside and enjoy the sunshine and the dry ground; I am ready to brew again in earnest, in the hopes of having competitions and even more simply- informed company to share my creations with. While I enjoy drinking my brews, I miss seeing what other people have made, and learning from the conversations I have with others. Those experiences are not just fun; to many new members and entrants to the hobby they are crucially formative. I cannot tell you how much I learned simply listening to the conversations had around the various tables during the social time in our meetings while sampling a wide range of beer styles, meads, ciders, and more. It all feeds back into the passion for those of us who want to continue to learn and develop our own skills. Those enthusiastic new brewers in turn bring their own collection of brews to the gatherings and the glorious cycle continues. After this most recent hiatus, it will do my heart good to see that cycle start up once again.

As my current project churns happily in the carboy, I acknowledge that competitions may not be for all of us, as the process is often one of joy and Zen that needs no further purpose or reward. For the rest of you though, it's time to dust off those ancient tomes of brewing knowledge and dream up those new processes and recipes that will yield the fruits of greatness. If you haven't participated in a competition, I would encourage you to do so, as you cannot really quantify the experience. Whether it's simply receiving scoresheets and feedback in the mail or the great joy of attending and giving your two cents as a judge at an event; it's incredibly constructive and fun. I don't think anyone out there is striving to create a worse beer than their last

one, and it's all a part of the process of growing and partaking in the joys of homebrewing; so let's all partake in one form or another as these competitions roll back around!

To whatever you're drinking and wherever you're drinking it- Cheers!

-Chaven

## **HUGE THANKS to King Street for Brew-a-thon Yeast**

*By Mike Fisher*

I want to give a HUGE THANKS to King Street for donating a keg of freshly harvested abbey yeast for Brew-a-thon this year. And a HUGE THANKS for Kevin Sobolesky for coordinating the donation with them, providing the keg, and dropping it off. Super convenient.

If you see them—King Street folks and Kevin—saw thanks for their help.

## **Reading About Beer and Small Batch Brewing**

*By Steve Johnson*

The April GNBC meeting on small batch brewing inspired me to have another look at three 2017 articles in *Zymurgy* and a chapter of the 2019 book *Simple Homebrewing*. After pondering these resources and the GNBC program, I've summarized some of economic and other practical reasons for brewing in small batches in 2021.

Economics first. The ingredients to brew a one or two gallon batch cost less than the same ingredients required for the standard five gallon (or larger) batch. The brewer might also get by with home kitchen-scale brew pots, rather than the much larger kettles required for standard batches. Of course, the small batch brewer might also want to acquire one or more induction cookers perfectly suited for quickly bringing one gallon batches to a boil.

Second, minimizing risk. When testing new recipes or techniques, small batches, especially one gallon batches, make more sense than five gallon batches. Dumping a one gallon batch of a failed beer costs, and hurts, less than dumping five gallons of the same beer. And in brewing a series of one gallon batches to perfect a recipe or style, one is less likely to tire of that recipe style than in dealing with a succession of five gallon batches.

Third: Testing variations on one recipe may also take the form of splitting a standard batch between two or more fermentors to test different yeasts, dry hops or other post-boil additions or techniques. Most brewers have done that at one time or another.

Fourth: The economics of personal time come next in this list--but for many hobby brewers, perhaps time constraints may be the most important reason to consider small batch brewing. Those who leave the brewing hobby sometimes mention a lack of time as an important reason for quitting. Brewing small batches may take less time on brew day, especially if using the "simplified brewing" approach. At least an hour might be saved by limiting mash time and boil time to 30 minutes for each process. According to some authorities, mash and boil times are variables that can be changed with little loss in yield or in the quality of the wort.

Finally, given the abundance good beer from local breweries and other sources, why continue to brew at home? That question is not new in this decade or century. Home brewing declined when Prohibition ended. In the late nineteen-nineties, and again in the last ten years, homebrew shops and clubs declined in number and participants as more styles of good beer became available at local liquor stores, supermarkets, bars, brewpubs, and breweries. And in 2020-2021, with the lock down, brewers have had few opportunities to share their brews at club meetings and other gatherings.

Brewing smaller batches, perhaps more frequently, may help preserve the hobby of brewing at home even as we enjoy more products of commercial brewing in the twenty-twenties.

Steve Johnson

Resources

*Zymurgy* 40(4) July-August 2017. Ultralight Homebrewing: A Study in Three Parts. Clint Cherepa, Follow the path to minimalist homebrewing, p. 58-62. Chris Colby, Small batch, big flavor, all grain, p. 64-67. Matt Smith, Two hours to five gallons, p 68-70. (Available online with membership in American Homebrewers Association).

Drew Beechum and Denny Conn. Chapter Three - Simple Small Batch in *Simple Homebrewing: Great Beer, Less Work*. Brewers Publications, 2019. Available as e-book for Kindle and Nook in addition to paper edition.

## **Team Brewbies**

*By Liz Greer*

Attention Brew Loving Ladies! Great Northern Brewers Club is once again supporting the Alaska Run for Women (<https://www.akrhw.org/>). Our Brewbies team is registered with the event. You can run on your own or with our group at 9am on Saturday June 12. Meet at the Westchester Look out. Please consider supporting!

## **The GNBC Summer Camp Out!**

*By John Trapp*

Okay, we are just over two months away from taking over the Trail River Group Camp Site for three (count um) 1, 2, 3 glorious nights. Hopefully, you received the e-mail regarding the fishing charter out of Seward. If you are interested in doing that, please reply so we can get a head count and start coordinating the charter. Think fishy thoughts. Just a reminder, but the campout is in July, a few weeks after our normal campout time. Thursday the 8th at noon, until Sunday the 11th at noon. There are a lot of things to do in the area, fishing on the Russian (the reds will be in) as well as Seward. There are tons of trails to hike if that's your thing, mountain biking, or just wander along the shores of Kenai Lake. Plus, the campsite has horseshoes, volleyball, and badminton.

The campsite has around 12 spots for RV's, plus you can pitch a tent if you're a car camper. There's also a very nice pavilion where the group meal will take place on Saturday evening (around 6:00) so start thinking about a potluck dish to share. So mark your calendars and plan on having a great 3 day weekend on the Kenai. I realize that not everyone knows where to go, so here's a quick set of directions: Go south on the New Seward Highway, you know, as if you're going to Seward. Drive until you go through Moose Pass (be sure to slow down – big speed trap) and travel just over one mile past the Trail River Bridge. Turn right at the sign that says Trail River Rd. Follow it for about 1.25 miles to drive into the Group Camp Site.

## **Camp Out Fishing Charter Planning**

*By Mike Fisher*

If you're interested in signing up for a fishing charter out of Seward during the camp out, please fill out the form linked below. If there's enough interest, we'll pass on your info to someone to organize it.

The survey is here: <https://forms.gle/5wm8vUcr3fwzczxi8>

Cheers!

# A HUGE Thanks to our 2021 Supporters

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