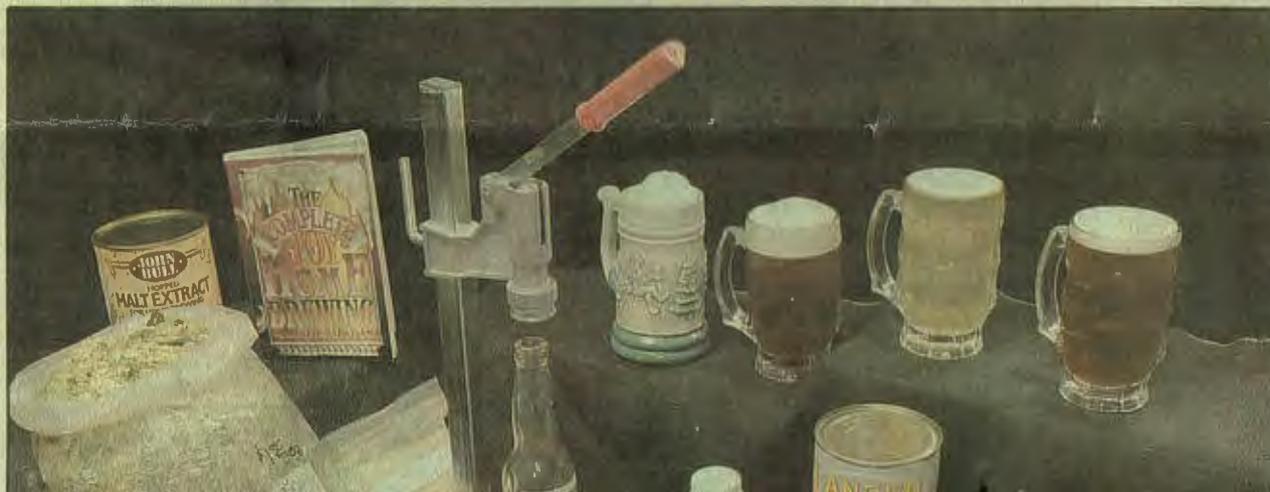


Members of the Hogtown Brewers gather for sampling and sociability at monthly boiling parties. At right, Gary Blandina, right, and Wayne Smith pour bags of malt extract in syrup form into the community brewpot. Assisting are Smith's daughter, Kristin, 10, and Michael Ward.



Hogtown Brewers



Home-brewers say the greatest beers begin at home

By **BOB ARNDORFER**
Sun staff writer

Joe Kostelnik was surprised to discover on a visit to England that a pint of dark brew he drank in a pub "tasted exactly like mine." Upon his return home, the 30-year-old Gainesville chemist was inspired to brew up another batch of his own stout.

"It made me realize that it's really authentic taste



Photos by JOHN MORAN/The Gainesville Sun

Above are shown some of the ingredients, equipment and end products of home-brewing. Foreground includes a fermentation cap and hydrometer at left, in front of a large bag of leaf hops and a small bag of dark, roasted barley grains. To the right of club member Tom Cutler's mug of "Bitter Red" homebrew is a bag of light-colored pale malt grains, and a bag of hops in pellet form. Glass mugs in background contain English ale, left, brewed by club members during a boiling party; Bob Bates's 100-percent wheat beer, center; and Gary Blandina's "Aus-Some Australian Ale," right. At right, the Hogtown Brewers gather for a group photo.



The greatest beers begin at home

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Joe Kostelnik was surprised to discover on a visit to England that a pint of dark brew he drank in a pub "tasted exactly like mine." Upon his return home, the 30-year-old Gainesville chemist was inspired to brew up another batch of his own stout.

"It made me realize that it's really authentic taste we're recreating with our homemade beer," said Kostelnik, who works for Environmental Science and Engineering.

He's among an enthusiastic community of brew-it-yourselfers who have found that when it comes to getting a good glass of beer, there's no place like home. They disdain most American commercial beers, which, despite their vaunted advertising claims, are for the most part mild-mannered clones of each other, mass produced for mass tastes. Homebrewers' quest for real beer, one that is truly full-bodied and flavorful, takes place not in their local beverage mart, but in their kitchens.

There they uphold a centuries-old tradition that can be as uncomplicated as making tea, or as elaborate as creating a gourmet feast.

"With the beer-making kits, everything's included, and it's as simple as cooking with Bisquick," said Ray Badowski, president of Hogtown Brewers, a local club of some 80 home brewmeisters. "The thing about making your own, it doesn't have to be complicated to get an excellent beer."

The basic process of beer-making is simplicity itself. If you can boil water, the meisters say, you can cook up a batch of beer. That's especially true with brewing kits, which feature malt extract, a prepared syrup or powder that takes the hard work out of making homebrew.

You simply boil the extract with hops, sugar and water, let them ferment for several days or weeks — depending on the style of beer you want. Then bottle up the result, let it age for several more days or months and, per the slogan of home-brewers, "relax, don't worry, have a home-brew."

After mastering the fundamental process, many home-brewers like to experiment with other ingredients and more complex techniques to design beers in a variety of styles and infinite flavors.

"The combinations are endless," said Gary Blandina, 30, who teaches severely emotionally disturbed students at Bronson High School. A member of the brewers club, he has been making his own beer since getting a brewing kit for Father's Day last year.

"My favorite batch of beer is a type of Indian pale ale," he said. "I've made it four times, but haven't See **BREW** on page 4D

BREW

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made the same thing twice. I've even tried to duplicate the recipe, but each time the batch seemed to get better. It's intriguing, like having your own chemistry set in your kitchen."

Creating an authentic beer

Like many home-brewers, University of Florida professor Bob Bates has more than a "guzzling interest," as he puts it, in real beer. Certainly he likes to drink beer that tastes as it is supposed to taste, he said, but he equally enjoys the process involved in creating authentic beer.

"I find the many operations intriguing, from malting and mashing to experimenting with different types of hops," said Bates, who combines both personal and professional interest in the science of beer-making. He works in UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, where he is an authority on fermentation. He teaches classes on the subject, and also helps Third World countries develop nutritional food sources through the fermenting sciences.

For his home-brew, Bates malts his own grains, a process in which barley, wheat or other grains are soaked in water until they begin to sprout. The germination from malting induces the grain to develop sugars, starches and other characteristics necessary for brewing beer.

He also mashes his grains. In this step, the malted grains are steeped in water at controlled temperatures that allow enzymes to convert starches to sugar. Later, in the fermenting process, these sugars are converted to alcohol, carbon dioxide and the distinctive flavor of beer.

Various styles of beer are made by modifying the ingredients, the time and temperature of cooking, adjusting the length of the fermenting stage, and aging. Some beers are ready to drink in three weeks; others may need a year in the cellar before it's time to pop the top.

The family of beer is a large one

The family of beer features a dozen or more basic beverages that can differ broadly in body, sweetness, aroma and alcoholic content; some even can be brewed virtually alcohol-free. Within each style — ale, stout, lager, porter, Oktoberfest are some of their names — minor adjustments in production can create many differences in flavor.

In his book, "The Complete Joy of Home Brewing" — the bible, according to many brew-it-yourselfers — Charlie Papazian estimates there may be 20,000 different types of beer in the world. The Pilsener style that characterizes most commercial American beers — a light-bodied product designed to appeal to the broadest range of tastes — is but one of them.

Truly discriminating beer drinkers prefer to make their own.

Yes, to answer the obvious question, it is legal to make your own beer at home. It has been since 1979, when Jimmy Carter signed a bill into law repealing prohibitions against home-brewing of beer and wine. Most states permit legal-age individuals — 21 and older in Florida — to make for personal consumption up to 100 gallons of beer a year, or 200 gallons in households where there are two or more adults.

Paul Kiger, a counselor for the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, has 13 cases — a little more than 30 gallons — stashed away in a home closet, batches that range in age from two months to one year. "To me, the process of brewing is a hobby, a way of relaxing," he said. "There are times when it can be tedious — like the bottling — but the end result makes it worthwhile."

This summer Kiger is teaching a class in beer-making through the Alachua County community education program. The 14 slots in his "Brew Your Own Beer" class, the first offered through community ed, were quickly filled by people wanting to learn about the fine art of brewing.

"I hope to get them up to an intermediate level, and that they'll leave with a basic understanding of how to brew a good beer," Kiger said.

His students will be introduced to the use of some specialty ingredients like honey, brown sugar for stout and brown ale, and perhaps the addition of specialty hops and grains.

One of their most important lessons will be sterilization, critical to the success of home-brewing. "That's to prevent the yeast from fermenting with airborne bacteria and adversely affecting the flavor of the beer," Kiger said.

They'll also learn how to properly gauge the fermenting process, to reduce the likelihood of incomplete fermentation that can cause their bottles to blow up in their closets.

The Hogtown Brewers also serves an educational function, and is open to anyone interested in learning about home-brewing.



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Cost of home-brewing is modest

Initial cost of a basic equipment kit to set up a home brewery, designed for batches of 5 to 6 gallons, is around \$50. Figuring the cost of ingredients, homebrewers say, the price of a six-pack they make themselves generally works out to less than half the \$7 or \$8 price of a six-pack of really fine imported beer.

Ingredients include malt extracts and processed hops in pellet form (preferred when convenience matters), brewer's yeast and various sources of sugar. Some purists prefer using raw materials, including grains and hops in their natural state. Specialty hops to impart other flavors to the beer are also available at home-brew supply stores.

In the classical German tradition of brewing, beer is made from four essential ingredients: barley grains that have been malted to develop fermentable sugars, water, yeast, and hops, the thumb-size flowers of the hop vine.

In less classical recipes, malt from corn, rice, wheat, rye and other grains may be substituted or combined with barley malt to produce fermentable sugars — and, ultimately, a lighter-bodied beer than the more zesty "full-malt" products.

Badowski said interest in home-brewing coincided with the growth in recent years of brewing pubs and micro-breweries, which produce high-quality specialty beers in limited quantities. Two brewing pubs in Gainesville are the Market Street Pub and The Mill.

The owners of the Market Street Pub introduced Badowski, his wife, Lisa, and other fanciers of authentic beer to the finer points of brewing, giving birth to the Hogtown Brewers. The club's diverse membership shares one thing in common — they are men and women who appreciate the distinctive qualities of good beer and the process of creating it.

"We're not a bunch of drunks," Badowski said. "For many of us, it's the social aspect of getting together and sampling different varieties of beer. No one brews the same thing."

He and his wife own the Village Kiln, a ceramic shop in which they began stocking home-brewing supplies. That side of the business has blossomed in recent months to the point where it has overtaken their line of greenware and finished ceramics.

Building contractor Wayne Smith, 42, said he has friends who don't normally drink beer. "But they tell me they like what I make," said Smith, who serves as treasurer of the Hogtown Brewers.

He and his wife, Sue, the club's secretary, quickly mastered the basics of home-brewing, and enjoy experimenting with new recipes. No two of their aging stock of 20 cases are alike.

"Almost anything that can be brewed into tea can be brewed into beer," he said. He has tried, and found interesting, exotic homemade beers flavored with licorice and cinnamon.

"It takes a while for some people to get used to what real beer tastes like," Smith said. "But when you make it yourself, you get to the point where you can't drink any other beer."

Michael Ward, 29, a biological scientist at UF's Center for Aquatic Plants, specializes in brewing mead, a beverage made from fermented honey and a cousin of wine as well as beer. He's been making his own since 1983, and regards home-brewing as more than a way to get good beer cheap.

"It's definitely an art form," he said.

"I have a grandfather who is a carpenter and woodworker, who's skilled in an art form that has gotten better over the years," Ward said. "I thought making beer is a skill I could learn, and if I made it for years and years, I'd

The Hogtown Brewers

The Hogtown Brewers, a club of home-brewers in the Gainesville area, is open to anyone interested in the authentic taste and production of beer.

The club offers members technical information about brewing beer at home, and provides opportunities for sampling each other's product. A boiling party, during which members get together to brew a batch of community beer, is held the last Monday of the month at The Village Kiln, 209 NE 16th Ave. One Saturday a month, a social is held at the home of a member. Dates and times for the Saturday social vary, depending on the host's schedule.

Ray Badowski, president of the Hogtown Brewers, may be called at 375-7949 for membership and other information.

get better and pick up some of that folk wisdom. I'd gain a commodity I could pass on to my family."

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Home-brewing requires the use of special equipment, including a 5-gallon glass fermenter, a fermentation lock, and hydrometer, not normally found in the kitchen. The following recipe is included simply to illustrate the ingredients and procedure for making one type of home-brewed beer.

MAJOR BRUCE KEY'S INDIA PALE ALE (Courtesy Gary Blandina)

- 4 pounds light malt extract
- 3 pounds amber malt extract
- ½ pound toasted barley grains
- 1 pound crystal malt grains
- 3 ounces cascade hops (for boiling)
- 1 ounce cascade hops (for finishing)
- 7 grams Munton & Fison ale yeast
- ¾ cup corn sugar (for bottling)

Sterilize all equipment and work spaces with a solution of bleach and water.

In a 6-quart or larger pot, make a "tea" with adjunct grains (toasted barley and crystal malt) and ¼ gallon water; bring to boil. Strain tea through collander into brewpot (any 3- to 5-gallon kettle), pouring a fresh gallon of water through the grains. Add malt extract and bring back to boil. At boiling point, add 3 ounces cascade hops. Boil exactly one hour, adding 1 ounce cascade hops for last two minutes (for aroma). Cool "wort" (the unfermented liquid, pronounced "wert"), strain into glass fermenter into which 3 gallons of water have been added. When temperature of wort is between 72 and 78 degrees, add brewer's yeast. Install fermentation cap onto fermenter, with a "blowout hose" attached from it to a 1- to 2-gallon cider jug partially filled with water (that acts as a water trap to make sure flavor-ruining oxygen doesn't get back into the beer). Place fermenter in pantry or closet for a week to 10 days.

At end of fermenting period, take readings with hydrometer for two days in a row to check for specific gravity; when numbers remain unchanged for two days, fermentation has stopped and the wort has become beer, ready to bottle.

Boil corn sugar in one pint of water; let cool. Siphon beer from fermenter into a large, sterilized bucket. Stir in corn sugar mixture (which carbonates the beer in the bottle.) Pour beer into sterilized bottles, cap and store for three weeks to one month. Pour from bottle into mug, sit back, relax and enjoy a home-brew.