



The Midnight Brewer

Official publication of the Midnight Homebrewers' League

Carroll County, Maryland

Year 2003
Issue No. 4

Brewing software review

BeerSmith v. 1 for Windows

By Steve Kranz

I came across a desktop brewing program named BeerSmith while perusing the rec.crafts.brewing newsgroup, and promptly went to the publisher's web site (<http://www.beersmith.com>) to download a trial copy. The trial copy is fully operational for a 30-day period (in which time you have 14 days of actual trial use). Thereafter, you'll have to pay \$19.95 to become a registered user. Interestingly, and to the developer's credit, discounts are offered for multiple-copy purchases by homebrew clubs.

As you can see, BeerSmith follows the Windows Explorer model with the menu tree down the left-hand side of the screen, and the View panel on the right. SUDS users will be familiar with this approach. When you click on menu items on the left, the contents of the View panel change accordingly. As with any program, getting a sense of its layout and

(Continued on page 5)

Dress up your bottles

By Steve Kranz

If your bottles of home-made adult beverages are being given away as gifts or served at a special occasion, it doesn't take much to make them look nice. This article will discuss adding labels, heat-shrink capsules or sealing wax to give your bottles an inexpensive, special touch.

Labels

You can either make bottle labels yourself, buy custom-made labels, or buy pre-made labels that you can customize yourself by hand or on your computer printer. Your choice will depend on how creative you can (or want to) be, how much time and money you want to spend, and how polished and professional you want your results to be.

Home-made labels

To make your own labels, you need a computer and a printer. Almost any printer will do, although a color inkjet that can produce "photo-quality" output will give you the most options and the best-looking results.

Amount	Item	Type	% or IBU	Add Grain/Extract	Increase Amount
14.00 lb	Pale Malt (2 Row) UK (3 SRM)	Grain	93.3 %		
1.00 lb	Caramel/Crystal Malt - 40L (40 SRM)	Grain	6.7 %	Add Hops...	Decrease Amount
2.00 oz	Cascade [5.5%] (90 min)	Hops	24.4 IBU	Add Yeast...	Increase Time
2.00 oz	Cascade [5.5%] (30 min)	Hops	17.5 IBU	Add Misc...	Decrease Time
2.00 oz	Cascade [5.5%] (2 min) (Aroma Hop-Steep)	Hops		Add Water...	Delete
1.00 tsp	Gypsum (Calcium Sulfate) (Mash 60.0 min)	Misc		Add Item to My Ingredients	
2 Pkgs	Windsor Yeast (Lallemand #)	Yeast-Ale			

Beer Profile		Alcohol	
Original Gravity Estimate	1.039	Style OG	1.030-1.038 SG
Measured OG	1.010 SG	Alcohol by Vol Est	3.8
Final Gravity Estimate	1.009	Style FG	1.008-1.013 SG
Measured FG	1.005 SG	Style ABV	3.0-3.8 %
Estimated Color	6	Actual ABV	0.6 %
Style Color	6-14 SRM	Color	
Bitterness	41.9	Style IBU	20.0-40.0 IBU
Alpha Acid Units	2.2 AAU	Calories per 12 oz	32

You will also need software to design your labels. A word-processor (MS Word, etc.) will do if you are *really* good at it, but you'll be happier with a graphics or desktop publishing program because of the flexibility and text/graphics handling features they offer. I use Microsoft Publisher, but there are many others.

It is beyond the scope of this article to describe how to design labels, but examples abound. Look at some commercial labels to get ideas. For your purposes, simple is better. You want labels that will be very readable. That means no funky-looking fonts that are difficult to read. And avoid trying to squeeze in too much

(Continued on page 3)

Club Hoppenings

BrewCamp 2003 — This year's BrewCamp was a success in all respects, in spite of a last-minute change of venue from Thurmont to North East, MD (Cecil County) due to lingering hurricane damage at Cunningham Falls State Park. Elk Neck State Park was widely considered among participants to be an even better location than Cunningham Falls, so it probably will become the new annual home for BrewCamp.

Twelve of us occupied four sites next to and across the road from each other, making communal brewing and dining easy and convenient. From what I recall, about six batches of beer and mead were brewed. The tap water smelled and tasted fine, but Paul and I did seem to notice a distinct tint...it looked slightly brown, but hopefully nothing that will effect the outcome of our Guinness clone.

We had a brief period of mildly annoying rain on Friday evening, but at least it waited until we'd finished supper. The weather for the entire weekend was otherwise was cool and comfortable, perfect for camping.

On most camping trips, I try to meet and chat with my camping neighbors, so long as they don't seem like losers. This time, my unknown neighbors were a wife, husband, three kids and a dog. One of their boys who noticed all of the brewing activity on Friday had asked what we were doing. We told him we were brewing beer, which elicited an "oh, yeah?" in response. He apparently told his Dad, because on Sunday morning as we were packing up the Dad asked me how the brewing had gone. "Lots of work, but it's all for the beer", I told him. He asked about the brewing process, how long it takes, etc., and seemed impressed with the English Bitter I poured for him while we spoke. I could tell he was on the ball, was paying attention, and had some appreciation for the process when, during my explanation of sparging, he asked what we did

with all that "Mother Liquid" that came out of the cooler. I had to laugh, and told him we called it "wort" which was a stupid German word, but that "Mother Liquid" was an infinitely better and much more descriptive word for it.

Henceforth, at least so far as I can remember to do so, I shall use the term "Mother Liquid" when referring to wort.

Club Elections — Take a guess.....you're right! No candidates other than the incumbents were nominated for the positions of President and Treasurer. Accordingly, like it or not, they shall be deemed re-elected for another two year term.

Guild Holiday Party — Clipper City's brewery was the site of the Freestate Homebrew Club Guild's annual holiday party on December 6. Larry Hitchcock, Melinda Byrd, Jim and Nancy LaScoula, and Steve Kranz were there to represent the Midnight Homebrewers' League. The food and beers were outstanding, and a lot of food and clothing was donated for local charities. A raffle closed out the evening, and we all (except for one) came home with nice prizes.

10th Anniversary Competition — We're working with a certain local brewer to help organize a club competition which will result in the winning homebrewer's recipe being brewed and sold commercially, as part of our club's year-long 10th Anniversary celebration. Details to follow, hopefully shortly.

Embroidered polo/golf shirts delayed — Due to circumstances beyond our control, we'll be delayed in putting out specific information about the planned polo/golf shirt order. Specifically, our prospective vendor no longer is in the embroidery business. We're already working with a new vendor, and hope to be able to finalize the shirt information by the next newsletter.

Benefits of Membership

Members of the Midnight Homebrewers' League get these benefits in addition to this newsletter:

- Priority registration for tastings and other events
- Nifty color membership card, good for discounts at local homebrew supply shops
- Purchase club-logo T-Shirts
- Membership Directory - get help from other members
- Library of "Classic Beer Style Series" brewing books to borrow
- Buy, sell, trade anything "beer" in free member ads

Midnight Homebrewers' League
c/o Steve Kranz
741 Windsor Drive
Westminster, MD 21158

<http://members.aol.com/midnightbrewers/index.htm>

President:	Neil Mezebish neil@mezebish.com	410-875-2325
Vice President:	Melinda Byrd byrdcall@aol.com	410-549-4889
Secretary:	Steve Kranz smkranz@adelphia.net	410-840-9244
Treasurer:	Larry Hitchcock larry@taylor technologies.com	410-833-4409
Events	Greg/Karen Lambrecht rockjox@adelphia.net	410-840-2952

There's always room for beer

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. He picked up a large and empty mayonnaise jar and filled it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "yes."

The professor then produced two cans of beer from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things — your family, your children, your health, your friends, your favorite passions — things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

"The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else — the small stuff.

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18. There will always be time to clean the house, and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the beer represented.

The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of beers."

(Continued from page 1)

information...keep your labels un-cluttered.

For ease of use, go with peel-and-stick label stock, available at office supply stores. The best sizes available for wine or beer bottles are 3.3" x 4", or 2" x 4". Avery brand labels for color printing have a matte (smooth & flat) finish that produces nice-looking color. Try different printer settings (e.g. paper, resolution, etc.) to see how they change the output. Even if you are not using photo-quality paper, try that setting to see how it works. For really nice results, try photo-quality paper, available in either flat or glossy finishes. While photo-quality **label** stock is difficult to find, you **can** find full-sheet photo-quality paper that has adhesive backing. You just have to cut them out with scissors or a paper cutter after you print up a sheet of labels. One more alternative is to use your choice of non-adhesive paper (photo-quality or otherwise) which is much less expensive. You'll still cut out your labels, and then apply them to your bottles using an inexpensive glue-stick.

No labels you print at home will be waterproof. The ink **will** run or smudge if it gets wet. All that really means in practical terms is that you just need to be a little careful with the bottles until you give them away or serve them. You shouldn't be too concerned about re-using them, since you aren't going to put labels on the bottles that you will keep and consume yourself...well, you could, but why bother? If you are concerned about the ink running, you can buy spray-on products in art supply stores to help "fix" the ink. These products help, but they will not make your labels totally waterproof.

The cost of home-made labels will depend on the paper, and how much ink you use. For comparison with the other labels in this article, you can figure about \$.12 per label for peel-and-stick labels, plus something for the ink you'll use, probably somewhere between \$.02 and \$.30 **per label** for ink, depending on colors, resolution, etc. I just printed labels with dense colors at photo-quality resolution, and the cost (paper and ink) came to about \$.42 per label.

Custom-made labels

An online source for professional quality custom labels is: <http://www.myownlabels.com/>. There, you may order any quantity of labels (no minimum number of sheets), from a selection of pre-designed layouts which you then customize with your own text and color choices. Many of the designs also have optional neck labels, and a rear text

(Continued on page 8)

Treasurer's Report

By Larry Hitchcock

My thanks to all the Membership who voted me back into office this year. It warms my heart to know I continue to earn your trust with our Club funds. It's either that or no one else wants to do it! Either way, I'm happy to serve.

Previous Balance \$556.53

Cash Received:
Memberships \$110.00
 \$110.00

Cash Disbursed:
Guild due \$20.00
 \$20.00

New Balance \$646.53

As in previous years, the Officers have elected to join the Free State Homebrewers' Guild, the Homebrew Club of Maryland Homebrew Clubs. More information on their events and other benefits of our Club's membership will be in the newsletter.

Remember to send in your dues for 2004! It is, after all, the Club's 10th anniversary, so I know you all want to re-new.

Please let me know if you have any questions about our Club finances.

Larry

Kindergarten for men ("Hey kid, could ya pass me a cold one?")

German women can now leave their men at a special kindergarten for men, offering beer and entertainment, while they go shopping. "Women are issued a receipt for their partners when they hand them in and can pick them up again when they return it to us later," Alexander Stein, manager of the Nox Bar in Hamburg said. The men are given a name badge on arrival and for 10 euros (\$11.80) they get two beers, a hot meal, televised soccer and games. Stein said the idea for the Saturday afternoon "Maennergarten" came from a female customer who thought it would be a good way to get away from her husband so she could shop in peace.

The beer formerly known as Rudolph

Bethlehem Brew Works has been

forced to change the name of its "Rudolph's Reserve" special holiday brew after the Connecticut-based Rudolph Company objected to Brew Works' use of the term Rudolph and depiction of a red-nosed reindeer on the beer's label. Rudolph Co. owns the trademark to the Rudolph name. "We can't afford to fight something like this with a company that's much bigger than we are," Brew Works co-owner Jeff Fegley said. This will cost the brewery \$2,000 to \$3,000 to redesign the label for next year. The 2004 stock of Brew Works holiday beer will likely be called "Reindeer Reserve," or something else that has a holiday theme but is generic enough to beat any claims of trademark infringement. The label for Rudolph's Reserve pictures Santa Claus pulling a bottle of beer out of a pouch strapped to the side of a scarlet-muzzled reindeer. Fegley said neither Santa nor the reindeer is intoxicated.

Brush up on your *ale* vocabulary

There will be a quiz next week that will count for 25% of your grade.

ale-conner. In old England, an official appointed by the authorities of the city or borough to inspect and judge newly brewed ale. In the 14th century the ale-conner wore leather breeches and tested the ale by pouring it on a bench and sitting in the puddle for half an hour. If upon rising the breeches stuck to the bench the ale was sugary and imperfect; otherwise, it was fit for consumption. Shakespeare's father was an ale-conner in Stratford-on-Avon in 1557. Also spelled: aleconner.

ale-gill. A type of ale once flavored with ground ivy.

ale knight. An obsolete term referring to a person who frequents ale-houses and whose knighthood comes from conquering ale glasses.

ale passion. A slang term for a headache caused by ale drinking.

ale wife. In medieval England, a woman who brewed ale, one who kept a tavern or a combination of both (now *that's* a perfect spousal unit! — Ed.). The term is usually synonymous with *brewster* and *breweress*, although it sometimes refers to women who simply sold ale on the premises where it was made as opposed to a huckster.

(Continued from page 1)

inner workings takes a little playing around.

The settings available in BeerSmith are much more extensive than in SUDS. For example, you can set the type of brewing equipment and batch size you typically brew, and BeerSmith adjusts its calculations accordingly. I did not play with this much, but tied in with this function is the ability to “scale” a recipe to your brewing equipment, which I did try out. If you enter a recipe you get from someone for a

10-gallon batch, but your default equipment settings are for a 5-gallon batch, BeerSmith scales the ingredients down for you if you want it to...pretty cool.

Creating recipes using the various ingredient databases is a pretty straightforward thing. In SUDS, you can either drag-and-drop ingredients from the database on the Explorer menu into the recipe on the right, or use buttons in the view panel to add ingredients. In BeerSmith, you must access the databases

from within the Recipe View using buttons. It’s fairly intuitive after you play with it a little.

My main gripe with BeerSmith is the way it formats recipes for printing. Shown here is a sample printout. Instead of just listing ingredients followed by brewing procedures, it uses a procedural time-line and tells you what to do when. You have to scan through the whole page to hunt & peck for ingredients. I find this format difficult to read, irksome to use at the store if you’re shopping for ingredients, and some really simple test recipes I tried didn’t fit on one sheet of paper. The recipe shown on the left ran over to a second page, even though there wasn’t anything relevant on it. You can print out a separate “shopping list”, which I guess is something, but this should be included within the recipe printout.

Down the left-hand side is a column which you’re supposed to use to “check-off” things as you do them. I think that’s just dumb, even for novice brewers. It clutters up the page, and if you really need to check things off you could just do it in the margin without having a printed column.

BeerSmith is a young program that is still in its 1st version. It looks like a functional and well thought-out program for building and logging recipes. Maybe you could get used to the funky way it prints recipes, or maybe that will be improved in later versions. It would definitely need to be, in order for me to either pay for it, or fully recommend it to others.

Bitter Fest

Brew Type: All Grain
Style: English Ordinary Bitter
Batch Size: 10.00 gal
Boil Volume: 13.20 gal
Brewhouse Efficiency: 72.0 %

Date: 10/05/03
Brewer: Steve Kranz
Assistant Brewer:
Boil Time: 90 min

Brewing Steps

Check	Time	Step
	10/05/03	Clean and prepare equipment.
	-	Measure ingredients, crush grains.
		Prepare Water (15.80 gal total)
		Amount Item Type
		1.00 tsp Gypsum (Calcium Sulfate) (Mash 60.0 min) Misc
		Prepare Ingredients for Mash
		Amount Item Type
		14.00 lb Pale Malt (2 Row) UK (3 SRM) Grain
		1.00 lb Caramel/Crystal Malt - 40L (40 SRM) Grain
	2 min	Mash Ingredients
		Mash In: Add 18.75 qt of water at 165.9 F
	60 min	- Hold mash at 154.0 F for 60 min
	-	Sparge with 11.11 gal of 168.0 F water.
	-	Add water to achieve boil volume of 13.20 gal
	Boil for 90 min	Start to Boil
		Amount Item Type
		2.00 oz Cascade [5.5%] (90 min) Hops
	60 min into boil	Add 2.00 oz Cascade [5.5%] (30 min)
	Steep 2 min	Cascade [5.5%] (2 min) (Aroma Hop-Steep)
	-	Cool wort to fermentation temperature
	-	Add water (as needed) to achieve volume of 10.00 gal
	-	Siphon wort to primary fermenter and aerate wort.
		Add Ingredients to Fermenter
		Amount Item Type
		2 Pkgs Windsor Yeast (Lallemand #-) Yeast-Ale
	10/05/03	Measure Original Gravity: (Estimate: 1.039 SG)
	4 days	Ferment in primary for 4 days at 68.0 F
	10/09/03	Transfer to Secondary Fermenter
	7 days	Ferment in secondary for 7 days at 68.0 F
	10/16/03	Measure Final Gravity: (Estimate: 1.009 SG)
	-	Keg beer at 60.0 F at a pressure of 21.6 PSI
	4.0 Weeks	Age for 4.0 Weeks at 52.0 F
	11/13/03	Sample and enjoy!

Taste Rating (50 possible points): 35.0

Darker beer seems kinder to the heart

November 11, 2003

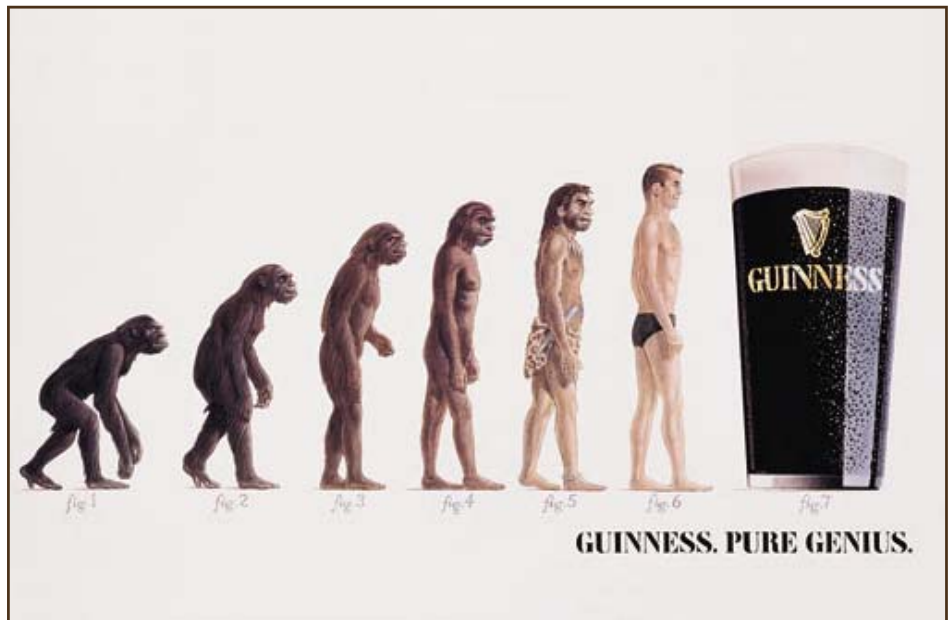
ORLANDO, Fla. -- Like chocolate and wine, the darker the beer, the better it could be for your heart, according to a new study.

In a comparison of Guinness Stout, a dark beer, and Heineken, a light beer, the darker brew had substantially more anti-clotting activity, according to a University of Wisconsin-Madison scientist who presented his findings Tuesday at the annual meeting of the American Heart Association.

Guinness was about twice as effective at preventing the blood platelets from clumping and forming the kind of clot that can cause a heart attack, according to the study's main author, John Folts, a professor of medicine and nutritional director of the University of Wisconsin Coronary Thrombosis Research and Vascular Biology Laboratory.

The beneficial effect comes from flavonoids, anti-oxidant compounds that provide the dark color in many fruits and vegetables. There are hundreds of flavonoids in beer, Folts said.

Flavonoids also work to prevent the oxidation of cholesterol, which plays a role in causing atherosclerosis --



known as hardening of the arteries. They also help arteries to dilate, which improves blood flow and blood pressure, he said.

Folts did his research in test tube studies and on eight dogs.

He said a person would have to reach a blood alcohol level of 0.06 in order to get the optimal anti-clotting effect. He said that for the typical person, that could be accomplished with two 12-ounce bottles.

Doctors warned that even though dark beer might have heart-healthy properties, it has a downside that could negate any benefit: extra calories.

Dark chocolate and red wine have

similar properties but also provide extra calories. Obesity raises the risk of heart disease.

Ronald Korthuis, a professor of physiology at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, said Folts' research bolsters epidemiological studies suggesting that alcoholic beverages can reduce heart attacks.

"What is impressive about Dr. Folts' observations is that the flavonoids in dark beer produce anti-platelet effects that rival those of aspirin," Korthuis said.

Folts said his goal is to isolate the beneficial compounds and put them into a pill.



Recipes: **Weizen mit Himbeeren** (Raspberry Wheat — Extract) **Old & Peculier** (American Brown Ale — Extract)

Weizen mit Himbeeren
 (Raspberry Wheat — Extract)
 Steve Kranz

(My friend Art still says this was the best beer I've ever brewed. I'll have to make it again soon.)

Ingredients for 5 gallons:

- 6 lbs. dry wheat malt extract (55% wheat, 45% barley)
- 1 lb. light dry malt extract
- 1 lb. 40L Crystal malt
- .5 oz. Northern Brewer hops (60 min.)
- .5 oz. Northern Brewer hops (30 min.)
- 1 oz. Hallertau hops (5 min.)
- 5.25 lb. frozen red raspberries, thawed
- .75 cup corn sugar for priming
- Dry ale yeast

Place crushed grain in 3 gallons of cold water, apply heat and remove grains when boil commences. Remove kettle from heat, and add extracts. Return to boiling, add .5 oz. boiling hops. In 30 minutes, add remaining .5 oz. boiling hops. At 55 minutes, add Hallertau hops. Total boil time 60 minutes.

Chill, transfer to fermenter and add water to make 75° wort. Aerate and pitch yeast.

After active fermentation slows (2-3 days), add raspberries which have been thawed to room temperature and crushed.

Consider using a nylon or muslin bag for the berries, to make racking easier. I added them to the primary, rather than the secondary, because it's easier to get the berries out, and I also wanted to make sure any sugar in the berries would have enough yeast to ferment.

Keep in primary fermenter for another 5-7 days (for a total of no more than 10 days in the primary). Rack to secondary. Prime and bottle after a week in secondary.

Old & Peculier
 American Brown Ale
 Steve Kranz

(This recipe was created and brewed for my dad's 70th birthday party.)

Ingredients for 5 gallons:

- 3.3 lbs Dark Malt Syrup Extract
- 3.3 lbs Rice & Barley Extract
- 1 oz Cascade hops (Whole) (60 min.)
- 1 oz Eroica hops (10 min.)
- 1 tsp Irish Moss
- 1 pkg dry ale yeast of your choice
- .75 cup corn sugar for priming

Boil Time: 60 minutes

Really simple recipe...no grains. Bring 3 gallons of water to a boil and remove from heat. Dissolve extracts, return to boil, and add hops per the hop schedule. Total boil time is 60 minutes.

Chill, and transfer to primary fermenter. Add sufficient cool and sanitized water to make 5 gallons of 75° wort. Rehydrate yeast for best results. Pitch yeast and aerate well. Ferment one week; rack to secondary. Prime and bottle (or keg) one week later.



Events Calendar

For all tastings, \$5 per member (\$7 for guests) covers the host's costs. RSVP directly to the host, or as indicated. If you wish to schedule an event, contact any club officer.

December

13 Holiday Party hosted by Melinda and John Byrd (410-549-4889)

January

Tba...Chili cook-off hosted by Gary and Lydia Cress (410-876-6605).

February

21 Mardi Gras tasting hosted by Steve and Michelle Kranz (410-840-9244)

March

tba

April

tba

December 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

(Continued from page 3)

label where you can write anything you want to describe what's in the bottle, your ingredients, procedures, etc. These labels are also waterproof, an advantage if you want to re-use them on a "house beer".

Three sheets of labels (six per sheet) is more economical than just one, so I'll use it for comparison. Three sheets cost \$23.75 with shipping, or **\$1.32 per label**, compared with \$.42 at most for home-made labels. But you gain a more professional appearance and durability, if those are your goals.

Another online custom source is: <http://www.morebeer.com/labels/>. These are priced at \$3 per sheet of six labels (i.e. \$.50 each) plus a \$5 setup fee. They're not as professional-looking IMHO, but they're also much closer to the cost of home-made.

Pre-made labels

Some homebrew supply shops sell basic labels that you can either write on or run through your printer. Some of these look very nice, especially if you have a nice "hand" and can hand-write with an artistic flair (I cannot) if you're not into the computer thing. For online sources, try these:

<http://www.brew4less.com>. A large assortment of label designs priced at \$10-\$20 for packs of 32 labels (the

ones with foil are higher), which come on sheets that you can either write on or run through your printer. For another \$30, they sell computer software that has "templates" that work with their label collection, but you don't need it.

<http://4th-vine.com/> also sells sheets of printer-compatible labels.

Bottle Capsules

Capsules are plastic covers you find on many commercial wines. They dress up the bottle by covering the cork, giving you a professional-looking finish. Available in various colors at homebrew supply shops, they shrink for a snug fit when you apply heat from a hair dryer or a heat gun. As shown in these pix, place the capsule over the top of the bottle, and apply heat evenly around the capsule (I turn the bottle as I apply the heat gun). The



capsule shrinks before your eyes, for a nice tight fit.

Sealing Wax

Lastly, the wax. I recently had my first experience with wax, helping to bottle the mead pictured below (wearing a label I created), and it was really easy. Available at homebrew shops in a variety of colors, the wax comes in 1 lb. bags of soft "beads" that we melted in a double-boiler. Once it's all melted, you dunk the bottles upside down in the wax, let the excess wax run off, and turn the bottles upright. The hot wax drips down the bottle as it hardens for a really cool drippy

