

# Forest City



# Brewers

Rockford, IL

Dedicated to the Art of Home Brewing

# The Barley Whispers

**Official Newsletter of the  
Forest City Brewers**

**April/May 2016 Edition**

Next meeting will be held at Rockford Brewing Company

Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 - 7:00 PM

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## **April Meeting Recap**

### **New People**

The club was pleased to welcome Chad and Pam to their first meeting.

### **Mike Sears**

The deadline for the Ballast Point homebrew contest is mid-May. Winners get to brew at Ballast point. Additionally, Zak would like to organize a BP 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary Tasters' Guild at Olympic.

The Great Taste of the Midwest trip is all set, and the club will start accepting money immediately. The cost of the trip is \$78/member.

Mike encouraged all those present to brew for both the Screw City and Great Lakes beer festivals. Please inform if and what you intend to brew.

### **Mike Gifford**

[As of the meeting] there were five seats remaining for the Lagunitas/Off-Color bus trip.

Big Brew is May 7<sup>th</sup> at the Allison residence. See upcoming email for details and directions. In addition to encouraging members to bring their setups and brew, Steve could also use a couple of volunteers.

See upcoming email or fill out one of the hard copy forms for the next apparel order.

Giff put out one last call for support for a Summer Picnic at his house. The online survey garnered little response.

### **Brent**

Please get your information to Brent for the member page if you would like to participate. There will be a link on the website by May's meeting.

### **Eric**

April's Tasters' Guild will be at Kryptonite. As this is a special mid-week event, Eric encouraged all who are able to attend.

### **Trish**

Trish gave an update on club funds to date. Beginning the year with \$2900, club funds currently sit at \$3500 as of the April meeting. Purchases this year included a 15-gallon barrel for the club's anniversary brew, Day of the Living Ales bus reservation, Sensory Analysis and the After X-Mas Party.

### **Other Members**

Jerry, Curt, Art and Mike shared several home-built gadgets that improve brew day.

Stacy informed the club about the upcoming fundraiser at the Prairie Street Brewhouse for the Veteran's Drop-in Center. The event will be on May 25<sup>th</sup> and will feature food (courtesy of Greenfire), wine and beer samples (courtesy of Artalé), a silent auction, live music and a 50/50 raffle. Tickets will be \$30/person, \$25 for veterans. [There are currently no details posted on Prairie Street's website.]

Jon Lambert stopped in to talk about his new Hairy Cow Brewery project opening up this winter in Byron. The new brewery will feature two acres and a banquet space with a riverfront taproom that will also serve sandwiches and wood-fired pizza.

Mike Coisman brought a sample of the barrel project wee heavy. He would also like to host a spirit tasting April 30<sup>th</sup> or May 14<sup>th</sup> at his house in Belvidere.

Tim Gave a recap of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary wheatwine brew at March's Brewers' Guild. The beer came out at 12% ABV and he has reserved five gallons each for SCBF, GLBF and the After X-Mas party. This month's BG will be at Kent's place.

## **Upcoming Beer Events**

### **Rockford Area Events**

#### **FCB Tasters' Guilds and locations:**

May – TBD

If you have any ideas about new places to go for upcoming Tasters' Guilds, please let us know at the meeting.

#### **Brewers Guild Information:**

This month's Brewers' Guild will coincide with Big Brew at the Allison's house. See below and check your email for details.

Please stay tuned for upcoming Brewers Guild dates and locations. See Tim Lundquist if you'd like to volunteer to host.

#### **Big Brew – Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> – Steve and Alison's House**

In celebration of National Homebrew Day, Steve and Alison have graciously offered to host Big Brew this year. As always, the club will provide light breakfast and some food for lunch but plan to bring a dish and some beer to share. All are encouraged to bring their setup and brew if you're able. Please sign up if you are going to brew and let us know what you're brewing

#### **American Craft Beer Week – May 16<sup>th</sup> through May 22<sup>nd</sup> – All over**

American craft beer week kicks off on May 16th. Check your favorite local establishments for special tapplings, limited releases and other goodies going on all week.

#### **Ballpark Ale Fest – Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM**

The first ever Ballpark Ale Fest will feature over 80 Illinois craft beers with food and live music at the Rockford Rivets stadium. The event's founder, Josh Seago will be present at this month's meeting to talk about FCB participation. He will also be offering a \$5 discount to club members.

<http://ballparkalefest.com/>

### **Midwest Events**

#### **Chicago Beer Classic – Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> – Soldier Field, Chicago, Illinois**

Nearly 100 breweries will be pouring samples at Soldier Field for this year's Beer Classic. There will be two sessions and tickets start at \$65 per person, \$75 the day of the event. See the website for details.

<http://chicagobeerclassic.com/>

### **National Events**

#### **National Homebrewer's Conference – June 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> – Baltimore, MD**

While NHC 2016 is still two months away, registration is now open and is on a first-come, first-served basis. Space is limited, so register soon if you plan to attend. Click the link below to register.

<http://www.homebrewcon.org/news/2016-register-now/>

## April Contest Results

### Open Contest

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Mike Bohn – Coconut Curry Stout  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Dave Cobb – Oatmeal Stout  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Jason Varilek – American IPA

### **Honorable Mention:**

Jason Kline, Scott Walker, Joe Mongan, Ron Derry, Mike Sears, Dave McCollom, Tim Lndquist, Jeremy Krieger, Blake Aper

### Style Contest – Fruit Beer

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Mike Bohn  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Ron Derry  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Tim Lundquist

### **Honorable Mention:**

Shannon Shanks, Brent Shelton, Mike Coisman, Chris Giovani, Nikki and Brett Messink, Blake Aper

## Upcoming Styles for 2016 (Categories are 2015 Guidelines)

- January – English Porter (13C)  
 February – Specialty Red IPA (21B)  
 March – Irish Red Ale (15A)  
 April – Fruit Beer (29A)  
 May – SMaSH American Pale Ale (18B)  
 June – Extract American Wheat (1D)  
 July – Spotted Cow Clone (34A)  
 August – Saison (25B)  
 September – Oatmeal Stout (16B)  
 October – Märzen (6A)  
 November – Mead (All “M” Categories)  
 December – Belgian Tripel (26C)

## Competition Corner

### Area Competitions

#### Local

As always, bring your beer to the club meetings for our monthly tasting competitions.

#### Regional/National

#### **Ballast Point OG20 Homebrew Competition**

In celebration of their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Ballast Point is hosting a homebrew competition where the winner will get to brew their beer at the brewery. Registration closes on May 25<sup>th</sup>, so get your submissions ready this month if you wish to participate. See the website for details.

<http://www.ballastpoint.com/og20/>

The AHA National Homebrew Competition for 2016 will be accepting beer applications from February 1<sup>st</sup> through February 7<sup>th</sup>. First round shipping is between February 29<sup>th</sup> and March 9<sup>th</sup>, with first round judging beginning on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Note the dates as your brew day to meet the shipping deadline is fast approaching.

For details on upcoming AHA sanctioned competitions, go to:

<http://www.homebrewersassociation.org/pages/competitions/aha-bjcp-sanctioned-competition/calendar>

## **Beer in the News**

### [Ridiculous Rap Musical Gets its Own Beer](#)

The Bronx-based Gun Hill Brewery has announced a new beer capitalizing on the smash hit *Hamilton* as part of the Broadway Brews Project. While the popularity of the musical is incomprehensible, the beer itself is brewed with input from the cast and is inspired by colonial brewing traditions.

### [SIU to Offer Major in Brewing](#)

If you're considering going back to college, perhaps Southern Illinois University is for you. Students can enroll in a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in fermentation science to help meet the demand of the country's over 4000 craft breweries.

### [New Glarus to Add Distillery](#)

In what is sure to be a roaring success, New Glarus Brewing has broken ground on an \$8 million distillery operation. (I, for one, can't wait – Eric)

## **Brewing Tips and Techniques**

Instead of tips and techniques this month, what follows is the point/counterpoint article from *The Mash Tun Journal* about the great growler debate. In case you missed April's meeting, Zak Rotello explained the current growler situation in Illinois and presented his case. See the link below if you prefer to read it online.

<http://www.mashtunjournal.org/2016/04/the-growler-standoff/>

### *The Growler Standoff*

Posted by [ed](#) on Friday, April 15, 2016 ·



*The Growler Standoff with Zak Rotello and Chris Quinn*

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*The Growler Standoff: Free the Growler*

By Zak Rotello

If you're already a *Mash Tun* reader, I highly doubt I need to school you on growlers. But for the uninitiated: growlers began as lidded metal pails that customers (or possibly their kids) would fill up with draught beer at the local saloon. Taverns have been filling growlers since the late 1800s when the term was coined, and in modern times, breweries have used them as a convenient way to get their beer in the hands of consumers without dealing with the complex maze of labeling, licensing, and packaging issues that come with bottles and cans. Modern growlers run the gamut from the ever-popular 64-ounce glass jug, to handmade ceramic works of art, to high tech CO2-pressurized, double-walled, stainless steel vessels.

Admittedly, they're an imperfect container for beer (see Chris Quinn's counterpoint), but still a useful one. They're great for our environment, since there's almost zero packaging waste and they're reusable. They're

great for enjoying draught beers that may not be available in bottled or can packages. They're not so great for extended storage due to oxidation and/or carbonation loss. But still, I'd much rather have a 4 day old growler of double IPA, than a bottle that's been sitting on the store shelf for 90+ days. And if brewers truly thought they were such a horrible container for their beer, they wouldn't be selling them.

Stay with me, this gets a little technical...

In April 2014, in response to many requests from their retailers and publicans, the Illinois Craft Brewer's Guild issued a press release stating, "Filling growlers is a well-established right or special privilege in Illinois that brewers have in order to guarantee and protect the integrity and freshness of their product." The guild cited a section in the Illinois liquor code that prohibits retailers from "repackaging", or refilling original containers. Of course, that clause exists for good reason – no one likes the idea of unscrupulous bartenders refilling the Van Winkle bottle with Very Old Barton when no one's looking. Brewers also expressed their concern over quality. If someone brought in a dirty growler, would a bar still fill it with beer and potentially give their brand a bad reputation?

Brewers' concerns about cleanliness and sanitation are understandable, but that concern should probably be aimed at pub glassware first and foremost. Considering the vast majority of draft beer is served over the bar at restaurants and bars in Illinois, it's uncertain why the brewers' concern about draught quality only surfaced when bars & restaurants started asking about growlers. Furthermore, the code they cited doesn't refer to growlers.

A growler is not an original container any more than a pint glass, or a tulip, or a pitcher – kegs are the original container for draught beer. Growlers are purchased separately from the cost of the liquid inside – you might bring your own growler to the pub, or you might need to buy a new one on-site. And if bars weren't allowed to "repackage" draught beer into another non-original container, there'd be no legal way to enjoy a pint at your local pub.

Ok, you still reading? Stay with me....

So I searched and searched, and I still haven't seen anything in the Illinois liquor code or brewer's licenses that gives brewers any special rights or privileges pertaining to growlers. What I did find, is that per federal TTB definition, filling growlers is considered a draft beer service function, which is entirely different from packaging or bottling. It could be argued that anyone who fills a growler in this state, including breweries, are allowing their customers to leave with an open, unsealed container – something you really don't want a cop to find in your car. And that's where we're at in Illinois. We have this unnecessary standoff over why it's ok to put beer in this glass, but not that glass.

Bored yet? I promise we're almost done.



It's time we modernized our growler laws to reflect the current market. Other states have made serious errors in writing these laws. Florida consumers were restricted to filling 32oz and 128oz growlers, but the standard 64oz growler was illegal. In California, until very recently, consumers had to have a specific brewer's growler, meaning you had to make sure you had the right branded growler with you, depending on where you stopped to fill up. Even now there's a patchwork of interpretations of the law in Chicago – Brewery X will fill this, Brewery Y won't fill that.

Clearly, it can take many years to fix poorly written and vague laws. Right now, the slate is clean, and we have the opportunity to collaborate on a bill that ensures product quality, and skips over the errors that other states have made. Shouldn't we all be working together to make this the best state to build a brewery, a bottle shop, or a pub? Aren't we all trying to do the same thing, responsibly sell more fresh, local beer to our guests? At last count, 41 other states allowed growler fills at retail. Do we really want to be the last one to do this properly, just behind North Dakota? Arkansas?

So.

This is where you, the consumer, come in. If you think it'd be convenient to grab growlers of draught beer at your local, make your voice heard and help us modernize Illinois beer laws, head to [FREETHEGROWLERS.COM](http://FREETHEGROWLERS.COM), read the spiel, check out the links, and sign the petition. Tell your favorite brewer that you'd buy more of their beer if you could get it closer to where you live. Ask them to work with the storeowners and bar managers that sell their beer. It's time that we ended the growler showdown. Let freedom ring.

If brewers can fill growlers in a sanitary way, other businesses can too.

*Zak is the beer dictator at Olympic Tavern in Rockford, IL Follow his hairbrained bliss on Instagram at @zakrotello and @olympictavern.*

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### ***The Growler Standoff: Nix the Growler***

*By Chris Quinn*

First and foremost, I would like to say that I have a good deal of respect for Zak, and I feel his reasons for wanting a change in the growlers laws in Illinois are legitimate. That said, unlike almost every beer retailer I know in the state, I am not a fan of growler sales. This isn't to say that I am a fan of growlers at breweries but not at bottle shops and bars. I don't like them, period. However, I do feel that growlers play an important role for many breweries here in Illinois, which I will get into later.

To me, the primary reasons I hear for growler sales to be legalized for licensed retailers can be summed up as, "If they can do it, then I should be able to as well" and "Growlers could represent a significant source of extra sales (read: money) for me." I agree with both of these points. I think it isn't fair that taprooms have growlers and retailers can't, and I also agree that they could potentially lead to increased sales, or at least higher-margin sales. So, then, why exactly don't I like growlers? Because they are bad for the beer.

Quite simply, of all the ways one commonly drinks beer, a growler is at the very bottom of the list, right alongside those tabletop self-serve beer towers you occasionally find at sports bars. So right off the bat I think we are fighting for an inferior type of packaged beer. And before we get any further, I think it needs to be made clear that growlers are not a form of draft beer, they are a form of packaged beer and should be compared against other forms of packaged beer.

It doesn't take much more than a common-sense look at the system for filling growlers to see why it's always better to get a beer from a bottle or can if you are getting beer to go, all of which revolve around the fact that

breweries spend a ton of money, time, and energy on their packaging lines. I would argue that the packaging of beer is the most crucial part of the process – whether a beer is going into a keg, bottle, or can. This is because it's during packaging that so much can go wrong – much of which can quickly and drastically decrease the quality of even the best beer in the world.

Craft breweries literally spend millions of dollars on their packaging lines to ensure that their beer gets to you in pristine condition. To think this can be matched by some bartender sticking a piece of vinyl tube over the faucet of a system designed from the ground up to serve beer for immediate consumption, and opening it up to dump into a glass jug is silly. Draft beer is meant to be consumed within minutes of being served. Not 24 hours. Minutes. After that, the carbonation will rapidly start to leave the beer. Shortly after, it will begin to take on oxidized flavors and quickly bear little resemblance to what the brewer originally intended. People say that a growler is fine as long as you drink it the day you bought it. I'll concede that point – the beer will taste fine. Not great, but fine.

Want to get an idea for how a growler tastes? Open up five bottles or cans of beer, pour them all into glasses, then take one to drink and set the other four back in the fridge. By the time you are on the fourth and fifth beer, there will be noticeable differences in the carbonation of the beer. “Who cares,” you say? I do! And you should too. Why settle for a less than ideal experience when you can just open up a new bottle or can each time? Those vessels have been counter-pressure filled specifically to hold their carbonation until opened. This is not the case with growlers.

And this isn't even beginning to get into the area of cleanliness. Beer is pretty much a sugary dream come true for many wild bacteria, yeast, and molds that can't wait to infect your beer. Then there's the fact that the last beer in your growler was a cinnamon chili stout, and now there's a pilsner going into it. A quick rinse under the sink isn't going to remove either of these things. To remove these flavors a thorough washing is required, ideally followed by a quick sanitization to make sure there's nothing bad left in your growler. If this doesn't happen, will it ruin your beer? Most likely not – although vinegar-producing acetobacter, which is pretty much everywhere and on everything (including dirty draft lines), can turn a beer sour within a few days. But the risks of contaminating the beer in your growler are orders of magnitude higher than they are for bottled or canned beer. If you tell someone you got an infected bottle of Goose Island Bourbon County Stout, it's a national story. If you tell someone your growler of BCS was infected, they wait for you to get to the point of your story.

So, what would a “good” growler system involve? Above starting with clean vessels, I think having a counter-pressure filler is a must (if your customers expect to use their growlers like they would any other packaged beer). The problems with counter-pressure growler fillers is that by design, they fill beer under pressure – and almost all growlers are not pressure-rated in any way. This means if you filled normal growlers on this system, eventually they will fail (i.e. explode.) This is seriously dangerous, especially when you consider the fact that people are most likely going to be handling these growlers at the time they explode. Even pressure-rated growlers can conceivably fail after prolonged use. To me, the answer is to only fill metallic growlers – which are pricey and put an extra burden on consumers and retailers.

Another problem with counter-pressure fillers is that just as draft systems are designed for pouring beer for immediate consumption, counter-pressure fillers are designed for packaged beer – meaning you really need to have separate lines to fill growlers versus draft beers. So it's not exactly like everything you have on tap is necessarily available for sale in a growler. So do bars have duplicate lines and duplicate costs for each beer they serve? I don't see that happening.

So why are growlers a good thing for some Illinois breweries? Because they are highly profitable. The revenue generated by a small brewery's taprooms, where they are able to sell their brews for 25 times the cost it took to make, is at times essential to their survival. If their ability to have exclusive rights to fill growlers with their beer helps them survive through the early years, then let's not take that away from them.

We are in a time where there are more choices of bottled and canned craft beer than there has ever been, and I think you would be hard pressed to find any brewer who would rather have their beer served out of a growler than having the same beer out of a bottle or can from a professional packaging line. On top of it all, there are small breweries out there that need the extra margin that comes from direct sales in their tap rooms. So we're fighting to serve worse beer, while at the same time hurting some of our smallest local brewers. Why do we want this so bad again?

*Chris owns The Beer Temple and hosts a weekly radio broadcast on Lumpen Radio called The Insiders Roundtable, which was once delayed by a Villanova men's basketball game. 3/24/2016: Never forget.*

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## **FCB Club Member Benefits as of April 2016**

- 10% discount on ingredients at Brew & Grow
- 10% discount on most items at Farmhouse
- 20% off your bill for one member and one guest at Lucha Cantina
- 20% off your entire tab at Pig Minds
- 50% off appetizers (with purchase of one beer) at The Olympic
- 50% off appetizers (with purchase of one beer) at Rockford Brewing Company (not on club night)
- 50% off food at Kryptonite until 9 PM