



Official Newsletter of Forest City Brewers January Edition

Next Meeting will be held at **Prairie Street Brewing
Company**

Wednesday, February 4th, 2026 @ 7:00 PM

Beer Trivia Question

What yeast byproduct makes beer bubbly?

HOW TO CONTACT FOREST CITY BREWERS

[Homepage: Forest City Brewers](#)

forestcitybrewers@gmail.com

[Facebook: Forest City Brewers](#)

Forest City Brewers

Welcome to the Forest City Brewers!!

NOW TAKING 2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES!
\$35 – SINGLE // \$50-CO-HABITATION

January Meeting Notes

President, Scott Walker, started off the meeting welcoming everyone. We Welcome all new members to the club and our monthly brewer meetings are open to the public.

Next, we talked about the past / upcoming events for the Forest City Brewers. There are upcoming beer events such as Fondy Beer Fest (Fond Du Lac, WI) and FCB Winter/Holiday Party and Dinner.

Scott reminded all members that 2026 memberships can be renewed. Membership payments are accepted at the meeting or by visiting the FCB website. Scott explained the styles for the 2026 monthly competitions. See this newsletter and the website for the monthly categories. Styles were based on the 2021 BJCP guidelines and were chosen by the survey / member choices.

Spring bus trip was discussed; Wishful Acres has offered to open early to accommodate us and then we will continue on the Northwest Illinois Ale trail. If you want a stress-free way to visit new breweries please plan on joining us, tentatively scheduled for May 2nd. There quite a few breweries to try and visit.



Monthly Style Table Competition

January Style Table – 33A – Wood Aged Beer

1st Place

Mark Davis – Cherry Blonde ale aged on oak

January Open Table

1st Place

Mark Davis – Imperial Russian Stout with coffee

2nd Place

Scott Walker – Märzen

3rd Place

Hazel Begmann – Apple Pie Cider

Honorable Mention

Dave Benson – Czech Premium Pale Lager

Current Point Standings

<https://forestcitybrewers.us/index.php/contest-points/>

*Please remember to preregister your beers for the Brewer of the Year contest by registering your beer thru the Forest City Brewers web page.

<https://forestcitybrewers.us/index.php/pre-register/>

Upcoming Competition Styles

February 2026: Brown Ale - English & American

March 2026: Same Recipe - Wheat - All Grain & Extract Kit – Bell's Oberon clone

Kits can be purchased here;

[Brewing Kits – Bell's General Store Online](#)

Discount of 10% off, just type "homebrew10" in the Discount Code box at checkout to apply the discount to your order.

April 2026: Fruited Sour

May 2026: Helles Bock

June 2026: Low to No ABV Beer (0%-2%)

July 2026: IPA - Any Style

And the Answer Is...

Carbon Dioxide

UPCOMING EVENTS

UPCOMING TASTERS' GUILD

There will be no Tasters Guild for January due to the Winter/ Holiday Party.

February Tasters Guild - Old Chicago
March Tasters Guild - The Mill Saloon

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

Winter/Holiday Party

When: January 17th 3pm – 8p

Where: Shooters Tap room 4007 E State St,
Rockford, IL

As always, the club will be purchasing all the food for the main course, but members are encouraged (not required) to bring a side dish to pass. The main dish is still TBD, but we'll be ordering from the Shooter's kitchen.

Homebrew and commercial beer are welcomed and encouraged to bring to share. Shooters also has a full bar and extensive tap list as well. This is a paid members only event, plus 1 guest. Door prizes and white elephant again this year.



Fondy Brewfest 2026

When: February 7th, 2026 4 – 7:30 pm

Where: Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds-Expo Center
520 Fond du Lac Avenue
Fond du Lac, WI 54935

And, this year again, we've themed it... for 2026, in celebration of our country's 250th birthday, the theme is "Red White & Brews!" Expect to see folks sporting patriotic gear and an Uncle Sam or Betsy Ross in the crowd.

Brewers for this event will be provided \$50 to offset the hotel cost. The hotel in Fond du Lac of choice is Hotel Retlaw and in the past has provided a discount, just mention you are a brewer for Fondy Brew Fest.

[FONDY BREW FEST 2026](#)

TASTERS GUILD



November's Tasters guild was held at The Music Box located at 218 E State St, Rockford, IL 61104 United States, Thanks to everyone that made this a great night to gather, consume fabulous concoctions, share some beers and share some great stories.

**** Look for the new discount – 10% off bill****



February Tasters guild will be held at Old Chicago, pizza and Taproom located at 6280 East State Street Unit A, Rockford, IL 61104 on Wednesday February 18th, 6 pm – 9pm.

CONTEST WINNER



Well, if you didn't know Jerry Machula won the Urban Forest / Forest City Brewers Competition Brewer's choice in August. Jerry got the chance to go and brew his upscaled recipe with Alex. The time has come to hoist a pint and congratulate Jerry on this accomplishment.

When: January 28th 6pm – 9pm

Where: Urban Forest Craft Brewing 6551 E Riverside Blvd. #112, Rockford, IL, United States, 61114

NEW FOREST CITY DISCOUNTS

We have a new **DISCOUNT** being offered by Welders Supply Company located 3485 Brick Dr, Rockford, IL 779-208-4055

Forest City Brewers is being offered the opportunity to participate in Co2 tank **exchanges**. If you need Co2 Monday-Friday 7:30 AM till 4:30 PM, please stop by and give them a try.

- 5lb and 20lb tanks always available
- 2.5lb and 10lb tanks, please call-in advance to verify availability
- Co2 tanks are exchange only
- Just mention you are a member of "Forest City Brewers"
- Cash On Delivery – Pay when you exchange / pick-up

[Welders Supply Rockford Map Location \(Link\)](#)

The Music Box

We have another **NEW FCB DISCOUNT** being provided to us by The Music Box located 218 E State St, Rockford, IL 61104. This great place has an intimate live music venue offering comfy vibes, original music and affordable craft cocktails & beers. Some music shows are free and others require a ticket. FCB members are being offered a 10% discount. They offer a Happy Hour on Tues, Thurs & Friday with \$4 off house pour mixers and \$2 off signature cocktails, wine and beer. Please stop by downtown Rockford and immerse yourself in a cozy ambiance and enjoy some craft beverages and an engaging musical experience.

Famous Dave's

We have a new FCB **DISCOUNT** being offered by Famous Dave's located 3303 N Perryville Rd, Rockford, IL 61114 815-636-0300. We are being offered \$5 off your meal. Please stop by with the family and enjoy some good food.

Club News



This Year's Brewers of the Year are

Lesley Davis on Style Table

Mark Davis on Open Table

This is a four-peat with this duo winning four consecutive years in either the Style Table or the Open Table.

2025 Style Table Year-end Standings

1st – Lesley Davis 2nd – Scott Walker
3rd – Dave Benson 4th Mike Bohn
5th – Ben Barr

2025 Open Table Year-end Standings

1st – Mark Davis 2nd – Jerry Machula
3rd – Dave Benson 4th Ryan Bergmann
5th – Ken Wallyn

Congratulation's to everyone on a fantastic brewing year. Now let's keep it up into 2026.

Brewer of the Year & The Style Table are back for 2026. Just to recap how the competitions work, every month, we'll have two different tasting tables, a Style Table, and an Open Table

What is Cold Crashing in Beer Making?

Ever wondered how your favorite brew gets that crystal-clear look and crisp taste? Well, it's all thanks to a nifty process called 'cold crashing'. It's like a winter vacation for your beer, and it's got nothing to do with snowboarding!

If you want your beers to have the same quality and clarity as commercial beers, cold crashing is a must. Looking at beer that has not undergone a cold crash is like looking through a foggy window on a rainy day. The beer has a murky, hazy appearance, almost like a snow globe after you've given it a good shake. The clarity that you're used to seeing in your favorite commercial beers is missing. Now, take a sip. The taste might surprise you. Without cold crashing, the beer can have a yeasty, grainy flavor. It's like biting into a loaf of bread that's still doughy in the middle. The flavors haven't had a chance to fully settle and mature, so they're all jumbled together.

So, while skipping the cold crash might save you some time, it's clear that this step is crucial for achieving that clean, crisp beer taste and look we all love. Think of cold crashing as the beer equivalent of a quick spa retreat. It's when you rapidly lower the temperature of your finished beer before bottling, kegging, and carbonating it. This process, typically taking your beer to just above freezing, is done once the beer has hit its terminal gravity. This frosty technique has its roots in the cold aging process of lager beer styles. But now, it's used for many ales and is a popular trick in the commercial brewing world. Why? Because not only does it give your beer that crystal-clear look, but it also reduces the aging time.

So, how does cold crashing work? It's all about the science of solids and temperatures, and the star of the show is the yeast. Cold crashing triggers a survival reaction in yeast that forces them to 'flocculate' or clump together. These larger clumps fall out more quickly due to Stokes law, which says that larger particles have a higher settling velocity. It's like a yeast party where everyone clusters together and then passes out, but without the hangover! This is why you should not confuse a cold break with cold crashing. They are two very different processes that happen at different stages of your beer making process. The cold break happens right after the boil, when you rapidly cool your wort to encourage proteins, tannins, and other solids to clump together and fall out of the solution. On the other hand, cold crashing is a post-fermentation process. It is important to understand that the cold break, removes most of the solids and grain tannins, but not all and, wort does not have yeast. So even if you do cold breaks, the cold crash is a different process that removes solids like yeasts that are present after fermentation. It also removes the remainder of proteins and tannins that may have not dropped out during the cold break. Since rapid cooling assists in the cold crash process, you can use your wort chiller to rapidly cool your beer before you refrigerate it. The faster you shock the yeast, the better they will clump together and drop out of your beer.

The length of cold crashing can vary, but most brewers go for several days. Though some suggest that it can go longer, 2-3 days is the advisable limit. Leaving it too long can lead to complications later in your process. While cold crashing will drop a lot of yeast out, you do not want to lose too much of it because you need some present for the bottle conditioning phase. It is also advisable to use a yeast with low to medium flocculation.

Aim to get your beer as close to freezing as possible, without actually freezing it. This is very important. Freezing your beer can cause a whole host of problems. The water in the beer might freeze, but the alcohol won't, leading to a concentration of flavors that can throw off the balance of your brew. Plus, the expansion that occurs during freezing can lead to burst carboys or damaged kegs. So, while cold crashing is a cool technique, remember to not get greedy. You want your beer chilled, not frozen. It's like a refreshing dip in the pool, not a plunge into the Arctic Ocean!

On a side note, be careful with your airlock during cold crashing. A one-way airlock can result in negative pressure and suck liquid into your fermenter. It's best to use a two-way airlock or some sanitized foil to avoid this problem.

Lastly, if you are going to dry hop, do it after you cold crash. The cold temperatures make it harder to get aroma oils in the beer, and dry hopping closer to bottling will preserve more subtleties. It's like the final flourish on your beer masterpiece.

So that's the cool scoop on cold crashing your beer. It's a simple, effective way to improve the clarity and taste of your beer. Cheers!