



Hangtown Brew Noose

www.hazeclub.org

HOPFEN UND MALZ, GOTT ERHALZ!



Holy Hop Horror! Surviving The Hop Crisis Part I



I First, the bad news: the hop shortage is real, and, like feminists, very annoying and promises to be a fact of life, at least for awhile. The good news is that, well, it's not all bad and at some point life might actually return to normal, although woman will still be able to vote. Over the next several issues of the "Noose" we'll explore why we're here and what to do about it. But as always, the first order of the day is to get a beer, preferably one you made. Go ahead, go get a beer. I'll wait for you...

Hops, the spice of beer, are part of the global economy, and as such are subject to the variations of the world market. Two things are perhaps really important to understand: 1) About half of the worldwide hop production is converted to extract (liquid hop, if you will) used by the mega brewers such as SAB-Miller, Heineken, etc., and 2) The homebrew market for hops is like a gnat on the windshield of hop sales (which is nicer than referring to us as the hind tit, as it were). So homebrewers, perhaps more than anyone, are totally subject to where this crisis goes (envision yourself as that gnat at the end of India Jones' whip!). At least we're in



good company to the extent that the corner brewpub and even the revered breweries such as Stone, Anchor and Russian River aren't big players in the hop market, either. And to call it a crisis, by the way, is not an exaggeration. A Sacramento area brewer recently put out an urgent call to anyone who might be listening: "I have no more hops. I can't get anymore hops. I cannot even brew one batch of beer. Can anyone help?!" I'm sorry, but I can't even imagine what that must be like. Talk about a charitable cause! Where the hell is American Idol when you need them?!

So, why are we here? Well, with so much hop production going to extract, what wasn't consumed was stored since extract has a decent shelf life. Hop production overall was high and prices fell and remained low. Farmers began to lose money, and, being smarter than those who gave women the right to vote, decided to plant other things. For awhile, this shift in production was absorbed by the excess extract in the warehouses. But as production fell and stores began to be used up, margins dwindled. And since no one really knew what was in inventory, it was very difficult to accurately predict how bad it might get and when. Some particularly bad weather at a particularly bad time (can you say Slovenian hail storm the day before harvest?!) further exacerbated the European condition, but with the Euro much stronger than the dollar the Europeans bought up much of the open market supply. And when can we expect this to turn around? Well, let's just say, that like California's budget, '09 is likely to be worse than '08!

Better go get another beer for this next piece, a Kill Ugly Radio or a Chimay Red would be nice....

February 2008
1
Volume 24



Hangtown Brew Noose

www.hazeclub.org

HOPFEN UND MALZ, GOTT ERHALZ!



February 2008

2

Volume 24

The hop shortage is bad, but not permanent. And if you brew beers where the hops are almost exclusively to balance, such as German beers, you can probably get by, although many German nobles are becoming hard to find. But for those who love craftbeer, and in particular beer with a significant flavor and/or aroma profile, the current shortage is actually the good news of the crisis. Aroma hops are rapidly disappearing with farmers either starting new fields or even replacing existing fields with high alpha hops. Again, it's pure economics. High alpha hops tend to produce

The hop shortage is bad, but not permanent.

far more per acre and are more widely sought after by larger breweries who aren't as concerned about aroma or flavor. Bringin' it home, this means that the epitome of the west coast craft brew revival, Cascades, may all but disappear commercially in a year or two! Oh, and I haven't even talked about barley yet!!

Not to fear, or at least, not as much, because there are things we can do, both short term and long term, to get by. Next month we'll look at Survival Strategies.

1st Annual Snow Day Brew

Activities Uber-Herr Jeff Bunch and the ever-lovely Candi invited HAZERs "up the hill" to the their place late last month for the First Annual Snow Day Brew. The Big Brew System (BBS) was pulled into the service of master brewer Steve Seeley for a fine German Kolsch. The chilly temps were kept at bay with warm hospitality and hot chili over cornbread.



The perfect day for a snow brew. And look, NO yellow snow!



The BBS humbly awaits to be played by the maestro



"You cold?" "No, I'm not cold. You cold?"
"Hell yeah, I'm Freezing!"

HAZE is dedicated to fostering social and educational opportunities for homebrewers in the foothills.



Hangtown Brew Noose

www.hazeclub.org

HOPFEN UND MALZ, GOTT ERHALZ!



Godisgood!

1st Annual Snow Day Brew



A picture is worth a 1000 words!



Carboys in milk crates –
“That’s the way - uh huh uh huh I like it uh huh!”



Chow!!!

H.A.Z.E.

Club Officers for 2008

President:	Dave Pratt
Vice President:	Maddy Franke
Secretary:	Bill Kenney
Treasurer:	Tina Weinrich
Activities Uber-Herr:	Jeff Bunch

HAZE makes it's money from raffle ticket sales and the fodder you bring to the meeting makes that a success. Every little bit helps! Thank you to all of the breweries and brewpubs which donate.

**This month's contributor:
Sierra Nevada Brewing Company.
www.sierranevada.com**

HAZE Lexicon:



frenning: to acquire large amounts of beer related loot and booty, or other such paraphernalia for the purpose of raffling at monthly beer club meetings
usage: If you've

been out frenning lately, don't forget to bring the frennables to the meeting!

F
e
b
r
u
a
r
y

2
0
0
8

3

V
o
l
u
m
e

2
4