



Sharing Beer is Just the Beginning: Homebrew Club Activities

Monthly Club Meetings

Monthly meetings alternate monthly at Hopvine Brewing Company and Nevin's Brewing Company

We get to enjoy food and beer from both of these well-established breweries

The first 20-30 minutes are usually spent with club business. It is here that we talk about things going on in the club such as competitions, club events, congratulations for competition wins for members. We also encourage PALE members who are now pro-brewers to give us an update of what they are currently doing.

Sometimes we have a Tech talk where a member or group of members present a new gadget, or new brewing ingredient, or something that they want to share.

The rest of the meeting is for our informal social hour. It is during this time when members sample their beers with other members.

Our BJCP judges are walking around at this time too, easily noticed by their yellow lanyard. They can give honest critiques of member's beers.

Big Brew Day

On May 7, 1988 Congress announced this day as National Homebrew Day. Usually takes place on the first Saturday of May.

Our homebrew club gathered at Hopvine Brewing Company for a club brew day.

Wort is donated by Hopvine by their brew master, Ken McMullan.

Homebrewers were allowed to take the wort, boil it up, add whatever hop additions to it.

I took the 1.050 OG wort and made some modifications to it and made it into a 10.5 Russian Imperial Stout. After about six-eight weeks or so, beers are judged at Hopvine by Ken and his staff.

Winning beer was brewed at Hopvine with Ken on his system and scaled up to 4 barrels. This was how my own Fifty Shades of Gorbachev's Birthmark was born.

Learn to Brew Day

Typically held on the first Saturday of November.

Gives homebrewers a chance to give back to the homebrewing community and teach other non-homebrewers how to brew a beer.

Group of Homebrewers gather at Werk Force Brewing Company/Chicago Brew Werks

Co-Owner of Chicago Brew Werks, Brandon Wright, orchestrates customers to buy ingredients to make a 5-gallon batch of beer.

These new brewers are either given the chance to brew an extract batch or a BIAB all-grain batch.

New brewers are teamed up with an experienced brewer from Pale; walks new brewer through the entire brewing process, and even walks away with a 5-6 gallon carboy of wort to ferment at their house.

HomeBrewCon 2017

2017 HomeBrewCon was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A six-hour car ride north allowed three homebrewers a fun weekend of HomeBrew Nirvana.

SUV and trailer was filled with beer and the set for Wayne and Garth's basement from the movie, "Wayne's World."

A tweet was sent to Mike Myers, inviting him to Minnesota to join us the festivities. My tweet was ignored and I may or may not have been blocked from future tweets to Myers.

Helped our good friend, Rex Slagel, from The Brew Bag, at his booth on the convention floor.

Not only did we enjoy the conference and everything it has to offer, but we also visited many local breweries in the Minneapolis area.

We are making the trip to Portland this year too.

Fantasy Brew Draft

About twelve homebrewers all gathered at Werk Force Brewing Company on a Saturday afternoon.

Since I am a teacher, I will fully admit this idea was “borrowed” from someone on some homebrew page on Facebook.

This idea originates from Fantasy sports that has been so popular for the last twenty years

Instead of selecting players, we selected ingredients to brew a beer.

Besides base malts, once an ingredient is selected; nobody can select that ingredient.

Some of the beers that will be made include: a Grodziskie(a historical Polish beer made with oak-smoked wheat malt), an IPA, Lagers, Saisons, a Belgian Trappist beer, and many other beers.

Beers will be submitted to and judged by the Werk Force Brewing Company crew.

Winner will be able to brew their winning beer on Werk Force's system for a one or two-barrel batch.

Chili Cook-off and Homebrew Pairing Event

Club members gathered at Pollyanna Brewing Company on a cold Saturday afternoon in Feb. PALE member, Ed Malner, who is one of the owners of Pollyanna, was generous enough to host this event.

Members were asked to come to this event with a chili already made and pair it with a beer that they brewed.

This was a PALE Friends and Family Event with the entry fee being donated to a local charity. The local charity was Naperville Responds for Veterans.

We raised \$110 to a very worthy cause.

Chili and Beers were judged by friends/members of the club.

Winner took home a trophy and a lot of PALE bragging rights, not much chili though because we ate most of it.

Barrel Fill Project

From time to time we are able to procure empty bourbon barrel.

A local brewery knew of bourbon barrels being freshly dumped by Buffalo Trace Distillery out of Frankfort, Kentucky.

Club members gather at a local brewery where we have relationships with the brewer, usually current pro-brewers who have been involved with the club themselves.

Our latest barrel project venture included teaming up with our friend Dan Rosenberg, head brewer MyGrain Brewing Company

We teamed up and created a recipe and brewed an English Barleywine which is aging nicely as we speak.

Brew at the Bridge Event

Club members volunteer to pour and donate their own homebrew to be poured at the event

Great opportunity to showcase homebrew with a separate homebrew tent along with pro brewers pouring their own beers

Homebrew Competition also included in the day's events. Many PALE members collected hardware at the event.

Morel Fest

Every year the the city of Ottawa, IL celebrates the foraging of morel mushrooms. |

Along with morel mushrooms, this event has become associated with homebrew.

About six or seven different homebrew clubs gather in one tent serving their awesome beers.

PALE was asked to donate and pour our homebrew for this event.

PALE was the clear favorite last year, as we won the First Place with average score for the homebrew competition.

Two of our members even had their beer selected by the town's mayor as the best beer of the event. It was a Cucumber Hibiscus Sour. This was a delicious beer.

Advent Calendar Exchange

Myself and five other PALE members began our very first PALE Advent Calendar Exchange.

Each brewer was given the task to brew four different beers.

A firm deadline was set for each of us to have the beers delivered to me.

One mild, late November Saturday, I spent a couple hours organizing cases of beer for all involved members of this exchange.

Each of us then received 20 different beers and 4 of our own beers.

These beers were then, in theory, enjoyed each night leading up to Christmas Eve.

Since this project was such a success, we hope to have more involvement next year. It is certainly something clubs should look into doing for the holiday season.

PALE Outings

From time to time members will get together at a local brewery for a brewery tour.

This gives us the chance to check out cool new breweries, talk with brewery owners and/or head brewers, and check out their space and equipment.

After the tour, the club will usually buy pizza that we enjoy with the brewery host and his beers.

Our latest Pale Outing allowed us the chance to meet up with local beer historian, John Bitterman.

We met John at a museum in downtown Joliet, IL to learn about the history of Joliet beer.

This outing was very informative as well as extremely fun.

We began our day at Elder Brewing Company. After drinking some beers at Elder, we walked to the museum. Ended the afternoon at MyGrain Brewing Company in Joliet for beers and dinner with John.

Brewing Thru the Styles

This is my latest project. Along with two other homebrewers from PALE, we are on the quest to brew through the 2015 BJCP Styles, place for each style and sub-style in a BJCP homebrew competition, and document all of it through a blog.

This project is just beginning.

You can check out the blog at: <https://www.bareknucklesbrewing.wordpress.com> and our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Brewing-Thru-The-Styles-a-beer-blog-1017940015038281/>

Brulosophy Comes to PALE

I have fostered a good relationship with Matt Del Fiacco, one of the contributors of Brulosophy.

After talking with Marshall Schott and Matt Del Fiacco, the Brulosophy Triangle Tests have included PALE members as their tasting panels.

We have had Matt come out to two meetings so far. We look forward to many more and even hanging with the Brulosophy guys at HomeBrewCon 18.



In Closing

Along with drinking delicious beers, homebrew clubs offer much more.

Education, competitions, and community donations also make up a large portion of what we like to do at PALE.

