

HÂRNIC BREWING PRACTICES 1

The Honest Craft of Brewing

A Treatise on Hârníc Brewing Practices¹

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The Artisan

The Alewife

The alewife is ubiquitous, and can be found in every city, town and village. Her ale is of highest quality, and hardly a man can match her craft. But the brewster is not allowed to sell her product, not even her excess to her neighbor. Just revenge is hers, for though the innkeeper holds the franchise to sell ale, it is often his wife who brews it.

The practice of old was for the woman to brew, and to pass on the art to her daughters. It was a most convenient craft for her, as the waiting between steps allowed her time to attend to her other household chores. So essential to the economy of a woman was her craft, that even to this day laws in many kingdoms state that her brewing vessels are her personal property.

A student learning the craft, and accustomed to the techniques used by the larger inns and taverns, might wonder that the alewife can brew at all. Her stew pot is her mash tun, and she lauters with straw. It seems that she spends more time chasing the fowl away from her malt than brewing the malt. The wort is left to work without her attention. Despite this, her ale is simple and satisfying, which is all a brewer can ask for. It is flavored with sweet gale, or another herb found in her garden. It is very sweet, and is often watered for consumption.

The Abbey²

Betwixt the alewife and the innkeeper is the Abbey brewer. He brews on a larger scale, but only for the benefit of the abbey clerics and visitors. He is not allowed to sell his ale except to an innkeeper (and quite a few inns buy it). Every church approaches its brewing differently. For example, the Ilviran abbeys view brewing as an art, but to the Laranian abbey, it is a discipline.

In many abbeys, the scullery is the brewery. But a few, especially those that profit from sales to inns, devote entire abbey buildings to its production. Meticulous records are kept, and if one is so inclined, a

complete history of barley harvests for the previous centuries can be gleaned from them.

Abbeys will tend towards brewing only one kind of ale, never altering the recipe. There is little difference between the ales of the abbey and the inn, except one. Quite a few churches have periods of fasting in which the clerics may not partake of food, only beverage. The abbeys of these churches brew an ale that makes up for the lack of meat and bread. It is quite dark, almost black. It is very sweet, and brewed with a wondrous variety of herbs. It serves its purpose well, for a tankard of this “fast ale” will both quench the thirst and sate the hunger.³

The Innkeeper

The innkeeper may be one of several sorts. He may brew an insipid ale, not knowing the art but making it anyway. Or he may be one of those wonderful people who brew that excellent ale which attracts the townsfolk and travelers to his inn. It takes no learning to understand which of these provides best for his family. If an innkeeper cannot make a palatable brew, it behooves him to hire one who can.

The inns and taverns of Hârn produce the most marvelous variety for brews. There one may find ales the color of palest straw to those almost black, from sweet cloying beers to ones bitter enough to peel the tongue, and brews weak enough for weaning or strong enough to scour pots.

An inn’s brews are often stored in kegs, the result being that they are lively, and not at all flat. Upon pouring one from the keg, the mug will overflow with the most joyous foam. But one should time their visits well, for the ale from the top of a keg will gush, leaving one with but a sip or two of drink, while that from the bottom will be flat, with the barest hint of a head. It is interesting to note that the practice of the Ivinian is to plunge a hot poker into the tankard, stirring up the life in the ale, and giving the brew a mighty head of foam.

The Wondrous Drink

Most water is unsuitable for consumption, and wine too expensive for daily drink. Milk is wholesome, but best used in cheese. Is it no wonder then that ale and beer are liquor of choice for both noble and commoner? Part of the daily pay for the steward of the King of Kaldor is ale; he thrusts his finger into a cask, and receives ale to the depth of the digit.

A Note and Language

Hârníc is a singular language in that it borrows from all the other languages. The language requires no less than three words for this wonderful beverage. “Brew” and “beer” are closely related words, both

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derived from “barley”. The former is a generic term for any malted beverage, while the latter is used for those brews made with hops⁴. The word “Ale” comes from the Ivinian “Öl”, and refers to any brew made without hops.

The Variety of Taste

The great abundance of ale fashions has already been mentioned. The variety of brew on Hârn is probably greater than that of all of Lythia. Whereas Hârn imports the finest wines of Shorkyne and Trierzon, they reciprocate by loading their Niviks and Daks with the finest Hârnic ales.

Small beers and ales are the most common. They are fairly weak, and are common drink for the thirst and at meals. Hops are often used in their manufacture, since this noble herb prevents souring. Honey is sometimes used to fortify the small beer, and this product is called braggot.

Stock and mild ales are staples in the cellars of taverns, with mild being the most common of the two. They are very malty, with little bitterness from hops or gruit. Stock ales are aged in the cask, while mild ales are served fresh. The pale variety of ales require the fairest malt, and can be hard to find outside of eastern Hârn⁵.

Brown ale is stronger than mild, and often has a nutty and toasted character. Brown beer is singular in that a surfeit of hops are used in its brewing, making it an exceedingly bitter brew.

Strong ale needs fewer herbs in its manufacture, since its vigor keeps souring at bay. They are often sweet or spiced. Any strong ale or beer with exceptional strength or flavor is often called stout⁶. The stronger ales are usually aged throughout the winter, and the tapping of their kegs is cause for springtime celebrations.

The ultimate ales of strength are the doubles, triples and barley wines. The former are double or triple coyt brews, being boiled twice or three times to concentrate the wort. Barley wines are made from the first runnings, often double coyt, and spiced with all manner of gruit.

The variations on these simple styles are amazing. Wheat, rye and oats are often used for substantial portions of the malt, sometimes up to half. As was mentioned, many abbeys produce a “fast ale” that is made with every herb in the abbey garden. Of singular character is the smoked ale of Rethem, made with malt that has been cured by smoking. The Khuzan can produce a black malt which goes into the manufacture of Dwarven stout, unique in its jet opacity⁷.

The Elements of Drink

Grain and Malt

A good ale starts not with the brewer but with the malter. Although they belong to the Miller’s Guild, malters are seldom millers. It behooves to brewer to select the finest malt possible.

Barley is the major grain malted, but wheat malt can also be found. Rye and oats are seldom malted. Grain is steeped in fresh water and allowed to sprout. It is turned and raked often. The malter frequently inspects the grains, and when the barley sprout has reached the end of the grain, he takes it to the kiln. There he dries it gently and cures it above the heat of a fire. The heat of the fire determines how dark the malt will be. A good malt should not be stony and hard, but one should be able to chew it without danger to the teeth.

Amber and brown malts are the primary malts used. The brewer should inspect the malts before purchase. Amber and brown malts will often look as if they were a mixture of pale, brown and dark grains of varying proportions. There should be no charred grains, and the amount of pebbles and straw should be negligible.

Black but uncharred malt is available only in Azadmere, and its export is almost unheard of.

Herbs and Hops

Ales are apt to spoil and sour without the addition of certain herbs, unless they are very strong. Ale brewed without herbs must be drunk as soon as possible, as it will not keep longer than a few days.

A mixture of herbs, called gruit, is most common. Among the herbs used in gruit are gale, millfoil, rosemary, cloves, nutmeg, mace and fennel. Juniper and spruce shoots are common in gruit, or by themselves. Different herbs are thrown into the brew kettle at different times, or added all together. Every region has its own gruit tradition, and one can tell which city he is in by the taste of the ale. Golotha is illustrative in that it is overly fond of wormwood.

Hops were first used extensively by abbey brewers, although it has probably been used as an ingredient in gruit in the past. It is a wondrous herb that not only prevents much spoilage of beer, but has a pleasing bitterness that enhances a brew’s flavor. It has a delicate odor that is lost during boiling, and a few brewers add some hops directly to their kegs.

There are two principal hop varieties. The first is the wild hop that can be found growing unattended throughout Hârn. It is very bitter, almost harsh, but has a minty fragrance, and some brewer’s prefer it. The other hop is called “Abbot”, and was first bred by

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Peonian priests long ago. It is less bitter than the wild hop, and has a spicy, floral scent.

The Brewer's Implements

The brewer's kettles are chief among his wares. They should be copper. Iron kettles will impart a strange flavor to the brew. The Jarin people traditionally use a wooden kettle. Into this they drop stones that they have heated over a fire.

Next in importance are the mash and lauter tuns. Most tuns are either wooden troughs or barrels of various sizes cut in half, though the mash tun is often copper. Whatever the manufacture, the lauter tun must have a spigot at the bottom to drain the fresh. Sometimes a layer of fresh straw, coarse cloth or basketry is used to hold back and filter the malt.

A vessel must be had in which the wort works and becomes ale. Barrels of all sizes and sorts are perfectly suitable. Larger breweries will construct large slate vessels. It must be scoured with boiling water before, and scrubbed after, every use. It must not be sealed, or the working wort will certainly cause it to burst.

Besides these, the brewer needs other various kettles, barrels, and paddles.

Crafting the Noble Beverage

The grain must be milled for the purpose of brewing. It must be grits, not flour. If it is ground too fine, then the ale will never clear. The water for brewing should come from a well or spring, and not from a stream or river. There should be water equal to one barrel per gross weight of grain.

The brewer must now conduct the mash. This procedure is intended to coax the sweetness of the malt from the grain. The water is placed into the mash tun, and heated to the strike temperature. This heat is reached when the brewer's reflection is obscured by the steam resting on the water.

After a wait of two score of minutes, the mash will change its texture, and will appear clear, and taste sweet. The liquid will henceforth be known as wort, the juice of the grain.

Now the brewer must lauter, or rinse the sweetness from the grains. Gently scoop the grain and liquid from the mash tun into the lauter tun. When all is moved, let it settle. Mark the level of the mash in the lauter tun.

Open the spigot on the tun and slowly drain the wort into the kettle. Care must be taken not to splash the wort, as it is sensitive to mishandling. This first running of the wort is used to brew strong ales. Set the kettle to boiling.

Again fill the lauter tun with hot water to the same level as was before. Let it set another two score of minutes. When this is drained into a second kettle, it will be used to brew a mild or stock ale. Repeat this procedure yet again, and the third runnings will be used to brew a small beer. The wort from the third running is often fortified with a measure of honey.

The kettle should be brought to boil and remain there for one hour. The hops should be added at the beginning, as well as any other bitter herbs. Sweet herbs and gruit are added at the end. The finer flavors of the herbs will only be present if they are added late, otherwise the boil will drive them off. The boil will clarify the wort and cook it.

After this the wort is cooled and racked to the fermenting vessel. A measure of working ale or barm from a previous batch is added to begin the working anew. The working changes the wort into ale. As it continues, the ale will boil, creating a head of foam, called the krausen. This should be skimmed every morning and evening, but do not uncover the ale. What is skimmed can be added to yet another recipe of ale.

When the boil of working subsides, the ale is racked off of the lees into casks for aging, or for serving fresh. While it is in the keg, it will continue working a while yet. This creates a liveliness to the drink. The ale will also blink, or clarify further. Small beer is usually drunk as soon as the krausen has fallen.

Proper Storage and Dispense

An aging ale will take on the qualities of its vessel. The tight grained oak from Leriell, though more dear, is ideal. The larger the cask, the better the ale will age, and the less oak character it will pick up. In addition, the economy of purchasing larger vessels outweighs the practicality of smaller ones, and they should be considered.

Casks will come in all manner of sizes. The various guild's have managed to enforce a relatively uniform set of measures, but variations do exist. In general, a barrel holds 36 gallons of brew and a hogshead holds 50 gallons. A brewer's tun equals two butts and holds 256 gallons in eastern Hâr, but only 200 gallons in the west. Half the size of the barrel is the kilderkin, and half that is the firkin.

The dispensing should be made by way of the tap. It shows the innkeeper's low birth to ladle pints from the top of a barrel.

A pint tankard of pewter is supplied to the Thardic innkeeper by the aletaster as proof that his cups and mugs are correct and his ale sound. In times past, before the Innkeeper's guild controlled the craft, brewers and alewives would hang a thistle above their door to announce the presence of good ale. Some

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innkeepers still follow this mode. From this tradition arose the modern practice to hang the pewter tankard instead, and also the badge for the Innkeeper's guild.

Beyond these tankards, few metal drinking vessels can be found. Most cups will be the wooden piggin, but leather gispens or crockery are also popular. Horns can be found in Orbaal and Ivinia, and the Sindar sometimes use glass! Great leather blackjacks may be used by the maids to carry ale from table to table.

Licenses and Regulations

At times, the burden of laws upon the craft may tempt a brewer to pursue the husbandry of pigs instead, and leave the manufacture of ale to the litigants.

Sovereigns of nations desire revenue from ale. It has always been thus, and will always be. But the ale tax is small, and levied upon the barrel and not the pint. The tax upon barrels is currently 1d, and this is not so onerous. But add to this the guild fee and the innkeeper will feel the pinch. Taxes are not levied upon the alewife or the abbey, since they do not sell their product.

To protect the customer, the sovereigns employ the aletaster. There is one aletaster for every shire, and they are appointed by the sheriff. Quite often, the aletaster is a woman. In eastern Hârn, this inspector ensures that all cups and barrels are of proper measure, and he confiscates any that do not meet his analysis, along with any brew inside. The kingdoms of Kaldor and Kanday also ensure the quality of ale sold. The brewer of inferior ale receives a vigorous dunking in a public spectacle. The bad ale is then distributed to the poor, though I see no reason that they should be mistreated also. The kingdoms of western Hârn provides the brewer of good ale and good measure with a pewter tankard sworn to be one true pint. Other regions have followed the practice of hanging pewter vessels above the door, whether or not they are official.

The guild also has a few rules, chief of which is the guild's fee. They also set the proper price for ale and beer. Small beer cannot be sold for more than one farthing per quart. Stock or mild ales may be sold for one farthing per pint. The guild does not set prices for stronger ales. During times of drought or other calamity, the Guild can and will change these maximums.

official Hârn materials have further separated this document from any sense of historical accuracy. Please take this document for what it is: fictional background for a fictional world.

²In medieval Europe, it was the Abbey which was the commercial brewer, and it was the sale of this beer that supported many of them. However, the Hârindex says that the Innkeepers hold the monopoly on the sale of alcoholic beverages.

³This parallels the original purpose of the Bavarian "Bock" beer, which was quite unlike the modern variety.

⁴Hops were not used by medieval brewers, but since the official Hârn material refers to them, they are included. There is no reason why medieval brewers did not use hops in their beer other than tradition. When brewers discovered the preservative benefits of hops, it was not long until their use became prevalent. Hârn brewers are slowly switching over to the use of hops, and only tradition prevents the extinction of gruit.

⁵Pale ales are another Hârn anachronism. Medieval brewers did not have access to the technologically advanced pale malts. It is probable that the designation "pale" refers to any ale lighter in color than the average, which would still be considerably darker than the modern variety.

⁶Stouts, like pale ales, are very anachronistic. However, the original use of the word "stout" referred to any beer of stronger than normal character. This is how the modern stout got its name: they're actually stout porters.

⁷Dwarven Stout has become legendary among gamers of all stripes, so it had to be included.

¹Just as Hârn is modeled after several different historical periods, so is this treatise a blend of brewing practices from several time periods and brewing regions. The brewing art was undergoing vast changes during the medieval period that necessitates a generalization. In addition, many anachronisms in the