

drink

THE BREW CODE

by MATT WETTENGEL



BREWING BEER IS EASIER THAN EVER BEFORE WITH KITS AND A LITTLE BIT OF CURIOSITY. EVEN ON A COLLEGE BUDGET, THESE MEN HAVE A TASTE FOR SOMETHING BETTER AND LIVE FOR THE NEXT GREAT BREW.

Mike Young doesn't crack open a cold one very often anymore, but that's because at any given time he has nine kegs of self-brewed beer on tap in his basement.

Young's house looks like the others on the 900 block of Kellogg Avenue, but the aroma of a fresh mash, and eventually wort, drifts from his back porch at least once a week. He loves the smell and wonders why there aren't air fresheners made to duplicate the scent, though from his experience the "lady-folk" usually don't care for it once the hops are added. With his brewing setup and supplies that he buys in bulk, Young is equipped to brew and serve a lot of beer. So, logically, he does.

The ascension to his large-scale operation began while Young was a 20-year-old sophomore in management information systems at Iowa State. At the time, beer wasn't even his drink of choice.

"It took me sitting myself down with a case of Keystone ... and just pounding it out and I told myself I was going to start drinking beer. And I did," joked Young, cringing ever-so-slightly at the thought.

Young worked his way through a variety of commercial beers before realizing he could make

a better brew himself. With the aid of the Internet and a beer kit, Young began his brewing endeavors, which has manifested itself in the back porch and basement of his house. After brewing using extract for two or three years, he worked his way up to an all-grain system, meaning that he mills his own grains rather than using pre-processed malt extracts that can be purchased.

Young's taste palette has changed dramatically since he forced those first Keystones down as a young and naïve college student. Not only has he become a member of the Beer Judge Certification Program, he's also brewed all but seven of the different styles in the program's guidelines - which has 28 categories - each with one to seven sub-categories. When he isn't brewing himself, Young now spends his free time attending meetings for the Ames Brewers League or the Iowa Brewers Union and sharing advice with members who are new to brewing.

Today he's working on a Scottish 60 Schilling, a lower alcohol amber session beer, having broken out his 10-gallon system for the spring/summer season. Walking around to his back porch, I hear another voice. It turns out to be Louie Rizzo, senior

at Iowa State and one of Young's brewing buddies who he met through the Ames Brewers' League. He's over watching Young begin his current brew, talking about a party he had thrown the night before over a couple beers.

He's a younger version of Young, who has already transitioned to using an all-grain system in his apartment on Beach Avenue. He explains that he's an accounting major, which he jokes gives him more time to brew beer than his former stint with mechanical engineering. Though he gives school precedence over the craft, Rizzo has put in applications at breweries all over the place, he says. What began as a hobby a little over three years ago has quickly become a major interest of Rizzo's.

"It's definitely not hard to make beer. It's tough to make really good beer, but anybody can make beer, technically," Rizzo says.

Though we're at Young's place, listening to their brew-speak and knowing Young is one of his mentors, chances are Rizzo has brewed some really good beer.

Rizzo began concocting his own brews with as little knowledge as Young had when he began. He laughs as he says that before he started brewing himself he thought beer was made first and the alcohol was added after. Now he has the whole process down to a science, as does Young, and works with his five-gallon system to keep beer flowing from his kegerator that he built and keeps in the kitchen in his apartment.

His roommates are some of the biggest supporters of his hobby and are always curious about what kind of beer he's brewing. When he brews, they know they'll eventually get to drink it, which is exactly what Rizzo wants.

"I like to get peoples' opinions on it. If I ever want to open something up, I want to know what everyone's going to like."

Rizzo doesn't want to think about how much he's invested in homebrewing, but it's enough that he says he knows it's something he'll likely be doing for most of his life. The satisfaction from making something that people enjoy out of relatively simple ingredients is enough to keep both him and Young involved with brewing - spreading their passion for the craft to others and always striving to make the next great brew. **SIR**

BREWING TERMS

MASH

Product of combining a mix of milled grain and water and heating this mixture, which allows the enzymes in the malt to break down the starch in the grain into sugars.

WORT

Liquid extracted from the mashing process during the brewing of beer. Boiled and fermented to create beer.

EXTRACT

Concentrated wort made from mashing grain malt and then removing a portion of the water to either concentrate it into thick syrup or a dry powder.

ALL GRAIN

Process of brewing beer where the wort is created by mashing crushed malt and running hot water through the grain bed.

MILLING

Process of crushing grains to separate the seed from the husk. This increases the surface area of the grain and makes the starch more accessible

KEGERATOR

A personal draft beer-dispensing device, which stores one or more kegs, depending on its size, for easy access and chilling purposes.

EQUIPMENT

- 1 FIVE-GALLON BREW SYSTEM
- 1 TEN-GALLON BREW SYSTEM
- 2 KEGERATORS (4-TAP & 5-TAP)
- 10 FERMENTERS
- 23 KEGS

EXTRA FRIDGE FOR BREWS THAT REQUIRE TEMPERATURE CONTROL

IMMERSION WORT CHILLER

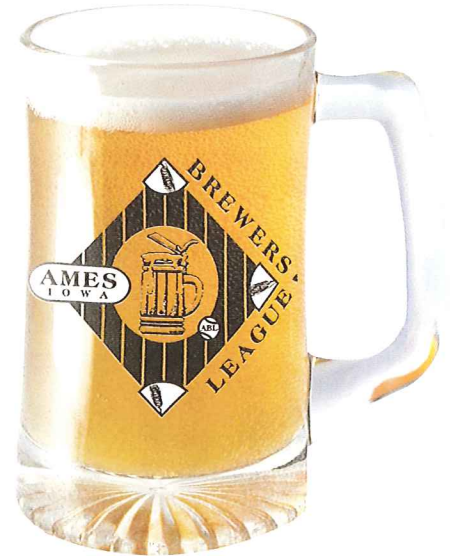
STORAGE BINS FULL OF GRAINS AND A DRILL-POWERED MILL



LEARN MORE

For more of Mike's recipes, tips and all things brewing-related - check out Mike's website, mikebeer.net

WANT TO BREW YOUR OWN BEER?



The Ames Brewers League is a club designed for all brewers,* whether you have experience or not.

An ABL meeting is the perfect place to ask any questions you may have about getting started brewing. Find meeting times and more info online at www.AmesBrewersLeague.org or join our Facebook group.

***MEMBERS MUST BE 21 AND OLDER**

