



Mild Ale: It's Not Dead

Terry Foster, Brew Your Own September 2005

“Mild ale is the lowest of the low!” “Mild ale is dead!” In Britain, where it originated, it is seen as weak, uninteresting and old-fashioned. It has the reputation of being a “cloth cap” beer, drunk by the sweaty working classes as they swarmed out of the factories and coal mines, eager to slake their thirst after long hours of hard physical labor.

Mild is generally the lowest-strength beer in any brewer’s portfolio. It is often very difficult to find, especially in London and the South-East of England. The bigger brewers are not interested in brewing a slow-selling, low-volume beer. And publicans are not interested in selling a beer that has low turnover and does not keep well in cask because of its low strength.

Bitter ales and pale lagers are now the most popular beers in Britain, and mild ale makes up only about 3% of total draught beer consumption. Many see mild ale as, if not already extinct, at least a highly endangered species. Some brewers have succeeded in increasing poor sales of mild by simply renaming it, leaving out the word “mild” all together. And

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Next Meeting: September 13th
Location: Sean Wood's Home
2622 N Antioch
Fresno, CA 93722

Schedule:

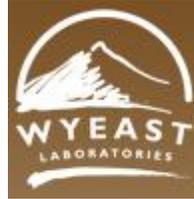
12:00 Club Business

12:30 Style Lecture-Oktoberfest/Marzen

1:00 - 4:00pm Open taps

Please bring a side dish to share at the potluck and some homebrew or some nice commercial brew to share with the other beer lovers.

2014 Fresno Fair Homebrew Competition



Here is your chance to compete in a National BJCP sanctioned homebrew competition. Submit your beers no matter what level you think they may be and get the feedback from nationally recognized judges. This is a great opportunity to further your knowledge of your own beer and a big step forward in making great beer!

ENTRY FORMS DUE SEPTEMBER 6, 2014

Limit one entry per exhibitor per BJCP subclass
 Eligible for all US residents only
 No entry fee

Exhibits must be received at the HOME ARTS BUILDING on
 September 12, 2014 9 AM – 5 PM
 September 13, 2014 9 AM – 5 PM
 September 14, 2014 12 NOON – 5PM
 or received or shipped to
 BENCOMO'S HOME BREW SUPPLIES
 234 W. OLIVE AVE
 FRESNO, CA 93728
 between September 10TH – 15TH 2014

STYLE DESCRIPTIONS Full style descriptions at BJCP web site, [HTTP://WWW.BJCP.ORG](http://www.bjcp.org)

DIVISION 813 BJCP styles 1 thru 6.
 DIVISION 814 BJCP styles 7 thru 10
 DIVISION 815 BJCP styles 11 and 14.
 DIVISION 816 BJCP styles 12, 17 and 19
 DIVISION 817 BJCP styles 13 and 18
 DIVISION 818 BJCP styles 15, 22 and 23
 DIVISION 819 BJCP styles 16, 20 and 21
 DIVISION 820 BJCP styles 24 thru 28

Further information can be found at <http://www.sjworthogs.org/competition.html>

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CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale) has run promotions for some years making May a “Drink Mild” month, in order to keep the beer going. It wasn’t always that way, though. From around the end of the nineteenth century until just after the Second World War, mild ale was the most popular English beer.

From DESCRIPTION to STYLE

The term “mild” seems to have become relatively common in the eighteenth century, although there are even earlier references to it. At this time it did not really apply to any particular style of beer, but merely to beers that had not been kept, and were sent out for drinking within a matter of weeks after brewing. It was often applied to porter, the most popular beer in England in the late eighteenth century. But this was only to distinguish new porter, from “stale” porter, which had been kept in wooden vats for as much as six months to over a year.

Going into the nineteenth century there was a change in popular taste, and more and more of the beer brewed was new, rather than long-vatted. These new beers were sometimes called mild, still as a descriptive term only, or more commonly “running beers,” a term still sometimes used by modern English brewers. Even by the middle of the nineteenth century, there does not appear to have been an actual style designated as mild ale. That may be because most brown beers were simply called “ales” if they were not porter or stout. The use of “mild” to designate a new beer somewhat fell out of use as virtually all ales became running beers. Those that were meant to be kept were now termed “stock ales.”

An important development in English brewing around the 1820’s was the development of India pale ale in Burton upon Trent. Pale ales had been around before, but had not been widely popular until IPA came on the scene. By the second half of the eighteenth century, most brewers were producing pale ales of one sort or another, and the popularity of porter and stout had waned drastically. So they had to come up with another name for their brown, non-porter beers, and “mild ale” was the term they chose.

Mild Ale by the numbers:*

Dark Mild

OG 1.030–1.037 (7.5–9.3 °P)

FG 1.004–1.008 (1–2 °P)

SRM 17–34

IBU 15–24

ABV 3.2–4.0%

Pale Mild

OG 1.030–1.037 (7.5–9.3 °P)

FG 1.004–1.008 (1–2 °P)

SRM 8–17

IBU 15–24

ABV 3.2–4.0%

*numbers given are the author’s opinion, and differ slightly from the BJCP Style Guideline numbers.

The HIGHS and LOWS of mild

Nowadays, we think of mild ales as the lowest-strength English beers, but that was a later development. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, a particular brewer often charged more for his mild ale than he did for his pale or bitter ale. One publication of the 1880’s lists Burton Mild with an OG of 1.080 (19.3 °P), compared to bitter at 1.064 (15.7 °P). Around the turn of that century, mild ales were still being brewed at gravities of 1.055–1.060 (12.4–14.7 °P) on average. By this time, porter had almost entirely disappeared in England, and the most popular beers were pale and mild ales, with the latter predominating.

From around 1900 onwards, there was a general decline in strength in British beers. This may have been a gradual trend anyway, as a result of an 1880 Act of Parliament that taxed beers according to their original gravity. But a drastic acceleration came during the First World War, with the average original gravity of all beers falling as low as 1.031 (7.8 °P) by 1918. This was partly due to a shortage of raw materials, and partly because the government limited both the volume and strength of beer which individual brewers could produce.

Beer strengths in Britain did increase after World War I, but they were never to return to pre-war levels. Even today the average original gravity is only around 1.038

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White Labs

Turn in your used White Labs Vials at the next Meeting...when we get 5000 vials Chris White will brew with us! Every meeting we get closer...



Ever wanted to know more about beer, be a better brewer, and help out other brewers? Then becoming a BJCP Judge is for you. Check on the BJCP website at <http://www.bjcp.org/>. The first step is to download the study materials, study and take the online **BJCP Beer Judge Entrance Examination**. Once you pass the exam you will need to take the **BJCP Beer Judging Examination** in the next twelve months. If we have at least 8 people pass the entrance exam Tom Pope can facilitate the Judging Exam!

Bencomo's Homebrew Supplies

Bencomo's Homebrew Shop was started in 1991 in Mike's Liquors on north Palm Ave. Julian Bencomo has been brewing since 1988, is a nationally recognized beer judge, and has won numerous awards for his

beers. The shop is located on the northeast corner of Olive and Arthur between Palm and Fruit at . Hours of operation are M-F 10-4; Sat. 9-5 we also take appointments after hours and on Sundays. Bencomo's is a full service shop with great selection of grains, hops, yeasts, extracts and equipment. Homebrewing advice is always just a phone call away. Phone 559-486-3227

Address: 234 W Olive Fresno



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(9.5 °P). It took a while, since many breweries still brewed more than one mild, but bitter soon became the stronger of the two for a given brewer. More to the point, after World War II, bitter became increasingly popular, as tastes changed and drinkers became more affluent. The position of mild was not helped by it gaining a reputation for being the beer to which the publican added back all the slops collected during serving. It wasn't helped either by other tricks practiced by unscrupulous brewers, such as producing a very light bitter, then coloring part of the beer with brewer's caramel and calling it mild ale.

NO LONGER number one . . .

It seems to have been around the 1960's when bitter took over from mild as the most popular drink in Britain, and it continued to forge ahead of mild. In some geographical areas, notably the Midlands and parts of the North, mild was still the favored drink; even in the 1970's there were close to twenty breweries producing not just one but two milds. But both mild and bitter were to drop in consumption as lager became more popular, with the latter taking over from bitter as the most-drunk draught beer, sometime around 1990. The once-mighty mild ale has now dwindled from being the star to being just a bit-player whose part could be quickly written out of the play.

. . . but NOT DEAD YET!

But, perhaps the picture is not quite as bad as I have painted it. There are still something like 50 breweries in Britain who produce a mild, albeit in small quantities. A few of these are producing milds at something approaching their original strengths. Noticeable among these is Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby (which has dropped the word mild in recent years) at around 6% ABV, and Father Mike's Dark Rich Ruby, from Brunswick Brewery, at 5.8% ABV.

And just this year, a 4.4% ABV dark mild from Rudgate was overall champion at the Society of Independent Brewers' North Region Festival and Competition.

Mild ale, as defined above, is clearly a low-alcohol session beer, meant to be suited to drinking several pints in a few hours, without falling over. With a low

hop-rate too, it can never be a dramatic beer, like so many new American breweries prefer to produce. So you would think it would never be commercially successful here.

Yet, what about Southern Tier from New York and their "mild," an excellent version of pale mild? Also, in last year's New England Real Ale Festival, there were three mild ales from New England Brewers — one from Martha's Exchange and one from The Tap in Haverhill. The third came from BRU Rm @ Bar, in New Haven Connecticut; despite being a classic 3.7% ABV dark mild, it has sold very well and is produced regularly. It's called Raven Hair Beauty, and a recipe for it appears at the end of this article.

Brewing MILD ALE

You may be wondering why there is both a dark and a pale version of mild ale. It is quite logical when you consider that "mild" originally meant any fresh, non-vatted beer, and the distinction between them is as much geographical as anything.

Dark mild originated in the London area, but is now more common in Wales and the Midlands of England, while pale mild is more likely to be found in the North of England. This makes for some difference in brewing them, in that a lot of the taste in mild comes from roasted malts, and the color puts a restriction on how much of these you can use in pale mild.

And these are not easy beers to brew in that it is difficult to avoid making them taste watery. David Crease, the Head Brewer at Woodforde's prize-winning Norfolk brewery, thinks that 3.8% ABV is the cut-off point. Above this figure it is relatively easy to make a flavorful brew; below that point the brewer faces a much more difficult task.

Boosting BODY

Commercial brewers have a couple of tricks up their sleeves, in order to give the beer some residual sweetness making the beer taste a little fuller. First they mash at higher temperatures, 153–155 °F (67.2–68.3 °C), in order to give a higher level of unfermentables in the wort. This allows some sweetness and body to carry through to the beer. Second, if the beer is got out to the pub and served quickly after arriving in the cel-

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2014 "Worthog of the Year"

Official Rules

Worthog of the Year" (also known as WotY) is an honor bestowed upon an individual who brews the best beers through a single year. To honor this member, a trophy is given to the highest scoring Worthogs to highlight their outstanding brewing skills. Please read below for official rules.

Official Rules

1. Only actively paid members may participate in the competition.
2. The competition consists of brewing 4 different styles of beer between the dates October 31st and the September general meeting.
3. Each contestant must register their beers at <http://sjworthogs.org/woty>
4. Competition entries will **only** be accepted at the general meeting listed below **no later than 12:30 pm**. Beers will be inventoried by the current acting Executive Vice President or any person on the board who will not be participating in the judging.
5. All entries must be submitted in two - 12 oz. or higher bottles with the competitors name clearly printed on them. You may also use the bottle ID generated for you when registering your beer at <http://sjworthogs.org/woty>. Any bottle that does not specify a first and last name will be disqualified.
6. Each candidate may only enter in one beer per style.
7. All entries will be judged by two or more judges based on BJCP guidelines using the official BJCP score sheet (http://www.bjcp.org/docs/SCP_BeerScoreSheet.pdf). Entries that are out of style will be disqualified.
8. Depending on the number of judges, scores will be averaged between the score sheets to determine the value for that particular entry. For example; judge one gives 40 points and judge two gives 42 points. Your official score value for that competition will be 41. The participant with the highest cumulative amount of points at the end of all four competitions will be awarded WotY.
9. The styles for 2014 and their due dates are as follows:
 - a. **Mild Ale (Category 11A)** will be due at the **January** general meeting.
 - b. **Belgian Dubbel (Category 18A)** will be due the **April** general meeting.
 - c. **Cream Ale (Category 6A)** will be due at the **June** general meeting.
 - d. **Oktoberfest/Marzen (Category 3B)** will be due at the **September** general meeting.
10. The Worthog of the Year winner will be awarded the trophy at the annual Hogtoberfest event.

May the best Worthog win!

lar, there will be some residual sweetness from the priming sugar. The first “trick” works for the home-brewer, but the second does not, since we usually just don’t get through 5 gallons (19 L) or more quickly enough, and the priming sugar has fermented out by the time we drink it. In any case, for me, just making the beer with a little sweetness doesn’t do a lot for flavor. We need to make the beer more complex.

Complex MALT

Since this is not a hoppy style, you have to make the flavor with crystal, or roasted malts such as chocolate and even black malt. But first, if you are an all-grain brewer, your base malt should be mild ale malt, not pale malt. Mild malt is kilned at a slightly higher temperature than pale malt, is a little bit darker, and adds some roasted/nutty flavor to the beer.

For a dark mild ale brewed from malt extract, start with an amber extract; for a pale mild ale, you would be better off starting with a pale malt extract, since this allows you to use a little more roast malt, without the beer becoming too dark.

Crystal malt is a common mild ingredient, at rates of about 10–15% of the total grist, or up to about one half pound (0.23 kg) for a 5-gallon (19-L) brew. Use the more highly-colored crystals, 60 or 80 °L, for dark mild ale, as these give a nice nutty flavor and ruby red color. For pale mild, you should go to 20 or 40 °L, so that you don’t overshoot the color. With a dark mild, you can eliminate crystal malt, if you use relatively high levels of chocolate malt (up to about 5% of total grist, or 4–6 oz. (113–170 g) per 5 gallons (19L)). Pale mild will require lower levels — about 1–2% of total grist, or 1–2 oz. (28–57 g) per 5 gallons (19 L). I prefer a combination of the two, since you want to make the beer as complex as possible.

Black malt can be used for dark mild ale, either alone, or more preferably in combination with crystal malt. You must use it sparingly, about 2% of grist maximum or 2 oz. (57 g) per 5 gallons (19 L), or the beer will finish up harshly bitter and one-dimensional.

Crystal and roasted malts are normally mashed with the mild ale malt. In extract brewing they should be steeped in hot water (150–160 °F/66–71 °F) for 30–45 minutes, then the grains removed and the liquor run into the boiler.

However, when we brewed Raven Hair Beauty, we used a somewhat different approach. We had a black malt flour (from Briess). The malt was very fine, as the name suggests, and not as whole or just broken grains, as black malt is normally obtained. This flour was added to the copper at the end of the boil. That meant it sat in the hot wort for 30 minutes — that is, a 10 minute rest after turning off the heat, 10 minute whirlpool and a final 10 minute rest. That meant that a good deal of the black malt was removed with the trub; anything that wasn’t would sit in the fermenter, and be removed from the beer during filtration. You could try this if you can get the flour and filter your beer. If not, it might be better to add the black malt to the mash, or pre-steep in the case of extract beers.

English HOPS

Hops are a simple matter with mild ale, as they are used only for bittering. In general, English hops such as Fuggles and Goldings are best, or English-derived types, such as Willamette or Styrian Goldings. Northern Brewer also works quite well. Although many milds do not use aroma or flavor hops, it is permissible to do so, but you don’t want this to stand out, so Goldings in moderate amounts is probably the favored approach. However, in Raven Hair Beauty we used Mount Hood and Liberty (both Hallertauer derivatives) for bittering and aroma respectively, with Mount Hood for flavor.

Any WATER, Ale YEAST

Water is pretty straightforward. Use what you have! The only possible problem would be very hard water, such as that from Burton, which can make the beer taste somewhat harsh, and we’re looking for a mellow flavor. Having said that, at least one British brewer — Marston’s — has used Burton water for brewing mild ale for many years. Others have used very soft water, whilst yet others, notably in the London area, have successfully used high-carbonate water. Therefore, I would only make adjustments if making an all-grain brew and I was having problems getting the mash pH in the 5.2–5.5 range. In that case, I would simply add a little gypsum (5–10 g for a 5-gallon (19 L) brew) to bring the pH into the required range.

Yeast is also straightforward, almost any top-fermenting strain will work well. We use Wyeast 1098, a Whitbread strain, at Bru Rm @ BAR, but

White Labs WLP002 also works well, as it tends to leave some residual sweetness. Wyeast 1028 (London Ale) yeast is also a possibility; it does tend to give relatively high levels of diacetyl, but if you are not averse to this flavor note, it can add a welcome richness to this style of beer.

I'll have ANOTHER ROUND

Mild ale is a simple beer, meant for pleasant drinking in a long session. However, with care, it can be made into a quite tasty, interesting beer, and should not be at all bland or boring. You need to get some complexity into the beer, and that is going to come from the malt. So don't be afraid to experiment, and you will find yourself making some very tasty mild ales, which will make you wonder why on earth it should be losing popularity in its homeland! And remember, "mild" in this context means fresh!

Standard Dark Mild

(5 gallons/19L, all-grain)

OG = 1.035 FG = 1.009

IBU = 20 SRM = 24 ABV = 3.5%

Ingredients

6 lb. 10 oz. (3 kg) mild ale malt

3/4 lb. (0.34 kg) crystal malt (60 °L)

2.0 oz. (57 g) chocolate malt

5.3 AAU Fuggles hops (90 mins)

(1.33 oz./38 g at 4% alpha acids)

Wyeast 1098 or White Labs WLP007

1/2 cup dried malt extract (for priming)

Standard Pale Mild

(5 gallons/19L, all-grain)

OG = 1.037 FG = 1.010

IBU = 23 SRM = 13 ABV = 3.6%

Ingredients

6 lb. 8 oz. (2.9 kg) mild ale malt

1 lb. 6 oz. (0.62 kg) crystal malt (20 °L)

6 AAU Willamette hops (90 mins)

(1.2 oz./34g at 5% alpha acids)

0.5 oz. (14 g) Goldings hops (5 mins)

Wyeast 1098 or White Labs WLP007

1/2 cup dried malt extract (for priming)

Step by Step

Use a single-step infusion mash at 152–154 °F (66.7–67.8 °C) for the dark mild or 153–155 °F (67.2–68.3 °C) for the pale mild for 1–1.5 hours. Sparge one hour, with water no hotter than 175 °F (80 °C), until run-off reaches SG 1.010–1.012. Boil 90 minutes, with bitter-

ing hops added at the start. Strain, or siphon off from the hops, and adjust wort volume with cold water, and cool to about 70 °F (21 °C). Pitch with yeast starter, and allow to ferment. By 5–7 days, final gravity should have been reached; rack into a glass fermenter. One week later, rack again, prime with dried malt extract, and rack into keg or bottles. To ensure good fermentation, it is best to make a half-gallon starter of the original yeast culture.

Raven Hair Beauty

(5 gallons/19L, all-grain)

OG = 1.043 FG = 1.016

IBU = 19 SRM = 25 ABV = 3.6%

Ingredients

2.5 lb. (1.1 kg) mild ale malt

2.5 lb. (1.1 kg) US 2-row pale malt

1 lb. 11 oz. (0.77 kg) Briess Munich malt

14 oz. (0.40 kg) crystal malt (60 °L)

4.5 oz. (0.13 kg) Belgian Special B malt

7.0 oz. (0.20 kg) Briess Extra Special

Roast malt

14 oz. (0.40 kg) Briess Vienna malt

1.1 oz. (32 g) Briess black malt

3.33 AAU Mount Hood hops

(90 mins)

(0.47 oz./13 g at 7.1% alpha acids)

1.25 AAU Willamette hops

(30 mins)

(0.25 oz./7 g at 5% alpha acids)

2.5 AAU Liberty hops

(5 mins)

(0.5 oz./14 g at 5% alpha acids)

Wyeast 1098 or White Labs WLP007

1/2 cup dried malt extract (for priming)

Step by Step

Use a single-step infusion mash at 154 °F (67.8 °C) for 1.5 hours, keeping the black malt flour to one side. Sparge one hour, with water no hotter than 175 °F (80 °C), until run-off reaches SG 1.010–1.012. Boil 90 minutes, with bittering hops added at the start. Add the flavor hops 30 minutes, and the aroma hops 5 minutes before the end of the boil. Strain, or siphon off from the hops, adjust wort volume with cold water, and cool to about 70 °F (21 °C). Pitch with yeast starter, and allow to ferment. By 5–7 days, final gravity should have been reached. One week later, bottle and prime with 1/2 cup DME. To ensure good fermentation, it is best to make a half-gallon starter of the original yeast culture.