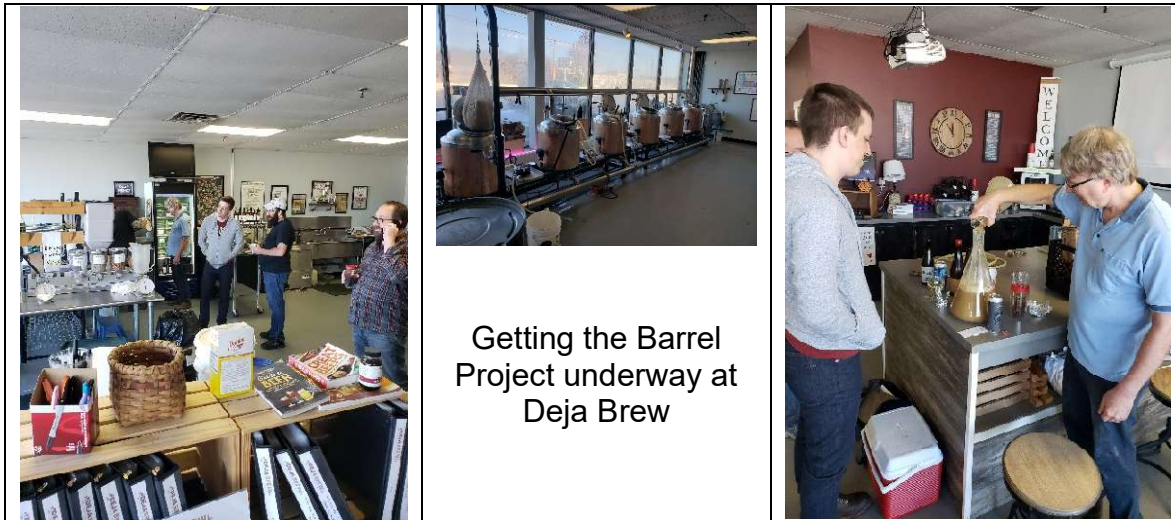


In The Beginning (November 2019)

A new project for the club in 2019 started when ten club members went out and got a barrel inoculated with Cantillon dregs from Mystic Brewing. Their plan? Fill it with a Golden Sour formulated by Zak that he based on a beer by The Rare Barrel. After two days at Deja Brew, one for brewing (all six kettles) and one for transferring to the barrel at Zak's house, the barrel was full and the began ageing until the next step comes up in mid to late 2020. At that time, they will dole it out to the participants so that each of them can give it a different secondary treatment, most likely with some type of fruit. Then it's back to Deja Brew for another brew day to start the process all over again.



The long awaited and well deserved first tasting was planned for late 2020 but COVID may have slowed that down a bit.

The 1st Top-up and Distribution (September 2020)



THE WIZARDS SOUR BARREL PROJECT

A sunny fall day started off with brewing another sixty gallons (four kettles) of the Golden Sour at Deja Brew and ended with each of the barrel project participants taking home 3 gallons of the initial brew.

In between, the brew was transported to Zak's house, kegs were filled, the Octoberfest beer swap was held and a few beers were sampled. And after everyone left, Zak cleaned up the mess and topped up the barrel with the new brew from earlier in the day.

Once at home, everyone started the secondary treatment of their beers, mostly with fruits but there are also rumors of coffee and chili peppers.

[The First Tasting - Fruited Sours \(April 2021\)](#)



The club met on a sunny Saturday afternoon in April at Bill M's house for our first in-person get together since the pandemic began. Bill had a fire going in the pit and brisket waiting on the table. Besides getting to see everyone face to face (or would that be mask to mask?), highlights included the first group tasting from the barrel project and at

least another 15 beers to try. Clearly a good day all around!

Barrel project beers tasted included the untreated base beer, passion fruit, blueberry, dry hopped (Galaxy, Vic Secret & Ellos), apricot, rhubarb, chili, raspberry, plum, blackberry and peach. Good or bad and depending on how you view it, the rumored coffee treatment never did materialize!



Other beers sampled included Headshots (Monkish), 2019 Good Migrations (Creature Comforts), The future is unwritten (Small Change), More Pours (Vitamin Segal), Session IPA (Craig), Quadruple Stout (Treehouse), Malloy's solera blend (Bill M), Bagged Lunch (S&S Farm), Endless Night & Day (Trillium), Gravity Hammer (Modern Times), 2016 El Lechedor (Night Shift), Darkness (Surrey), Dark Lord (3 Floyds), Black is Back (Joey) and Star Metal Ultra (Modern Times).

Participating club members were Bill N, Bill G, Bill M, Rob, Joey, Jon, Brian G, Brian W, Zack, Colby, Craig and Pat.

Changing Homes (May 2021)

Zack decided to move closer to the city and the barrel had to find a new home. Eight or so club members met at his house and filled around 11 kegs to drain the barrel as empty as possible. Then Bill M took the barrel for a ride in his wife's Yukon to its new home in Shrewsbury where it was refilled and left to referment.



The next step is to give all project stakeholders another share that they will take home and age on a variety of different woods in anticipation of another club tasting event. Presumably another trip to Deja Brew will be required to top up the barrel for the next round.

Brewing the 2nd Top-up (March 2022)

It's time to fill the barrel again. This time we did something different and brewed at Duane's house in Worcester instead of Deja Brew. In addition to Duane's setup, Pat and Rob combined parts and pieces to make up another brewery.

In total, another twenty-some gallons were brewed on that cold chilly in March. Duane made us another mega yeast starter and then we left it to Duane, Eli, Bill M and Pat to let it ferment before toping up the barrel.

Yes, it was a cold chilly day in March but everyone had a good time doing it. Fortunately for us, we had a few other libations to sample and keep us warm. And an extra thanks to Rose who had some tasty snacks on hand!



[The 2nd Top-up and Distribution \(April 2022\)](#)



April came and it was time to distribute and top up the barrel. After the barrel was refilled, twelve kegs left Bill's house with the participants for the final step. Rob got us eleven different kinds of honeycomb wood samples to treat the soured beer this time. The plan was to age each of the first eleven kegs on a different one of the wood samples for six to eight weeks. The twelfth keg was left untreated as the base beer control.

As it turns out we didn't brew enough at Duane's so Bill M. brewed another 12 gallons to complete the refill and to keep the barrel topped off till next time.

[The Second Tasting – Wooded Sours \(November 2022\)](#)

The wooded sour swap and tasting was the main feature at our November club meeting. Some were better than others and some tasted like they were supposed to! Everyone agreed it was a fascinating and educational experiment although we're not sure it will be repeated any time soon.



The Swap



The Tasting

Club Favorites: Yellow Birch, Cedar, Hickory and White Ash.
Most interesting: White Ash, Bald Cypress and Sassafras
White Oak versus Red Oak – the red wins
Soft Maple versus Hard Maple – the hard wins

Now, just in case you wondering what the different woods taste like and the effect they could have on beer, here's the complete list of woods used:

THE WIZARDS SOUR BARREL PROJECT

Wood	Description
Cherry	Butter brickle, ripe cherry, fresh grass, meringue, light fried bread/Belgian waffle
Hard Maple	Maple candy, light spice-nutmeg, cinnamon, syrup, bread/bakery, cream hint of cocoa
Hickory	Honey, BBQ, hickory smoked bacon, apple sauce, cocoa coconut
Red Oak	Red berries, toasted marshmallow, light grass, baking bread, butterscotch
Sassafras	Vanilla, Sage/Spice, Root Beer, Mint
Soft Maple	Yellow cake, light smoke, banana, nut, toasted bread, hint of orange spice
White Ash	Campfire, marshmallow, light grass, rising bread dough, light sweetness (adds different mouth-feel dimension)
White Oak	Vanilla, toasted coconut, cinnamon, pepper, sweet baked bread, caramel
Yellow Birch	Toffee, butterscotch, honey croissant, light lemon, tropical fruit
Spanish Cedar	The oil in these Spanish cedar spirals contribute vibrant flavors and aromas of grapefruit with lighter notes of white pepper and sandalwood
Cypress	subtle vanilla wafer sweetness and the delicate tannins

Next up, what do we do for the third top-up and distribution and how long will the barrel last? Only time will tell.

[The Final Drain \(August 2023\)](#)

All good things end sometime and that time has come for the barrel project. The club met at Bill M's house to drain the barrel for the final time. We filled kegs for everyone who wanted one, filled another for the club and gave the final runnings to Rob so he could make some vinegar! After that, all we had to do was get the barrel out of the Bill's basement. We're not sure what everyone is doing with their share but we do know Bill M is planning to make the barrel into a table for his backyard patio.





The First Appearance of the Final Beer (September 2023)

The first time we got a taste of the final barrel beer was when we brought the club's keg to the New England Home Brew Jamboree. We served in through the Randall first with rhubarb followed by peach then mango and finishing with more rhubarb. Maybe we did rhubarb twice because we had a lot of it or maybe because we know it would be the most popular. Either way, it proved to be a popular choice among the festival goers. We didn't finish the keg so with any luck we can do it again next year.



What will see next and when?