

w·i·z·a·r·d·s

Worcester Incorporated Zymurgists Advancing Real Draughts



**Homebrew Club
Worcester, MA**

Sponsored By



Highlights from the year that was 2024

Like we say every year, it's been another good year for the Wizards. The club kept busy with quarterly mini-comps, a visit to NERAX, a Mass Craft Brewer's Week Pub Crawl, the NE Home Brew Jamboree, our annual December outing/pub crawl in Worcester and our 4th annual Advent calendar beer swap. All this on top of our weekly Thursday night social call where we're now up to 245 in a row with only a few holiday breaks

Looking back at the mini-comps, it's been a battle for the king of the hill. Last year it was Bill with two wins, this year it's Brian W and Eric with two wins each. Who will it be in 2025? The only way to win is to brew and enter. Oatmeal Stout is up next in February!

January Club Meeting

The new year began with a blizzard and switched our monthly meeting to Zoom at the last minute. Justin began the meeting by revising his opening toast to commend our good wisdom of staying off the roads and switching to Zoom. Everyone had a good laugh but quickly agreed. "What new do you plan to brew in 2024" was the question of the month. Some answers were a Munich Dunkel, Belgian Quad, Barleywine and more lagers. Duane capped it off with I don't brew much new but rather tweak what I have.

Bill led a lively discussion about the May Quarterly Style, Dark English Mild although the planned tasting had to be postponed. We pushed Duane's talk on yeast till March so more people could be present then quickly moved into a discussion about yeast anyway. All in all, a good, well attended meeting even if we had to resort to Zoom in a blizzard.

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review

[Annual Holiday Party](#)

Bill hosted the club's annual holiday party at his house in Hudson. The Strange Brewers joined us again this year and, much like last year, kept the party going strong into the night. Plenty of home brews, a handful of interesting "big" bottles and a Bigfoot Flight rounded out the night.



[February Club Meeting](#)

For this month's opening toast, we had a pair of pilsners from Rob C. and Greg. Rob's had peeps in it, Greg's did not. Both were very good. Thankfully you couldn't taste the peeps. Brian's question of the month was "why don't more of you bring your beer for the quarterly style comps in mini kegs or growlers with CO2 cartridge dispense systems?" After discussing a few of the various styles and their drawbacks, he decided to keep using bottles.

The highlight of the meeting was the West Coast mini-comp where Brian W. picked up the top honors with Bill as the runner-up. Wait, you're saying what's a West Coast Pilsner? West Coast Pilsner, or WCP for short, isn't new but it isn't exactly something we see every day. They've been around for about seven years and are now starting to increase in popularity, probably more so on the West Coast. While the style is relatively new and still evolving, it is defined by the combination of straightforward drinkability and aggressive, New World dry hopping. The key to brewing WCP is to approach it like a pilsner on the hot side and like a West Coast IPA on the cold side. You can read more about the [WCP style](#) on our website under [Brewing Styles](#).



1 WCP Judging

Bill gave us a quick Mild style refresher and tasting in preparation for the May mini-comp. The tasting included Shoemaker Dark Mild (Lost Shoe), Tiny Coffin Dark Mild (Freak Folk Bier) and Pour Yorick (Forrest & Main).

WIZARDs 2024 Year in Review

We finished the night off with a pH test comparison between Duane's pH meter and Colorphast strips. Bru'n Water suggests adding a 0.3 correction to the strip reading to get the true pH (although he doesn't really say which pH strips this applies to but he sort of implies it's the Colorphast ones), however, our test showed the correction to be closer to 0.1 for the Colorphast pH strips.

Thanks to Bill N for hosting us in Hudson this month.

[Murder Hill Trip](#)

February brought us a trip to Murder Hill Brewery in Whitinsville and visit with former club member, owner and brewer Ben Rosech. Did you know Ben is one of fifteen club members that have gone on to professional brewing? You can see all of them on our website under [Club History](#). After a nice visit and a few tasty beers, we headed home but not before stopping at Rushford & Sons in Upton for a quick pint and Cold Harbor in Westboro for a night cap.

[Mass Craft Brewer's Week Pub Crawl](#)



Joey got some of the club together on a Thursday night for an impromptu pub crawl to celebrate Mass Craft Beer Week. Stops included Flying Dreams, Lost Shoe, Wild Hare and Tacklebox

although some of the crew also hit Medusa and/or Clover Road as well. Joey and Jeremiah even managed to join the rest of us on the Thursday evening call on their way home.



[March Club Meeting](#)

Illness and travel brought us a smaller meeting this month but a good time was had none the less. Walter presented his ESB for the opening toast to rave reviews. Bill proclaimed it was a good thing he wasn't around for the ESB mini-comp! After some talk about NERAX and jockey box repair the meeting quickly transitioned to the chaos and mayhem stage.

Thanks to Jeremiah for hosting us in Worcester this month.

WIZARDs 2024 Year in Review

[April – Pubcrawl/NERAX](#)

This year's pub crawl took the club to Boston for the New England Real Ale Exhibition (NERAX), the longest running Real Ale Festival in the United States. Some of us boarded the train in Worcester and headed to the Lithuanian Club in South Boston where we met Rob and Brian W who went there straight from work in the city. The night we were there, there were 62 cask ales for the tasting (26 from the UK and 36 from the US). We barely made a dent, but there's always next year.



Anticipation on the train!



Us in the hall!



Lots of beers to go!

[April Club Meeting](#)

For the opening toast, Bill presented a Mild that he brewed using an AI Generated recipe. The beer was well received although hardly a winner. The answers to this month's question "Where do you buy your home brew supplies and why?" were a bit surprising. Approximately 70% of us still shop at a nearby LHBS versus 30% online although bulk hops often come from Yakima Valley and bags of base malt come from Stone Path.

Duane finally got to give his yeast talk, all 1 hour, 12 minutes and 13 seconds of it, to rave reviews. He talked about the importance of the right amount of healthy yeast, preparing a starter, equipment, sanitization, storing and reusing yeast and identifying contaminants. You can read a summary of his talk on [Yeast Starters](#) on our website under [Styles & Tips](#).



Brian W talked about Saison for the August mini-comp while we sampled a Saison Dupont (brought by Mark) and a Cuvee des Jonquilles (that Brian hand carried back from his recent trip to France).

Thanks to Bill N for hosting us in Hudson this month.

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review

[May Club Meeting](#)

Congrats to Eric for winning the Dark Mild Mini-Comp by besting out seven other strong contenders. Brian W and Jeremiah rounded out the top 3 coming in second and third. Eric quickly picked Vienna Lager as his choice for the November mini-comp.

Thanks to Mark for hosting us in South Grafton.

[June Club Meeting](#)

Brian W opened the meeting by sharing his latest Best Bitter telling us to “Drink & Enjoy.” What’s your favorite specialty malt and why was this month’s question of the day. As you might expect, there was a lot of discussion but nothing especially definitive.



Brian W gave a follow-up talk on Saison for the August Mini-Comp giving us more detail, guidance, and samples than we had in the abbreviated version back in April. His style highlights were very dry, bitter, peppery, highly carbonated, and often bottle conditioned. His brewing tips included very hard water, mash at low temps, open fermentation. We sampled the gold standard Saison Dupont along with Hillstead Farms Charlie and Arthur and Fox Farm’s Bloom’d. For comparison we had two Bier de Garde’s Brian brought back from his recent trip to France: Meteor Blonde de Garde and Page 24 Blonde Bier de Garde.



And if all that wasn’t enough, we started our annual rehab of the club’s jockey box in preparation for the Home Brew Jamboree later this summer.

Thanks to Rob for hosting us in Uxbridge.

[July Club Meeting – It’s the Swill-Off Again](#)

Joey welcomed us to his backyard with homemade hot dips, nacho chips and his 2014 robust porter aged in a rum barrel from the Maine Craft Distillery for the

WIZARDs 2024 Year in Review

opening toast. Although the carbonation has faded over time, the beer survived remarkably well with notes of rum, molasses, and mint.

This month's question was perhaps the liveliest one ever "What is your biggest brewing mishap?" Lighting the kitchen counter on fire, melting the stove, exploding bottles and fermenters, bad measurements and incredibly poor ingredient choices were among the top answers.



Then the lightning started, the wind picked up and the rain started coming down in buckets. After a quick move into the dining room, Eli put on a Mexican playlist and our annual swill-off was underway. This year's theme was "South of the Border" meaning anything south of the US border. Although we might have had two too many Modelo chilas we still had a good time. You can read Pat's ever so eloquent [2024 write-up](#) and see who came out on top on the web site under [Swill-Off](#).

Thanks to Joey for hosting us in Holden this month.

[August Club Meeting](#)

It was an unseasonably cool night when we met in Eli's backyard. No worries, he's got a nice backyard fire table and we had plenty of beer to keep us warm. Pat opened the meeting by sharing a Nachtmusik Dunkel that he picked up at the Shilling Brewery on his recent summer vacation. Maybe it was the cold or maybe we were just being lame but we never did get to the question of the day this month.

There's a new sheriff in town and his name is Brian W. Brian picked up his second win of the year in this month's Saison mini-comp. Kudos to runners-up Bill and Duane.

One highlight of this month's jamboree planning was checking out the completely rebuilt 15-line gas manifold that Eli put together for us!

Thanks to Eli for hosting us in Worcester this month.

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review

[New England Homebrew Jamboree, Tamworth Camping Area, Tamworth, NH](#)



The Wizards made another strong showing at the New England Homebrew Jamboree in Tamworth, NH. Our booth was looking good, the lights were up (thanks Walter), the cauldron was level (thanks Mark) and the taps all worked (thanks Eli). We had twelve beers and a non-alcoholic lemonade on tap. The last of the Belgian Pale Ale (that was supposed to go into the barrel) was on the Randall, first with raspberries, then rhubarb and finally with mango. We even had a California Common Radler, thanks to the kid's lemonade.

Here's the tally of what you missed, taken between 3:00 and 4:00 PM on Saturday:

- Worts - 10
- Strange Brewers - 8
- WIZARDS - 13
- FOAM - 5
- Merrimack Valley - 32
- Northshore - 31
- CBS - 20
- Seacoast - 32
- BFD - 19
- CAHB - 6
- Southern Maine - 11
- Knight of the Mashing Fork - 16
- Bubba Lou - 2
- Blue Line Truck - 4
- RIBS - 14
- SNEEZ - 7
- Southshore - 49

That's 16 clubs and the Blue Line Truck for a total of 279 beers, wines, ciders, meads and who knows what else to choose from! There were 2 new clubs and 1 more club than last year but 23 less choices. Once again, we didn't break any records since I've been counting (19 clubs in 2018 and 2019 and 339 beverage choices in 2017) but still a pretty solid showing. Hopefully they made a good buck for Make-A-Wish.

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review



Plans are already being made for next year's jamboree; we have a few more improvements for the booth in mind...

[September Club Meeting – Oktoberfest!](#)



After delaying for a few late arrivals, Brian W poured us an opening toast of Von Trapp's Vienna Lager and jumped right into his presentation on the Vienna Lager style in preparation for November's mini-comp. He started with some history of the style and humored us with some of Anton's antics while creating it. Perhaps the most entertaining antic was the sample

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review

stealing hollowed-out cane he used on the British brewers. Since we were already running late, we skipped the question of the day, rushed through old and new business and moved right on into our annual Oktoberfest Celebration. Pat wasn't there to provide his usually witty write-up, but thanks to Bill we had some rough notes that Gemini rewrote in Pat's style for you to read at the end of this newsletter.

Thanks to Mark for hosting all this fun at his place in Grafton.

[October Club Meeting](#)

Duane started the meeting by presenting his NHC award winning Belgian tripel for the opening toast. Jeremiah quick followed that up with a selection of pumpkin beers. Chaos and mayhem soon followed interspersed with a few lively discussions, mostly related to brewing.

Thanks to Jeremiah for hosting us at his house in Worcester.

[November Club Meeting](#)

Eric opened this month's meeting with some Treehouse Vienna Lager in preparation for our pending mini-comp judging. The month's question of the day, "which brewery has your favorite flagship/core line up" produced some interesting discussion. Greg voted for Alesmith, Justin voted for Guadalupe, Jeremiah said the only brewery with a core line-up worth talking about is Treehouse and the rest of us were hard pressed to come up with a single favorite.

After a short business meeting to finalize plans for the upcoming months, Brian W gave a short talk on Oatmeal Stout which he picked for the February quarterly style. Then it was on to the Vienna Lager mini-comp with Eric taking first place (he's now 2 for 2 this year), followed by Bill and Walter.

Thanks to Bill for hosting us in Hudson this month.

[WIZARDS Advent Calendar 2024](#)

Once again, we didn't have to go to the old Bed, Bath & Beyond parking lot for the Advent Calendar beer swap. This time we chose the Baystate Brewing parking lot where we met for our annual holiday outing. This makes it four years in a row for the beer swap. Kudos to Greg for the most innovative packaging yet. In case you're wondering, the top picks for the last three years have been Tröegs Mad Elf Grand Cru (2021), Brooklyn Brewery Black Ops Imperial Stout (2022) and Duane's Goosehead Imperial Stout (2023).



WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review



[December Club Meeting – Baystate Brewing](#)

We had quite the turnout and quite the adventure for our annual holiday meeting on the road. We met up at Baystate Brewing, had a few flights (ok, we ran them out of tasting glasses), had 50¢ wings and did our Advent calendar beer swap in the back room. A short walk took us to the White Eagle for perhaps the funniest moment of the night. Joey walks up the bar, orders the house Eagles Rocks beer, pulled out his credit card and was promptly told there's a \$10 minimum and his order only came to \$2.50. He then generously offered to buy one for anyone to reach his minimum. Next, we went to the Fiddlers Green Pub at the Worcester Hibernian Cultural Centre but it was closed so we headed to another Irish Pub, Boland's Bar, for the perfect pint of Guinness. We finished the night with a quick stop at Vincent's on the way home. Too bad the band was finishing up right when we got there. On the plus side, Jermiah taught us all about Spaghett, a drink made with Aperol and Miller High Life. All in all, quite the night.



Stop 2 – The White Eagle



Stop 3 – Boland's Bar

WIZARDS 2024 Year in Review

WIZARDS Tasting Glasses



Good news – even though we sold some more at the jamboree, we still have plenty of glasses left!

Any member in good standing (ie, dues paying) gets two for free and additional glasses can be bought at the bargain rate of 2 for \$5.

Till next year, see you at the monthly club meeting, always held on the third Tuesday of the month.

[Oktoberfest 2024, courtesy of Bill and Gemini on Pat's behalf](#)

Guten Tag, fellow beer wizards!

We gathered at Mark's place for our annual Oktoberfest celebration. The air was thick with anticipation, and the lederhosen were out in full force. After a quick talk about Vienna lagers by our resident beer historian Brian W, the fest was underway. President Eli put on some traditional Bavarian oompah music and Walter assumed the job of designated pourer setting the stage for a night of delicious brews.

We had a total of 12 beers to try, including 7 festbiers, 3 Märzens, and 2 Oktoberfests. Surprisingly, they were all American this year. Here's the lowdown:

- **Notch Festbier** – our first beer of the night, no comments, score: 28.
- **Idle Hands Brocktoberfest Festival Lager** – With an English accent, Greg said it was bit nutty, Brian said it was all right just not as festive as the Notch, score: 21.
- **Medusa Simon Festbier** – butter, diacetyl, Wurthers candy, Bill said it was much better on tap this past weekend, score: 17.
- **Treehouse Rustle Festbier** – good looking beer, not the usual Treehouse winner, score: 25.
- **Exhibit A Right to Farm Northeast Festbier** – made with local ingredients, sweet finish, I like it, little woodiness and funky. And then we had our first distraction with a rather lengthy discussion about where Exhibit A moved to, score: 24.
- **Sierra Nevada Oktoberfest Festbier, Gutmann Collab Edition** – the highest ABV so far, I could drink a liter of this, lots of talk about not buying used lederhosen followed by a stern warning from President Eli to keep on track, score: 32.
- **Idle Hands Wie'sn Fest** – our first and only crowler of the night, Walter proclaimed something was wrong with the can as he dripped it across the floor, Greg felt it had a skunky nose, Mark thought it was old, Walter said he got it filled this past Friday, score: 17.
- **Schilling Konstantin Märzen** – looks like a Vienna Lager, not really tasty, sulfur, cardboard, Eli wanted to vote it much higher but was humbled by his peers, score: 19.
- **Treehouse Whisper Märzen** – tasty, no wooded creatures (think this had something to with the label), little sweet, could be a nice ice cream topper, score: 27.
- **Treehouse Solitude Märzen** – bright, totally obvious it's dry hopped, drinks better than the last one, a great beer but not sure how traditional it is, someone called it a nice American adaption, a crowd favorite, score: 32.
- **Founders Oktoberfest** – Eli started us off by saying it's never been a great beer and called it what the masses want, Brian questioned if what

WIZARDs 2024 Year in Review

the masses want is good, Levi likes the Founders Breakfast stout, Walter does too, score: 22.

- **Sam Adams Oktoberfest** – Levi got this one for free and broke it out at the end, like a pumpkin beer without the spice, at an ABV of 5.3%, there's no fest in that, Mark made a quick plug for Jeremiah's pumpkin beer and Brian brought us back full circle by pining for a Vienna Lager, score: 15.

Given what we've been through, a call was made to revisit the very first beer of the night (you know how the first guy up tends to get the shaft?) to see how it stood up. This time the Notch Festbier got a 31. Channeling his inner Pat, Eli demanded an average of the two and after a small debate on rounding we gave it a final score of 30.

So, who won? Sierra Nevada Oktoberfest Festbier and Treehouse Solitude Märzen tied for first place with a score of 32. Thanks to Meghan for sending us the best beer of the night!

Till next year, Pat