

The
YoBrew Magazine

Summer 2011



Issue Number 3

Price Free

Editorial

Welcome to the third issue of the YoBrew magazine. Again Pete and I have set to work to provide a wide and hopefully interesting range of articles for you. We cover summer recipes, brewing articles and provide a novel hydrometer (Concept brewing). Pete and I provide two separate and independent views of "Best / worst equipment on the market". Outside of the normal home brew subject area we try our hand at humour and include the crossword. We hope you enjoy the magazine.

The magazine was produced by me Stephan by Peter Laycock.

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I hope you enjoy the magazine and want to thank Pete for all his assistance in producing this magazine. Pete contributes to www.yobrew.co.uk and has his own homebrew site www.petespintpot.co.uk

SUMMER 2011

Stephan

Quite a variety of topics in this issue so it's hard to know where to start.

Let's start with some summery mixes. This is sure to bring on the rain.

Summer drinks for picnics and garden parties.

Citrus wine cup

1 Bottle white wine (750ml) some of you excess homebrew whit will be good

1 Can lemonade (330ml)

1 Can soda water (330ml)

2 or 3 Lemons

For a larger party I use 3 bottles of wine 1 Litre of lemonade and 1 Litre of soda water and 7 or 8 lemons.

Chill all the ingredients well before you start. Mix all the ingredients together in a large punch bowl and chill well. Serve with ice.

(The lemonade and soda can be substituted for bitter lemon soda)

Picnic Sangria

2 bottles of red wine (2 x 750ml)

5 tablespoons Cointreau or Grand Marnier

600ml lemonade

600ml soda water

2 oranges

2 apples

(1/4 cucumber) I leave this out as cucumber is yuck!

Sprigs of mint or lemon balm

Chill all the ingredients well before you start. Slice the oranges and apples and place all the ingredients in a large bowl with the sprigs floating decoratively on top.

(The lemonade and soda can be substituted for bitter lemon soda.)

I use the above as a rough guide and adjust depending on the people and the occasion.

Humour

Stephan

International Agreement on Brewing Terms becomes law. (IABT-2011)

The almost random use of the terms “Lager”, “Beer” and “Ale” by some countries has raised the urgency for an international agreement. As an independent and un-biased group YoBrew was ideally placed to resolve this by proposing concise and clear terminology rules. We are proud to say that our proposed rules can now be considered as a part of international law.

The rules for the new law are:-

Lager: Refers to European lagers and can be considered as “Pretty good” or “Exceptional”. Super market’s own brands can no longer use the words “Lager”, “Beer” or “Ale”.

Beer: British Beer and Ale will be referred to as “a pint of ale” or “a pint of beer” but definitely not as “a pint of warm and flat”. British Beer and Ale can be referred to as “The best”. British beer is an acquired taste which means if you are not entirely satisfied then please do not return it, the issue is with your taste buds. To educate the palette, purchase and consume more British Beer.

American brands (Near-Frozen Gnat's Urine) will be referred to as “Gnat’s Urine” or in polite company this can be shortened to “Gnats”.

No drink can be referred to as “the king” as the Queen would not approve.

American Beer produced by home brewer and microbreweries can be considered as “Surprisingly good” or even as “Annoyingly good”.

The Isle of Wight (UK) produces Garlic beer for their Garlic festival. This is so wrong on so many levels that it should be clearly labelled “Export only” and sold in trendy French wine bars as “Garlic Champagne” or “Champagne à l'ail”.

To avoid any confusion, drinks that are currently labelled as “Export” or “Export only” must now be labelled as “Pretentious”.

South African’s are permitted to use the terms “Lager”, “Beer” and “Ale” in anyway that pleases them. This also goes for any other similar tough nations that should not be messed with.

If you know of a similar tough nation that should not be messed with then please add that nation to the YoBrew Facebook poll. All nations added to this poll must be considered as suitably tough enough that the above international rules cannot be applied to them.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/YoBrew/225563240791684>

RATIONALIZED WINE MAKING

Peter Laycock

Right, you want a nice easy recipe to start with, well here are two:-

DRY APPLE WINE

3l apple juice
620g sugar
5g (1 tsp) pectic enzyme
5g (1 tsp) Bentonite
2.5g (½ tsp) yeast nutrient
1 sachet good wine yeast
Water to 4.7 litres

APPLE WINE (an actual published recipe - not so simple)

568ml (1pt) apple juice
1.814Kg (4lb) sugar
5g (1 tsp) pectic enzyme
5g (1 tsp) tartaric/citric acid
5g (1 tsp) grape tannin
5g (1 tsp) Bentonite
5g (1 tsp) yeast nutrient
5g (1 tsp) wine yeast
Water to 4.5l (1 gall)

“But,” you ask, “Are they any good?” “Possibly/doubtful” is the reply (always the optimist). “How do you know?” You then ask. “Well, without making & trying these wines we cannot know for sure, but, by analysing the ingredients we can get some idea as to the balance” I reply.

Take the first wine, the ingredients, which are made up to an initial volume of 4.7 litres, contain the following approximate weights of these important substances

	<i>Wt g</i>	<i>Sugar g</i>	<i>Acid g</i>	<i>Tannin g</i>	NOTE These figures will vary slightly depending on the constitution of the juices used.
<i>Apple juice</i>	<i>3000ml</i>	327	0.8	0.3	
<i>Sugar (added)</i>	620	620			
<i>Fermentation acid</i>			7		
<i>Total</i>		947	7.8	0.3	

This assumes the juice contains 10.9g sugar per 100ml, for the same quantity there is 0.69g acid & 0.1g tannin, then, by calculation, our finished wine will be around O.G. 1076, F.G 993 11.1% ABV, 0.59% acid & less than 0.01% tannin, the volume should be close to 4.5 litres, sufficient for 6 x 750ml bottles.

This fits in well with the table overleaf.

For the second apple wine, made up to an initial volume of 4.5l

	<i>Wt g</i>	<i>Sugar g</i>	<i>Acid g</i>	<i>Tannin g</i>
<i>Apple juice</i>	<i>568ml</i>	62	3.9	0.1
<i>Sugar</i>	1814	1814		
<i>Tannin</i>				5
<i>Tartaric acid</i>			5	
<i>Fermentation acid</i>			7	
<i>Total</i>		1876	15.9	5.1

By calculation, our finished wine will be O.G. 1156, F.G 993 (assumed, if all the sugar is converted to alcohol) 22.2% ABV, 0.35% acid & 0.11% tannin. In practice such a wine would not ferment out to more than around 20% using the best high alcohol yeasts, the unfermented sugar would make it sweet & the small amount of juice would give little flavour. Again, from our table, 0.33% acid is very low & the added tannin is not necessary as 0.11% is far in excess of what we need for a white wine.

When we finally bottle our wine we could possibly end up with our last bottle (750ml) containing only 550ml wine owing to our losses. What do we do? The options include nothing, topping up with some existing wine or filling our 6 bottles equally & topping up with water, thus diluting our wine to around 95%. We could always top up with grape or apple juice, the advantage(s) of this is that the body will not be thinned & our wine will be slightly sweeter by a couple of degrees. If we ever do top up a finished wine with fruit juice or add sweetening sugar, it must be stabilised with potassium sorbate first to prevent re-fermentation, but not with sparkling wines as they would end up flat!

So, beware of (old) recipes advocating lots of sugar, use a good sachet of yeast, do not use toast as some old books tell us, or yeast from tubs as wild organisms can infect these after opening.

You may have noticed that only 2.5g yeast nutrient is used in the first recipe. Most musts will contain sufficient nutrient but the ½ tsp added will ensure this. Excess nutrients remain in the finished wine and, once again, could provide food for unwanted organisms.

Bentonite (both recipes) is not essential but it certainly helps a wine to clear.

COMMERCIAL WINES

If we know the makeup of commercial wines then we can tailor our own wines to have similar characteristics. The following table is a useful guide. Note that many commercial wines may not fit into the following criteria, but that does not necessarily mean they are bad, they could easily be very good, possibly with some outstanding features, some may need long maturation periods.

Wine Type		% alc	% acid	% tannin
Dry White Table	Ger	9-10	0.55-0.70	<0.04
	Others	11-13	0.5-0.8	
Dry Red Table		11-13	0.50-0.65	0.1-0.3
Rosé (<i>a gvestimation</i>)		11-13	0.60-0.75	0.04-0.09
Sweet White Table	German	8-11	0.60-0.75	<0.04
	Others	12-15	0.50-0.60	
Dessert (fruit)		17-20	0.55-0.65	0.2-0.3
Dessert (Port)		17-20	0.40-0.50	0.2-0.3
Dry Aperitif		14-17	0.5-0.6	

My Definitions:-

DRY	F.G. <998
MED. DRY	F.G. 998-1005
MEDIUM	F.G. 1005-1010
MED. SWEET	F.G. 1010-1015
SWEET	F.G. 1015-1020
DESERT	F.G. 1020+

The figures in the following table are for an initial volume of **4.7** litres of WINE & are only approximate. They should only be used as a rough guide to help calculate a wine's general parameters.

For sweetening wines, 60g sugar will add approximately 5° to our finished wine (**4.51**).

Sugar g	O.G.	Wine % Alc.	Ingredient Acid g	Total Acid g	Wine Acidity %	Tannin g	Wine Tannin %
700	1056	8.4	10	17	0.36	0.5	0.01
725	1058	8.6	11	18	0.38	1.0	0.02
750	1060	8.9	12	19	0.40	1.5	0.03
775	1062	9.2	13	20	0.43	2.0	0.04
800	1064	9.5	14	21	0.45	2.5	0.05
825	1066	9.7	15	22	0.47	3.0	0.06
850	1068	10.0	16	23	0.49	3.5	0.07
875	1070	10.3	17	24	0.51	4.0	0.09
900	1072	10.6	18	25	0.53	4.5	0.10
925	1074	10.8	19	26	0.55	5.0	0.11
950	1076	11.1	20	27	0.57	5.5	0.12
975	1078	11.4	21	28	0.60	6.0	0.13
1000	1080	11.7	22	29	0.62	6.5	0.14
1025	1082	12.0	23	30	0.64	7.0	0.15
1050	1084	12.2	24	31	0.66	7.5	0.16
1075	1086	12.5	25	32	0.68	8.0	0.17
1100	1088	12.8	26	33	0.70	8.5	0.18
1125	1090	13.1	27	34	0.72	9.0	0.19
1150	1092	13.4	28	35	0.74	9.5	0.20
1175	1094	13.7	29	36	0.77	10.0	0.21
1200	1096	13.9	30	37	0.79	10.5	0.22
1225	1098	14.2	31	38	0.81	11.0	0.23
1250	1100	14.5	32	39	0.83	11.5	0.24
1275	1102	14.8	33	40	0.85	12.0	0.26
1300	1104	15.1	34	41	0.87	12.5	0.27
1325	1106	15.4	35	42	0.89	13.0	0.28
1350	1108	15.6	36	43	0.91	13.5	0.29
1375	1110	15.9	37	44	0.94	14.0	0.30
1400	1112	16.2	38	45	0.96	14.5	0.31
1425	1114	16.5	39	46	0.98	15.0	0.32
1450	1116	16.7	40	47	1.00	15.5	0.33
1475	1118	17.0	41	48	1.02	16.0	0.34
1500	1120	17.3	42	49	1.04	16.5	0.35

All data is for the finished wine unless otherwise stated, fermentation adds approx. 0.15% acid to **4.7** litres of wine (equiv. to approx. 7g/1.5 level tsp tartaric acid).

1 level tsp (5.5g) sodium bicarbonate reduces acidity of **4.7** litres of wine by about 0.11%. No more than 2 or 3 tsp should be added as the added salts may affect the taste & always add with care to avoid an eruption.

In **4.7** litres of wine, 1Kg sugar gives approx. 11.7% alcohol

24g *total* acid gives 0.51% acid (25g/**4.7** litres). All acid values are for tartaric acid.

(One advantage of using Tartaric acid for wine making is that any excess will be deposited in the form of these crystals, especially when the wine is cooled.)

9.5g tannin gives 0.2% tannin (9.5g/**4.7** litres)

NOTE:- the “% Alc” column assumes a F.G. of 993.

HOME MADE WINES

The table below gives some indication of what to expect from some of the home winemakers armoury. Again the figures are only approximate & can easily vary 10% or more either way. Factors such as type (Russet or Bramley apples etc.), the make of tinned fruit & constitution etc & not least the ripeness of the fruit, all play a part. A coloured box indicates a guess!

1Kg apples give around 0.5l juice & 1Kg grapes give around 0.6l juice, these figures are very approximate & an average figure taken from several sources.

ITEM	NOTES	Sugar %	Acid %	Tannin %	ITEM	NOTES	Sugar %	Acid %	Tannin %
APPLE	COOK	9	1.2	0.08	RASPBERRY		6.5	1.5	0.25
	EAT	11.5	0.7	0.08	REDCURRANT		5	2.3	0.1
	CRAB	13	1	0.8	ROWANBERRY		9		
APRICOT	FLESH	6.5	1.2	0.1	RHUBARB		1	1.5	0.1
	DRIED	42	3.6	0.3	SLOE		8	2	0.3
BANANA	FLESH	18	0.35	0.1	STRAWBERRY		5.5	1.1	0.4
	DRIED	60	1	0.3	TANGERINE	JUICE	7.5	1.3	0.01
BILBERRY		6	0.95	0.15	WATERMELON		9	0.2	0.1
BLACKBERRY		5.5	1.1	0.3	WHITECURRANT		5.5	2.2	0.1
BLACKCURRANT		7.5	3.5	0.35					
BLUEBERRY		11	0.3	0.1	ITEM	TINNED FRUIT	Sugar g/100g	Acid %	Tannin %
CHERRY	BLACK	12	0.5	0.1	APRICOTS	(Check labels for sugar content)	18	0.5	0.05
	RED	10	0.5	0.1	CHERRY		22	0.25	0.05
CRANBERRY		3.5	3	0.15	FRUIT SALAD		13	0.4	0.05
DAMSON		9	2.2	0.15	GOOSEBERRY		22	0.7	0.05
DATE		65	1	0.5	GRAPEFRUIT		17	0.7	0.05
ELDERBERRY		11.5	1.05	0.55	GUAVA		19	0.2	0.05
FIGS	FRESH	15	0.4	0.1	LYCHEE		19	0.15	0.05
	DRIED	52	2.5	0.5	MANGO		20	0.25	0.05
GOOSEBERRY	COOK	5	1.7	0.1	ORANGE		19	0.5	0.05
	EAT	8.5	1.7	0.1	PAPAYA		15	0.1	0.05
GRAPE	NO SKIN	17	0.85	0.02	PEACHES		17	0.3	0.05
	SKIN	17	0.85	0.2	PEARS		18	0.2	0.05
GRAPE JUICE	WHITE	17	0.85	0.02	PINEAPPLE		15	0.17	0.05
	RED	17	0.85	0.2	PLUM		20	0.7	0.05
GRAPE CONC.	WHITE	65	2	0.06	PRUNES		18	0.6	0.05
	RED	65	2	0.6	RASPBERRY		23	0.6	0.05
GRAPEFRUIT	FRESH	6	2	0.1	RHUBARB		7.3	0.7	0.05
	JUICE	7	2	0.01	STRAWBERRIES		15	0.6	0.05
GREENGAGE		11	1.2	0.1	TANGERINE		18	0.5	0.05
GUAVA		7	0.4	0.1					
HONEY		74	0.15	0	ITEM	*FRUIT JUICES	Sugar g/100ml	Acid %	Tannin %
KIWIFRUIT		14	3	0.1	APPLE	(Check labels)	10.5	0.69	0.01
LEMON	JUICE	1.5	4.3	0.1	CRANBERRY		16	0.8	0.2
LITCHI		17	0.3	0.1	GRAPE	WHITE	16.25	0.72	0.02
LOGANBERRY		5	2	0.2		RED	16.25	0.72	0.2
MANGO		11	0.5	0.1	GRAPEFRUIT		15	1.5	0.01
MEDLAR		10.5	1	0.1	"FIVE ALIVE"		10	0.48	0.01
MELON		6	0.2	0.1	ORANGE		10.5	0.98	0.01
MULBERRY		8	0.45	0.1	RIBENA		10	0.7	0.1
NECTARINE		12.5	0.7	0.1	RIBENA	CONC.	60	1.9	0.5
ORANGE	FRESH	9.5	0.95	0.1	SUMMER FRUITS	CONC.	50	1.5	0.2
	JUICE	10	1.05	0.01	PINEAPPLE		12	0.8	0.01
PAPAYA		8	0.1	0.1					
PASSION FRUIT		6	3	0.1	ITEM	VEG.	Sugar %	Acid %	Tannin %
PEACH	FRESH	8.5	0.65	0.1					
	DRIED	52	1	0.5	BEETROOT		7	0.2	0.01
PEAR		10	0.3	0.1	CARROT		6	0.06	0.01
PERSIMMON		14	0.2	0.1	CELERY		1	0.1	0.01
PINEAPPLE		12	1.1	0.2	MARROW		1	0.1	0.01
PLUM	COOK	7	1.6	0.15	PARSNIP		11	0.12	0.01
	EAT	10	1.5	0.15	POTATO		1	0.1	0.01
PRUNES		47	1.3	1					
QUINCE		8	0.95	0.15					
RAIS/SULT/CURR.		67	2	0.5					

COLOURED BOX DENOTES FIGURE IS GUESSED.


LIGHT SUMMER ALE

Peter Laycock

Three recipes & all for the same brew? Well, let me explain, the free beer & wine calculators available at www.yobrew.co.uk/calculators.php, the “Extract Calc.” has two basic methods of designing recipes which are referred to as **METHOD 1** & **METHOD 2**, **METHOD 1** is further complicated by having the option of adding any sugars at the start of the boil & after the boil.

THE CONVENTIONAL WAY

METHOD 1 my “normal” recipes/calculations assume a 20% hop utilization, the sugar is added at the start of the boil.

	<u>Ingredients</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Calc.</u>
	Dried malt - light	1500g	O.G. (excluding the primer)	1034
	Crystal malt	250g	O.G. (including the primer)	1035
	White granulated sugar	500g	F.G.	1005
	Fuggles hops (4.5% AA)	36.5g	% ALC.	4.1
	Challenger hops (7.5% AA)	29.5g	Initial volume litres	23
	Ale yeast		Bitterness EBU	33
			Colour EBC	12


- 1 Boil the malt extract, crystal malt, sugar & hops & the in 12.2 litres for 60 mins.
- 2 Carefully strain the liquid & sparge (rinse out with water several times) into the fermenter. Make up to 23 litres with cold water & cover.
- 3 When the wort (rhymes with shirt - unfermented beer) when the temperature is around 20°C, add the yeast & re-cover. (The gravity should be around 1034 - if measured.)
- 4 Leave to ferment, the gravity should be about 1005, within 2 or 4° & static. The “final gravity” is very hard to predict.
- 5 Leave a few days to clear, bottle with 1 level tsp (approx. 3.15g) granulated sugar per litre.
- 6 Keep in a warm dark place to get it’s “fizz” (plastic bottles are best - they will feel “fat”).
- 7 Keep in a cool dark place to mature for a month or two.
- 8 Drink & enjoy - serving temperature should be around 11-13°C.

METHOD 1 - alternative method. Adding the sugar after the boil.

- 1 Boil the malt extract, crystal malt & hops & the in 9.25 litres for 60 mins.
 - 2 Carefully strain the liquid & sparge (rinse out with water several times) into the fermenter containing the sugar. Make up to 23 litres with cold water & cover.
- Steps 4-8 as before.

THE UN-CONVENTIONAL WAY

METHOD 2 in which my recipes/calculations totally abandon the idea of a 20% hop utilization!

<u>Ingredients</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Calc.</u>	
Dried malt - light	1500g	O.G. (excluding the primer)	1034	
Crystal malt	250g	O.G. (including the primer)	1035	
White granulated sugar	500g	F.G.	1005	
Fuggles hops (4.5% AA)	25g	% ALC.	4.1	
Challenger hops (7.5% AA)	20g	Initial volume litres	23	
Ale yeast		Bitterness EBU	33	
		Colour EBC	12	

- 1 Boil the hops & the crystal in 6 litres for 40 mins.
- 2 Add the sugar & the malt extract to a clean fermenter.

- 3 Carefully strain the hops & the crystal malt through a large colander (45g of hops take a lot of space when wet!) & rinse out with water several times into the fermenter. Make up to 23 litres with cold water & cover.
- 4 When the wort is around 20°C, add the yeast & re-cover. (The gravity should be around 1033 - if measured.)
- 5 Leave to ferment, the gravity should be about 1005, within 2 or 3° & static. The “final gravity” is very hard to predict.
- 6 Leave a few days to clear, bottle with 1 tsp granulated sugar per litre.
- 7 Keep in a warm dark place to get it’s “fizz” (plastic bottles are best - the feel “fat”).
- 8 Keep in a cool dark place to mature for a month or two.
- 9 Drink & enjoy - serving temperature should be around 11-13°C.

RECIPE NOTES:

A fairly easy ale to make, especially when using **METHOD 2**, with a good hop character. A 1.8K tin of light liquid malt extract will give very similar results.

As Cyrano de Bergerac famously said “There’s more than one way to skin a cat.”

HOP GROWING

Peter Laycock

The main jobs of hops in beers are to give bitterness, flavour, aroma & help preserve the beer.

Well, that’s the intro sorted out, let’s concentrate of the growing of hops.

We will start off with the ground, it requires a lot of sun so a generally south facing aspect is ideal. Hops are climbers with a left-hand thread & can grow over 4.5 metres long, this makes the hop difficult to grow & harvest. But there is an easier way to grow them. I have a cane adjacent to a 2 metre fence post, up which my hop bines grow. Further canes run horizontally with the top of the fence & half way up the fence using wire hangars attached to the fence posts. The hops are then trained to run along these “horizontals”.

When growing this way, it is a good idea to limit the number of bines growing to the number of “horizontals” & the removal any side-shoots from the vertical growth is perhaps a good idea.

Hops like water & some compost as they can grow over 7cm in a day.

I the beginning hop flowers like tiny strands of cotton before developing into that familiar shape & turning to that gorgeous pastel green colour. They are normally 2-6cm in length & 1-2.5cm in width, depending on the type.

HARVESTING

When ready to pick, the hop develops a “papery” feel, they spring back when lightly squeezed, feels lighter & has tinges of light brown (as opposed to the immature hop which tends to feel “thicker”, “remains squeezed” & has a greener hue).

DRYING

If you thought that “harvesting” was hairy fairy then STOP READING RIGHT NOW!

Drying keeps the hops safely during storage. Something like a reduction in weight of between 25% & 20% is required. Many amateur American hop growers appear to put their (hop) cones on (door) screens & sun-dry them. I’ve always thought that hops were unstable when exposed to light (especially UV) after harvesting!

To me, oven drying is a much better option. 50 or 70°C is about the right temperature; the lower the temperature the better the hop quality but a longer drying time is needed. Weigh your hops & bung them in the oven. After half an hour or so, weigh them again, gently “turn over” & repeat until the hops are sufficiently dry.

Alternatively you could place your hops in an unheated loft or airing cupboard for a few days to dry naturally.

Store in jars or sealed bags in a cool, dark place.

Home-grown are hops best used as late hops, to give the beer aroma as the alpha acid content is unknown.

HOP PROPAGATION AND AFTER CARE

Hop seeds are useless. I'll expand a little on that statement. Unwanted male plants may germinate as well as female. The best way to grow hops is to clone them by taking root cuttings in the winter time or "normal" during the growing season, also note that the roots tend to develop new shoots which can be separated from the main plant.

Once established, the *Humulus lupulus* the main problem is limiting the growth. Some people (like me) can experience problems when brushing against them as their skin erupts with blisters upon contact.

In the autumn/winter cut back the dead growth back, almost to its roots. Don't worry about cold winters, they are good for the rhizomes as they store sugars, ready for the new growth they will follow.

Further information can be found on hop growing along with two suppliers of hops etc. at www.yobrew.co.uk/grow_your_own.php & more about the hop's characteristics & uses see www.petespintpot.co.uk/hops.html.

THE BEST & THE WORST PIECE OF EQUIPMENT PURCHASED.

STEPHAN'S CHOICE

Worst piece of equipment I have purchased for home brew was the digital PH meter. It was not that cheap so I expected good things from it but almost immediately it was of no use as it states that it needs to be calibrated before use and each time you use it after leaving it for a short while. To calibrate it you need two expensive buffer solutions (not supplied with the unit) and you fiddle about trying to get two readings to read correctly on the digital probe. For me it was a complete waste of money and time.



Best piece of equipment I have purchased for home brew was a tough one. I really like my catering quality digital thermometer for its reliability and accuracy. I would not want to be without my hydrometer or even my bottle drainer which I think holds about 40 bottles. But for me the winner is the Floor standing corker. Corking was kind of getting me down. My previous corkers were a pain to use and they compressed the air in the bottle. I tried to avoid compressing the air using a bit of fishing line but that was a real fad and it did not work well. Then I got the floor standing corker which seems completely over the top but it is flipping great. I really look forwards to having 30 or more bottles to cork. It makes short work of it and it is fun to do. The corking mechanism is much more like that used by commercial wineries. As a result the air inside the bottle is not compressed and I can easily insert longer corks and even commercial corks. Because most home brewers do not have floor standing corkers they cannot insert commercial corks and that is why corks sold by home brew shops are ever so slightly narrower than commercial corks and so the fit is not quite as tight as commercial bottles. So without a doubt my floor standing corker is the best bit of equipment I have purchased for home brewing even if it is a bit over the top for a hobby that should not require lots of expensive kit.



PETE'S CHOICE

Oh dear, where to begin!

The worst piece is the easiest & I'm going to nominate the

THORNE ELECTRIM 75 IMMERSION HEATER

Basically this is a 240V, 75W fish tank heater selling for just under 29 Quid at the time of writing. I found completely unsuitable for brewing & winemaking. Not as versatile as the BrewBelt, even more fiddly, needed more cleaning & was very fragile, it was far too powerful but worst of all was the poor temperature control (ostensibly set at 22-24°C - I would have preferred 20-22°C), the temperature control range of the heated liquid was far too great (a 2°C range would have been excessive but the error was grater than that!). So mine went straight back to the shop as "unfit for its intended purpose". This was a few years ago, they may have changed now.



This could possibly be used as a submersible aquarium heater if it were not for its excessive cost & excessive temperate variation.

The best piece of equipment I ever purchased is probably:-

KENEX PROFESSIONAL DIGITAL POCKET SCALE, MODEL KX-500FT



To-day you can get a pocket digital pocket scale for less than a tenner. I settled for the Kenex KX-500FT because it was the cheapest! Typically they are very pocketable & are suitable for weights up to 500g or more, they have a resolution/accuracy of 0.1g on a back-lit LCD readout; the figures are 10mm high. Metric, Imperial (ounce & ounce Troy) & "Pennyweight" options are available; just choose your favourite system. The Kenex scales are auto-calibrating no additional weights need buying. One very useful feature is the "Tare" weight option, if for example, I wanted to weigh out say 55g of hops, the operation is simplified by placing a suitably sized plastic container on the scale, the "Tare" setting sets the read-out to zero & I can now add/remove hops until I have my required quantity, removing the container from the scale during

this process is not a problem as the "power off" feature does not operate unless the scale has been static for a minute. They also make a lovely toy!

Actually the pocket scale is the *second* best piece of equipment I ever bought, after the hydrometer! This instrument (described as having magical properties by Dave Line as the scale always faces away from you!), helped me to understand the principles of beer/winemaking etc., find problems with the same & it lead to me on to develop the [YoBrew calculators](#).

YOBREW'S JOURNEY ON TO FACEBOOK

Stephan

The style of the YoBrew site is based more on the principals of editing a magazine or a book rather than a complete free for all forum. The YoBrew structure is just the way it was in the beginning and the way it has evolved in the form of content contributions, rather than a clear and precise strategy. YoBrew thrives on input from the home brew community but we have always been concerned that about fully opening YoBrew up such that anyone can add / edit content could detract from our aim to only deliver quality, reviewed articles to our visitors. Then again since the concept of YoBrew is that it is "YOur BREW" we definitely wanted a place where it's a bit more of a free community. Facebook looks just the job. Reviewed articles and tried and tested recipes can continue to go on the main site but everyone is free to take part in the YoBrew Facebook community. As we get more familiar with the Facebook page we can see that the wall thingy is kind of neat and

in a way too good. Everything goes straight to the wall and tabs like the discussion tab do not get much of a look in. That coupled with the fact that a Facebook discussion tab is not that brilliant if you are used to discussion forums like PHPBB. YoBrew is quite new to Facebook and we want to give a big thank you to the early visitors and early “likes YoBrew”. (THANKS!!!) We may be new to Facebook but we are not new to technology and boy setting up a Facebook page is weird. Basic things like adding tabs and apps can be less than intuitive. The effort is worthwhile as one of the great things about Facebook is that a lot of people are already on Facebook so they do not need to register their details with YoBrew to join in. The future of the social side of YoBrew is I guess up to us all. We all can play our own part in the YoBrew community whether that as an occasional visitor or as a confirmed “likes YoBrew” and regular contributor. After all isn't that what a social community pages should be.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/YoBrew/225563240791684>

HOMEMADE SPECIALIST BREW BIN HYDROMETER.

Stephan

How to make a specialist brew bin hydrometer, which compliments your general purpose hydrometer. A general purpose hydrometer is fairly essential for home brewing and can be easily purchased from a homebrew shop for about £3. I find general purpose hydrometer a bit difficult to read when you have brew bin full of fermenting liquid. What I want is a hydrometer you bung in the brew bin and leave it there and one that is easy to read when the brew is between 1.005 and 1.000. General purpose hydrometers cover a wide range of specific gravities and as such the difference between 1.000 and 1.005 is about 2.5mm. The difference using the brew bin hydrometer is three times longer at 7.5mm, which means is much easier to read and the marking are very easy to read as well.

- Top of the cap 0.995 (Estimated not measured yet)
- Base of the cap 1.000
- Bottle lip just below the cap is 1.005.

Things required to make your own:

- 1 clean and empty 1 litre plastic fizzy drink bottle.
- About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a litre of sand. I used some of the play sand from my daughter's sand pit.
- 1 bucket of water. The bucket needs to be deeper than the 1 litre bottle you are using.

Instructions

- Remove the label and any glue from the fizzy drink bottle. The fizzy drink bottle should be totally clean. Only use only food grade plastic fizzy drink bottles and make sure the cap is food grade plastic and not metal.
- Clean and dry the bottle inside and out including the cap.
- Below the plastic cap is a plastic ring. Remove this such that it is easier to clean and sterilise when you use it again and again
- Fill the bottle will sand until the bottle floats with the water level just touching the base of the screwed on plastic cap.

You now have you a Hydrometer calibrated to 1.000

- When you do your first brew note the hydrometer reading when the brew bottle floats to the level of the clear plastic lip just below the cap. On mine this was 1.005



Now you have two very clear and easy to read calibration points. Just below the cap is 1.000 and the clear plastic bottle lip below the cap is 1.005.

For my brew I put the brew bin hydrometer in and when the brew is nearing the end of fermentation I take a quick glance to see if it's near 1.005.

This is working well for me. I was a bit surprised the bottle did not tip up as the sand can move about, but so far so good. Hydrometers use material as heavy / dense as possible and this is fixed to the base. This make the hydrometer stand firmly upright.

I had concerns about accuracy as it is not made of glass so it is easy for the bottle to be dented by changing atmospheric pressure and this affects the bottle volume and thus affects the accuracy. I always open the cap and then re-close it to allow for change in atmospheric pressure and thus far it works well. I had considered adding a small amount of fizzy drink into it to trap some pressure and ensure that the shape is maintained irrespective of temperature and pressure outside but so far this has not been necessary.

Taking this further

When I brew my next dry wine I will see how it floats and record that. I am hoping that in a finished dry wine the water level will be around the top of the cap or even sink.

You can also make markings inside the bottle to mark off key calibration points such as set finish gravities such as a finished Sweet wine mark.

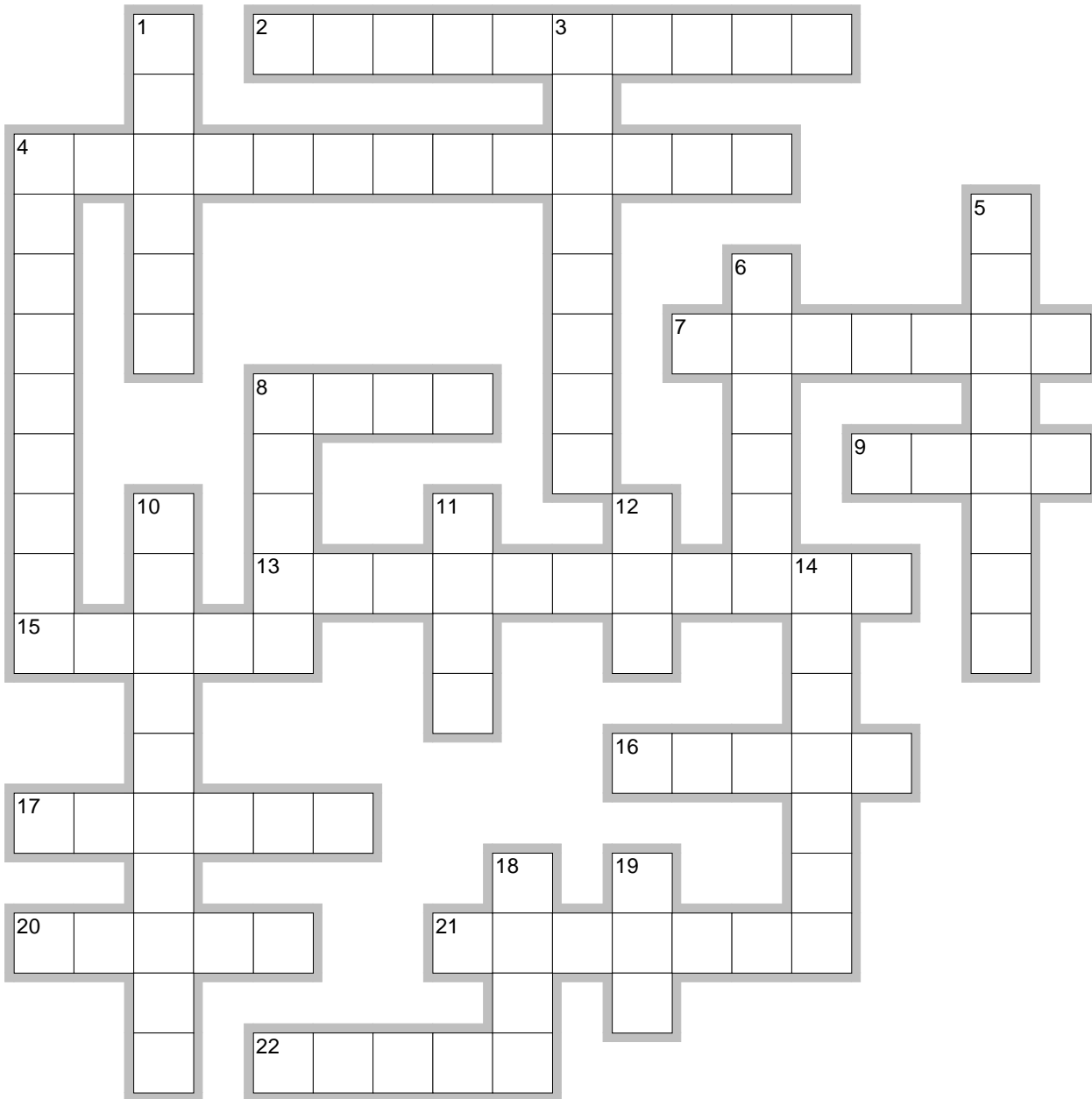
I had intended to attach a two foot long aluminium tube (5mm in diameter) to the bottle cap. With the bottle standing vertically the tube would be attached to the top and mounted vertically. The aluminium tube would be sealed at both ends with one end fixed to the cap. I planned to drill a 6mm hole in the brew bin lid to allow the aluminium tube to poke through. Then I can take readings without opening the brew bin. This is in the TODO list. I do not know of suitable food safe glues and sealants to do this task. But when I do have success with this I will update the YoBrew web page. If the buoyancy is such that the cap is just below the surface and its just the tube keeping it a float then the use of this tube should greatly increase the distance between specific gravity measuring points and as such make a much easier to read hydrometer.

People who bought Stella also bought

LYNX!

They marginally preferred the taste but the Stella smelt much better!

YoBrew Crossword - Summer 2011



Across	Down
2. Before centigrade (10)	1. Distilled wine (6)
4. Wine making stage after fermentation. It's all becoming clear now. (13)	3. One of the two gasses in Guinness bubbles. (8)
7. Wine aroma (7)	4. The wine drinker's single most important piece of equipment (9)
8. Wooden storage vessel (4)	5. Mix different wines to make a better wine (8)
9. Describes the feel of the wine in the mouth. We all have one. (4)	6. A great homebrew site. (6)
13. My favourite British country wine by far. (11)	8. Best use of apples (5)
15. Most abundant ingredient in Ale, Beer, Cider and Wine (5)	10. Hops adds a load of this to ale (10)
16. Yeast's favourite food (5)	11. Sediment (I don't know what the element but I think I know what he sediment) (4)
17. 5 - 10 gallon glass container (6)	12. Ela is a very backwards drink (3)
20. A wine with a final gravity of about 1.015 (5)	14. Proper chemical name for the alcohol we like (7)
21. Sugar heated above its melting point (7)	18. germinated cereal grains dried (4)
22. Key ingredient left out of the German Beer Purity Law (5)	19. Wood that is good for wine (3)

Answers can be found on the YoBrew site.

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