

The Brewer's Corner
Article 1, August 2020

From our beginnings in the great Garden of Eden, we have been journeying with the know-how of those who have gone before us. With their vast experiences, we have advanced over the years in many aspects of the arts and sciences. But this isn't an article on the Redemption of man, even though that too is an important topic that deserves its own time in holy hour and conversation with your local parish priest.

But, our topic plunges us into the nectar of the gods. Yes, you read that correctly, we will be discussing how the rich Catholic tradition gave birth to a labor of love that the monks of Europe treasured more than a huge library of books or even St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. That treasure is beer. Yes, within our Catholic heritage lies the keys to a world that, up until the last decade, has lain dormant but has renewed interest due to the proliferation of micro-breweries. These endeavors have challenged the popularity of the macro-breweries that lasted through this commercial age. Yes, even before Budweiser and Pabst Blue Ribbon, some of the best known beer could be found in the deep cloisters of the monastery, for monks have brewed beer for themselves and their guests ever since the 6th century.

Well, if your curiosity has been peaked, then you have come to the right place as we journey together to explore the vast experience of the wonderful world of beer. In these articles, we will be exploring beer's connection with our Catholic heritage, particularly its monastic heritage and how it has developed into what we see, smell and taste today. Some of the best beers today are still produced or inspired by the monastic tradition and we have the privilege to discover the minds of these great monks that paved the way for the liquid bread that we have come to enjoy at sporting events, family functions or celebrations. So, the next time you visit a monastery that produces beer, thank the monks for their contribution to this great drink that we have all come to enjoy.

Brewer's Corner
Article 2, September 2020

In Germany during the month of September and the early part of October, there is a month-long festival called "Oktoberfest" which, in the world of Beer, is an event to attend. The extravagant tents and fairgrounds accommodate large crowds of Beer enthusiasts from all over the world who are looking to enjoy some of the most premiere beers ever created.

A parade ushers in the celebration followed by the ceremonial opening of the keg after which flocks of people head over to their favorite tent to enjoy a good brew with neighbors, friends, and even strangers. All those in attendance are united in socializing and listening to different cultural tunes that hail from the various regions of Bavaria. Some tunes have a little countdown for you to enjoy your beverage and sing along with, though without encouraging the inebriation so common in America. Although in a non-sacral context, this participation of many cultures in one celebration can remind us of the fact that we were incorporated into the body of Christ at the moment of our baptism.

Oktoberfest is one of many celebrations the Church has taken to heart, through which She teaches a thing or two on how to feast and how to fast, a concept we experience most profoundly during Passiontide. Holy Mother the Church, through Her wisdom, identifies the importance of celebrating with others in good fashion at the appropriate times. Recently, we celebrated the great feasts of August from Saint Mary Major, to the Transfiguration of our Lord, the Assumption and the Queenship of Mary, and onward to our very own spiritual father's memorial the feast of St. Augustine on August 29th. In September, we enjoy St. Gregory the Great, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross followed by Our Lady of Sorrows, which tapers off with the feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael - also known as Michaelmas.

So, after you attend (or livestream) the sacrifice of the Mass or pray your rosary you may want to consider celebrating in good fashion with a nice cold brew of your favorite type of beer on any of these feasts, or try some of the brews from Oktoberfest that are offered at your local stores. (I recommend some of the Belgian or German brews). Or, better yet, taste some of the Trappist Beers with the label marked authentic. Any of these beers directly helps the monastic communities that brew and sponsors them to continue to follow their way of life. In the spirit of what is to come, we here at the Dom Gréa home-brewed our first craft beer on the feast of St. Dominic. It was a great way to build fraternity and enjoy the day. Updates on how the first brew goes will be included in next month's article. Until then *ein prosit der gemütlichkeit*. Or as Reverend Father says after celebrating Mass:

Prosit.

[May it (the Mass) be for your benefit.]

Pro omnibus et singulis. [For all and for each.]

[Please drink responsibly]

The Brewer's Corner
Article 3, October 2020

Extra, extra read all about it! This is the article you have been waiting for! I'm happy to announce that our beer has come to its proper end, and it is done fermenting. It has been transformed from its earlier stages, what we call in the art of brewing "wort," into what can be enjoyed now as beer. So without further ado, let us go grab a pint and navigate through our first Homebrew that the community created.

Well, first and foremost, before we were able to take our first sip of beer we obviously required permission from Father Superior, which we received. So, we were able to venture out into the deep waters of the art of brewing. With support from the brothers, without which this project would not have been possible, we worked together as a community to create the final product. I decided to start this process during a time when many of us wanted to learn or grow in a skill or a trade to assist the community. This helped many of us transition and become grounded after all that has transpired over the summer and upon entering into religious life and its various activities. Our first goal of this project was already achieved by coming together in a new way as we were learning more about this leisurely activity.

Side note, I have found that developing practical knowledge of basic skills of life keeps life from becoming boring or mundane. As seminarians, we are constantly studying intense theology or praying, so manual labor and crafts help us to relate to many who labor greatly for their families. Any developed skill also reinforces the aspect of *Ora et Labora*, prayer and work, which helps us to live an integral life dedicated to God, and idle hands are the devil's playground.

Now, back to the heart and soul of this article. I know what you're thinking, "How did the brew turn out?" Well, like anything in life, we set out to accomplish something and there are things that happen outside of our control. So, the beer was transformed not the way we planned but into something different. Our purpose was to create a Belgian house ale but we accidentally created a sour beer, which can happen in the natural process of brewing and fermentation. The change in the beer was caused by elements that we cannot see with the naked eye. I'm talking about our microscopic friend called brother bacteria. The bacteria in the beer isn't harmful to us rational beings, but to our creature beer it definitely changed the dynamics to something unexpected. The beer took on a taste almost like a lighter brand of Shock Top, particularly when you add an orange wedge into it, although it was supposed to have a heavier, breadier taste. Even though this wasn't the outcome we hoped for, the brothers here at the Dom Grea House learned a great deal from this first brew experience. We were left wanting to study the regimen more and correct some of the steps where we had difficulties. I can honestly say this has been a positive experience in so many ways and we have already gone back to the drawing board and re-stocked supplies for the 2nd brew. Yes friends, you read that correctly, we are planning to brew again because if at first you don't succeed try, try again. This is exactly what can be said about our faith, that we must not give up so quickly during tough times and must always return to it even when we feel like quitting.

Future updates to come once the second brew is finished. Overall this has been an excellent, though trying, experience for my brothers and myself. It truly has brought us together, which was the main purpose of this activity, to help build the community.

[Please drink responsibly]

The Brewer's Corner
Article 4, November 2020

This latest update is quite exciting as we celebrated, in simple fashion, our very own Oktoberfest. Some of you may have seen the pictures via the different mediums of social media, nevertheless it was our first time doing this and hopefully won't be our last. It was nice to come together to close out the month of October. Even Father Superior was impressed by the decorations that were provided by our Canoness Sisters who, in a moment's notice, were able to elevate our luncheon with various fall seasonal ornaments enchanting our tables and drinkware. The Sisters also had a little picture booth ready for anyone brave enough to take a photo. Father Superior was quoted as saying, "I thought we were just grilling brats, but this is amazing." The celebration began as we had our regular prayer for grace before meals and a special blessing of the beer which follows in English and of course in the mother tongue of Holy Mother the Church, Latin.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord. R. Who made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray.

Bless, + O Lord, this creature beer, which thou hast deigned to produce from the fat of grain: that it may be a salutary remedy to the human race, and grant through the invocation of thy Holy Name; that, whoever shall drink it, may gain health in body and peace in soul. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Latin:

V. *Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.*

R. *Qui fecit caelum et terram.*

V. *Dominus vobiscum.*

R. *Et cum spiritu tuo.*

Oremus.

Bene+dic, Domine, creaturam istam cerevisiae, quam ex adipe frumenti producere dignatus es: ut sit remedium salutare humano generi: et praesta per invocationem Nominis Tui Sancti, ut, quicumque ex ea biberint, sanitatem corporis, et animae tutelam percipiant. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Afterwards, our house brewer had prepared a little sample of some of the best beers that are usually offered during a traditional Oktoberfest. These beers were up for the trial of the taste buds of Father Superior. They were beyond good and were the creme de la creme of beer.

The first beer was Bitburger Festbier: Germany-Marzen/Oktobertfest. This style of beer generally offers toasted bread or biscuit-like malt flavor and aroma. These beers are traditionally brewed in March and lagered over the summer.

The second beer was Hofbräu München Hefeweizen. The following is a description given by a beer connoisseur: “Back in 1602 Weissbier could only be brewed by ducal privilege. It was Munich’s first Hefe Weizen. Hofbräuhaus enjoyed this exclusive right for nearly 200 years, thus holding a monopoly on Weissbier in Bavaria. But even without a monopoly, Hofbräu Hefe Weizen is a really special kind of beer. Characterized by its sparkling rich foam and distinguished by its unforgettable refreshing and fruity taste. It is brewed according to an ancient tradition and offers an alcoholic content of approximately 5.1% by volume. Savor the pure, refreshing enjoyment!”

The final beer that was in the running was Paulaner Märzen:
An amber beer style that was developed over 200 years ago to celebrate the original Oktoberfest. Märzen comes from “March beer” because it was historically brewed in March to be at peak flavor for the Oktoberfest celebration.

Out of the tasting, Father Superior chose the winner of the day which was the Hofbräu München. After the blessing and sampling we lined up for amazing food that is regional in Germany and the United States, at least in some places here. The menu was a deli roll with bratwursts that came with different types of veggies and fixings for the experienced eater and the novice, followed up by a hash brown and a few sides of apple crisps. It was a hearty meal for our community and some festive music helped create an atmosphere to celebrate as a community during lunch.

Stay tuned next article for more updates on our second attempt on the brew that is fermenting as we speak. “Drink beer, and you will sleep well. Sleep, and you will not sin. Avoid sin, and you will be saved. Ergo, drink beer and be saved.” - Medieval German saying.

Stay safe and drink responsibility.

The Brewer's Corner
Article 5, December 2020

Ave Maria!

An important update can be found in this article with ongoing development of the 3rd edition of the brew that we mentioned last article. But first, a message from this novice brewer: I want to wish you and your family and friends a blessed and holy Advent and Christmas season! May you find time to spend with those you love during this season that calls us to share the hope fulfilled in Christ Jesus through the union of our Faith united in our precious liturgies and sacraments. May your days be merry and bright with a good brew of your choosing and, for our younger brethren not quite of age yet, may you find a nice cider or soda pop to bring in the Christmas spirit rooted in Christ who renews all things in Himself. Stay safe and drink responsibly.

Now back to our regularly scheduled program: the details on this 3rd edition of our journey to brewing a beer that we can take pride in has been successful in the sense that we are improving our method and understanding how to create something that is enjoyable and yet satisfying to the palette. Even so, this requires on our behalf patience and humility. With that said, we here at Dom Grea House have completed our 3rd brew for this year! This is a tremendous blessing since we can now compare the brews and see our progress. This last brew is uniquely different even though we have been using the same recipe for the last two brews. From the start, when looking at this brew, we notice the color is a dark gold which you can see through it in a tall glass after it's been chilled. Still, there is an issue we find with this batch we brewed: the hops and taste isn't as good as we had looked forward to. Nevertheless, we will be vigilant in next year's brewing process and hopefully, with more studying and analysis of these minor setbacks, we can make some good ground.

Until next brew this is your friendly neighborhood Novice brewer saying, "Merry Christmas and stay holy my friends!"

+Please drink responsibly.

The Brewer's Corner
Article 6, January 2021

Greetings from "The Brewer's Corner"! In the words of our founder Dom Grea, *Ave Maria!* It is the season for fresh starts, especially now as a new year and month awaits. Many people try to start new things around this time.

May the start of this month bring you to a special brew called the *Birra Nursia* which is produced by Benedictine monks in Norcia, Italy. After the devastating earthquake of 2016 that hit Norcia and took out the monastery. The monks of Norcia have not allowed this life changing event to affect their obedience to the rule of Saint Benedict or their way of life. Here you will find enjoyment in the simplicity of their life in a glass. There are only two types of beer that the monks offer for the beer connoisseur and the beer enthusiast. With their flagship beer, the blond which brewed to perfection brings a nice shade of crisp yellow color when poured into a beer chalice, which is specifically designed to hold that kind of beer. Even if you don't have a beer chalice, any drinkware will be safe for this beer so long as you can take the time to appreciate it in moderation. Upon tasting the first sip, you will find that it is a light beer that will definitely become a favorite for you. This blurb is taken from their website:

"Birra Nursia Bionda is a golden, luminous beer with a creamy, compact and persistent head. Its fresh aroma is enhanced by hints of coriander and lemon zest. With time, it matures to become an ethereal floral perfume. The palate is enlivened by the hop and malt notes. The cheerful carbonation and the gentle, dry finish nicely round off the body of this beer.

FOOD PARINGS: Starters and first courses with cheese and vegetables; spinach and ricotta tart; artichoke tortellini atop taleggio fondue; oven-cooked white meats. Pizzas: Four seasons; white pizza with artichokes and cured ham; white pizza with cooked ham, asiago cheese and asparagus."

Supporting this community and purchasing their beer will in fact assist them in rebuilding their monastery so that the monks of Norcia can continue to chant the psalms and offer the labor of love for the Church, all of which is why we here at "The Brewer's Corner" gives this beer a 5 out of 5 mug rating for its likability and the worthy cause of religious helping religious.

With that said, this is a beer to experience with family and friends. It can be ordered online for our 21 and older brethren who have the option of having this special beer delivered to the safety of their home. You may also join the brewmonks club to support them regularly (and receive more beer) or there is a one-time option if you find that this wasn't your favorite. Either way, your dollar goes to a worthy cause.

Again, this is your neighborhood friendly novice brewer signing off until next time. Have a brew and drink responsibly.

The Brewer's Corner
Article 7, February 2021

Welcome back to another edition of "The Brewer's Corner" where we examine the wonderful world of the art of brewing.

In this article, we take a look at the foundation of our journey to becoming masters of the craft. And there is no better place to begin than to examine the monks of old. I have been reading *Brew like a Monk*, a title that will hopefully apply to me someday. In the book itself, the author takes a look at the background of some of the monasteries in Belgium and how the monks developed the great brews that are still around for tasting to date. Before the history, however, the beginning of the book states that it is important to establish good brewing practices to ensure the best possible outcome, which we have been refining here at the Dom Gréa House.

That being said, our point of departure from this book is only from a historical perspective for this article. I thought the timeline was excellent and clarified many questions that I had about the Belgian monks, particularly the Trappist and Benedictines. I will write about that later in another article, but for now I want to endorse it as an enjoyable read and worthy of purchasing for reference. In other words, it should be one of those books that a novice brewer has in his personal library. Of course, our way of life calls us to surrender ownership of personal things, to the extent that we novices often remind each other to "call nothing your own." Thus, the entire community may benefit from this resource as it is placed in the community room. This is an excellent point which leads us into our first rule and the main point of this article. As we approach the art of brewing and researching methods, the first rule is preparation, as the well known quote by Meyer Breslau has it, "Beer that is not drunk has missed its vocation." We are in that process of learning and understanding as we dive into such a craft as this. It is important to have all that you need before you, so that when the time comes to brew there is no second guessing, only carrying out the different tasks for crafting the brew of choice.

Second, note that it behooves an individual that embarks on this journey to have sound resources as well as proper tools to rely on so that he will more easily understand and carry out the various tasks in order to make a great brew. I have found that asking for the intercession of St. Arnold or St. Augustine, the patron Saints of brewers and future master brewers like us, is essential. We will talk more about these Saints later on in the year as a way to thank them for their patronage.

Let's continue to read more and research as we continue to work on the methods of the art of brewing. Have a cold brew, maybe make it a home brew, and please drink responsibly. This is your friendly neighborhood novice brewer signing off: Ave Maria!

The Brewer's Corner
Article 8, March 2021

Welcome back to another addition of "The Brewer's Corner," where we examine the wonderful world of the art of brewing.

In this article, we are taking a slight deviation from our research for the art of brewing to share a moment that the brothers and myself had this past month, when a fellow seminarian came to visit us for a few days. Usually when a brother in Christ visits us, we catch up on what has happened on the novitiate, since we have shared many experiences together at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo.

Nonetheless, this brother sometimes brings gifts of good will when he comes to visit. This time he brought a game called *Heaven & Ales*. You heard that right, *Heaven & Ales*. Now I can imagine what you must be thinking about now. If it's anything close to what I was feeling in the moment, then we are in sync. When the brother told us the title I was instantly interested and at the same time saying to myself, "Why didn't I discover or hear of this game sooner?" We jumped right into it, so after prayers and lunch we began our journey together into this so aptly named game.

After a brief explanation and tutorial round we got into the gameplay. So my first impression was that it had a *Settlers of Catan* look and feel to it. The main objective is that you are an abbey of monks striving to get your ale out to the world. In order to make it to success and ultimately win the game, you must collect and harvest and refine items like water, hops, barley and barrels for fermentation.

Even recruiting vocations is part of the game by activating more monks to cultivate the items and build breweries. Naturally, when playing a new game, it takes a few times to get used to the actions, so that was the downside for us brothers especially when trying to understand different strategies and techniques. But overall, it was a fun game for us to come together. Even though I didn't win, that was okay. I would definitely play this game again if given the opportunity. Especially because it involves monks and ales, my two favorite subjects.

So I would recommend playing this with friends and family. It teaches a little bit about economics and business with a dash of acknowledgment that the monks of old made beer in good fashion. Also, it would be nice to have a beer or ale of choice while playing (of course, please drink responsibly).

We here at the Dom Gréa House enjoyed the great moments shared in this game, which overall was the purpose of coming together for a moment.

The brewer's corner gives this game 3.5 mugs out of 5, since it's Lent and we couldn't have a beer ourselves.

Again, this is your friendly neighborhood Novice brewer saying,

Ave Maria!

The Brewer's Corner
Article 9, April 2021

Welcome back to another edition of Brewer's Corner. In this article, our findings lead us into the heart of our journey into the land of Belgium, where the monks of old planted seeds in their labor to sustain themselves in brewing beer for the thirsty pilgrim. Nevertheless, our finds lead us into a more complex understanding of vocation crisis that is affecting the craftsmanship of brewing beer in the heartland of brewing. A bit of sad news this month, but I promise you that there is hope towards the end as we spotlight on an abbey toward the eastern shores of the USA.

Nevertheless jumping to it, here is an article, titled "BELGIUM: The last Trappist leaves his abbey and one more beer dies off," written by Reverend Father John Zuhlsdorf, who is a critically acclaimed Catholic priest blogger. He points out that there are 14 major Trappist beers that are known all around the world. Now. Six are in Belgium: Achel, Westvleteren, Westmalle, Orval, Chimay, and Rochefort. Achel brewery has just taken its name off the "authentic Trappist" labeling that guarantees that it was brewed and bottled by Trappist monks.

In a previous article, we had mentioned this labeling to help support the hardworking monks that pray for the conversion of sinners and brew excellent beer. This news about Achel is sad indeed, as they have been making quality beer for years now in the Belgium region, but, due to lack of vocations and man-power, they have been removed from the list.

But, as mentioned above, there is hope with all that has happened. That hope being you the reader. Yes, you... If you are willing to learn this craft, by all means take to heart this call to renew our efforts, to dare to go where the monks of old ventured. That is to say that those who have a love for the craft of brewing support those monks who have dedicated their lives to Holy Mother, the Church, and to this wonderful contribution of crafting extraordinary beer.

Even though another "grandpa" brewery is out of the market doesn't mean all hope is lost in the Catholic brewing world. As a matter of fact, there are still more Trappist monks in other areas keeping the tradition alive, particularly in USA. Spencer Brewery, is the only Trappist brewery in the United States-outside of Europe. Located an hour drive east of Boston, Spencer sells its beers across much of New England, and half its sales come from overseas.

We will talk more about the monks of St. Joseph abbey in another article. Nevertheless, let us be inspired by what we have heard, as well as by those who are willing to learn this wonderful craft, which can be tied to those who have come before us.

This is your friendly neighborhood novice brewer signing off wishing you a Blessed Eastertide.

Ave Maria!