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Repast

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POTENT POTABLES

The theme for this Fall issue fell into my lap when I realized that 2005 brings no less than four big anniversaries in the history of alcoholic beverages: the bicentennial of Veuve Clicquot, the celebrated Champagne label; the bicentennial of Pernod Fils, the first large-scale commercial absinthe distillery; the sesquicentennial of the Miller beer brewery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and the sesquicentennial of the Grands Crus system of Bordeaux wines.

The **Clicquot** vineyard, near Reims, France, became in 1805 the first of a series of wine estates taken over by the *veuves* (widows) of their deceased owners. It was Madame Clicquot who would bring to the Champagne industry such technical innovations as riddling and in-bottle fermentation, and boldly open up new markets in Russia and elsewhere; see Boris Silberberg's article on page 8 for the full story. Two centuries later, women still have leading roles at Clicquot: the company is headed by Cécile Bonnefond, and its U.S. affiliate, Clicquot, Inc., is headed by Mireille Guiliano (author of the recent *French Women Don't Get Fat*).

In the same year, 1805, Henri-Louis **Pernod** broke away from his father-in-law's small operation that produced absinthe, then mainly known as an apéritif. Pernod's plans were to establish a larger distillery of his own on the main street in Pontarlier, France, near the Swiss border. Under the name Maison Pernod Fils ("House of Pernod the Son"), he soon became the world's leading supplier of absinthe. Later, when the *Phylloxera* infestation devastated French vineyards and made wine scarce and expensive, absinthe consumption in France would soar— by a factor of 50 between 1874 and 1910! In French-influenced New Orleans, bars like the Old Absinthe House made beloved drinks with Pernod, while at Antoine's Restaurant chef/owner Jules Alciatore used it in his 1899 invention of Oysters Rockefeller. Absinthe became illegal in the U.S. in 1912, but as *Time* magazine noted in 1934, New Orleans remained "the absinthe capital of the world".

In Milwaukee in 1855, Frederick J. **Miller**, a newly-arrived German, leased the defunct, 11-year-old Best Brothers brewery, located on a plank road on the outskirts of town, and used it to brew a modest 300 barrels of *lager* that year. He was by no means the first local beer-maker to cater to that city's large immigrant community, but his production expanded, and eventually Miller was shipping ice-cooled beer all over the country. Besides Best and Miller, other important German-immigrant breweries included Schaefer Brothers (New York, 1842), C. Schmidt and Sons (Philadelphia, 1844), Huber (Monroe, WI, 1845), Krug/Schlitz (Milwaukee, 1849), Stroh's (Detroit, 1850), Blatz (Milwaukee, 1851), Anheuser-Busch (St. Louis, 1860), Hamm's (St. Paul, 1865), Phillip Best/Pabst (Milwaukee, 1873), Coors (Golden, CO, 1873), and Olympia (Olympia, WA, 1896). During this period, beer became the most popular alcoholic drink in the U.S. In large cities, a beer garden might serve food and drink every Sunday to upwards of 3,000 people.

Back in Europe, also in 1855, French emperor Napoléon III asked wine brokers to devise a classification of the **Bordeaux** vineyards for use at the Universal Exhibition in Paris that year. The brokers grouped the leading estates, which were mostly in the Médoc region, into five ranks of prestige called *grands crus classés*, based largely on the prices that their wines commanded. Surprisingly, the classification has varied little in the intervening 150 years. A new book about these estates, which will interest connoisseurs of wine or of castles, is *Bordeaux Chateaux: A History of the Grands Crus Classés 1855-2005* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004; translated from the French by Louise Guiney and Susan Pickford; 320pp., $60 cloth). Commissioned by the Conseil des Grands Crus Classés itself, the book is a lavish collection of photos and writings by experts on wine and the decorative arts.

— RKS

On the cover: A German *Oktoberfest* poster from 1930.

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THE GREAT GERMAN THIRST

by Sabrina Broselow Moser

Sabrina Moser, an American scholar of German food history, is currently living in Stuttgart, Germany. She recently completed her Ph.D. in Germanic Languages at the Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, with a dissertation on Enlightened Gastronomy: Discourses on Meals and Mores in the Age of Goethe. *Among her publications is a piece about the introduction of coffee to Germany, and its moral and economic ramifications, in the current issue of* Prandial Post, *newsletter of the Food History Committee of the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP).*

Bibit pauper et ergrotus,
bibit exul et ignotus,
bibit puer, bibit canus,
bibit presul et decanus,
bibit soror, bibit frater,
bibit anus, bibit mater,
bibit ista, bibit ille,
bibunt centum, bibunt mille.

[The poor man drinks, and the invalid,
the exile drinks and the man nobody knows,
the boy drinks, the greybeard drinks,
the president drinks, and the deacon,
the sister drinks, the brother drinks,
the old man drinks, the mother drinks,
that woman drinks, this man drinks,
a hundred drink, a thousand drink.]

— "In Taberna", from *Carmina Burana*
(Bavaria, Germany, 13th Century)

Throughout the ages, Germans have been known as a prodigiously thirsty folk. As early as the 1st Century A.D., the Roman historian Tacitus claimed in his history of the Germanic tribes that although the barbarians were inured against cold and hunger, they had little tolerance for the twin evils of heat and thirst. With this observation, Tacitus became the first in a long line of commentators, both foreign and German born, to report on what they dubbed "the great German thirst". Sturdy and robust denizens of northern, forested climes, the ancient Germanic peoples prided themselves not only on their fearless brazen in battle but also on their drinking prowess, and from those days onward, the Germanic penchant for drink became an undying source of amusement, disdain, bewilderment, and awe.[1]

In great contrast to their Greek and Roman counterparts, however, the Germanic peoples did not choose to quench their thirst with the fermented juice of the grape, and even their mythology is remarkably free of Bacchanalian or Dionysian figures. Rather, the Germanic tribes honored gods such as Wotan and Thor with offerings of mead, cider, and, especially, beer.[2] In fact, beer is the beverage most strongly associated with the Germanic peoples.[3] In Norse mythology, the gods present fallen heroes entering the gates of Valhalla with the finest beers imaginable, and participants in Germanic religious rites often drank beer to excess in the hope of catching a fleeting, intoxicated glimpse of the afterworld. Moreover, in Germanic burial ceremonies, beer was often placed in the grave alongside the departed, and in the realm of the living, beer was the primary drink of the home. It was always offered to guests as a symbol of hospitality, and imbibing it together was a vital means of cementing lasting social and political bonds.[4]

More than just an intrinsic element of ritual or the focus of social gatherings, however, beer from ancient times onward has also been a necessary and nourishing staple of the German diet. Next to bread, beer constituted the primary source of daily calories from the days of Wotan and Thor until the end of the 18th Century, when the potato finally won wide acceptance across the German-speaking lands. An example of this phenomenon is the fact that rich and poor alike commonly consumed beer in the form of a soup called *Biersuppe*. Concocted of warmed beer, beaten eggs, and butter, beer soup became a standard German breakfast dish. Even the esteemed Prussian monarch Fredrick the Great, who lived from 1712 to 1786, enjoyed partaking of a hardy beer soup for breakfast, and any German cookery book from the era is bound to include several variations on the theme. Sometimes the warm beer soup is poured over chunks of bread; sometimes it is seasoned with salt and sugar; occasionally, it is even eaten garnished with shavings of chocolate. Regardless of how it was eaten, *Biersuppe* was a mainstay of the German diet for centuries.

As a kind of liquid bread, beer also had a certain set of advantages over other common foodstuffs that made it a dependable and resilient source of daily nutrition. Grain was known to rot in its silos or succumb to hoards of hungry mice, and even baked bread, the staff of life itself, could easily grow stale and moldy. By contrast, beer was brewed to last. It did not spoil easily, and it repelled even the hungriest of rodents. In other words, German beer amounted to a long-term preservation of the grain supply that could be relied upon in times when grain shortages posed a recurrent and serious threat.[5]

In terms of contamination, there was yet another pragmatic reason for beer's great popularity since water was considered highly unsuitable for human consumption. Thought in the Middle Ages and early modern period to spread the plague, water right up to the beginning of the 19th Century was often a real cause of disease in urban areas. Fortunately, most German breweries had private wells at their disposal that were considerably deeper than those feeding city water supplies. And even if the water used for brewing was contaminated, the process itself sterilized the end product. In short, beer became a safe alternative to water for the thirsty masses, and due to its lower alcohol content, they could indulge in it more liberally than wine or spirits.[6] Indeed, the only real danger posed by beer was the fact that flies, also thought to carry the plague, were known to land in the mug and spoil the drink. For that reason, traditional German beer steins were originally

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GREAT GERMAN THIRST *continued from page 3*

equipped with hinged lids in order to keep flies— and the bubonic plague— at bay.[7]

The importance of beer as a safe and reliable form of liquid nourishment is also significant in the greater context of medieval Christianity with its strict tradition of fast and feast days. Keeping the fast in Lent and at other times during the Christian calendar was an important aspect of daily life in the German-speaking lands for almost all members of society, but monks living in monasteries were especially rigorous in their observation of such rituals. Due to the caveat that liquids did not break the fast (*liquidum non frangit ieiunium*), monks began to rely increasingly on thick, heavy brews to curb their holy hunger pains. Hence began the long association in the German-speaking lands of monasteries with beer brewing. Not only did monks have an especially great need for a substantial liquid to keep them nourished during the fast, but, among the most highly-educated members of society, these men were also able to write down and pass on their brewing procedures with unprecedented precision.[8]

Despite these advantages, beer brewing in Germany was not the sole purview of monks, for beer was also commonly brewed in the home where it qualified, along with cooking, cleaning, and laundry, as traditional woman's work.[9] But beer brewed by fastidious German housewives in the Middle Ages and early modern period would have tasted significantly different than it does today. In addition to the standard ingredients of malt and water, German housewives, much like their Germanic forefathers, did not rely on hops alone to brew their beer. Rather, they also used a variable mixture of wild herbs and other ingredients known as *Grut* that could include everything from tree bark and juniper branches to elderflowers, bay leaves, pinecone seeds and yarrow.[10] Some of these additives were especially prized for their narcotic effects, and brewers readily experimented with herbs in order to create the most potently intoxicating brews possible. Two such popular favorites were wild rosemary (*Ledum palumstre*)[11] and black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger)*. Referred to in German as *Bilsenkraut*, black henbane triggered wildly vivid hallucinations and could even be fatal if indulged in too freely. Interestingly, it is from this herb, and not the Czech city of Plzen as is commonly believed, that the word "Pilsner" derives its name.[12]

Such experimentation quickly led to attempts to regulate beer brewing, the most famous and long-lasting of which is the so-called *Reinheitsgebot* or the German Beer Purity Law. Issued in the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt on April 23, 1516, the Purity Law constitutes one of the world's oldest-known food regulations. Originally, this law limited the ingredients to be used in beer brewing to barley, hops, and water, though eventually yeast, initially taken from the air, also came to be recognized as a necessary separate component. Still today German beer makers adhere proudly to this nearly 500-year-old regulation, with the exception that wheat malt may also be used for the creation of the famous German wheat beer known as *Hefeweizen*. The regulation has ensured the recognition of the supreme quality of German beers around the globe.

An important aspect of this Bavarian regulation was its insistence on hops as the only admissible additive to the brew of malt, water, and yeast. Whereas wild rosemary had to be imported at expensive prices from the north, hops grew abundantly in the south, and still today, Bavaria is the region of Germany most widely associated with beer brewing and drinking.[13] The ongoing popularity and world renown of Munich's annual *Oktoberfest* bears witness to this claim. First held on October 12, 1810, this festival is perhaps the largest and most famous folk festival in the world. Originally planned as a one-time horse race in celebration of the marriage of the Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria to Princess Therese of Saxon-Hildburghausen, the festivities were so popular among the cheering, beer-drinking crowds that the royal family decided to repeat the celebration the following year.[14]

The rest, as they say, is history. *Oktoberfest* has become an internationally-known festival in celebration of Bavarian culture and of the beers that have made the region famous for centuries. These days, millions of visitors from Germany, Europe, and all over the world stream into the Bavarian metropolis to link arms under beer tents and experience first-hand the age-old phenomenon known as the great German thirst. With a yearly consumption of some 5,000,000 liters of beer, these visitors, both foreign and German-born, participate in a spectacle of beer-drinking and revelry that would make even Wotan and Thor blush. ■

Endnotes

1. For detailed social histories of "the Great German thirst", see the respective books by the Hübners, Tlusty, and Spode.
2. Tlusty, p. 106.
3. Seidl, pp. 16-17.
4. Rätsch, pp. 122-125.
5. Seidl, pp. 14-15.
6. Seidl, p. 63.
7. Seidl, p. 112.
8. Seidl, pp. 35-38.
9. Seidl, p. 57.
10. Seidl, p. 61.
11. Seidl, pp. 61-62; Rätsch, pp. 138-146.
12. Rätsch, pp. 132-137.
13. Seidl, p. 77.
14. Niemeier, p. 10.

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EARLY AMERICAN BEER & THEY WERE WHAT THEY DRANK

by Patrick Reynolds

Patrick Reynolds is Exhibits and Project Manager at The Henry Ford, the living-history and museum complex in Dearborn, MI. He is an expert on colonial American beer, and teaches mini-courses on the history of beer and brewing in America at Schoolcraft College and elsewhere. He is also an experienced home brewer. After attending the Ninth Annual Summer Beer Festival of the Michigan Brewers Guild this past July 22 in Ypsilanti, Patrick wrote us: "I am happy to report that the brewing renaissance is alive and well in Michigan."

This article examines the historical record of the domestic manufacture of beer, or "homebrewing", in America, with a particular focus on the colonial era. Far from being a trivial or passing phenomenon, homebrewing is closely intertwined with the milieu of the time. Examining this history provides a unique glimpse into domestic economy, self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, and innovation by many a thirsty American.

Very few in-depth studies deal with this subject. Homebrewing methods used during the colonial period are largely undocumented, but can be reconstructed from clues found in numerous sources from the historical record. Homebrewing is often given only passing mention in works on the brewing industry. Works on American food and cooking occasionally mention brewed or fermented beverages, and cookbooks provide interesting details of specific ingredients in beer. In general, brewing in England has been studied more extensively, and several sources dealing with that subject have been used here because of the connections between brewing in colonial America and brewing practices in England.

What Is Beer?

If you say "beer" to an average American today, the beverage that comes to mind is rather different from that of the 18th Century. To a considerable extent, until the recent microbrew revolution, America had lost much of the diversity in its beer. Except for a few examples, the American beer market has been dominated by virtually one style of beer, American Pilsner, for the last 100 years.[1] This is the stereotypical modern American beer, which often comes in a can and is consumed very cold. It is generally light in color and flavor, with a mild alcoholic content (about 3.2% by volume) and little taste of malt or hops.

Far from the rather homogeneous nature of beer in America from the 1870's through the 1970's, earlier beers had wide variation in color, taste, and strength. While the common notion of beer is a fermented beverage made from malted barley, yeast, hops, and water, a beer of 200 years ago might be made from corn, ginger root, birch sap, spruce essence, pumpkin, or even parsnips. Early recipes, anecdotes, and other documentation illustrate that colonists viewed beer as virtually any fermented sugar that had been flavored with herbs or hops. The two exceptions to this broad definition would be wine, made from fermented grapes, and mead, or fermented honey.

Brewers did not make a distinction between *ales* and *lagers* until after 1857, when work by Pasteur explained the difference between the two types of beer yeast.[2] Yeast provides the fermentation action in beer, digesting the malt sugars and releasing the by-products alcohol and carbon dioxide gas, the latter giving beer its carbonation. Lagers are made with a type of yeast that sinks to the bottom, making a lighter, milder beer.

The ingredients used in beers throughout American history varied considerably from one period to another. Its social and economic significance varied as well. Today, "beer styles" are used to classify beer into categories based on taste, color, and ingredients. In the past, the concept of style was not so formalized, and beer was generally classified by how much alcohol was in it. *Small beers* were low in alcohol and consumed by the entire family. *Table beers*, a bit stronger (about 2-4% alcohol), were for general daily consumption. *Strong beers* were higher in alcohol and reserved for adults.

European brewing traditions were rather conservative in nature, and for the most part they were not prone to radical change. Most breweries were small, and shipping was relatively limited. Similar types of beers tended to be brewed within a given geographic region. Until the 18th Century, the opportunity to sample a beer made in a distant region was mainly a luxury of the rich. But as canals, steam ships, and railroads developed, shipping became easier and practical, and commercialism and brand identity emerged. Just like wine, beer was marketed and named based on where it was made and the ingredients used. This regionalism of brewing evolved into a very loose delineation of "style" that has been formalized in recent times.

Something Was Brewing in the Colonies

As the brewing historian Stanley Baron put it, "To speak of the origins of brewing in America is to speak of the origins of the nation itself."[3] The earliest documentation for brewing in America dates to 1588, nearly 20 years before the founding of Jamestown. Lacking barley, the English colonists at Sir Walter Raleigh's colony on Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now North Carolina, succeeded in making beer with maize (Indian corn). In his *Narrative of the First English Plantation of Virginia*, Thomas Harriot remarked that "We made the same in the country some Mault, wherof was brewed as good Ale as was to be desired. So, likewise by the helpe of Hops, therof may be made as good beere."[4] Harriot's terminology reflects the fact that in England, until the late 17th Century, there was a tradition of differentiating the hopped beverage called "beer" (or "ale beer") from "ale", which referred to an earlier un-hopped beverage.

Beer was a commonplace beverage for Europeans of the time, and people of all ages could routinely drink small beer. A primary reason underlying this widespread consumption was the lack of understanding of bacteria and sanitation. Imagine

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the dilemma of drinking from a well one day and it would be fine, while on another day the water would make you sick. This gave rise to the common belief that it is unhealthy to drink water[5], and people had learned that drinking something that was boiled, brewed, or fermented was much safer.

Beer was thus an essential part of people's daily provisions. On ocean-going vessels, a shortage of beer could lead to problems. An incident involving the Pilgrims' beer supply indicates that Cape Cod was not their intended destination in 1620. They had been planning to sail to New Netherlands, but the crew became concerned about the amount of supplies necessary for the voyage back to England. The settlers made landfall prematurely at Plymouth, Massachusetts because, as chronicler William Bradford recorded, "we could not now take the time for further search or consideration, our victuals being much spent, especially our Beere."[6]

Beer brewing was also essential to the prosperity of fledgling settlements. It was listed on many requests for supplies from the homeland. But relying on imported beer was problematic. The heavy kegs would sometimes leak, and the lengthy voyage and poor handling of beer would often lead to spoilage during shipment. On occasion, breweries would ship inferior beer as trade goods. In addition, a duty (import tax) on beer made it more expensive. Resistance to the beer duties would later lead to the first organized protest against taxing the colonies. Had the opposition been a bit more organized, there might have been a New York Keg Party instead of the Boston Tea Party![7]

Due to such obstacles of cost and quality in importing beer from Europe, it was preferable to import the less-perishable raw materials themselves— or even adapt native ingredients— and to begin brewing beer in the colonies. But commercial breweries in America were relatively scarce until the 18th Century. It was brewing at home that offered a pragmatic and predictable alternative to purchasing beer.

Brewing in the colonies began soon after the settlers reached the shores. Barley was grown to a limited extent, but colonists still relied on imported barley malt, the primary ingredient in beer.[8] Malting is the process that converts barley's starches into simple fermentable sugars. There is evidence that the earliest settlers in America made their own malt, especially during the 17th Century when few breweries had yet been established. But barley malt was difficult to secure, for skilled maltsters were in limited supply in America. In addition, while the middle and southern colonies grew barley (mostly of the two-row type) for brewing purposes, the New England colonies were not well suited for growing this grain. There is little evidence that home-based production of malt was practiced beyond the earliest days of the colonies.

The higher prices associated with imported barley malt gave rise to improvisation and innovation. The colonists' response is indicated in this verse from the 1630's:

> If barley be wanting to make into mault,
> We must be content and think no fault,
> For we can make liquor to sweeten our lips,
> Of pumpkins, and parsnips, and walnut tree chips.[9]

These lines illustrate the resourcefulness of the settlers who, lacking many of the commonly used ingredients for brewing, turned to locally available alternatives. Pumpkins and parsnips could be cooked and mashed and would serve as a substitute for barley malt. Walnut tree chips, when boiled, yielded tannins that would bitter the beer and serve as a substitute for hops.

The earliest colonists also experimented with native maize as a substitute for barley. But the use of malted corn did not remain common after the 17th Century, because barley malt eventually became more widely available. (In the 20th Century, corn would become a routine adjunct ingredient in beer, serving as a cheap source of sugar for the brewing process.)

The use of natural, wild yeast had all but disappeared from European beer-making tradition when the earliest settlers reached America. Instead, the settlers brought supplies of yeast from fellow brewers, much like the sourdoughs we know today. Yeast was maintained and shared by families and breweries. A few accounts indicate that some brewers dried and preserved yeast by dipping a whisk or willow branch into actively-fermenting beer. The branch would then be hung up to dry, thus preserving the yeast until it was rehydrated.[10] If the supply of yeast died or became sour, the brewer had to get a fresh supply from another brewer or bakehouse. There was no distinction between brewing yeast and baking yeast as we have today.

In 1775, the Virginia Gazette made note of the difficulty of acquiring malt liquors from Europe. It offered a family recipe for making beer from the juice of green cornstalks.[11] Spruce beer, a brew made from molasses and spruce essence, and ginger beer gained widespread followings from colonial times through the Civil War. In her *American Frugal Housewife* (Boston, 1832), Lydia Marie Child gave this recipe:

> Ginger beer is made in the following proportions: - One cup of ginger [root], one pint of molasses, one pail and a half of water, and a cup of lively yeast. Most people scald the ginger in half a pail of water, and then fill it up with a pailful of cold; but in very hot weather some people stir it up cold. Yeast must not be put in till it is cold, or nearly cold. If not to be drank within twenty-four hours, it must be bottled as soon as it works.[12]

Despite a few such unusual concoctions, the beer that remained most popular was the kind brewed from barley and hops. Other societal and international issues also had an impact on domestic drinking trends, however, and indicate that America's penchant for beer waxed and waned during colonial times. Lacking beer, colonists were often forced to drink water. The pureness of American water surprised the colonists who, in 1630, found it "pleasant unto them as wine or beer had been in the foretimes."[13] There was a gradual acceptance of water consumption by Americans, especially among the poor.

Cider, apple brandy, and rum all grew in popularity in America in the 18th Century. *Hard cider*, or unfiltered, fermented apple juice, is very easy to manufacture. By the mid-17th Century, consumption of cider exceeded that of beer in New England and "rivaled it in many colonies to the southward."[14] In addition, dropping sugar prices and the increased appearance of local distilleries made rum more economically attractive than beer. Rum, cider, "beverages", and punches became common alternatives to beer, although they did not replace it.

Professional brewers of beer also began to flourish alongside their homebrewing contemporaries. In lower

Manhattan, the Dutch West India Company built the earliest commercial brewery in America in 1623.[15] Similarly, a "furnace for brewing" was built in Plymouth by 1633.[16] Although there were numerous commercial brewers in America in the 1600's, they couldn't satisfy the demand for beer.[17] But later, as urban areas developed in the colonies, commercial breweries became an integral part of economic development. These brew houses generally malted their own barley. In the latter part of the 18th Century, New York and Philadelphia would become the chief brewing centers in America.[18]

By the late 18th Century there was a small but prospering industry in hops cultivation in Middlesex County, Massachusetts.[19] Hops are the flowers of a climbing vine, whose oils add bitterness, flavor, and aroma to beer, as well as a preservative effect. The colonists had abandoned indigenous hops in favor of imports, and eventually planted European hops on American soil. Hops-growing prospered in New England, only to be supplanted by that of New York in the 1850's.

A Commercial Interruption

After 1780, commercially-manufactured beers generally became more widely available and more widely consumed in the new nation. Smaller regional breweries predominated during the 18th and 19th Centuries, reaching a peak of just over 4,000 in 1873.

While the numbers are very impressive, this beer varied considerably in quality and consistency. A lack of understanding of fermentation and hygiene meant that beers were sometimes spoiled, or otherwise made unpalatable, by mishandling. While homemade beer could also spoil, it wasn't prone to the damaging effects of commercial shipment, and was thus more trustworthy as a general rule.

Bottling of beer, which became common after the Civil War, was a major advance. Prior to the advent of adequate glass-manufacturing plants, bottles were relatively scarce and expensive in America. Commercial beer not consumed inside a tavern was generally brought home from the tavern (or directly from the brewery) in a pitcher or bucket. Beer in such vessels quickly lost its carbonation, and was prone to infection by microorganisms. Louis Pasteur's work leading to an understanding of microbes and the concept of pasteurization, combined with advances in bottling machinery, resulted in the widespread adoption of bottling as a primary mode of beer distribution in the last quarter of the century.[20]

As large-scale bottling became common, it lowered the price and increased the quality and availability of commercial beer. This further decreased the need or practicality of homebrewing, especially in urban areas. Many small-scale commercial breweries also passed by the wayside. By 1910, consolidation and the rise of large national breweries decreased the number of small brewers to 1,568.[21]

Federal Prohibition (1919-33) prompted a well-known increase in homebrewing[22], but put an end to many small commercial breweries and sounded the death-knell for beer diversity. Following repeal, there was a predictable rebound in the industry, with the number of breweries increasing from 31 in June 1933 to 756 by 1934.[23] However, this burst of growth was short-lived. By 1960 there were but 230 breweries in operation in the U.S., with only 14 being independently run.[24] The interest in homebrewing and in small-scale commercial brewing ("microbreweries") would revive only in the 1980's.

Homebrewing as Women's Work

Journals, diaries, and cookbooks from early American times provide considerable evidence of beer-brewing in the home. Frustratingly, they rarely indicate how much or how frequently a family brewed. A prime example is the diary of Martha Ballard, which chronicles in considerable detail the life of a midwife in Maine during the late 1700's. The author makes three diary entries related to brewing, but offers no detail on what was brewed or the quantity.[25] Was it even beer?

Other accounts show that domestic brewing was going on in rural areas. Madam Sarah Knight kept a journal of her travels from Boston to New York in 1704. She made note of a "Gentelwoman" who offered the traveling party "a handsome Entertainment of five or six dishes and choice of Beer and metheglin, Cyder & c. all which she said was the produce of her farm."[26]

Evidence suggests that women were responsible for brewing in the home. Although commercial brewing was primarily a male-dominated profession, domestic brewing was an integral part of a housewife's library of skills, as reflected in the inclusion of brewing recipes in many early cookery books. English cookbooks of the period frequently included extensive directions for making many types of beer. Prior to the 19th Century, Americans relied primarily on reprints of such English cookbooks.[27]

Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery* (1796), the first truly American cookbook, contains just one recipe for beer: spruce beer.[28] Spruce beer was quick and easy to make from ingredients readily acquired, notably spruce essence and molasses. It often featured little or no hops, instead deriving its flavoring and bittering agent from the new growth of blue spruce trees. Molasses, although not as desirable as malted barley, was probably the most easily obtained brewing ingredient for many brewers, a relatively cheap source of fermentable sugar that required no processing prior to brewing. As a common small beer of the time, spruce beer could be brewed quickly and was potable after only a few days. Apart from its healthful benefits as a safe and palatable drink, it was also believed to prevent scurvy. It was quite popular with the Pennsylvania Germans, and it continued to appear in cookbooks into the 19th Century.[29] Other historical recipes for spruce beer include those recorded about 1773 by George Washington[30] and in 1782 by Benjamin Franklin[31].

Although the lack of a large collection of brewing recipes in Simmons's work could indicate that Americans had scant need to know about brewing, other sources suggest the contrary. In the same year as the publication of *American Cookery*, an extensive and detailed English manual on beer brewing, Samuel Child's *Every Man His Own Brewer*, was reprinted in Philadelphia, its second printing in America. Despite its name, *Every Man His Own Brewer* underscores that women were the primary brewers in the home. Child advocated homebrewing as a wise alternative to purchasing commercial beer, for the money saved was "enough to pay for the time and trouble of a few hours of a woman's time."[32]

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A STORY OF CHAMPAGNE

by Boris K. Silberberg

Boris Silberberg of Troy, MI grew up in Metz, France and spent the years of World War 2 in the Bordeaux farm region, where he has fond memories of participating in the Fall grape harvests. He is a recently-retired Pathologist at Providence Hospital (Southfield), where he continues activities in the Research Dept., and is former Clinical Associate Professor of Pathology at Wayne State University. He and his wife Frances Williams joined CHAA in 2003. They just returned from a visit to the Bordeaux Médoc region, where their Cabernet- and Merlot-growing hosts confirmed the delights of French cuisine and hospitality.

Two hundred years ago, in 1805, François Clicquot died unexpectedly. He was the owner of a small wine enterprise founded in 1773 by his father in the northern French province of Champagne. His wife of seven years, 28-year-old Nicole-Barbe Ponsardin (1777-1866), was left a widow and the heir and director of the firm, soon dubbed Veuve Clicquot ("Widow Clicquot"). Her shrewd management, high standards of manufacture, marketing prowess, and introduction of significant technological improvements led to a large commercial success and a prominent position in the renowned history of sparkling wine.

The Champagne Region

The province of Champagne has a more than 2000-year history of viniculture. The Classical Roman occupation of Gaul between 100 BCE and 200 CE, described by Pliny[1], improved on existing local methods and continued an unbroken history of wine-making leading up to our own times. Lying at the crossroads of European North-South and East-West trade, this region has witnessed a stormy history, including the defeat of Attila the Hun (455 CE), the pursuit of Napoléon by Russian troops (1814-15), and the savage battles of the Franco-Prussian War and World Wars 1 and 2.

The Champagne region forms an ovoid, from Alsace in the east to the Parisian basin in the west (a distance of approximately 100 miles), and from Reims in the north to the Aube region in the south (approximately 70 miles), with Épernay at the center. This cool-weather zone rests at the northernmost point of successful grape-growing, with the cool climate having a large influence on the quality and evolution of local wine-making. The region also lies within a long swath of chalky sub-soil, readily visible from the English Cliffs of Dover to the familiar subterranean Champagne tunnels 200 miles to the east, which are used to house the maturing sparkling wine.

The boundaries defining the production limits of "Champagne" were fixed by legal decree in 1927 and formed a rough ovoid within the larger one described above. This official zone comprises about 60,000 acres, which includes about 20,000 growers clustered in 270 villages. The soil is often poor, requiring fertilizers and resulting in a variable quality of wine produced. This has, in turn, led to a classification that assigns a "quality ranking" to each area. The top ranking, *Grand Cru*, at a value scale of 99-100%, is currently held by 17 *communes* or districts; the next tier, *Premier Cru*, at 90-98%, is currently held by 38 *communes*; and so on. These rankings affect the price that growers can obtain for their crop.

Since the large commercial houses own only a portion of their grape sources, they purchase from multiple small growers, leading to the Champagne technique of blending the juice of different grapes to achieve a "style" that is characteristic of a certain commercial house brand. For example, the Veuve Clicqot brand owns about 700 acres and purchases the remaining 60% of the grapes that it requires.

In 1941 a combination of growers and merchants formed the important Comité Interprofessionel du Vin de Champagne (CICV), charged with safeguarding standards, techniques, marketing, etc. to protect the interests of champagne wine. CICV is a strong force in the champagne culture.[2]

Growing the Grapes

The Champagne region consists of four principal growing areas:

- the Montagne de Reims, south of the city of Reims
- the valley of the Marne River, flowing east to west
- the Côtes de Blanc, southeast of Épernay
- the Aube region, southernmost and significantly separate from the other three.

The Côtes de Blanc principally grows the white Chardonnay grape, a hardy vine originating in Burgundy but widely grown around the world. Its fruit mixes well with other flavors and forms about one-third of the Champagne wine volume, where it is said to bring lighter flavors and "elegance" to the blend. When used alone in the Champagne process, this grape yields the sparkling form called *Blanc de Blanc* (meaning literally white [wine] from white [grapes]).

The three other Champagne areas grow the red grapes Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, each forming approximately one-third of the Champagne wine volume. Careful and rapid pressing is necessary to prevent red coloring of the *must* (grape juice) that forms the blended base. This requirement has led to the rise of about 2,000 pressing firms, who then sell to the larger houses for further processing.

The Pinot Noir grape also originates in Burgundy, is difficult to grow, and provides, in its successful form, deep flavor, texture, and perfume. However, its juice is low in sugar. Thus, sugar is often added to Burgundy and Champagne during the process of *chaptalization* first described in 1801 by French chemist Jean-Antoine-Claude Chaptal. Chaptal developed the technique of increasing wine's alcohol content by adding cane or beet sugar to the must.[3] Yeasts convert the sugar into alcohol during the process of fermentation.

Pinot Meunier is grown principally in Champagne, is more reliably productive, and provides "youthful fruitiness".[4]

With evolving vinicultural practices, Champagne grape yield has tripled in the last 50 years to approximately 10,000 pounds of grapes per acre, with about 300 pounds required to produce 100 liters of must. The grapes are picked in late September. Pressing of Pinot Noir and Meunier grapes to yield a white juice is done with speed (within two hours) and care. The must is extracted at one pressing and settles in large stainless or cement vats. Yeast strains developed by the CIVC are added, and low sugar levels may be corrected by chaptalization to yield an eventual alcohol content of about 12%.[5]

The resulting primary fermentation produces a still (i.e., non-sparkling) wine, which is taken from multiple growers and winemakers to larger firms where blending and further processing will be done.

The Making of Sparkling Wine

Dom Pierre Pérignon (1638-1715), a Benedictine monk from the Hautvilliers Abbey near Reims, was given the task of collecting rents from local farm tenants, often in the form of grapes or wine. This led to his direction of the abbey wine cellars, toward which he applied intelligence and zeal. At the age of 50, he became cellar-master and introduced improvements in wine-making. According to legend, it was he who "discovered" champagne, resulting in his famous exclamation, "I am drinking the stars!" A more sober review of his contributions would accord him credit for introducing cork to seal bottles, applying rational thinking to wine-making, and importantly, the technique of blending wines.[6]

Fermentation often came to a halt during the cold Winters of the Champagne, only to resume again in the Spring. This frequently resulted in an unintended fizzy carbonation. Such effervescence was noted and appreciated in England, where barrels of still Champagne wine were being sold in large quantities. Its occasional "sparkling" behavior led to efforts in the early 18th Century to contain this quality in bottles.[7]

Unfortunately, the rate at which these bottles exploded from the high gaseous pressure reached 40-50%. Serendipity intervened in the form of a timber fuel shortage in England, caused by the accelerating pace of industrialization there; the resulting conversion to coal made glass production at higher temperatures feasible, and *voila!* a stronger and darker glass bottle thus became available.[8] Additional improvements to the bottle included longer necks and a deep *punt*, an inverted indentation at the base that made for easier handling and sediment management. These technological advances spurred the production of effervescent wine by a contained second fermentation.

In-Bottle Fermentation

Enter the famous widow Clicquot. Her leadership, intelligence, and energy led to significant improvements in the making, marketing, and sales of Champagne during the first 40 years of the 19th Century.

As described earlier, the fermented and blended still wine is bottled with an appropriate addition of yeast and sugar to achieve desired alcohol and effervescent content. Such control of in-bottle fermentation by managing sugar content was one of the achievements of Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin, as the firm was renamed in 1810. This development was based on the work of André François, a pharmacist in Châlon, who defined the quantity of sugar necessary to control carbon dioxide (CO_2) production; he died in 1838 shortly after publication of his observations.

An earlier advance attributed to Clicquot was a method for the removal of *lees*, the esthetically undesirable pellet of dead yeast cells and other debris in the fermenting bottle. The removal method, called *remuage* or "riddling", is essentially still in use today. In the traditional method of *remuage*, the bottles are placed on a wooden rack where, repeatedly over the course of several weeks or more, they are slightly twisted and shaken and are gradually tilted neck-down to settle the lees. The amount of time that the wine rests on the lees is an important variable in achieving desired flavor. Periods of five or more years are common for the more expensive varieties.

At the end of the *remuage* process, the bottle neck is frozen in a cold brine solution, and the temporary (beer-type) metal cap is removed, causing a gaseous expulsion of the frozen neck contents. A *dosage*, or small replacement volume of wine with added sugar, is then introduced to yield a degree of champagne sweetness approximating these familiar designations[9]:

Designation	Residual Sugar Content
Nature	0 grams per liter
Brut	up to 15 grams per liter
Extra dry	12-20 grams per liter
Dry	17-35 grams per liter

The bottle is capped with a special flared cork, usually made of two or three glued segments, and is then wired to contain the eventual in-bottle pressure of 70-90 pounds per square inch, equivalent to five or six atmospheres.

The bottled wine is then put to rest in the extensive network of chalk tunnels at a temperature of about 55° F. (13° C.). The 125 miles of tunnels can hold about 100 million bottles in horizontal position. Arguments for upright storage have also been advanced. Much of the *méthode champenoise* process described above, which was traditionally done by hand, is now mechanized.

Production and Sales

The early 19th Century showed a marked increase in champagne production and sales to aristocratic Europeans in many countries.

The largest volume went to Russia, despite an early embargo order by Napoléon Bonaparte. It is said that Russian troops, who had pursued Napoléon's armies following his 1814 retreat and who occupied Champagne for a short time, developed an appreciation for and partook of the local "bubbly". (The Russian market would collapse only after the revolutions of 1917.)

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A STORY OF CHAMPAGNE *continued from page 9*

It is further said that the Russians in France had a habit of entering a restaurant and banging on the counter separating the clients from the kitchen, yelling "Beestra!", Russian for "quick", giving us the term *bistro* for that honored French institution. Thrifty restaurateurs covered that counter with a preservative layer of zinc that became a fixture of French cafés.

The 1870-1890 *Phylloxera* disaster, with its extensive damage to Champagne vineyards, prompted the grafting of vines on American rootstock, which forms the basis of the current grape crop.

Various styles of champagne are available. Some 80% of production consists of non-vintage Brut. On the other hand, years thought to be of exceptional quality are identified as Single Vintage, with the vintage year or *millésime* identified on the label. Champagnes made solely from Chardonnay grapes are labeled *Blanc de Blanc*, and those made solely from red ("black") grapes, *Blanc de Noir*. A small number of *rosés* (pinks) are made by assorted ways during the Champagne process.

Variants of sparkling wines include *crémant* (creaming), a type of lower-carbonation wine made in several regions of France, including Crémant de Loire and Crémant d'Alsace. These can be a very tasty and lower-priced alternative to Champagne, and are often made by the traditional *méthode champenoise* described above. Less complex and expensive methods for making sparkling wine include bulk continuous fermentation (devised by Eugène Charmat in 1907) or simply the introduction of CO_2 gas into still wines of doubtful quality (horrors!).

Recent Evolution of the Champagne Market

The Syndicat des Grandes Marques (Association of Principal Brands) includes about 30 members from the well-known Champagne brands. The seven biggest merchants account for 70% of total trade, but many smaller producers also make high-quality Champagnes.

Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin was acquired by the luxury-brands company LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessey) in 1987. LVMH boasts several other well-known champagne houses, including Moët Chandon of California (founded in 1973). Premium brands, referred to as *cuvées spéciale* or *cuvées de prestige*, include the Dom Pérignon label (founded in 1936-7 by the House of Moët, based at Épernay) and Veuve Clicquot's "La Grande Dame" (priced at about $125 a bottle as of April 2005).

Total yearly sales of Champagne in 2004 were 300 million bottles, 175 million of them in France. The largest export market is the United Kingdom with 35 million, followed by the United States with 26 million and Germany with 12 million bottles.[10] It seems that other European Union countries prefer to buy their own versions of sparkling wine, e.g., Spumante in Italy, Sekt in Germany, and Cava in Spain.

The quality and pleasure of Champagne will vary with many objective and subjective factors, which include quality of grapes, viniculture, wine-making in its still and sparkling forms, blending, aging, and the multiple factors that result from experience and tradition of craft. Lawrence Osborne, in his recent book *The Accidental Connoisseur*, gives us a thoughtful and delightful discussion of these and other qualities in wine-making. He touches on the cultural values woven into taste, myth, and marketing. In France, he points out, it is the respect for a high "aristocratic" degree of craft and devotion, coupled with intelligence and a substantial investment in material and human resources, that yields a spectrum of Champagnes of fine quality and proportional price.

Subjective taste is not easy to define. Madame de Pompadour (1721-1764) once said, "Champagne is the only wine that makes women more beautiful after drinking." But one person's "bubbly delight" may be another person's indifference. As the saying goes, *chacun à son goût*: to each his own taste. ■

Endnotes

1. See Plinius, Books 14 and 17.
2. The CIVC website is at http://www.champagne.fr
3. See Sherbert; Herbst and Herbst; and Robinson, ed., p.154.
4. Robinson, ed., p. 447.
5. Robinson, ed., p.777.
6. Robinson, ed., p. 516.
7. Robinson, ed., p. 96.
8. Robinson, ed., p. 318.
9. See CIVC website at http://www.champagne.fr/fr_BRUT
10. "Champagne Sales Increase in 2004", *Wine Business Insider* (Sonoma, CA), March 28, 2005.

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DAN LONGONE REVIEWS EARLY HISTORY OF AMERICAN WINE

reported by CHAA members Annette Donar,
Sue Lincoln, and Randy Schwartz

During the first Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History this past May in Ann Arbor, Daniel T. Longone gave a skillful overview of the complex history of wine-making in 19th-Century America. Below, we have reported a summary of this talk.

Dan and his wife Jan are founding members of CHAA and co-donors of the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive at the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. A Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at UM and a nationally recognized expert on the cultural history and appreciation of wine, Dan lectured nationally on wine for the American Chemical Society for many years.

In his illustrated lecture, entitled "Early American Wine-Making: The 19th-Century Experience", Dan highlighted works on display at the Longone Center for American Culinary Research, William L. Clements Library.

Colonial Efforts Go Sour

During the American Colonial period, Dan told us, teams of vintners were periodically brought to nearly every colony. The English were looking to the New World for agricultural commodities that could not be produced in the home country, such as wine, olives, and raw silk. But their attempts to cultivate the European grape, *Vinifera*, were repeatedly foiled by infestations of plant pests such as *Phylloxera vitifoliae*. The latter, an aphid or "plant louse" that infests the roots of grapevines, was indigenous to the New World. Imported European vines were helpless against it, while native grapes had evolved a natural resistance. However, due to their taste and chemical composition, New World grapes were judged to be unsuitable for making European-style wines.

Case 5 of the Clements exhibit contains some of the treatises and practical manuals that were published in colonial times. A highlight is the rare volume by John Locke, *Observations Upon the Growth and Culture of Vines and Olives: the Production of Silk: the Preservation of Fruit* (1766).

Wanted: Wine As Great As America

Following American independence, many immigrants came to the U.S. with the specific intention of making "wine to match the greatness of the country". In the first decade of the 1800's, Swiss immigrant John James Dufour founded the first commercially-successful vineyard in America, located near the Kentucky/Ohio/Indiana border. The grape he used was not *Vinifera* but the Alexander, a native variety developed in colonial Pennsylvania. By 1820, he was producing 12,000 gallons of wine annually. While his vineyard hardly endured after his death, he left us its story in a book that he published in the nation's semicentennial year, *The American Vine-Dresser's Guide* (Cincinnati, 1826), on display in Case 6.

Dan Longone speaks on American wine history at the First Biennial Symposium in May. (Photo: Fritz Schafer)

A nonimmigrant, John Adlum, born in 1759 in York, PA, was a vintner in Washington, D.C. who produced wines from native grapes. In 1809, he sent a bottle to Thomas Jefferson, a strong advocate of viniculture. Jefferson wrote back, praising it as "a truly fine wine of high flavor". Jefferson's letter, along with Adlum's *Memoirs on the Cultivation of Vines* (Washington, D.C., 1823), the first book on American wine growing, are on display in Case 6.

It was Adlum who introduced the Catawba grape, native to North Carolina, for use in wine-making. He passed this grape variety along to Nicholas Longworth (1783-1863), a vintner based in Cincinnati. Longworth and other growers are credited with making the Ohio River Valley a celebrated wine region, dubbed "the Rhine of America". The large German immigrant population in the area were pleased by these dry wines, especially by the sparkling white Catawba wines (developed by Longworth with the assistance of champagne makers invited from France), which reminded them of light German whites from the old country. The persistence of Longworth and others paid off, as non-Germans and Easterners were eventually clamoring for this wine; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow even wrote a poem praising the Catawba wine and grape. Their work reached an apogee just before the Civil War, when a fungus hit the vineyards, and production never recovered.

New Regions Opened for Wine Production

The push to settle the West, along with the outbreak of the Civil War, helped shift the wine-making focus from the Ohio River Valley to Missouri, upstate New York, and California.

On the Missouri River, upriver from St. Louis, the many vineyards established included those at Hermann, MO, and Augusta, MO. The German immigrant community in Hermann had begun commercial wine production in 1848, using Isabella, Concord, Norton, and Catawba grapes. At Mount Pleasant Vineyard in Augusta, Friedrich Münch was a grape-hybrid specialist who produced fine native wines. He published the important manual *Amerikanische Weinbauschule* (School of American Grape Culture) (St. Louis, 1867), which is also on display. By 1879, the "Missouri Rhineland" was producing nearly two million gallons of wine per year.

In the 1860's, a series of vineyards was established in New York's Finger Lakes region. These would remain important un-

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EARLY AMERICAN BEER *continued from page 7*

Every Man His Own Brewer also gives insight into some practical issues of brewing. Most notably, no specialized equipment was needed. He suggests using a large laundry kettle as brew-kettle, and gives directions for fashioning a discarded pail into a *tun* (a vat for mash).[33] Such details highlight the historian's difficulties in turning up evidence of domestic brewing: the equipment might show up in household inventories, but does not stand out as brewing equipment.

During the 18th Century, breweries seem to have served as the primary source of yeast for housewives. They often advertised the sale of yeast and beer in newspapers[34], and women would sometimes line up at breweries on days when it was available for purchase.[35] Early American brewers could also get yeast from the *barm* (foam) in an existing keg of beer, or perhaps from a neighbor who had a viable supply.[36] ■

Endnotes

1. Michael Jackson, *The World Guide to Beer* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1977), p. 204.
2. Jackson, p. 19.
3. Stanley Baron, *Brewed in America* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1962), p. 3.
4. United States Brewers Association (USBA), *One Hundred Years of Brewing* (Chicago: H. S. Rich & Co., 1903), p. 157.
5. Richard J. Hooker, *A History of Food and Drink in America* (New York: Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc., 1981), p. 5.
6. Baron, p. 7.
7. USBA, p. 160.
8. Baron, p. 213.
9. Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin. *Drinking in America* (New York and London: Free Press and Collier Macmillan, 1982), p. 5.
10. Richard Bradley, *The Country Housewife and Director* (London: privately printed, 1732; repr., London: Prospect Books, 1980), p. 51.
11. Baron, pp. 94-95.
12. Lydia Marie Child, *The American Frugal Housewife* (Boston: March and Capen, 1832), p. 86.
13. Hooker, p. 35.
14. Hooker, p. 36.
15. John P. Arnold and Frank Pennan, *History of the Brewing Industry and the Brewing Science in America* (Chicago: G. L. Peterson, 1933), pp. 47-48.
16. Baron, p. 10.
17. Gallus Thorman, *Liquor Laws of the United States: Their Spirit and Their Effect* (New York: privately published, 1885), p. 16.
18. USBA, p. 173.
19. Michael Tomlan, *Hop Culture in the United States* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), p. 11.
20. USBA, p. 108.
21. Philip Van Munching, *The Beer Blast* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 17.
22. Gallus Thorman, *American Beer: Glimpses of Its History and Description of Its Manufacture* (New York: United States Brewers Association, 1909), p. 8.
23. Baron, p. 323.
24. Baron, p. 343.
25. Laurel Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Knopf, 1990), pp. 73, 264, 313.
26. James Grant Wilson, *Memorial History of the City of New York* (New York: privately published, 1898), vol. I, p. 230.
27. Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery, 1796* (Boston: Rowan Tree Press, 1982), Foreword, page i.
28. Simmons, p. 74.
29. William Woys Weaver, *Sauerkraut Yankees: Pennsylvania-German Food and Foodways* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 185.
30. Baron, p. 96.
31. Gilbert Chinard, ed., *Benjamin Franklin on the Art of Eating* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1980 [originally published by Princeton University Press in 1958]), p. 152.
32. Samuel Child, *Every Man His Own Brewer* (Philadelphia: printed for T. Condie & H. Kammerer, 1796), p. 9.
33. Samuel Child, p. 19.
34. *Der Reading Adler* (Reading, PA), September 14, 1796.
35. A sketch of women awaiting buckets of beer and barm is found in Robert P. Turner, ed., *Lewis Miller: Sketches and Chronicles* (York, PA: Historical Society of York County, 1966), p. 68.
36. USBA, p. 96.

EARLY AMERICAN WINE *continued from page 11*

til about 1900, when they were struck by fungal diseases. There were also some important vineyards growing Catawba and other native grapes along the south shore of Lake Erie, from New York to Ohio.

In California, a rather different story was developing. Wine production was established there by Spaniards, notably by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries, following the introduction of the European Criolla or "Mission" grape to the San Diego mission in 1769. This and other missions directed by Father Junípero Serra, a Franciscan from Mallorca, produced both table wine and wine for use at mass. California became part of Mexico in 1822, and commercial production of wine in southern California followed in the 1840's.

The U.S. acquired California as a result of the 1846-48 war with Mexico, and after the Gold Rush the following year, wine production shifted to the area north of San Francisco to take advantage of the influx of wealth and of Chinese labor. Thanks to these factors and its Mediterranean-like climate, California became by far the most important wine state in the late 1800s, and the Old World *Vinifera* became the most important grape in the U.S. The Clements display includes a copy of Eunice Wait's *Wines and Vines of California: A Treatise on the Ethics of Wine-Drinking* (San Francisco, 1889).

The second half of the 19th Century also saw improvements in transportation, such as faster and easier transatlantic crossings and the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad. The French began importing the native American grapes from overseas and experimenting with them. Unfortunately, *Phylloxera* was brought with the American vines and began devastating the vineyards of France and other European countries after 1865. Ironically, while the American vines introduced to European vineyards caused a disaster, they also provided the means to recover from it, thanks to their natural resistance to the *Phylloxera* louse. Two solutions emerged: cross-pollination of French with American vines, and the grafting of French vines onto American rootstock. Each of these measures produced vines resistant to *Phylloxera*. Today, all *Vinifera* grapes grown commercially throughout the world are grown on American rootstock.

In this talk, Dan Longone reviewed a stirring history of American persistence to grow grapes and produce wine. With these efforts, 500 years after Columbus, we now have commercial wineries in all 50 states of the Union. ■

ABSINTHE, THE "GREEN FAIRY"

by Ann F. Woodward

*CHAA member Ann Woodward is a former editor of, and a frequent contributor to, this newsletter. Her article on Chinese poet and cookbook author Yuan Mei (*Repast *Summer 2004) is reprinted in Alice Arndt's forthcoming* Culinary Biographies.

During dinner conversation, a friend began describing an odd ritual of the making of a drink that he had seen in a film. Laudanum was involved, sugar was involved, there was elaborate pouring and melting, and the whole thing wound up being set on fire. How could we resist? We were all culinary historians and we made him go into detail. His source was the film "From Hell", which is about Jack the Ripper and has this scene in it. The drink being prepared was absinthe. It struck us as bizarre in the extreme, and I felt that research and an article were necessary or I would surely never rest.

In France, this distilled liqueur acquired the nickname *La Fée Verte*, the Green Fairy. There is a traditional glass for drinking it, footed, not small, flared toward the rim but rather plain. There is also a special utensil, ideally silver, a sort of pierced platform with a handle on one end and a broad hook on the other, to hold it to the rim of the glass. Upon this is set a cube of sugar, after an inch or so of absinthe is poured into the bottom of the goblet. Then cold water is dripped on the sugar to dissolve it into the green liquor, which turns an opaline white, though still greenish. According to our friend (and the movie), if laudanum is added, it is that which is dripped onto the sugar and then lit with a match. I have not been able to find a printed description of this way of preparing absinthe; there are many variations of the usual method, but in none of them I've read is anything set afire.

Absinthe is an elixir of wormwood, a term that is peculiarly repulsive, leading to images of riddled and powdery chunks of diseased wood. This mistaken idea has poisoned my reading for decades! Now I find that wormwood is a flowering plant, *Artemisia absinthium*, actually quite attractive in appearance. It is a bitter herb that has been known for centuries as a tonic for many purposes, especially for expelling intestinal worms, as the name implies, and also to prevent drunkenness, to rid the floor reeds of fleas in medieval abodes, to keep moths out of clothing, to settle the stomach, to strengthen the feeble, to ward off disease, and so on. Some recipes call for steeping the flowers, some the leaves. The earliest mention of wormwood that we have is in an Egyptian papyrus. It was known to the Romans and, before them, to the Greeks, whose name for it, *apsinthion*, translates as "undrinkable". The same word appears in the Bible, associated with bitterness.

The drink we call absinthe has other herbal ingredients besides wormwood. These include hyssop, anise, licorice, fennel, nutmeg, juniper, dittany, sweet flag, Melissa (lemon balm), coriander, veronica, chamomile, and parsley. Typically, only a few of these are included in any one recipe. There is also a high percentage of alcohol, the numbers ranging from 68% to 75%. Over the years, investigations to determine the really harmful elements in absinthe have found that both wormwood and hyssop are hallucinogens; but they often concluded that it is the high alcohol content as much as anything else that is dangerous. Apparently, use of absinthe is seldom moderate.

Absinthe as a modern alcoholic beverage originated in 1792, the story goes, in the small Swiss village of Couvet, canton of Vaud, just over the border from France. It was invented by a Dr. Pierre Ordinaire, who was a French refugee from the Revolution, and the recipe passed to his landlady on his death. She and her sister opened a shop to sell absinthe, the secret was eventually sold and-- The story is complicated and probably not all true. There was an ad for absinthe in a Swiss newspaper of 1769, for instance, and the landlady and her sister are said to have been selling absinthe long before the doctor showed up in town.

At any rate, eventually a name still associated with an anise-flavored drink appears: Pernod. The Pernod plant that produced absinthe for an increasingly large market in 1805 was located in France just across the border from Couvet, to avoid the customs duties of importation. Throughout this entire history, the action shifts back and forth across the border between Switzerland and France.

Use of absinthe increased enormously when French troops sent to the Algerian war of the 1840's were given absinthe to safeguard their health and to ward off disease. Thus ordinary men became accustomed to it and continued to drink it after they returned home. As the century progressed, use of absinthe became more and more common, especially among ordinary working people. The most famous painting of an absinthe drinker, done by Manet in 1859, is of an actual beggar in Paris, shown in stark realism, and with no redeeming moral tone. This guaranteed that it would scandalize academic painters and Parisian society, who believed that art should promote high values.

Most of the information I am using here comes from a book by Barnaby Conrad III, called simply *Absinthe: History in a Bottle* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988, reprinted 1997). It is a fascinating book, satisfying in its completeness and with many illustrations, reproductions of both photographs and paintings.

It is surprising how many painters and photographers chose absinthe drinkers as models. The latter all appear to be in a stupor, or at least dwelling deeply inward. Well-known artists and literary figures are themselves associated with use of absinthe, among them Rimbaud, de Musset, Verlaine, Manet, Baudelaire, and Oscar Wilde. Baudelaire, however, also had syphilis and was apparently prone to addiction of many kinds, a user of laudanum and hashish. Rimbaud believed that a poet should become deliberately debauched for the sake of visionary poetry, certain vices being almost required as ornaments of the artistic temperament. The age was decidedly morbid in some respects, but one must remember that these drugs were entirely legal at the time. Hashish, morphine, ether, and opium were readily available.

Alcoholism was widespread and not much studied or understood in the 19th Century. Absinthe became a symbol of all that was evil about excessive drinking, especially after a triple murder that happened a century ago in 1905 in the Swiss

continued on next page

ABSINTHE *continued from page 13*

canton of Vaud. The murderer, a local farmer who shot his wife and two young daughters in a rage, had been drinking absinthe that day, it is true. But he had started before breakfast, had taken in also a couple of liters of wine, and this was his daily habit. Nevertheless, the whole crime was blamed on the Green Fairy and there was strong sentiment against it. Two years later, Switzerland became the first country to ban absinthe, or more particularly wormwood, and almost all of Europe and the United States eventually followed. Spain, where absinthe was not so popular as in France, kept it legal. Ernest Hemingway, ever the bad boy, drank it in Spain, but much later than the heyday of this sinister drink.

And what do modern scientists say about wormwood? It has been extensively analyzed and the essence of its harmfulness resides in thujone, which is a convulsant poison. A 1979 report noted that the psychological effects of use of wormwood include "drunkenness, trembling, epileptic convulsions, muscle spasms, analgesia and sleep", and the list should probably also include hallucinations, anguish, and violence because these are so widely reported in accounts by users. Some of these effects are similar to those of marijuana, which wormwod chemically resembles. Others of the many flavoring ingredients used in absinthe are also said to be harmful.

The preparation described by our friend at dinner has definite echoes of the use of drugs in our own time—the special glass, the utensil made of precious metal, the careful drip of water, the physical change to opacity, admiration of the pretty color. It is easy to identify with the sense of innocent self-indulgence and pleasure that we all enjoy in off-moments of the day, with their elements of ritual, times such as afternoon tea or the before-dinner cocktail.

The flavor of absinthe is described by Conrad in his book. He was able to procure a bootleg bottle in Switzerland and it had a "light minty taste that was slightly antiseptic but refreshing." He also said that he felt, in retrospect, "…at some point in the previous evening I thought I knew the answer to life, only now I had forgotten it." He had drunk one glassful after another, alone though he thought it would have been nice to have company, and he remembered little the next morning. He put the half-finished bottle away, and at time of publication (1988) had not gotten it out again.

There were undoubtedly moderate drinkers of absinthe who did not suffer from it. The analysts say one would have to drink a lot to cause the harm usually attributed to it. Today, companies like Pernod-Ricard produce legal licorice-flavored alcoholic drinks called *pastis* that resemble absinthe but are made without wormwood. They are not drunk to excess as absinthe was, perhaps because some of the addictive elements have been eliminated. It seems safe to say that alcoholism is now more often recognized for what it is, and that is certainly a great advance for society. ■

THE ABSINTHE REVIVAL

When the European Union enacted major food laws in 1988, they neglected to include absinthe in the regulations. New absinthe distilleries and bars began springing up, and when the EU finally moved, it decided to allow commerce in absinthe, limiting its toxicity to a level deemed safe by most food scientists. In 2005, Switzerland, which had been the first country to outlaw absinthe, repealed its century-old ban.

Some of the new European absinthe is being exported to other countries, legally or illegally. A Czech brand called Hill's began arriving in England in 1998, becoming the rage among rock stars and other young hipsters. Soon thereafter, New Orleans chemist Ted A. Breaux founded Jade Liqueurs, which began distilling absinthe in Saumur, France and in Thailand; his Nouvelle-Orléans brand won the gold medal at last year's Absinth des Jahres, a juried competition in Germany. *Wired* magazine profiles Breaux in its November 2005 issue.

The revived fashion for this drink has certainly found its way into print. Besides Barnaby Conrad's *Absinthe: History in a Bottle*, cited by Ann in her article, there are a number of more recent books.

Hideous Absinthe: A History of the Devil in a Bottle (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004; 304pp., $24.95 cloth), by biographer Jad Adams, delves into absinthe's status among the bohemian strata of writers and artists in Europe. Adams argues that in the absinthe prohibition debate a century ago, both sides were driven by social and cultural biases rather than by good science, and he is scornful of the recent revival of absinthe's reputation.

L'Absinthe Perd Nos Fils (Montolivet, France: Éditions de la Fontaine-aux-Loups, 2001; 139pp.), by French art historian Benoît Noël, is a colorful historical scrapbook of literature, songs, plays, and films that celebrated or condemned the drink. The title is a pun that prohibitionists in Switzerland and France used as a slogan in 1905: *l'absinthe perd nos fils*, which means "absinthe ruins our sons", sounds like the brand name l'Absinthe Pernod Fils. This is Noël's fourth book on absinthe since 1999.

The Book of Absinthe: A Cultural History (New York: Grove Press, 2003; 304pp., $14 paper), by British author Phil Baker, explores the milieux in which absinthe was once popular, especially during its golden age among the artistic and literary crowd of the late 1800's. Baker also describes the traditional drinking rituals, and the latest scientific understanding of how real absinthe actually affects the body.

Absinthe, Sip of Seduction: A Contemporary Guide (Denver, CO: Speck Press, 2003; 129pp., $19.95 paper), written by Betina J. Wittels and Robert Hermesch, and edited by Breaux, surveys today's absinthe scene, with discussion of brands, instructions for mixing and drinking techniques, suggestions for food accompaniments, and reviews of relevant films and museums. Tales of famous devotées, and photos of historical objects and art, are also included.

Absinthe: The Cocaine of the Nineteenth Century (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1995), by Doris Lanier, is a serious critical history of the drink in Europe and the U.S. Lanier concludes that "the greatest period of absinthe drinking occurred during periods of great social and political upheavals, when life itself was turbulent and unpredictable." No wonder absinthe has become popular again!

— RKS

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Longtime readers of *Repast* have enjoyed several articles over the years by **James E. McWilliams**, a history professor at Texas State University-San Marcos who specializes in the early-American domestic economy. Now he has published his first book on the subject. In *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005; 386pp., $29.95 cloth), he examines the English colonies and shows how their frontier status, especially their abundant food resources and cultural diversity, laid the foundation for a distinctive American cookery. One chapter, for example, makes clear that only by relying on African and Native American know-how were English settlers in the Carolinas able to develop a sustainable diet based on Indian corn, beans and peas, swamp-grown rice, free-range beef, and wild game and fish. Another chapter shows how urban and rural colonial taverns shaped American habits by making eating and drinking public activities, and by greasing the wheels of an internal trade that would bring together and unify diverse regional foods. Other chapters take up sugar production and slave foodways in the West Indies; the successful replication of English farming in New England; the genesis of Chesapeake Bay dining traditions; German, Dutch, Quaker, and other influences on the diet of the Middle Colonies; the impact of British cookware, cookbooks, and customs; and food's role in advancing the cause of political independence. Throughout, McWilliams displays an engaging style, big ideas, lively detail, and thorough citations. He spoke to the Culinary Historians of New York about his book on Sept. 13.

In line with our "Potent Potables" theme in this issue, we also want to mention some works on the history of wine and beer that have recently caught our eye:

- *A Short History of Wine* (New York: Ecco/ HarperCollins, 2000; 369pp., $28 cloth, $15.95 paper) is the work of **Roderick Phillips**, Professor of History at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. This is a chronological account of the evolution in wine-making techniques, the importance of wine in the diet of sundry nations and eras, its position within the broader nexus of culture and gastronomy, and the vicissitudes of the global wine business. Along the way we visit the Fertile Crescent, where the earliest wine was made; ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, where it was used in religious rites; Europe's great vineyards and wine estates; and newer wine regions like South Africa, Australia, the United States, and Chile.

- *Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003; 400pp., $29.95 cloth) snagged one of the Wine Writing Awards given annually by the International Organization of the Vine and Wine. Its author, University of Pennsylvania archaeologist **Patrick E. McGovern**, has found the earliest known remains of grape wine (5400 BCE) and barley beer (3400 BCE) in the Zagros Mountains of Iran. In 1999, when his research team tested residues from ceramic cups found in "King Midas's tomb", an ancient Phrygian burial mound in what is now central Turkey, their chemical analysis concluded that *kykeon*, a grog made from wine, beer, and mead, had been quaffed at the funeral feast. McGovern uses such high-tech sleuthing, as well as ancient texts and artwork, to piece together a comprehensive story of Near Eastern, Egyptian, and European wine: its origins, techniques, customs, and trade.

- *The Botanist and the Vintner: How Wine Was Saved for the World* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2004; 320pp., $24.95 cloth [forthcoming in paper in March 2006 for $12.95]) recounts the *Phylloxera* scourge that nearly wiped out the vineyards of France and other countries in the late 1800's. British journalist **Christy Campbell** shows how this ecological disaster was an early warning sign of the perils of modern global trade. In his gripping but well-documented story, he traces decades of painstaking labor— by biologists, oenologists, and others— to identify the cause of the infestation and a way to recover from it. The book was praised in the pages of *The Blade* (Toledo, OH) last June 21 by wine editor Father Robert Kirtland, who found it "not only instructive, but hugely entertaining summer reading".

- *A History of Wine in America: From Prohibition to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; 582pp., $45 cloth) sees author **Thomas Pinney** picking up where he left off in his 1989 volume, *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition.* Pinney, an emeritus English professor at Pomona College in California, launches his story here with a careful reading of the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act of 1919, which he shows encouraged a shift to growing seedless varieties of grapes that would ship well. The resulting dominance in the U.S. of sweet, fortified wines would last for many decades after Prohibition's repeal. In such manner, Pinney provides an in-depth account of the business of American wine and of the legislation that governed its growth in regions like the Finger Lakes, the Great Lakes, and California.

- "Beer and America", in *American Heritage* magazine 53:3 (June/July 2002), pp. 28-38, is a well-written overview of beer from colonial times to the present, by writer and publisher **Max Rudin**. The article depicts how working-class and German immigrant populations played a key role in shaping this history, and how beer's status was related to broader social phenomena such as democracy, the temperance movement, sports, and advertising. Beer in America, Rudin argues, evolved from a locally-brewed form of nourishment to a mass-produced stimulus to entertainment.

- *The Miller Beer Barons: The Frederick J. Miller Family and Its Brewery* (Oregon, WI: Badger Books, 2005; 250pp.. $19.95 paper) was written by **Tim John**, who is a Milwaukee graphics company executive and a member of the Miller beer-making family. Timed to coincide with Miller's 150th anniversary this year, the book follows the company's evolution from the time its founder immigrated to Milwaukee and started his brewery. John's research includes the rivalry with other Midwestern German-immigrant brewers like Pabst and Best, the difficult Prohibition years, and the rise of Miller Brewing as a huge modern corporation. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Tuesday, November 8, 2005
3-5 p.m., Clements Library
(909 S. University, Ann Arbor)
"The New American Cooking: Innovation and Innovators over the Past Forty Years"
Joan Nathan, food writer and
author of *The New American Cooking*
Co-sponsored by the Longone Center for American Culinary Research

Sunday, December 11, 2005
4-7 p.m., Earhart Village Clubhouse
(835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor)
CHAA Participatory Holiday Dinner,
"A Silk Road Journey"
More details TBA

Sunday, January 15, 2006
"The History of Citrus Fruit"
George F. Estabrook, Professor of Botany,
Univ. of Michigan Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

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