

# My New Hobby—Home Brewing 101

BY KEN WILLIAMS, CGCS

It started last Christmas when I received a Deluxe Home Brewery system from my 22-year-old son. He bought the kit from MoreBeer.com when he noticed my interest in the craft beer movement. He surprised me with the basic home brew equipment and a kit to make an American IPA. I've had a blast brewing my own beer so far and am starting my sixth five-gallon batch since Xmas (Ha, I've given a lot away!)

Today's home brewing has come a long way since my old college days. Horror stories were once the norm with spoiled batches or exploding bottles. But with the ease of today's extract brewing, things are much more foolproof. Extract refers to a condensed form of grain extract that has already been malted, milled, mashed, and sparged. This breakthrough has taken a lot of the time and hard work out of the brewing process for the basic home brewer. The extract is basically a condensed dry or syrupy material that is added to water and boiled. Hops and other flavorings are added along the way depending on the style of beer and its individual recipe. Many recipe kits are available and the home brewer can make just about any beer imagined. Ales are definitely easier, as the entire process can be done at room temperature. Lagers require chilling, so some sort of refrigeration is usually required.

The step-by-step process goes like this: The Boil (2-3 hours), Fermentation (7 days), Settling (7 days), Bottling (1 hour), and Carbonation (7-14 days). So after about a month, most beers are ready to drink. A few beers are better with aging, but even those are ready within a few months.

Home brewing is economical too. Once the equipment is acquired, good beers can be made for as little as 50 cents a beer. And if de-

signer craft beers are your thing, those will be even less expensive than store bought.

So far, I've made an American IPA, a Red Ale, a Pale Ale, a Black IPA, and a German Kolsch. I bottle all my beer in 22oz bombers, but most serious home brewers use small kegs. GCSANC member Mike Hill's wife Trisha was kind enough to design some labels for me, so my beer now has an identity. Ken's Red Barn Ales are now anxiously anticipated by friends and family!

I'd recommend the hobby to anyone who likes beer, cooking, and creativity. If you are one who enjoys mixing up a spray tank on your golf course, you'll probably like home brewing! There are actually a lot of similarities there. But I wouldn't recommend the hobby to someone who hates doing dishes, as there can be a bit of equipment washing and sanitizing along the way.

Like any hobby, this is one a person could get easily carried away with. There are many options to take home brewing to higher and higher levels. In fact, most current commercial brewers started as home brewers.

I really like doing a brew on a Sunday afternoon while watching golf or baseball on TV. Both sports are slow moving and go well with boiling up a batch of beer. The boil creates a wonderful sweet smell that makes it hard not to sip a beer or two in the process! It is a nice hobby that keeps me at home and out of those tempting brew pubs. And it also gives me a regular supply of some really good beer to drink. Luckily I can keep it to one or two at a time. I hope sharing this info will encourage others to give it a go. I can't wait to figure out what to brew next!

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