



Volume 9, Issue 1/Winter-Spring 2010

## Introducing Citra, a new special aroma hop

There is a new variety on the market that has generated a big buzz of anticipation in the brewing world. Citra™ is a new special aroma hop variety released by the Hop Breeding Company, LLC, with a unique and highly flavored flavor characteristic.

As the name Citra™ implies, its flavor descriptors include the citrus fruits lime and grapefruit, other fruity characters described as gooseberry, passion fruit, lychee

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Turn to pages 4-5 for more news on hops and Hopunion LLC.

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as well as numerous other tropical fruits. Citra™ has an impressive pedigree, which comprises the well established and respected hop varieties Hallertauer

Mittlefruch 50%, US Tettnang 25%, Brewers Gold 19%, and East Kent Golding 3%. Citra™ is truly a unique aroma hop variety that also has the added benefit of a high alpha acids content of about 12 percent.

To date, flavor testing of beer brewed with Citra™ has brought about an enthusiastic response from brewers and tasters, and the future of this new hop variety looks promising.

### Analytical Data

Alpha Acids% 11-13  
 Beta Acids% 3.5-4.5  
 CoHumulone% 22-24  
 Total Oil% 2.2-2.8  
 Myrcene% 60-65  
 Humulene% 11-13  
 Linalool% 1-2

## Testing under way for Big QC Day

White Labs has commenced its 4th annual Big QC Day testing program and at the time of this printing lab members will be heavily involved in testing hundreds of beer samples.

For White Labs and its customers, February, which traditionally is one of the slower month for brewers and suppliers, has become anything but quiet. Lab members take advantage of the traditional slow period by carefully analyzing beers from around North America and the world. By bundling a wide array of tests together at the same time, and marshalling the resources of its lab employees and equipment, White Labs is able to offer these tests at a sharply reduced cost.

February is also the time of Valentine's Day, which explains the theme of the annual tests: "How much do you love your beer?"

In 2007, hoping to increase the awareness among craft brewers for the need to conduct regular quality control testing, White Labs launched Big QC Day, the industry's first large-scale analytical testing program for breweries of all sizes. The goal was to encourage beer

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Turn to pages 2-3 for more news on yeast and White Labs.

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testing by offering convenience and a low price. White Labs can provide this by collecting a large number of samples, simultaneously. This year, the price was \$129 for two complete beer analyses (a \$500 value), the same price as the previous year.

Big QC Day 2010 included the following tests: alcohol, IBUs, calories, color, pH, density, real extract, real & apparent attenuation, total VDK (diacetyl precursor), wild yeast, aerobic and anaerobic bacteria, among other tests. As noted in the email communications sent to brewers prior to the testing deadline, these tests combined can reveal many things about your brewing and fermenta-

See "Big QC Day," page 2

## What's new at White Labs

By Mike White  
 White Labs Communications Director

For many months now you have been hearing us talk about Yeastman, our yeast tracking and ordering system.

In recent times, the system has been further optimized, allowing brewers who log into it ([www.yeastman.com](http://www.yeastman.com)) to peruse strains and see when they will be available. The system is predictive of when the yeast will clear quality control testing, and may change depending on conditions, but it is the industry's first tracking and ordering system and one of the few in the larger world of custom microbiological cultures.

Our own people use the system to enter orders and they see the same information that is available to a customer when they choose to log

See "What's new," page 3

## Style Matters: Tips for making Maibocks

In each issue, CBQ spotlights a particular beer style and provides tips from an ingredient and fermentation perspective. In this issue we examine maibocks.

### Hop Notes:

As winter comes to an end it is the perfect time to start planning for your spring time beer.

MaiBock is a perfect transition beer to accompany the changing of the seasons. Shifting away from

the traditional heavier more alcoholic beers consumed in the winter to a medium bodied lager.

This style of beer is commonly brewed with a moderate hop flavor and low to no perceived hop aroma. The amount of hops used in this style are generally more apparent than in a traditional bock. A number of different varieties of hops can be used in this brew but Noble hops are a common choice for their perceived spicy and peppery qualities. For imported hops varieties such as

German Spalt, Tradition, Hersbrucker, or Hallertauer are commonly used.

As for domestic hops many brewers have used Santiam, Vanguard, Liberty and Mt. Hood. Some commercial examples of this style of beer: Gordon Biersch Blond Bock, Summit Brewing Miabock, Capitol Brewery Miabock, Mahr's Bock, Ayinger Miabock, and Mai-Urbock. To view more varieties of hops for

See "Style Matters," page 5

# WL fundraising news: Breast cancer walk results

**Editor's Note:** Beer for Boobs, a team sponsored by White Labs and others, participated in its second walk to support breast cancer in late 2009, along with thousands of others throughout the country supporting a cure for the disease. Beer for Boobs conducted its operations near its home base in San Diego, CA.

By Lisa White  
White Labs VP and  
Beer for Boobs captain

We did it! We gave your heart, soul, sweat and tears for three days and created some remarkable memories along the way.

It all began with an emotional and chilly Opening Ceremony at Del Mar Fairgrounds. We were surrounded by support at every turn. There was a fabulous house in Del Mar that was serving Starbucks coffee as we passed. Our main obstacle our first day was climbing up Torrey Pines State Park. The scenery was so beautiful, we almost forgot we were huffing and puffing up the hill. At mile 14, we stopped in at the Shack for a pint of Ballast Point (Picture 1). As we were almost at the close of our first day, a print shop in Pacific Beach had a keg of beer on tap for the walkers. It was Miller Lite, but it's the thought that counts. After a long day of walking, we gathered at Crown Point Shores, and settled into our pink tents in our home away from home for the weekend.

On Saturday morning, we woke up early, ready to hit the trail again. Saturday is the hardest day to get through because you know there is still one more day to go at the end of these 20 miles. It helps that we walk by beautiful Sunset Cliffs, Ocean Beach, and Mission Beach. It also is a boost to get free hugs from kids and firefighters J (pictures 2). We were even cheered on by the San Diego helicopter



from the air. The night ended with a dance party. Yes, we danced. We were too inspired to be tired. Well, lights out is at 9 p.m. after all.

Our final day of walking was emotional from start to finish. I walked a while with a new friend Denise. She is absolutely incredible. She just completed her 3<sup>rd</sup> round of chemo and has another 12 cycles to go. I can't believe she was walking, but it was an honor to walk by her side (Picture 3). Our incredible journey ended with a celebratory Closing Ceremony at Petco Park. We high-fived a welcome line of

walkers that had formed to greet the new entrants. The new members on our team couldn't contain their joy and felt the tears roll down their faces. With much respect, we raised our weary tennis shoes to cheer those survivors who accomplished the 3 day. (Picture 4)

"We walk because we must. We are strong because the journey demands it. Together in body and united in spirit we walk to see a world without breast cancer."

I believe it is very addicting to try and cure cancer. We just can't seem to give

The photos are numbered one to four clockwise. Details for each photo are included in the accompanying story.

up the fight, as long as the enemy exists. Team Beer for Boobs 2010 has already started to form. If you are looking to be a part of something fantastic, please join us. If you cannot walk, we can use other types of support. We can always use walker stalkers, t-shirt sponsors, hosts for fundraising events, and donations for our silent auction event. Please contact me directly at [lisa@whitelabs.com](mailto:lisa@whitelabs.com) or look for our team at [www.the3day.org](http://www.the3day.org). The money we raised will help Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the National Philanthropic Trust Breast Cancer Fund.

## Big QC Day

From Page 1

tion methods. Periodic testing is critical for benchmarking both the strengths in your brewing process and potential weaknesses, or areas meriting closer attention. Testing not only objectively evaluates your beers but can also be used to cross-check your own in-house analysis, procedures, and analytical instruments.

The program provides brewers to put their beers through rigorous testing at least once a year. However, one of the program's aims is to promote testing year-round, whether breweries do this in-hour or with the aid of an independent laboratory.

For those choosing to have White Labs help with additional tests through the year (including the Beer Twin Test), customer service people are available to discuss options at 888-5-YEAST-5 or [info@whitelabs.com](mailto:info@whitelabs.com).

White Labs sought to make the program as easy as

possible to implement. The price included shipping (for domestic customers) and brewers were sent a box containing everything they needed for the tests, including the containers to send the beer samples back to the lab.

Participating breweries were required to return to the testing kits to White Labs no later than Feb. 17 and results were expected to be sent to breweries by mid-March.

While individual brewery numbers are confidential, overall numbers, broken down by style and region, are published on the White Labs website, which can be viewed at [www.whitelabs.com](http://www.whitelabs.com) (follow the links to Big QC Day under news).

Brewers can also view a sample Big QC Day report at the website.

### Consulting options with White Labs Inc.

White Labs offers consultation and troubleshooting to all brewers, distillers, and winemakers.

Our consultation services are customized to best fit your needs. If you are experiencing off-flavors, stuck fermentations, or any other brewing related issue a White Labs technician can come to you to help diagnose and remedy the problem. During these consultation sessions, the technician can show you proper quality control techniques and assess your brewery, distillery or winery for possible contamination, fermentation, and propa-

# Bottle conditioning: Results from our lab tests

I always enjoy talking about classic brewing techniques and how to marry those with effective fermentation practices.

Recently I had the privilege of talking about bottle conditioning to large brewers, where the practice is less common. I used my experience working with craft brewers, where bottle conditioning remains popular, and I passed on stories I have heard from those who use the technique effectively. These practices are applicable for brewers of any size. I also shared some research we have done on the matter at White Labs.

I had the privilege of giving this talk at the Master Brewers' Association of America's annual technical conference in Toronto in January. Garrett Oliver of Brooklyn Brewery served as co-speaker, and he impressed the crowd with his stories. I will focus on a few points I raised.

Many of us in craft beer know the tremendous benefits that bottle conditioning can have on beer, but it's worth reminding that the practice can add visual charm, consistency, and complexity of flavor to beer. Of course the challenges are well known too: high alcohol; low pH, low oxygen; unfermentable sugars, and the presence of bacteria and brett. But many people, even in craft beer, have divergent opinions on how to approach bottle conditioning, so we decided to put these approaches to the test.

I shared with the audience an experiment we conducted at White Labs. Now, I must say beforehand that it was a small scale experiment done with a tight deadline in mind, yet it gave us some interesting results. We used our WLP001 California Ale Yeast and a dried brewing



## Letter from the President

Chris White

each beer was primed with four different amounts of yeast).

Here is what we did: we took Budweiser, decarbonated it, re-bottled the beer, primed it with sugar (1 ounce per gallon), primed it with the yeast I discussed previously. We measured CO<sub>2</sub>, visual attributes, sensory and microbiology.

While I have some very specific results that I would be happy to share with those who ask, the big picture was the dried yeast acted fine, however the rehydrated version was much better, creating a cleaner beer with a better yeast pack in the bottom of the bottle. The liquid yeast performed similarly to the rehydrated yeast, with some significant differences, including that the WLP001's yeast residue in the beer stuck to the bottom of the glass, while the rehydrated yeast swam throughout the glass.

Additionally, WLP001 provided a fine sediment in the bottom of the bottle and a nice, clean flavor profile. Of course, these tests were performed by and the results reviewed by White Labs employees, but I count on their impartiality for testing and I hope you do as well.

strain. The dried strain was used in two different ways, direct pitch and rehydrated, thus we had three separate beers to use (but we had 12 samples to compare, because

The amount of VDK was lower, in some cases considerably, than the dried yeast samples.

My recommendation to the audience as well as to the readers of the Quarterly is to test your bottle conditioning practices before putting it into use on a large batch.

By the way, in between visiting relatives in Ontario during my visit, I also had an opportunity to be interviewed by Josh Rubin, a food reporter for the Toronto Star, who attended the conference and wrote a story about yeast and White Labs for his newspaper. The story was available at the newspaper's Website, thestar.com, by searching under White Labs.

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Double-Take: I travel quite a bit with my twin brother Mike, who also works with us. We both attended The Brewing Network's Winter Beer Festival in Oakland on Jan. 30, and I had to leave early to make a flight. A homebrewer who I had met at a previous engagement came up to Mike and said "Hi Chris, remember we met at ..."

This is perfectly normal and happens all the time, and Mike politely explained that he was not Chris. A half hour later, the same man came up to Mike and said, "Hi Chris, remember we met at ..." Mike informed me he politely told the guy that he was not Chris (again).

*Chris White is President of White Labs Inc. He has a Ph.D in biochemistry. Feel free to write him at [cwhite@whitelabs.com](mailto:cwhite@whitelabs.com) about this column.*

## What's new

From Page 1

in themselves. Yeastman's goal is to make yeast and show yeast availability "super fast," hence the superhero-like logo.



In other news:

\* White Labs

is continuing to pursue options for a new factory in San Diego. The company's growing size is making the current facility less ideal, and we hope to share news about a future facility in the next issue. Our goal is to make the new plant the most modern and best yeast production facility in the world.

\* White Labs has opened a research and development lab at Sudwerk Brewery in Davis, Calif. The lab is located inside the brewery, behind its own walls, and below the University of California, Davis, extension classes on brewing. The goal of the relatively small space is to further research and development of current and future strains and to seek improvements in yeast propagation, shipping and stor-

age. Lab workers will also conduct experiments on yeast physiology. The facility will tap into the wealth of knowledge in Davis, which besides the brewery and extension classes

also features world-renowned brewing instruction at the main university campus.



## WHITE LABS INC. DAVIS LABORATORY

Small-scale yeast production is eventually planned for the Davis facility. Instrumental in helping open the Davis lab were Troels Prahl, who began working for White Labs as an intern and now represents us in Denmark and elsewhere through his independent company, Ferm;

and Jay Prahl (no relation), head brewer at Sudwerk.

\* Chris White, president of White Labs, recently gave a talk to the Northern California chapter of the Master Brewers Association of the Americas at Sudwerk Brewery in Davis, Calif. His talk centered on yeast technology, and he also gave a tour of the new White Labs laboratory at Sudwerk.

\* White Labs in San Diego is proud to be home of Siebel Institute of Technology's Lab Services Division. In response to customer requests for rapid turnaround, Siebel Institute has announced its new FastTrack testing package.

As explained by Siebel, brewers can get a range of Siebel's most requested services with accurate results sent back to customers in just days. Tests include: Alcohol, Extract, Attenuation, Density, Calories, pH, Color, and Bittering units. Samples received by Friday will be  
*See "Ballast," page 5*

## Craft Beer Quarterly

The purpose of CBQ is to provide information and tips about brewing from an ingredient perspective — malt, hops and yeast. CBQ is sent each quarter to thousands of professional brewers. CBQ is sponsored by Cargill Malt, Hopunion LLC and White Labs Inc.

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# Sasquatch Brew Festival draws thousands

Several thousand beer-thirsty revelers descended upon downtown Eugene, Oregon for the seventh annual Sasquatch Brew Festival. Boasting over 60 different craft brewed beers, many specially brewed for the occasion, from nearly 50 breweries in Oregon, Washington, California, Alaska, and Hawaii. The Sasquatch Brew Fest continued its tradition with an intimate brewer's dinner the night preceding the festival.

In cosponsorship with the Siebel Institute of Technology, the Glen Hay Falconer Foundation offers two full-tuition brewing education scholarships each year. One scholarship is for the World Brewing Academy Concise Course in Brewing Technology held at the Siebel Institute in Chicago, Ill.

The Concise Course in Brewing Technology is a two-week intensive program that covers every topic critical to

successful brewery operations. The program is designed for brewers pursuing a wider knowledge of professional brewing standards and techniques in order to advance their brewing careers as well as individuals planning to enter the brewing industry.

The second scholarship allows candidates to apply for one of three two-week modules from the International Diploma in Brewing Technology Program held at Siebel's Chicago campus in September/October 2009. This specialty brewing scholarship is intended for those brewers who seek an in-depth understanding of a specific brewing discipline.

From an outstanding group of talented applicants, Kachusha Munkanta of 21st Amendment Brewery (San Francisco, CA) and Evan Taylor of Silver Moon Brewing (Bend, OR) have been named recipients of the 2009

Glen Hay Falconer Foundation Brewing Scholarships. This year witnessed an outstanding group of highly qualified applicants and a very tight race for the two brewing scholarships. To date, the Foundation has granted a total of eleven scholarships over the past six years.

The Foundation extends congratulations to Kachusha and Evan and a sincere appreciation to all the applicants for their interest and enthusiasm for the brewing scholarships.

One member of the Selection Committee, Ralph Olson, was gracious enough to offer all of the scholarship applicant's free tuition to the annual Hops and Brew School held at Hopunion in Yakima, WA. He wanted to give recognition to all of the applicants' for the effort and energy they expended through the application process.

## Winter storms, shipping delays

By Joanne Scully

Now that the weather has turned colder, and storms have already hit parts of the country, it reminds us that we all need to be prepared for shipping delays.

All of us here at Hopunion, LLC, are committed to shipping our customers' orders in a timely manner and getting the product to you safe and secure.

However, with the arrival of winter, order arrival times are sometimes out of our control.

Be prepared for delays in shipments, if bad weather is hitting parts of the country pretty hard. The majority of the shipping hubs for UPS and for trucking companies are located in areas like Colorado, where as we all know, storms are very prone to hit hard, and can bring traffic to a screeching halt.

When deciding upon your hop needs, please keep in mind that a few extra days leeway would be necessary when you place your hop order, and you might want to throw in an extra box or two of an often used hop, just to make sure you will have plenty on hand if your next order should be delayed a day or two.

Please know that whether you are shipping via UPS or any of the Freight Carriers, Hopunion will continually strive to get your product to you in a timely manner, because your next 'brew' is important to us.

## Photos from the Sasquatch Brew Festival



## Style Matters

From Page 1

your brewing needs please visit our recently updated website at: [www.hopunion.com](http://www.hopunion.com)

— Jesse Umbarger, Hopunion LLC

### Yeast and Fermentation Notes:

Most of our customers tell us that when they are making Maibocks, they use WLP830 Pilsner Lager Yeast, WLP833 German Bock Lager Yeast, and WLP838 Southern German Lager Yeast.

As pointed out in the BJCP style guidelines, some believe Maibock is a “fest” type beer hitting the upper limits of hopping and color for the range. It is important to note that the fruitiness is not yeast-derived esters developed during fermentation, although some North American brewers certainly use these techniques. The guidelines say the flavor should be related to the Munich and other specialty malts.

Besides not having fermentation-derived fruity esters, Maibocks also should not have diacetyl. Even a young beer could taste deceiving when it comes to no diacetyl; it often develops over time. Thus, we recommend a diacetyl rest at 65F for one week. After that lower the temperature to about 40F and lager for two weeks.

— White Labs

### Vital statistics for Maibocks, using data from the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) style guidelines

#### Brown Ale-Milds

##### Vital Statistics:

OG: 1.064 - 1.072

IBUs: 23-35+

SRM: 6-11

FG: 1.011 – 1.018

ABV: 6.3 – 7.4%

## Hopunion, White Labs and Cargill ready for Craft Brewers Conference

If you are one of the thousands of brewers expected to attend the Craft Brewers Conference in Chicago, please visit the sponsors of Craft Brew Quarterly. White Labs is at booth 313, Hopunion is at booth 308 and 310, and Cargill Malt is at booth 707 and 709.

The 2010 Craft Brewers Conference (CBC) and BrewExpo America will be held from April 7 - April 10 at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers in downtown Chicago. Attendees can expect over 40 presentations from speakers from all facets of the brewing industry. BrewExpo America will once again be packed with exhibitors offering the latest supplies and tools for your business.

Besides White Labs, Hopunion and Cargill Malt, more than 150 exhibitors will take part in BrewExpo America, the main trade show for American craft brewers. It involves leaders in the national and international



brewing arena. As explained by the Brewers Association, it is an environment that allows exhibitors and buyers to develop profitable business relationships and helps brew-

ing and brewery restaurant professionals encounter the latest and the best that industry vendors have to offer. It is the only industry event that serves both brewpubs, breweries, and wholesalers.

The show will be an important event for White Labs, as always. The company is celebrating its 15-year anniversary (see graphic).

The show will offer an opportunity for White Labs to communicate with customers who have helped make White Labs a main industry supplier over the years. A number of innovations are under way at White Labs, including new testing opportunities, yeast strains, and ancillary fermentation services and products. White Labs people will also discuss the results of the 4th Annual Big QC Day, the industry's first and only comprehensive testing program.

## Ballast

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tested and results will be returned by the end of business of the following Tuesday by e-mail or fax, all for only \$130 per sample. Customers must provide 24 oz of each sample to be tested. Brewers must specifically request the FastTrack program.

\* Chris White and well-known author and speaker Jamil Zainasheff have recently completed the manuscript for their yeast instructional book. The long effort was capped in early 2010 when they submitted their manuscript to the publisher, the Brewers Association. Publication is planned prior to the Great American Beer Festival later this year. Updates will be provided on the White Labs' website.

\* Jamil also hosts a popular show on the Brewing Network, a live beer radio program that recently held its first (probably annual) beer festival in Oakland. Congratulations on a popular inaugural event.

\* Ballast Point Spirits has released its first product, a gin, to wide praise. Ballast Point Brewery and its distillery offshoot are longtime friends of White Labs, as both started at similar times and in nearby neighborhoods in San Diego. White Labs congratulates Ballast Point Spirits on its successful debut.



\* Ballast Point is one of a number of breweries that have expanded into the distilling world, of course. Given the strong ties between craft brewing and distilling, White Labs has been expanding its offerings to distillers and will continue to do so in 2010. We expect to

make an announcement in the near future regarding new enzymes for distillers, and we will do so in these pages as well as on our Website. Stay tuned. Meanwhile, we continue to visit distilleries and travel to related conferences. Chris White will be part of a White Labs team attending the 2010 Whiskey & Moonshine Distilling Conference in Borden, Indiana, in May.

\* White Labs is developing a fermentation worksheet for distillers and will develop the information into a poster. The worksheet was developed by Christopher Bird, a brewer and distiller, and Clayton Cone, a retired yeast scientist with Lallemant who has traveled the world helping distillers make better spirits.

## Consulting

From Page 2

gation problems.

A consultation session will not only clear up current issues, but it will also help to prevent future occurrences and keep you product clean and consistent. White Labs has been working with yeast and microbial organisms for over 15 years and we want to share that expertise with you. Call us today at 1-888-5-YEAST-5 to find out how a consultation session can help you.

An individual session like this will help you utilize the best practice for your unique set up and production needs so that you don't experience the same problems in the future. White Labs has been working with yeast for over 15 years and we want your experience with fermentation to be the best possible.



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## Attention brewer

Craft Beer Quarterly

## The Back Page

# Beer in the city: WL's Ashley hits the road

By **Ashley Paulsworth**  
Technical Sales & Marketing  
Coordinator, White Labs Inc.

I know that New York has great shopping, the street is a runway that speaks for itself. New York has great clubs, trust me I've been shocked to see the sunrise more than a few times. But does New York have great beer? In a city that houses the pinnacle of every industry; does craft beer have a high rise on Times Square to call its own? I spent a few days in this mecca of commerce trying to find out for myself exactly how New York does beer. First stop, Chelsea Brewing

Chelsea Brewing rests on the waterfront and serves up some great craft beer. Hint — impress your girlfriend and drink good beer here. With 7 beers on tap, 4 standard and 3 rotating, Chris Sheehan is able to put out a good variety of beer for all the seasons. Since I came early, I got to try all the beers. My favorite was his stout, which was smooth and delicious with a hint of cocoa! Perfect for the upcoming winter. If you prefer a hoppier taste, try the IPA. Chris is originally from California, and he brought his West Coast past to his East Coast IPA. Satisfied that I have discovered at least one of New York's breweries, I am now ready to make my way to the next.

Riding on the L train, I wind my way

to the Brooklyn Brewery. Ivy scales the brick walls outside and though there are signs indicating that this is Brooklyn Brewery, I'm not quite sure where to enter. There's a cross St. though, called Brewer's St so this has to be it. How they got a street named after them remains a mystery, but eventually I find my way inside. Everyone looks busy. And then I remember I'm in New York; everyone always looks busy.

After a quick tour and a sample from a barrel aged, I'm on another train and heading to Green Point Beer Works. The brewery has the same warehouse style and I am welcomed in through the wide garage. There is a difference here though, something feels relaxed. It's their brewer, he's from Oregon. We're chatting about New York beers and I'm learning that Green Point makes a ton of beer for the area, something close to 70% they estimate. We talk a bit about where to go for a good beer in NYC, I say Pony Bar and they say Beer Table. I'd normally take the recommendation from a local, but Beer Table is in Brooklyn and I am staying in Harlem. If you don't know New York,



Yeast news,  
pages 2-3



Hop news,  
pages 4-5



CRAFT BEER QUARTERLY is brought to you  
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think 2 transfers and at least 45 minutes on a subway with no bathroom.

So I end up at Pony Bar with my wino friend and her boyfriend. The place is packed; did I mention it is a Tuesday? With lots of questions running through my mind — who comes here, are they locals or tourists, home brewers, or just here for the cheap beer (\$5) — I begin to observe the crowd. Mostly male, but that is not unusual, mid twenties to late fifties, casual — and everyone has a beer scoring sheet. Thinking suddenly that I have wondered in on a beer competition, I ask the guy to my left about this sheet. He says I can get one too and record my every taste. Cool. I am not local, but I get one anyway and proudly fill in my first column, a Victory

Golden Monkey, which I already know I will like. After I force my friend to drink 2 beers, she switches to wine and we proceed to shut the place down. What do you mean I have to work on Wednesday?

So how does New York stand up to my challenge? Let's just say it's no house of cards. There may not be a lot of breweries located in the heart of New York City, but just like everything else in New York, the breweries here have character.

It was warm and my friend was recording a soundtrack to an Indy film. So I found myself in Brooklyn with some time to kill. Well it's true, I do.

*Ashley is based in Philadelphia and works closely with many East Coast breweries.*