

“Cream of Three Crops” Interview with Biermuncher

Question #1. How did you start brewing?

Answer: It started with the perennially popular “Mr. Beer Kit” my wife bought me for Christmas in 2006. The resulting batch was predictably yeasty and tangy, but something about this gimmicky brew kit sparked in me a deeper interest. I’d brewed a couple batches about 15 years earlier using a more conventional bucket setup, but the lack of ingredients at that time left me with disappointing beers and after just a couple of batches, I stowed the equipment away in my basement. Maybe it was the magic of listening to the yeast churn away in the Mr. Beer fermenter. Maybe it was the breadly smell coming from the airlock. Maybe it was just the idea that I was making my own beer. Of course it could have been that I was just deathly bored in the middle of the winter. Whatever the reason, before the Mr. Beer batch was more than 3 days old, I dug out the old equipment, ran to the local Homebrew Shop to buy whatever pieces of equipment I was missing, and was heading home with a recommended recipe kit. My original brewing equipment was back at work. No sooner had I pitched the yeast in this new batch of beer, than I was running back to the LHBS and buying more buckets, more ingredients and working my way through a LOT of Sam Adams to procure the cherished empty bottles. That winter, I brewed 8 consecutive weekends. By the 4th batch, I was into all grain. When I wasn’t brewing, I was scavenging for materials and building my own brewing equipment. I was hooked.

Question #2. When in your homebrewing career did you make your first beer that you considered more than just “good”?

Answer: It was maybe my third or fourth all grain batch. I was trying to dial in a good Blue Moon clone. Keep in mind, this was 2007 so all of the spiced wit bier offshoots like Shocktop were still a thing of the future. Once I dropped in that strainer bag of crushed coriander and shredded orange peel into my keggel, the brew shop smelled amazing. I knew this was going to be a good one. I was still doing five gallon batches back then, and I was force carbing (using the shake method) my beers because I was impatient and my kegerator was still new. Sharing with family and friends who stopped by, that beer didn’t last more than a week and THAT is when I knew my homebrewed beer could be every bit as good as anything bought off the shelf or drawn into

a pint glass.

Question 3. What would be the best advice you could give someone that just started homebrewing?

Answer: BREW...JUST BREW ALREADY! I have friends that say they want to get into home brewing and after more than a year of reading, lurking on HBT, asking me questions and wandering around the LHBS for hours on end...they are nowhere nearer to having their first batch brewed than when they started. When I decided I wanted to try brewing, I jumped in the car, drove to the local shop, took the owners recommendations and by that evening I had a fermenter bubbling away in the basement. Two days later, I went and bought three more fermenters and more raw materials and got my next batches going. I learned more about brewing in the 2 ½ hours of my first extract batch than any book could have told me. So advice to someone who wants to brew and keep on improving their product...buy your stuff and fire up the burner. Get your brew on already!

Question #4. Is this beer the best you have made so far, or are there others that we have yet to see?

Answer: At the time I came up with the recipe, homebrewing was catching on like fire, and along with it a growing sentiment that Miller Lite, Bud light, Coors, etc...were not worth of a homebrewers efforts. Kind of a "if it ain't a Wee Heavy at 7%, it ain't a homebrew" mentality. I kind of figured I'd take some grief for trying to "clone" a mass produced light beer. But in my mind, you should brew what you want to drink and what you want to serve your guests. It turns out the opposite happened. I heard from a lot of brewers who decided to get into homebrewing because of this recipe. Just because they might not enjoy drinking hop bombs like IPA's doesn't mean they can't be homebrewers. Like I've said, this may not be one of my craft beer hallmarks, but I take pride that it probably helped produce quite a few new homebrewers who otherwise might not have taken the plunge.

Question #5. Making a beer worthy of this list can't be an easy task, what kind of process and thought went into a homebrew like this?

Answer: When I set out to brew the Cream of Three Crops, I really was trying to come up with an extra beer I could keep on tap for every day, non-

adventurous beer drinkers. By this time I had enough taps on line and several distinct styles always in the pipeline. Friends, family and neighbors who visited knew I always had several beers on tap and most of them liked Pale Ales or English Milds or others in my lineup. But, there were always those few that reached into my garage refrigerator to grab a Miller Lite or something similar. I knew if I was going to convince them that homebrew could be every bit as predictable and easy to drink as BMC products, I'd need to come up with my own "every mans" beer. The cream ale wasn't a new style to me as I'd brewed them before, but I wanted something that really spanned to grain selection so the beer had some complexity while still being "drinkable".