

Three Floyds Zombie Dust Clone with SkeezerPleezer

Question #1. How did you start brewing?

Answer: Back in early April of 2010 I realized that I spent most of my weekends drinking beer and watching Basketball, Football, or playing disc golf. Since the NCAA tournament was coming to a close and it would be awhile before football started I decided I may as well find another way to pass some time and realized brewing may be fun. I headed to the homebrew shop and bought a Brewer's Best equipment kit and their Irish stout kit and brewed my first beer that day. After one more extract kit, I moved to all-grain and brewed Yooper's Dogfish Head 60-minute clone, then moved on to developing my own recipes. 22 days into the hobby, I had already bought 3 more fermenters and had 4 beers in fermenters. A kegerator, new boil kettle and burner were not far behind.

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

Answer: Like most new brewers, I tried to tell myself they were all excellent, but the first one that I really believed was better than average was my 6th batch, a wheat IPA/PA. It was the first one that friends were actually excited about and gave a lot of praise above the normal "this is pretty good" comments. Looking back at that recipe, a lot has changed in my brewing style for hoppy beers and I don't think I would brew it again without some significant changes, but it was definitely great at the time.

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

Answer: For equipment, make sure you have a good thermometer and a way to keep your fermentation temperature where you want it. The biggest improvement I saw in my beer quality happened after I started using a fermentation chamber.

For recipes, don't overcomplicate things. Adding 8oz of 6 different specialty grains, doing a multi-step mash, and using 6 different hops in a pale ale may seem like a great idea, but in reality it may end up taking away from the final product. Keeping it simple is sometimes easier, especially until you learn what each of the ingredients will add to the beer.

For brewing process, hit your mash temps and make sure you pitch the right amount of healthy yeast. A stir-plate is a nice piece of equipment to have and can be made for a little bit of money and time.

In my opinion, it is harder to make a bad batch of homebrew than a good one if you pay attention to details. Starting out, I recommend brewing a couple kits or at least proven recipes to learn the basic brewing process.

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

Answer: It is definitely my most popular recipe and one of my favorites, but there are others that I like as much or more. I have probably used the Zombie Dust grain bill for 15 other IPAs using different hop combinations and yeasts. One of my favorites was using 50:50 Mosaic:Citra hops and WLP644 (*Saccharomyces "Bruxellensis" Trois*). I increased the late hop additions and also did a ~180°F hop stand. It is fantastic. My Firestone Walker Wookey Jack clone is another that I like a lot and it is also very popular with friends and the online community. Some of my other personal favorites are wild/sour beers. The past few years I

have been doing a lot of brewing using various strains of Brettanomyces, Lactobacillus, and Pediococcus. The bad part about them is the time it takes before they are ready to drink, however the results are typically well worth the wait.

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: There are a lot of ways to acquire information when trying to clone or develop a recipe. In the case of my Zombie Dust recipe, I used information from the Three Floyds (FFF) website, information from other homebrewers, and since I was living in the Chicago area at the time I was able to drink FFF Zombie Dust often and could use my own judgement. I found that another homebrewer had degassed a sample of the beer to determine the FG. Using FFF's ABV% and the FG, I was able to come up with the OG. The FFF website said the beer was all Citra hops, so that made the hop choice easy (I have heard that they may use another bittering hop now, but it is still unknown). Having a juicier hop flavor and aroma and less of a bitter taste indicated that the beer was heavy on late hop additions and dry-hopping, so that's how I came up with the hop schedule. Looking at other homebrew recipes gave me an idea of some of the malts that FFF may use on their IPAs, so using that and what I knew about each of the grains I began putting numbers into Beersmith to try and get the desired OG and color. I had read that FFF used an English yeast strain as the house yeast, so I started with WY1968 and S-04, then adjusting mash temperature to help get the attenuation. Using this information, I made my first attempt. The beer was good, but not really what I was looking for so got rid of the wheat, changed some specialty grains, modified the hop schedule, and re-brewed. And that's where the recipe stands today.

Several other "clone" recipes that I have on Homebrewtalk (Firestone Walker Wookey Jack, Stone 15th Anniversary, and Boulevard Bourbon Barrel Quad), I emailed the brewers with my proposed recipes and asked for their feedback. They were all very responsive and gave great feedback on my recipe. Some even provided detailed information such as grain bills, fermentation schedules, mash schedules, etc.

I approach developing my personal recipes the same way. I figure out what I want in the final product, such as style, ABV%, FG, bitterness, hop flavor/aroma, color, malt and yeast characteristics, etc. then systematically build my recipe from there based on past experience or online research if brewing a style I have little experience.