

ALTBIER

<http://www.germanbeerinstitute.com/altbier.html>

AKA:

Alt, Düsseldorfer Alt

Pronunciation guide for English-speakers:

"ullt-beer"

Definition:

One of only a handful of traditional German ales. Altbier is Copper-colored, cool-fermented, cold-conditioned, clean-tasting, with an aromatic hop presence, a firm creamy head, a medium body, and a dry finish. It is indigenous to the Rhineland, which is part of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in the northwestern part of Germany, near the Dutch border. The best known Altbiers come from the Düsseldorf, the state capital.

Related beer styles:

[Sticke Alt](#), [Latzenbier](#)

A Sip of Altbier is a Sip of Beer History Itself

"Alt" means "old" an allusion to the old style of brewing. Altbier is an ale, as were virtually all beers of Europe before lagers were invented in Bavaria in the 16th century AD. Altbier is now identified with the Rhineland, especially its capital city of Düsseldorf, barely 50 miles from where the borders of Germany, Holland and Belgium meet. The Altbier is an ancient brew, but it acquired its name and its distinction as a modern beer style only in the 1800s, when it became threatened by the "new" beer, the lager style, which is now the most popular brew in the world. Before that time, in Düsseldorf, Altbier was just "Bier."

Few people are aware that Düsseldorf ranks among the oldest inhabited places on the globe. In fact, Neanderthal, which gave the Neanderthal man his name, is a suburb of Düsseldorf, about 10 miles east of the city center. Herr and Frau Neanderthal roamed the Rhineland some 50 to 100 thousand years ago. The first-ever skeletal remains of these precursors of *Homo sapiens* (that's us!), was unearthed in Neanderthal in 1858. It is unlikely that Neanderthal man ever made beer, but we have reason to think that his Stone Age successors, the Celtic and Germanic tribes of the Neolithic period, started brewing ales from wild grains in the Rhineland at least 3,000 years ago, and brewing hasn't stopped there since. Because Altbier has evolved from primitive tribal roots, it is arguably the oldest continuously brewed beer style in the world.

In spite of its ancient lineage, Altbier is considered a cool modern brew, sipped by suave Düsseldorfers from straight-sided 0.2-, 0.3- or 0.4-liter glasses in the city's many ancient brewpubs and ritzy bars. In the city's Altstadt (old town), almost every house, many of which date from the 13th to the 17th centuries, contains a pub. There are more than 200 of them crowded together in an area less than one mile square! The Altstadt mercifully survived the bombings of World War II unscathed. With its cobble-stoned lanes, it is known affectionately as the longest bar in the world, and it is there that you can find three of the four brewpubs that have defined the Altbier style for our age. Within a few hundred yards from each other, there is the Zum Uerige, Im Füchschen and Zum Schlüssel. In translation, these names mean "at the grouch," "at the little fox," and "at the key," respectively. The oldest Altbier brewpub, Schumacher, so-named after its founder Mathias Schumacher, is only a 10-minute walk to the east of the Altstadt. It opened in 1838.

Düsseldorf's climate is not unlike that of Britain. It rarely gets very hot or very cold, ideal for ale making. Altbiers are fermented with a specialty ale yeast at a cool 55°F (13°C) to 67°F (19°C) and then aged for one or two months, like a lager, to bring out its mellow maltiness and aromatic hoppiness.

In Germany overall, Altbier has a market share between two and three percent, but on its home turf, in Düsseldorf, just about every second beer drunk is still an Altbier. Most of it is poured on-premise, tapped from wooden casks. It has an alcohol level of 4.7 to 4.9% by volume.



BJCP

7A. Northern German Altbier

Aroma: Subtle malty, sometimes grainy aroma. Low to no noble hop aroma. Clean, lager character with very restrained ester profile. No diacetyl.

Appearance: Light copper to light brown color; very clear from extended cold conditioning. Low to moderate off-white to white head with good retention.

Flavor: Fairly bitter yet balanced by a smooth and sometimes sweet malt character that may have a rich, biscuity and/or lightly caramelly flavor. Dry finish often with lingering bitterness. Clean, lager character sometimes with slight sulfury notes and very low to no esters. Very low to medium noble hop flavor. No diacetyl.

Mouthfeel: Medium-light to medium body. Moderate to moderately high carbonation. Smooth mouthfeel.

Overall Impression: A very clean and relatively bitter beer, balanced by some malt character. Generally darker, sometimes more caramelly, and usually sweeter and less bitter than Düsseldorf Altbier.

Comments: Most Altbiers produced outside of Düsseldorf are of the Northern German style. Most are simply moderately bitter brown lagers. Ironically “alt” refers to the old style of brewing (i.e., making ales), which makes the term “Altbier” somewhat inaccurate and inappropriate. Those that are made as ales are fermented at cool ale temperatures and lagered at cold temperatures (as with Düsseldorf Alt).

Ingredients: Typically made with a Pils base and colored with roasted malt or dark crystal. May include small amounts of Munich or Vienna malt. Noble hops. Usually made with an attenuative lager yeast.

Vital Statistics:	OG: 1.046 – 1.054
IBUs: 25 – 40	FG: 1.010 – 1.015
SRM: 13 – 19	ABV: 4.5 – 5.2%

Commercial Examples: DAB Traditional, Hannen Alt, Schwelmer Alt, Grolsch Amber, Alaskan Amber, Long Trail Ale, Otter Creek Copper Ale, Schmaltz' Alt

[How to make a great Altbier \(German Ale\)](#)

<http://www.fermentarium.com/homebrewing/brewing-beer/great-altbier-german-ale/>

I've made several alt style beers for [my neighborhood parties](#). I always am asked "what kind of [beer](#) is this", which is quickly met with blank stares when I call it an "alt" style beer. In fact, I received so many blank stares at park parties I eventually relented and started calling it a "German ale".

Altbier is somewhat similar to an amber lager. This is because the beer is usually lagered after fermentation. This produces cleaner beers compared to British ales with significantly fewer esters.

The [Beer Judge Certification Program \(BJCP\) Style guidelines](#) list two alt beers in the Amber Hybrid Beer (7) category, the Düsseldorf Altbier (7A) and the Northern Germany Altbier (7C). It's considered a hybrid because the beer uses ale [yeast](#), but tastes more like a lager. If you're thinking California Common or steam beer, you're on the right track. California Common is 7B in the Amber Hybrid Beer category.

The familiar California Common (Steam beer) is sandwiched between the two altbier styles.

Altbier History

The Alt beer shares much history with Kölsch. Both beers originate in Cologne (Köln), Germany, but the Alt style is associated with Düsseldorf and Northern Germany.

In Cologne, ales have ruled since the 1600s. In 1603 and again in 1698, Cologne banned lagers within city limits to compete with lagers. Brewers had to swear to an ale version of Reinheitsgebot which said, "you prepare your beer, as of old, from good malt, good cereals, and good hops, well boiled, and that you pitch it with top-[yeast](#), and by no means bottom yeast, no Tollbier, 'raw [wort](#), no noxious herbs, no matter of what name". The oath not only specified top-fermenting ale yeast, it also called out bottom-fermenting lager yeast as a big no-no. Tollbier means lager beer in this oath, so you had to swear twice you would not make lagers.

If you wanted a lager, you had to get it outside of Cologne. Lagers were still very popular, and were made in many German cities outside of Cologne. In Germany lagers are king, so by 1750 Cologne gave in and started making lagers. The ales were the old, or "alt" which is old in German, way of making beer.

In Cologne, Kölsch is now the standard beer. Alts are found about 40 kilometers to the north in Düsseldorf, so the style is now associated with Düsseldorf. Neither beer has been called "alt" or

“kölsch” until the 1900s. Around this time German ales started to become popular again. Most likely to compete with the lagers surrounding Cologne, the style developed into the lager like profile. There really isn’t any reliable data showing what the German ales were like prior to the turn of the last century.

The beer

Altbiers are light copper to light brown ales with white heads. The beer is very clear due to the lagering. The aroma is slightly malty, with almost no hop aroma. The flavor is bitter. Not an IPA bitter, but still a firm bitter flavor. Some of the altbiers have a light caramel flavor, which I like, and is followed by a dry finish. The beer could be compared to a hoppy Vienna style lager. The alcohol content of the beer is lower than average, usually between 4.5% to 5.2%. This makes altbiers a great session beer.

Altbier recipe

Here’s the recipe I use for my Altbier.

Altbier

Batch size	5 gallons	Original gravity	1.051
Boil size	6.5 gallons	Final gravity	1.013
Boil time	90 minutes	Alcohol (by volume)	5.0%
Grain weight	9.5 pounds	Bitterness (IBU)	36
Efficiency	75%	Color (SRM)	15.8°L
Yeast		Mash	
2 liquid packs		60 minutes, 8.2 gallons	
White Labs <i>WLP029</i>	German Ale/Kölsch	Strike <i>Target 152°F</i>	3.6 gallons 163°F 60 minutes (+0)
		Sparge <i>Target 170°F</i>	4.7 gallons 177°F
Grains/Extracts/Sugars			
9.5 pounds			
Pilsen	8 pounds		

<i>36ppg, 1°L</i>	<i>84.2%</i>
Munich (Light) <i>34ppg, 10°L</i>	1 pound <i>10.5%</i>
CaraMunich <i>34ppg, 50°L</i>	0.25 pounds <i>2.6%</i>
Carafa II <i>30ppg, 500°L</i>	0.25 pounds <i>2.6%</i>

Boil

90 minutes, 6.5 gallons

Magnum hops <i>14%, Pellet</i>	0.75 ounces 60 minutes (+30)
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Wort chiller	15 minutes (+75)
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Ferment

14 days @ 65-69°F

Hops

0.75 ounces

Magnum hops <i>14%, Pellet</i>	0.75 ounces
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An example Altbier (courtesy of Wikipedia)

You'll want to mash the beer at 152 F (67 C). You should boil the beer for 90 minutes to reduce DMS, so adjust the boil volume to match your evaporation rate. Carbonate the beer between 2 and 2.5 volumes.

Once the beer has fermented I'll lager the beer for at least two weeks, longer if I find some courageous amount of patience and self-discipline. I tried serving the beer once without lagering and it was met with disastrous results. The beer stayed a bit cloudy, and it was very grainy. I ended up putting the beer back into the fridge for a few weeks, and was rewarded with a much cleaner and clearer beer.

Alt Munich I used to go to a bar in Montreal, Canada called Alt Munich. It's a giant beer hall that served lots of German food and pitchers of beer. I have no idea if it's still there, an exhaustive 30 second Google search turned up inconclusive results. Still I had great, if not very blurry, memories of the beer hall. This beer is dedicated to that bar.

Alt Munich

Batch size	5 gallons	Original gravity	1.043
Boil size	6.1 gallons	Final gravity	1.012
Boil time	60 minutes	Alcohol (by volume)	4.1%
Grain weight	8.5 pounds	Bitterness (IBU)	29
Efficiency	75%	Color (SRM)	18.3°L
Grains/Extracts/Sugars		Mash	
8.5 pounds		60 minutes, 7.7 gallons	
Munich (Light) <i>34ppg, 10°L</i>	8 pounds 94.1%	Strike <i>Target 152°F</i>	3.2 gallons 163°F 60 minutes (+0)
CaraMunich <i>34ppg, 50°L</i>	0.25 pounds 2.9%	Sparge <i>Target 170°F</i>	4.5 gallons 176°F
Carafa II <i>30ppg, 400°L</i>	0.25 pounds 2.9%		
Hops		Boil	
0.6 ounces		60 minutes, 6.1 gallons	
Magnum hops <i>13%, Pellet</i>	0.6 ounces	Magnum hops <i>13%, Pellet</i>	0.6 ounces 60 minutes (+0)
		Wort chiller	15 minutes (+45)
Ferment			

14 days

The recipe is as simple as you can get. It's an all Munich malt alt. Well mostly Munich malt. There's just a bit of CaraMunich to give the beer a little caramel hint, and a little bit of Carafa II to make the beer a bit darker without adding too much astringency. The beer is again mashed at 152 F (67 C), lagered for at least two weeks, and carbonated between 2 and 2.5 volumes.

(Sources: [Designing Great Beers](#), [Wikipedia](#), [BJCP Style Guidelines](#))



DJ Spiess

I am a avid homebrewer and winemaker. I've been making my own beer and [wine](#) for many years. I started making beer when I was in college (mostly because the drinking age in the United States is 21). My first few beers were horrible. The beers are much better now, and I often supply my neighborhood with free beer!

Brewing German Altbier Recipes

by Brad Smith on December 16, 2009 · 2 comments

German Altbier or Alt is a top fermenting beer that originated in the German Westphalia region and later grew in popularity around the Rhineland. This week we take a look at brewing Altbier at home. The term “Alt” or “old beer” refers to the old methods of using a top fermenting ale yeast at ale temperatures but then cold aging the beer to form a slightly bitter, malty, well attenuated German ale. The term Altbier first appeared in the 1800’s to differentiate this traditional ale from newer pale lagers getting popular in Germany.

The BJCP recognizes two distinct style of Altbier, the Dusseldorf Alt is primarily produced near the town of Dusseldorf, and is slightly more bitter than the more widely brewed Northern German Altbier. The Northern version generally has a slight caramel flavor and is sweeter and less bitter than the Dusseldorf. Some Altbiers are also produced in small quantities in the Netherlands near the German border as well as Austria, Switzerland and the US microbreweries.

The Altbier Style



As mentioned above, Altbier is an amber colored ale with a very smooth, well attenuated finish. The beer should be well balanced with some bitterness and some maltiness. Fruitiness from the ale yeast is appropriate. Color is generally bronze to brown (11-17 SRM). There is low diacetyl flavor and the beer generally has moderate to high carbonation.

There are differences between the Northern and Dusseldorf Altbier styles. The Dusseldorf style has medium bitterness and medium to high maltiness and is often brewed with moderately carbonate water. The Northern style may have a malty, grainy, biscuity and even slight caramel maltiness. The Northern style is generally less bitter than the Dusseldorf and is sometimes made with a mix of ale and lager yeasts or even a highly attentive lager yeast alone.

The BJCP style guide specifies an original gravity of 1.046-1.054 and final gravity of 1.010-1.015 for both styles. The Dusseldorf color runs bronze to brown, or 11-17 SRM. The Northern can be slightly darker at 13-19 SRM. Carbonation is a bubbly 2.5-3.1 volumes of CO₂.

Brewing an Altbier

The base malt for Alts is German Pilsner malt, which typically makes up 80% of the grain bill. A small amount of Munich or Vienna malt is often used to add some malty flavor. Dark Crystal malt is used in the Northern style to reach the appropriate color and add a small bit of caramel flavor. The Dusseldorf style uses less crystal malt, and instead substitutes small amounts of chocolate or black malt to achieve the desired color.

The traditional mash schedule is a German triple decoction, though a single step infusion mash is more than adequate if you are using modern highly modified malt.

Both styles require a highly attentive yeast with a clean finish. The Dusseldorf style always uses a high attenuation ale yeast such as White Labs WLP036 Dusseldorf Alt Yeast or WLP001 California Ale or Wyeast 1056 American Ale. The Northern Alt style also requires a high attenuation yeast, and most often lager yeasts are used though occasionally a mix of ale/lager or ale yeast may be used. Interesting yeasts to use include various German Lager yeasts, Kolsch yeasts from both labs, and the Alt ale yeasts listed above.

Spalt hops are traditionally used for the Dusseldorf alt, though many noble hop varieties are suitable as well. The Northern style uses noble hop varieties as well and there is some variation between breweries on which is best to use. The Dusseldorf style may use moderately carbonate water to accentuate the bitterness of the hops while the Northern style typically does not use carbonate water.

Altbier Recipes

- [1698 ALT](#) – All grain
- [Alt 'oids](#) – All grain
- [Dusseldorf Altbier](#) – Extract
- [Alt2](#) - All Grain
- [Alty Beer](#) – All Grain
- [Bay 13 Alt](#) – Extract
- [Zum Uerige Clone](#) – All Grain

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Old-World Alt

Author Matt Cole
Issue Jan/Feb 2002

From the central train station in Düsseldorf, I was making my way toward the charming Altstadt district. Düsseldorf is a bustling city on the Rhine river in western Germany, and Altstadt, which means "old city," is the historic part of town. On its centuries-old streets you can find many of Düsseldorf's traditional culinary treasures, such as mettwurst, Mainzer beer cheese, and the world's greatest pretzels and hot mustard.

The pretzels alone are worth the trip, but I wasn't in Düsseldorf to eat. I was there to learn how to brew the city's legendary altbier.

Ales have been brewed in Germany for 3,000 years, and alt is the ale that has long defined Düsseldorf. "If you ask for a beer in Düsseldorf, you get an altbier," writes Horst Dornbusch in "Altbier" (Brewers Publications, 1998). "If you want pils or weizen, you have to ask for it specifically." The name, which means "old beer," describes an ale fermented cool with top-fermenting yeast, then aged near the freezing point in the Düsseldorf style. Alt is a full-bodied beer, a bit like a British brown ale or bitter. Since it's not exported, this style can be hard to find in the United States. Take it from me: It's worth flying across the Atlantic to taste Düsseldorf alt from the tap.

Altstadt's cobblestone streets are lined with cozy, old-time taverns that have plenty of Old World charm ... and plenty of altbier. Walking into a Düsseldorf pub is like stepping into a time warp. Single-tap wooden barrels dispense alt into traditional straight-sided, 0.3-liter glasses, one after another. Once you've been served an altbier, the coaster under the glass serves as a tally for the number of beers consumed. The only way to stop your glass from being filled is to place the coaster on top of the glass, which tells the waiter you're finished. The blue-aproned waiters carry revolving trays of altbier while collecting empty glasses on the fly. The glasses are then half filled, let to stand, and topped up to establish a dense, frothy head. The waiters will occasionally pause to enjoy an altbier at the customer's expense, usually finishing it in one or two gulps.

In Altstadt, you will find three of the four breweries that have defined the style: Zum Uerige, Im Füschen and Zum Schlüssel. The fourth brewery, a mile outside the historic district, is the Brauerei Ferdinand Schumacher. Founded in 1838, Schumacher is the oldest continually-operating altbier brewpub in the city. "The founder,

Ferdinand Schumacher, took the traditional Rhineland ale as he found it, but added a bit more hops than was customary at the time, brewed it stronger, and started to experiment with aging the beer in casks to let it mature,” writes Dornbusch. “In these innovations lie the roots of the modern altbier style: a robust, coppery, slow-fermented and lagered ale.”

These classic breweries have a rustic atmosphere. Patrons gather around the old wooden barrels, used as tables, and drink glasses of alt while munching on aged cheeses and blood sausage. Some of the brewpubs even have their own in-house butchers, who serve the freshest meats and cheeses imaginable. Other pubs serve hearty full-course meals of wild boar, duck and eisbein (boiled knuckle of pork).

Making Alt the Düsseldorf Way

During the two days I spent in Düsseldorf, I took extensive tours of the Füchschen and Uerige breweries. The brewers were happy to share their alt techniques with a colleague from the United States, though they were guarded about their proprietary yeast strains. I followed along as they described their alt in German; in both pubs, an accommodating waiter helped me translate. The head brewer at Füchschen even gave me his recipe. (I have that beer on tap at my brewpub.)

Replicating a quality altbier is a challenge. The original gravity should range from 1.045 to 1.052. Alts are copper to brownish-amber in color and medium- to full-bodied, with a firm malt character that is not overwhelming. Altbier has a medium to high bitterness level, with a minimal hop aroma. The hop character must balance the overall impression of the beer. It has a crisp, dry finish, complemented by a nutty malt character without roasty overtones.

Altbiers are fermented cool, using a top-fermenting ale yeast, in open fermentation squares. Then they are lagered for an extended period of time, usually four to six weeks. Cold secondary conditioning is required for the clean, dry taste that typifies the style. Due to the low fermentation temperatures, you’ll want a high pitching rate (double the size of your yeast starter). Aerate your wort aggressively.

Brewing water, medium hard

The brewing water should have a medium hardness. If you add salts, use calcium chloride rather than calcium sulfate. This will enhance the beer’s fullness and maltiness and produce a mellower mouthfeel. Some Düsseldorf pubs use untreated tap water and lower the pH of the mash by adding acid malt at 1 to 2 percent. Always remember to de-chlorinate your water.

Malt for your authentic alt

Good altbier starts with good German malts. Altbiers have higher hopping rates that require a firm malt presence throughout. The base malt is German pilsner, while the addition of Munich malt at 5 to 20 percent will lend a mild sweetness and add some color. Most Düsseldorf alts include a small percentage of CaraMunich (5 percent) and black or chocolate malt (1 to 2 percent). I use a bit of de-husked, de-bittered chocolate malt, such as Carafa III, at 1 to 2 percent. This will lend a deep, tawny copper color to your alt. Some pubs also use a little German dextrin malt (CaraHell) to add body and head retention. American brewers tend to add too much caramel malt and not enough hops.

Fresh German hops

Fresh hops are critical for producing a classic Düsseldorf altbier, which ranges in bitterness from 35 to 55 IBU. Most Düsseldorf pubs use Spalt hops for bitterness. My favorite brewery, Im Füchschen, uses Hallertau Tradition for bitterness. Other suitable hop varieties would include German Tettnang and Czech Saaz. American varieties also work well. I suggest Liberty, Mount Hood, Ultra and Crystal. Pound for pound, pub alts are bitter beers, so focus on getting two-thirds of the bitterness at the beginning of the boil. The average boil is 80 minutes, and most breweries use three additions in the kettle: the first at 80 minutes, the second at 60, and the third 5 minutes before the end of the boil. Use a light hand during the last two additions. For added complexity, try dry hopping your alt in the secondary.

Yeast and fermentation

Arguably, alt yeast is the most important ingredient in reproducing the classic altbier style. Altbier should only be made with alt yeast. This “alt” to be a rule!

Alt yeast has a unique ability to ferment at cooler-than-normal ale temperatures. These cooler temperatures produce a cleaner, less fruity and more delicate flavor profile. The cooler fermentation temperatures reduce fruity esters and produce lager-like results. Fermentation should be conducted between 60° and 64° F for 3 to 6 days. Alt yeasts are low-flocculating strains. This increases its ability to hang in suspension. As a result, the yeast removes compounds and refines beer flavors. Altbiers produce a dense, rocky head of krauesen, so allow plenty of headspace in your fermenter. My favorite strain is Wyeast 1007 (German Ale), which is similar to the Düsseldorf pub yeast in its dry, crisp character.

After primary fermentation, condition the beer for three to six weeks at near-freezing temperatures. This will help clear the alt, refine the flavors and soften the overall character of the beer. Excessive fruity esters, caused by abnormally warm ale fermentations, can be reduced by lagering at very cool temperatures for extended periods of time. These beers require patience.

Sticke Alt is a more intense version of altbier. These “secret beers” are brewed stronger, are slightly darker, and are dry-hopped in the conditioning tank for four to six weeks. The result is a bittersweet, ultra-crisp ale with a fresh, flowery aroma. These traditional brews are available once or twice a year, usually in September and January. I was fortunate enough to taste Sticke Alt straight out of the aging tank at the Uerige brewery. It was possibly the best beer I have ever tasted.

Below are two homebrew recipes I created after my trip. Have fun making your own alt, and here’s a toast to the legendary beer of Düsseldorf!

Sly Fox Altbier (5 gallons, all grain)

OG= 1.052 FG= 1.010 to 1.012

IBU= 30 to 40 SRM= 15 to 18

Ingredients

6 lbs. German pilsner malt
2 lbs. German Munich or Vienna malt
1.25 lbs. Weyermann CaraMunich III or crystal malt (60° Lovibond)
1 to 3 oz. Weyermann Carafa III or black patent malt
6.4 AAU German Spalt hops (1.25 oz. of 5.5% alpha acid) for 80 minutes
1.5 AAU Saaz or Liberty hops (0.5 oz. of 3.1% alpha acid) for 20 minutes
3.1 AAU Saaz or Liberty hops (1 oz. of 3.1% alpha acid) for 5 minutes
Starter of alt yeast (Wyeast 1007 or White Labs WLP036)
3/4 cup corn sugar to prime

Mash grains in one quart of water per pound of malt at 100° F for 15 minutes. Raise to 122° F for 20 minutes, then do a conversion rest at 150° F for 60 minutes. Mash out at 170° F. Sparge with 170° water. Boil time is 80 minutes. Alternatively, a single-step infusion mash can be used at 152° F for 60 minutes. Ferment at 60° to 64° F for six days. Rack to secondary for three weeks at 32° to 40° F. Force- carbonate or prime with 3/4 cup of corn sugar and bottle. Wait two weeks. Extract brewers can substitute 4.25 pounds light DME for the pilsner malt.

Sticke Alt (5 gallons, extract with grains)

OG=1.052 to 1.055 FG= 1.010 to 1.014 IBU= 30-40 SRM= 14 to 16

Ingredients

3 lbs. pilsner dry malt extract

2.5 lbs. German Munich malt
2 lbs. Weyermann CaraMunich III or crystal malt (60° Lovibond)
0.75 lb. German CaraHell or CaraPils
3 to 4 oz. Weyermann Carafa III or black patent malt
6.4 AAU German Spalt hops (1.25 oz. of 5.5% alpha acid) for 80 minutes
1.5 AAU Saaz or Liberty hops (0.5 oz. of 3.1% alpha acid) for 20 minutes
3.1 AAU Saaz or Liberty hops (1 oz. of 3.1% alpha acid) for 5 minutes
1 tsp. Irish Moss at 20 minutes
Starter of alt yeast (Wyeast 1007 or White Labs WLP036)
3/4 corn sugar to prime

Bring 1.25 gallons of water to 155° F. Add grain and hold for 30 minutes at 150° F. Strain grain into the brewpot and sparge with 1/2 gallon of 168° F water. Add the extract and bittering hops. Bring the total volume in the brew pot to 2.75 gallons. Boil for 60 min. Add the flavor hops and Irish moss. Boil for 15 min., then add the aroma hops. Boil 5 min, then remove from stove. Cool wort. Strain into fermenter and add chilled, preboiled water to obtain 5.5 gallons. Add yeast when wort has cooled to 70° F. Aerate well. Ferment at 60° to 64° for 7 days. Rack into secondary (glass carboy). Condition at 32° to 40° F for approximately 5 weeks. Force carbonate or prime with corn sugar and bottle. All-grain brewers can swap 4.5 pounds of pilsner malt for the DME.

Matt Cole is head brewer at Rocky River Brewing Company in Rocky River, Ohio, where he always has alt on tap. He is an active member of the Brew Your Own editorial-review board and won two bronze medals at the 2001 Great American Beer Festival.