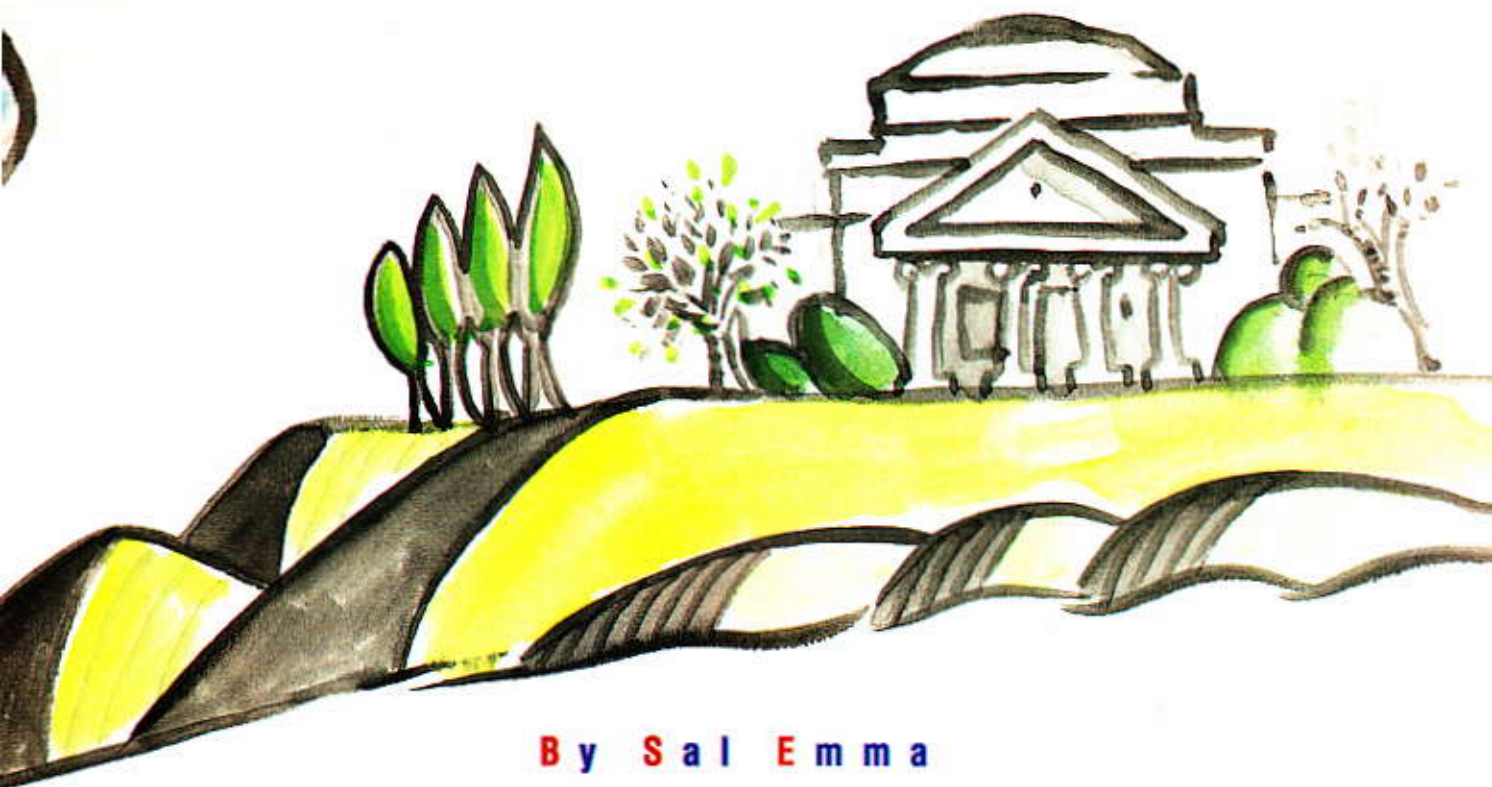






# REVOLUTIONARY BREWING



By **S a l E m m a**

**I**magine the scene: a dimly-lit, chilly tavern in 18th century Boston, Philadelphia, or perhaps New York. The fire is blazing, occasionally sending cascades of spark and flame rocketing onto the hearth, almost in unison with the fiery rhetoric of revolution being whispered in hushed tones in a dark corner of the room. Clouds of Virginia tobacco smoke cling blue to the air, perfumed in equal parts with rum, sweat, and ale.

It might be a bit of a stretch to say beer helped found America. Conservatives and neo-prohibitionists might shudder at the thought. But the fact remains: Taverns sold a lot of ale in those

days. And the tavern was an important political, social, and military meeting place during the birth of this nation.

Consider the words penned by E.L. Bynner:

"They were the centres of so much of its life and affairs, the resort at once of judge and jury, of the clergy and the laity, of the politician and the merchant; where the selectmen came to talk over the affairs of the town, and higher officials to discuss the higher interests of the province; where royal governors and distinguished strangers were entertained alike with the humblest wayfarer and the meanest citizen; where were held the carousals of roistering red-coat officers, and the mid-



night plottings of muttering stern-lipped patriots; where, in fine, the swaggering ensign of the royal army, the frowning Puritan, the obnoxious Quaker, the Huguenot refugee, and the savage Indian chief from the neighboring forest might perchance jostle each other in the common taproom."

Taverns were meeting rooms, strategy chambers, courtrooms, prisons, barracks, officers' headquarters, and even hospitals. Daniel Webster himself called Boston's Green Dragon Inn the "headquarters of the Revolution."

## Patriotic Brewing

Yes, those muttering, stern-lipped patriots hoisted an ale or two. After all, wouldn't you want to quaff some strong ale before dressing like an Indian, illegally boarding the King's ships, and dumping His Majesty's tea into Boston harbor — all the while taking the risk of catching a made-in-Manchester musket ball in the head?

In fact it was a brewer, albeit a brewer by default, who led those costumed "Sons of Liberty" into Boston Harbor on that December eve in 1773: Samuel Adams.

Most modern-day beer aficionados are acquainted with Samuel Adams, the "brewer patriot." Boston Beer Co., purveyors of the Samuel Adams line of beers, has seen to it that those of us who no longer study early American history won't forget Samuel.

But even Boston Beer admits Adams was not much of a brewer. When his father died, Samuel inherited the lucrative brewery. He was never interested in the family business. Beer held little attraction for him. He preferred the political debate, public oration, writing, and general rabble rousing intended to stir up the Redcoats. Within a few years of his father's death, everything the elder Adams had labored for was gone. Samuel's lack of managerial interest translated into the demise of the brewery.

But all was not lost. Having grown up in the beer business — and running it himself for a few years — he was at home in the colonial pub. It was a logical place to meet, scheme, and plot against the King. And plot they did.

## Recipes

As far as we know, none of the Adams family recipes have survived the ages. Not so for Adams' compatriot



Cover plate from *The Farmer's Wife or The Complete Country Housewife*.

George Washington, military commander of the revolution and the fledgling nation's first president.

At least one of Washington's homebrew recipes has survived: a recipe for "small beer," which uses no malt. The term "small beer" described one of two beverages — either that made from the second or third runnings of mashed malted barley in the brewery, or a reasonable facsimile made at home. This recipe of President Washington's falls into the latter category.

"To make Small Beer

"Take a large sifter full of bran, hops to your taste. Boil these 3 hours. Then strain out 30 Gall'ns into a Cooler. Put in 3 Gall'ns Molasses while the Beer is Scalding hot or rather draw the Molasses into the Cooler & strain the Beer on it while it is boiling Hot. Let this stand till it is little more than Blood Warm then put in a quart of Yeast. If the weather is very Cold, cover it over with a Blanket & let it work in the Cooler about 24 hours. Then put it

into the cask — leave the Bung open till it is almost done working — Bottle it that day a week [after] it was brewed."

When General Washington wrote "a large sifter" of bran, he meant a large, shallow winnowing basket, woven in a coarse pattern to act as a large sieve. These were used to separate chaff from grain after the crop was threshed by iron flails or the hooves of draft animals treading on the grains. A large sifter would have held somewhere around a bushel, perhaps two bushels.

Making beer without malt was pretty commonplace in early America. If you wanted malt, you had to buy it from England. It was expensive before the revolution and probably all but unavailable afterward. Apparently, although the colonists knew how to grow barley, they were short on malting know-how.

As early as 1620, Virginia's settlers were making small beer from corn. It was considered a good drink and some even preferred it to the real thing from England. Around 1720 a contemporary account of Virginia daily life referred to the preferred small drink as wine, beer, milk and water, or water alone. The beer is described as follows:

"The richer sort brew their beer with malt, which they have from England, though barley grows there very well; but for the want of convenience of malt-houses, the inhabitants take no care to sow it. The poorer sort brew their beer with molasses and bran; with Indian corn malted with drying in a stove; with persimmons dried in a cake and baked; with potatoes and with the green stalks of Indian corn cut small and bruised; with pompions, with the Jerusalem artichoke, which some people plant purposely for that use, but this is the least esteemed."

There's an ingredient list to keep the creative homebrewer busy for a few years! By the way, *pompion* is an old term for *pumpkin*. Pumpkin ale is nothing new!

## Farm Wife, Brewer

Nearly every farmer's wife in those days included brewing among her million other daily chores. Early cookbooks and recipe collections commonly included directions for the aspiring



homebrewer. A popular manual in the colonies, first published in London around 1770, was entitled *The Farmer's Wife or The Complete Country Housewife*. It contained, among instructions for tending sheep, hogs, chickens, and bees, "The Method of Making Cyder, Perry, Mead, Mum, Cherry-brandy &c.; Full Instructions how to brew beer and Ale, of all the various kinds made in this Kingdom."

The frontispiece of this volume was inscribed:

"To Tend the Dairy, and the Poultry rear,  
"Bake, Brew, and hive the Bees in seasons fair.  
"Taught by our Work, the Housewife learns with ease.  
"And while she learns shall find her Stock increase."

Beer was also recommended as a dietary supplement and all-around tonic. In 1869 Dr. A.W. Chase published *Dr. Chase's Recipes, or, Information for Everybody: An Invaluable Collection of About Eight Hundred Practical Recipes*.

Dr. Chase was a staunch advocate of beer, to be taken by men and women to strengthen the constitution and ward off sickness. The collection includes the following basic ale recipe, which is remarkably well built and probably would make a very nice pale ale:

"Ale, home-brewed, how it is made: The following formula for the manufacture of a famous home-brewed ale of the English yeomanry, will convey a very clear idea of the components and mixture of ordinary ales. The middle classes of the English people usually make their ale in quantities of two barrels, that is, seventy-two gallons.

"For the purpose, a quarter of malt (8 bus.) is obtained at the malt-house — or, if wished to be extra strong, nine bushels of malt — are taken, with hops, 12 lbs.; yeast, 5 qts.

"The malt, being crushed and ground, is mixed with 72 gals. water at the temperature of 160 degrees, and covered up for 3 hours, when 40 gallons are drawn off, into which the hops are put, and left to infuse. Sixty gallons of water at a temperature of 170 degrees are then added to the malt in

the mash-tub and well-mixed, and after standing 2 hours, sixty gallons are drawn off. The wort from these two mashes is boiled with the hops for 2 hours, and after being cooled down to 65 degrees, is strained through a flannel bag into a fermenting tub, where it is mixed with yeast and left to work for 24 or 30 hours. It is then run into barrels to cleanse, a few gallons being reserved for filling up the casks as the yeast works over.

"Of course, when the yeast is worked out it must be bunged. If one-half pint of this was taken each meal by men, and half that amount by females, and no other spirits, tea or coffee, during the day, I hesitate not in saying that I firmly believe it would conduce to health. I know that this, which a man makes himself, or some of the wines mentioned in this work, home-made, are all that any person ought to allow themselves to use in these days when dollars and cents are the governing influences of all who deal in such articles."

Homebrew, medicine, philosophy, and finance. Dr. Chase was a man after our own hearts.

### Is It All in the Hops?

Another cookbook of the day was *Mackenzie's Five-Thousand Receipts in All the Useful and Domestic Arts: Constituting A Complete Practical Library*. (Philadelphia, 1829) Boy, did they love gigantic titles in those days!

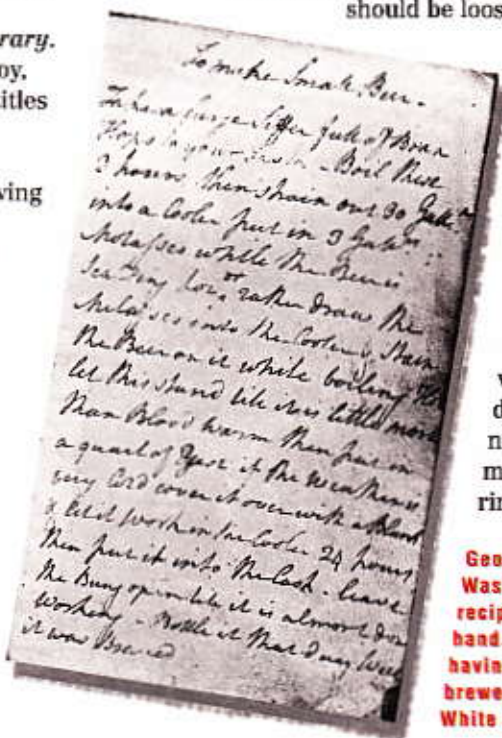
Mackenzie's contained, in the following collection of run-on sentences and comma splices, a recipe for a smaller quantity of homebrew:

"To brew ale in small families: A bushel and three-quarters of ground malt, and a pound of hops, are sufficient to make 18 gallons of good family ale. That the saccharine matter of the malt may be extracted by infusion, with-

out the farina, the temperature of the water should not exceed 150 or 160 deg. Fahrenheit's thermometer. The quantity of water should be poured on the malt as speedily as possible, and the whole thing being well mixed together by active stirring, the vessel should be closely covered over for an hour; if the weather be cold, for an hour and a half...During this time this process is going on, the hops should be infused in a close vessel, in as much boiling water as will cover them, for two hours. The liquor may then be squeezed out, and kept closely covered.

"The hops should then be boiled for about ten minutes, in double quantity of water obtained from the infused hop, and the strained liquor, when cold, may be added to with the infusion, to the wort, when it has fallen to a temperature of 70 deg. The object of infusing the hop in a closed vessel previously to boiling, is to preserve the essential oil of the hop, which renders it more sound, and, at the same time, more wholesome. A pint of good thick yeast should be well stirred into the wort and hops, and covered over in a place of the temperature of 65 deg. Fahrenheit; and when the fermentation is completed, the liquor may be drawn off into a clean cask previously rinsed with boiling water. When the slow fermentation which will ensue has ceased, the cask should be loosely bunged for

two days, when, if the liquor be left quiet, the bung may be properly fastened. The pale malt is the best, because, when highly dried, it does not afford so much saccharine matter. If



George Washington's beer recipe in his own hand. Imagine having a homebrewer in the White House!



## Persimmon Fever-Bush Spruce Beer

Like their present-day counterparts, early American homebrewers were an experimental bunch. While Germans were sticking to their purity law (the *Reinheitsgebot*) which dictated that beer consisted only of water, hops, barley, and yeast, 18th and 19th century Americans were adding anything and everything to flavor their beer.

If you want to brew like your forefathers (or somebody's, at least), try adding these ingredients, all found in popular 18th and 19th century recipes, to your brew.

- Bran
- Dried persimmons
- Dried pumpkin
- Fever bush
- Horseradish
- Indian corn stalks (green and bruised)
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Malted Indian corn
- Molasses
- Potatoes
- Roxberry
- Spruce
- Sweet fern
- Treacle

"Take a pound and a half of hops and boil in thirty-six gallons of water for an hour, then add fourteen pounds of treacle, and a little yeast to work it, ferment and bottle."

And for the hungry imbibor, Devilled Ale:

"Cut a slice of bread about an inch thick, toast and butter it, then sprinkle with cayenne pepper and ginger, and place it in the bottom of a jug. Add a pint of warm ale, and sugar to taste."

Delicious and nutritious!

Ale was an important staple and the basis of many mixed drinks of the day. In addition to Devilled Ale, American barmen whipped ale into all sorts of strange concoctions, including "Flip" and "Bogus," short for "Calibogus," which was beer spiked with rum.

"Flip" was made in hundreds of variations, depending on the locale and the mood of the barman. The basic recipe was strong beer, sweetened with sugar, molasses, or dried pumpkin and a shot of rum. The final flourish was achieved by thrusting a red-hot "loggerhead," or small poker, into the mug. This heated the drink, created a burned, caramelized flavor, and caused a dramatic overflowing of foam. The bartender kept several loggerheads in the fire at all times, to keep up with the demand on busy nights.

A Boston Flip variation was called "Bellow's Top," described as Flip with a last-minute addition of beaten egg, cream, and sugar. It was so named because the froth billowed over the rim of the mug when the loggerhead was thrust in.

Hot beer, gin, and sugar was "Dog's Nose." Hot beer, brandy, and eggs, "Huckle-my-Buff."

And from the Don't-Try-This-At-Home Department, hailing from colonial Salem, Mass.: "Whistle-Belly-Vengeance," an aptly-named slurry of sour beer, simmered with molasses and brown bread crumbs, consumed piping hot.

(The staff, publisher, and editors of *Brew Your Own* and its worldwide subsidiaries take no responsibility for physical or emotional effects, real or imagined, as the result of the making or drinking of Whistle-Belly-Vengeance, or from inhaling fumes emanating from same.)

the malt be new, it should be exposed to the air, in a dry room, for two days previously to its being used; but if it is old, it may be used 12 or 20 hours after it is ground. The great difference in the flavour of ale, made by different brewers, appears to arise from their employing different species of the hop."

## A Potato in the Boil

Mrs. Child's *The American Frugal Housewife. Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy* appeared in Boston in 1833. Within, Mrs. Child describes several beer variations, made with and without malt:

"Beer for the Family: Beer is a good family drink. A handful of hops, to a pailful of water, and a half-pint of molasses, make a good hop beer. Spruce mixed with the hops is pleasanter than hops alone. Roxberry, fever-bush, sweet fern and horseradish make a good and healthy diet-drink. The winterevergreen, or rheumatism weed, thrown in, is very beneficial to humors. Be careful not to mistake kill-lamb for winterevergreen. They resemble each other. Malt mixed with a few hops makes a weak kind of beer; but it is cool and pleasant; it needs less molasses than hops alone. The rule is about the same for all beer. Boil the ingredients two or three hours, pour in a half-pint of molasses to a pailful, while the beer is scalding hot. Strain the beer, and when about lukewarm, put a pint of lively yeast to a barrel. Leave the bung loose till the beer is

done working; you can ascertain this by observing when the froth subsides. If your family be large, and the beer will be drank rapidly, it may as well remain in the barrel; but if your family be small, fill what bottles you have with it; it keeps better bottled. A raw potato or two, cut up and thrown in, while the ingredients are boiling, is said to make beer spirited."

## Keep a Mallet Handy

The shortest recipes of all come from the cookbook with the longest title of all: *The Kitchen Directory, and American Housewife, Containing the Most Valuable and Original Receipts, in All the Various Branches of Cookery; Together with a Collection of Miscellaneous Receipts, and Directions Relative to Housewifery. Also the Whole Art of Carving.* (New York, 1844.)

*Kitchen Directory, etc.* contains the following recipe for "instantaneous beer," really an instant ginger ale:

"Put to a pint and a half of water four tea-spoonsful of Ginger, a table-spoonful of lemon juice — sweeten to the taste with syrup or white sugar, and turn into a junk bottle. Have ready a cork to fit the bottle, a string or wire to tie it down, and a mallet to drive in the cork. Then put into the bottle a heaping tea-spoonful of super-carbonate of soda, cork it immediately, tie it down, then shake the whole up well, cut the string, and the cork will fly out. Turn it out, and drink immediately."

And another, for Treacle Beer: