



**March 2014 Newsletter
North Alabama Chapter
of the
American Wine Society (AWS)**



**Monthly Tasting
Theme: Annual Beer Tasting: Stouts
March 23, 2014, 3:00 pm
Hosted by Jim and Cathy Baltar**

For this year's North Alabama Chapter of the American Wine Society's beer tasting, we will be sampling stouts at the request of Steve Young.

In the modern craft brew industry, the distinction between a stout and a strong porter is that a stout is brewed with roasted barley and a porter isn't (most of the time). Roasted barley is un-malted and has been roasted at a high temperature to a blackened state. It imparts a range of roasted aromas (think coffee and dark-chocolate) to beer as well as a dry bitterness on the palate (as opposed to the resinous bitterness imparted by hops). Alcohol content can vary greatly in both. There are six sub-styles of Stouts according to the BJCP style guidelines. We will try at least one of each. Again this is a very English style of beer, so we will try a few imported English stouts and then some American interpretations of the style.

Reservation Form is on page 7 of the newsletter

STOUT BEERS (Edwin Núñez, Education Chair)

Just like good wines, good beers deserve attention, scrutiny and considered evaluation. Most people have not been trained to do that. They generally approach beer as an industrial product: either as a thirst-quencher or as a familiar way to imbibe some alcohol. Quality beers, however, are ingenious and creative products that express the vision of their artisans. If you like quality wines, you will not put up with mediocre beers.



Beer is an ancient product, predating the origins of organized civilization. It has innumerable styles since it can be formulated using several distinct processes and a very large number of ingredients that add flavor and character. This month we will taste some strong, full-bodied beers that are bold in character: **the stouts**. Those who drink this type of beer are usually reacting to the advance of the more industrial and bland Pilsner beers that are mass-market products.

Basic ingredients in a stout beer. A stout goes through many of the basic steps necessary to make a beer. Nobody will then be surprised to find it uses the same fundamental ingredients as other beers: **water**, a **malted cereal**, **yeast** and **hops**.

Traditionally, clean and fresh water is fundamental for a good beer. Many breweries have ready access to springs and other sources of fresh water. Modern water-treatment technology has made this proximity unnecessary.

Barley and wheat—in that order—are the most common cereals used, but rye, sorghum and others are also used. The cereal will supply the starches for the yeast to act on. Yeasts have a great time with sugars but cannot process starches. The starches must be broken down before the yeasts can act on them. Consequently, what is needed is a “**malted**” cereal, i.e., one that has been processed to make the sugars available to the yeasts. For this to happen, the cereal must be allowed to sprout (see the photo below).



As the grains germinate, they produce enzymes that transform the cereal starches into sugars of diverse types. Germination also produces other enzymes that break down proteins in the grain, creating additional nutrients for the yeast.

When the grain has been malted to the brewer's satisfaction, the germination process is halted with drying hot air. The malt is then roasted. This adds colors and flavors to the beer that will be produced. If a portion of the malt—some 15 to 20 %, or so—is deeply roasted, the beer produced will be very dark in color and have flavors of chocolate, caramel, dark coffee, toast, charcoal and smoke. *This deeply-roasted malt is the ingredient that gives the stout beer its dark color, strong flavors and dry bitterness.*



At the risk of appearing too simplistic, we can say that the beer-making process is similar from here on. The roasted malt goes to a milling process that opens the grains to give yeasts an easier access to the cereal. It is then mixed with hot water to form what is called a **mash**. Starch is converted to sugars at this time, forming a hot, sweet liquid called **wort**. The wort contains many undesirable flavor compounds in the form of volatile organic compounds. Since they are volatile, the wort is boiled to eliminate them. This also achieves sterilization, an essential process to avoid spoilage. At this time hops are added if the brewer so desires. Any of a multitude of different hops may be used, depending on the style desired by the brewer. Hops are flowers whose oils give the beer a degree of bitterness to contrast with the sweetness of the wort.

The sterilized liquid is then moved to a fermentation tank. Yeasts are added to carry on the fermentation process. Yeasts digest the sugars and other nutrients during the fermentation

producing alcohol, heat, CO₂, esters, and a variety of other compounds. After fermentation is complete, suspended solids are eliminated and the basic stout is then ready for consumption. Enjoy!



Driving Wine Judges (Steve Young, AWS Wine Judge)

You've heard of Flying Winemakers and Consultants – those with clients and interests on several continents. They travel the world bringing their high level of expertise globally.



Let me introduce the Alabama Driving Wine Judges:

They travel far and wide bringing their knowledge to wine competitions. The latest stop in their travels was in Anniston Alabama on March 9th, where they judged the Alabama Winegrowers and Grape-growers Association

Competition. Picture from left to right are Edwin Nunez, Marj McCulley, Kristen Lindelow and Steve Young, also joining them in judging at this event was Chris McCulley.

Beth Young and Marisol Nunez helped behind the scenes at the completion as well. This Team awarded gold medals to fifteen wines, and noted that the overall quality of the wines has improved greatly over the years at this competition.



The competition took place at Southern Oak Winery, where owner and winemaker Randal Wilson has graciously hosted the completion for the last several years. While there, Randal also shared the first batch of wine from a new strain of Pierce's Disease resistant Red Chardonnay. Randal has been working with Auburn University and the University of California at Davis to test these grapes here in Alabama. After sampling the wine, I think vinifera has a great future in the south.

If you're interested in learning more about judging wines, and taking part in a competition, please contact any of the Driving Wine Judges for more information. As you can tell from the picture – they enjoy their job!

NAAWS Facebook Page!

Our Chapter has a Facebook page! Join us at “American Wine Society – North Alabama Chapter.” We’ll post pictures of tastings and other things our members are doing, and we’ll share info about wine-related events in our area.

Chapter Web Site

<http://www.naaws-hsv.com>

(Chip Boling, Webmaster)

The North Alabama Chapter of the AWS website is currently being upgraded to a content based system to allow for easier administration and to support better display over a wider set of devices (tablets, smartphones, etc). The initial cutover to this new design will occur sometime in February once I have some of the basic features and layout complete. During this time of transitions, the website display and content will be undergoing work and a few hickups can be expected.

The content from this archive site will be migrated to the new' site with priority placed on the monthly newsletters and upcoming chapter events. After the newsletter and event features are stable, I plan to work on implementing the past event archive to assist members in their planning of upcoming tastings and then turn my attention to Education articles, Event Pictures (galleries), and then Recipes. At the time that the Event Galleries is implemented, I will begin to accept website login/account requests as some content such as Event Pictures, will only be available to AWS Chapter members in good standing.

When you have time, check out the AWS web sites for both the National (www.americanwinesociety.org) and our local chapter (www.naaws-hsv.com).

Chapter 2014 Board of Directors

Director – **Jay Wilson**, director@naaws-hsv.com

Director Elect – **Tim Suttles**, director.elect@naaws-hsv.com

Secretary – **Steve Peirce**, secretary@naaws-hsv.com

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Newsletter – **Dave and Kim Russell**, newsletter@naaws-hsv.com

Webmaster – **Chip Boling**, webmaster@naaws-hsv.com

2014 - 2015 Programs (Bob Garay, Programs Chair)

You can talk to me during the tasting or contact me at any other time at programs@naaws-hsv.com.

Below is the calendar for 2014 and Jan 2015:

2014			
January	26	Italian	Fabby's
*February	10	"From Veneto with Love: Wines of Romeo & Juliet"	Garay's
February	23	Wines that Make You Say "Oh!"	Suttles
March	23	Annual Beer Tasting: Stouts	Baltar's
April	27	Derby Party	Falls/Peirce's
May	18	Southern Hemisphere	Garays
June	22	Interesting Blends	Sihwa Sussman/Mike Campbell
July	27	Wines of World Cup Winners	Lindelow/Coddington's
Aug	24	At the Auction Celebrating our Members	Wilson's
Sep	28	National Tasting	Open
Oct	TBA	Annual Dinner	Programs
Nov	16	Sparkling Wines	Collier's
Dec	N/A	No Tasting	N/A
2015			
Jan	25	Open	Open
* Special Banfi Wines Tasting			

10 February Banfi Wine Tasting Notes

The 10 February "*Wines of Romeo & Juliet, Getting to Know the Wines of Veneto*" provided by Banfi, included some exceptional wines from this Northern Italian region combined with a remote presentation by wine educator Bill Whiting.

This tasting at the Highland Lakes Club House in Madison – the first of its kind for the NAAWS – proved to be a great success. In addition to the exceptional wines provided by Banfi, a selection of cheese, crackers and assorted spreads was enjoyed by all.

Each of the wines was accompanied with an expert explanation of the area from which it originated and detailed tasting notes provided in a visual presentation that truly enhanced the experience. The wines tasted were as follows: Maschio Prosecco Brut – NV; Bolla Soave Classico "883" 2012; Sartori "Ferdi" 2011; Sartori Valpolicella Classico 2010; Bolla Valpolicella Ripasso 2011; and finally, the exceptional Bolla Amarone 2008. In terms of favorites, the crowd was equally enamored with the Soave and the Sartori for the whites. Similarly, there was widespread disagreement on the favorite red, which is a testament to how popular all of these wines proved to be.

23 February AWS Wine Tasting Notes

The 23 February tasting did more than tease, it delivered on its promise. The thinly nuanced (some might call salacious) “Wines that make you say ‘Oh!’” started with a Cremant Brut Sparkling made in France but imported by Toad Hollow. This light and refreshing low-alcohol wine satisfied but does not impair... leaving one to enjoy the rest of the wines.

Each flight of wines was from Naked Winery, in the Rouge Valley in Southern Oregon; and all were paired with cheeses and an assortment of appetizers. The reds were paired with a variety of smoked summer sausages and a flourless dark chocolate torte.

The white flight consisted of three satisfying whites: a light and woody Chardonnay, appropriately named “Foreplay;” a “Complicated” Viognier; and finally the “Oh” Orgasmic Pinot Blanc, which proved to be the favorite white of the flight. The “Oh” designator is Naked Winery’s designation for their Grand Reserve and represents the best of that varietal.

The red flight also did not disappoint either, and consisted of three delicious reds: the “Diva” Sangiovese; “Penetration,” a Cabernet Sauvignon, the favorite of the red flight; capped by “Oh” Orgasmic Barbera that proved to be a close runner up for the favorite red.

The weather on 23 Feb proved to be a welcome respite from the winter chill, and allowed half the crowd to enjoy the deck, while the rest preferred to taste indoors. There was a definite split in the voting between the patio/deck crowd and the indoor indulgers, but the larger group of indoor imbibers won out. Naked Winery wines proved a pleasurable experience that enticed many to continue the tasting well into the night.

A Preview for the March Beer Tasting

The March wine tasting is all about beer, and is hosted by Jim and Cathy Baltar. We will be sampling stouts that, in the modern craft brew industry, is distinguished from a strong porter in that a stout is brewed with roasted barley and a porter isn’t (most of the time). Roasted barley is un-malted and has been roasted at a high temperature to a blackened state. It imparts a range of roasted aromas (think coffee and dark-chocolate) as well as a dry bitterness on the palate (as opposed to the resinous bitterness imparted by hops). Alcohol content can vary greatly in both. There are six sub-styles of Stouts according to the BJCP style guidelines. We will try at least one of each. Again this is a very English style of beer, so we will try a few imported English stouts, as well as some American interpretations of the style.

We’re holding a raffle at every tasting

We hold a raffle at each monthly tasting to help increase our annual contribution to the AWS Educational Foundation (AWSEF). The purpose of this fund is to assist graduate students in continuing their studies that support the American wine industry. We all enjoy the fruits (well, wines) of their labors! Just bring your raffle item(s) to the tasting each month and we’ll raffle them off. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 tickets for \$5!! Remember, all money we raise through the raffle goes towards the AWSEF fund. Thank you!

February Raffle

We had a great raffle this month with five (5) donations. Special thanks to the following members who donated Items for the raffle: Tim & Joy Suttles – Tessa Marie Sangiovese, Bob Garay – Rio Finca La Emperatriz, Steve and Beth Young – Silver Streak, Bill and Jennifer Drake – 2009 Piesporter, Sihwa Sussman - Edge

Winners were: Stan Williams, Pam Hill, Walter & Therise Collier, David & Kim Russell, and our hosts for this tasting Tim and Joy Suttles.

We raised \$100 for the AWS Education Fund which is a very good amount for this month's raffle activity. Ten (\$10) in tickets were donated to the hosts Tim and Joy Suttles. I want to thank all who participated in this raffle and again special thanks to those members who donated wine for the raffle.

Stephen R. Peirce
Secretary AWS NAC

Chapter AWS Educational Foundation (AWSEF)

<http://www.awsef.org>

For the February 2014 tasting, \$100 was raised from the raffle. The balance in the chapter's AWSEF fund is \$831.

Our chapter is committed to supporting the AWSEF. As most of you are aware, we add \$2 to every tasting and this money is designated for the AWSEF. At almost every tasting we hold a raffle of items donated by the members.

The AWSEF scholarship award amount is \$3,500; our chapter's has started raising money for our 6th scholarship.

