



“True Brew” Hibiscus Wheat Ale (5 gallons AG)

4 lbs. Organic 2-Row Pale Malt
4 lbs. Red Wheat Malt
1 lb. Honey Malt
1 lb. Carapils Malt
8 oz. Belgian Aromatic Malt
1/4 tsp. Gypsum
1/4 tsp. Calcium Chloride
1/2 tsp. Chalk
2 1/2 oz. Dried Hibiscus Flowers
(Jamaica) (15 min.)
2 Whirlfloc tablets (15 min.)
.25 oz. Perle Hop Pellets
(60 min.) 9.5 IBU
.25 oz. Perle Hop Pellets
(30 min.) 3.3 IBU
.5 oz. Spalt Hop Pellets
(30 min.) 2.7 IBU
1 oz. Spalt Hop Pellets
(5 min.) 2.7 IBU
3/4 cup Corn Sugar for Priming
1 pk. #1010 American Wheat Yeast

Mash in grains at 150 °F. and hold for one hour. Mash out and sparge at 170 °F. Use a 60 minute boil, adding hops and Jamaica as indicated above. Ferment at 60-70 °F for primary and secondary.

(Note: extract brewers should leave out the Organic 2-row and Red Wheat malts, substituting 5 lbs. of Wheat Dry Malt Extract. Steep remaining grains at 150°F. for 45 minutes, drain into kettle, and rinse with hot water.)

SG 1.058
IBU 18.2

Brewing with Flowers

By Bob Peak

The largest outdoor deck in Ashland, Oregon, is at the *Caldera Tap House*. On that deck one sunny afternoon last summer, my family and I were enjoying some of the excellent draft offerings made at *Caldera's* production brewery. Along with the very good year-round beers, we also found a lovely summer beer: Hibiscus Ginger Beer. My daughter Charlotte, 21 years old and newly interested in brewing, noted that the ginger was stronger in the flavor balance than the hibiscus. Not a bad thing, but it made her curious and she asked if we could make a hibiscus beer without the ginger. I quoted back Byron's often-used line, "if it has sugar or starch in it, we can make alcohol out of it."

We continued to discuss the idea while enjoying the Shakespeare Festival and began to develop an idea. Wheat beer seemed to offer a good background on which to display the flavor and aroma of hibiscus (called Jamaica when offered as a tea-like beverage in taquerias). When we got home, we worked up a recipe and Charlotte bought five little packets of dried hibiscus flowers at *Lolita's Market* in Petaluma. Then we brewed!

The recipe for "True Brew" Hibiscus Wheat Ale is printed here for the adventurous brewer to try, too. We made ours all-grain, but we have provided an alternative for extract-and-partial mash brewers as well. The beer turns out pinkish-gold in hue; has a light floral aroma; and crisp, slightly tart, refreshing flavors. Inspired by *Caldera's* beer, but quite different with no ginger and shifting to a wheat grist, it is a similarly delightful beer for quaffing on the deck (even if your deck is not the largest in town).

After we made the Hibiscus Wheat ale, Charlotte and I went on to develop "Singapore" Brown Ale with jasmine pearl green tea. It has a very pronounced jasmine aroma, with malty brown flavors and a slightly tannic, dry finish from the addition of the green tea. Richer than the hibiscus beer, it allowed us to take a flower beer into winter drinking with great success (the recipe is available at the store).

There is a long tradition of brewing with flowers. Here at *The Beverage People*, Gabe has experimented with an old flower tradition: the Scottish practice of using heather tips in brewing. In his brown ale, the heather produced a tea-like quality and light minty notes, adding complexity but not dominating. One of our customers made a heather beer with a lighter malt profile and found the effect even more tea-like.

On the commercial side, *Caldera* makes not just the hibiscus/ginger beer, but also a *Rose Petal Imperial Golden Ale* using real rose petals and Bulgarian rose water. Sonoma County's own *Russian River Brewing Company* has been known to make an Italian-inspired beer called "*La Fleurette*" that included dried roses and dried violets. The possibilities are endless for using edible flowers in brewing.

If you decide to create your own beer with flowers, I would sug-

gest the following sequence. First, choose the edible flower or flowers you want to brew with. Think about flavors, colors, and cooking methods used for those flowers. Then, imagine those characteristics—especially the aroma (these are flowers, after all)—on a background of beer. Does it seem light? Dark? Strong? Mild? From those general thoughts, narrow down to a style or two that might work. Then, look at the BJCP guidelines for your chosen styles to get information on gravity, bitterness, and typical ingredients. Now you're ready for your base beer, but you need to think about the flower addition. Before making "True Brew", Charlotte and I made a jug of sun tea from Jamaica blossoms and evaluated it for strength, flavor, and aroma. We scaled that up for the beer itself. Finally, you need to decide when to add the flowers. We went with a late kettle addition for two competing reasons: in the kettle so the blossoms would be sanitized by the boil, but late so not too many volatiles would be driven off. Another choice might be to make a vodka extract of the flowers and add it at bottling, or even "dry hop" with dried flowers of your choice. Whatever you decide, have fun—and let us know how it turned out!

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