



Make It Fresh with Wet Hops

By Clare Speichinger

Hops usually come to maturity in August and September in Sonoma County so be sure to plan for the harvest and wet hop brews!

When to harvest?

Use the David Beach method (author of *Homegrown Hops*) by picking a cone at random- not the highest, nor the lowest; not the smallest nor the biggest. Cut it in half with a sharp knife. If the cone is ready to be picked, then you will see and smell a yellow powder “not unlike the yellow of highway lines”, says Beach. If the powder is pale yellow, or lacks hop aroma, Beach recommends waiting another week before sampling again.

Ready-to-pick hops should feel papery and light. If a cone remains compressed after squeezing, it is not ready. They should feel the same temperature as the air, not cooler as a damp immature hop would be. Some browning on a few of the tips of the cone are O.K., but not acceptable for the majority.

Make it Fresh!

A great (in my opinion, the best) way to use those freshly picked wet hops is to get them right into a brew kettle within 24-48 hours of harvest. Wet hops generally have 75-80% water weight, as compared to 8-10% in dried hops. This means that you will need anywhere from 4-6 times as much weight in fresh hops to brew the same beer as with dried hops. For example if your pale ale recipe calls for a total of 3 ounces dried hops, you will need 12 -18 ounces of wet hops to achieve similar results. Also bear in mind that the whole cones generally have lower extraction than pellets. You might consider pulling the cones apart or running them through a clean blender just before the kettle addition.

Alpha acids? I.B.U.s?

Homegrown hops have an unknown bittering potential inherently because the alpha acid concentration (which is responsible for providing bitterness in the boil) fluctuates from crop-to-crop, and from year-to-year. Thus, I think it's a good idea to use commercially dried hops with known alpha acid percentages for the bittering addition in a brew (45-60 minutes boiled) so that a known amount of bitterness is added to the wort. Wet hops can then be used for the flavor and aroma additions. Magnum is a great, clean bittering hop that will let your wet fresh

hops shine. Using a [hop extract](#) would also be a solid way to add known bitterness to a wort without adding a lot of hop matter that would lead to volume loss.

Drought Breaker Wet Hop IPA

Our popular [Drought Breaker I.P.A.](#) kit makes for a great base recipe to add your freshly harvested wet hops. You can just omit the aroma Cascade hops from the recipe (save them for dry hopping or to use in a future brew), and add in wet hops starting halfway through the 60-minute boil. Remember, the later you add hops, the more aroma you get from them. The loose hop cones can be removed with a sanitized strainer just before the end of the boil.

Use a Mash Tun

My coworker Alec Klassen said his favorite way to use wet hops is with his mash tun. After the boil, he transfers the wort to his mash tun filled with wet hops for 15 minutes before chilling. The false bottom helps keep the hops from clogging the boil kettle valve while adding a HUGE hop aroma to the wort.

We have several other wet hop recipes available in-store and on our website. Here are 3 of our favorites! Call us for any questions you may have about making your own wet hop beer!

“Fresh Hop” Rye Ale (5 gallons – All Grain Recipe)

5 lbs. U.S. 2-row pale malt (1.7L)

1 lb. U.S. 6-row Malt (1.8 L)

2 lbs. Rye Malt (3 L)

1 lb. Flaked rye (0.8L)

1/2 lb. Munich Malt (6.5L)

1/2 lb. Carapils Malt (1.2L)

1/2 lb. Rice Hulls

1/2 tsp. Gypsum

1/4 tsp. Calcium Chloride

1 tsp. Irish Moss

1/2 oz. Hallertau Hop Pellets (60 Min.) 8.0 IBU

1/2 oz. Perle Hop Pellets (30 Min.) 5.3 IBU

10 to 20 oz. Fresh Picked “wet” Hops (Probably 10 to 20 IBU) (15 Min.)

Water to five gallons

3/4 cup Corn Sugar for Priming

1 vial 1056 Chico Ale or WLP002 English Ale Yeast

SG 1.056

IBU about 23 to 33

Mash grains, including flaked rye and rice hulls, together at 150 degrees F. for 60 minutes. Use a 60 Minute boil, adding hops as indicated above. Ferment at ale temperature.

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"Country Living" Fresh Hop Pale Ale (5 gallons – All Grain and Extract Recipe)

9 lbs. 2-Row North American Pale Malt

1/2 lb. Belgian Caravienne Malt

1 lb. German Vienna Malt

1/2 lb. Carapils Malt

2 oz. Special B Malt

1/2 tsp. Gypsum

1/4 tsp. Calcium Chloride

1 Tbsp. Irish Moss (15 min.)

About 10 oz. Fresh (wet) Cascade hops (60 min.)

About 10 oz. Fresh (wet) Cascade hops (30 min.)

About 10 oz. Fresh (wet) Cascade hops (5 min.)

Water to 5 gallons

3/4 cup Corn Sugar for Priming

1 1056 Chico or WLP001 California Ale Yeast

Mash grains together at 150 degrees F. for 60 minutes. Mash out and sparge at 170 degrees F. Use a 60 minute boil, adding hops (loose) as indicated above. Use a sanitized strainer to remove most hops at cool-down.

Extract Version: Substitute 6 pounds of light dry malt extract for 2-row malt. Steep remaining grains in 2 quarts of 150 F water for 45 minutes. Rinse with 1 quart of 170 F water and collect liquid in boiling kettle.

SG 1.058-1.062

IBU 40-45+

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“Sudden Sunday” Fresh Hop Imperial Stout (5 gallons – All Grain and Extract Recipe)

5lbs. Light Dry Malt
5lbs. Amber Dry Malt
1 lb. British Crystal Malt (55-60 SRM)
1 lb. Extra Dark Crystal Malt (Caramel 120)
8 oz. Brown Malt
8 oz. Chocolate Malt
8 oz. Black Roasted Barley
1/2 tsp. Gypsum
1/2 tsp. Calcium Chloride
2 tsp. Powdered Chalk
1 tsp. Irish Moss
4 oz. Chinook Fresh (Wet) Hops (60 min.) 44.80 IBU
12 oz. Chinook Fresh (Wet) Hops (5 min.) 23.52 IBU
8 oz. Cascade Fresh (Wet) Hops (5 min.) 11.48 IBU
8 oz. Cascade Fresh (Wet) Hops (dryhopped) 11.48 IBU
1/2 cup Corn Sugar (for priming)
1 pack WLP#004 or Wyeast #1084 Irish Ale Yeast

SG 1.095
IBU 91.28

Mash all grains 30 minutes @155 F., and rinse with 170 F. water. Boil wort for 60 minutes. Dryhop in muslin bags in soda keg.

All grain version: Substitute 16 pounds Maris Otter English Pale Malt for extract. Mash at 154 F for 60 minutes. Sparge with 170 F water collecting between 6-7 gallons total in boil kettle.

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