

# Keystone Homebrew Supply Newsletter

January 2003

## Happy New Year!

For those of you lucky enough to receive a home beer- or wine-making kit, congratulations! We look forward to helping you become experienced fermenters and sharing the excitement of leaning your new craft. Thanks to all of our loyal Keystone customers for making 2002 a great year for our company. November 2002 marked ten years since we first opened our business in the New Montgomeryville Mart, and thanks to you we have grown almost every year since.

This year we'll have lots of fun events, and you're invited to all of them:

Don't miss our customer wine tastings, where home vintner's gather to discuss wine and sample the best.

Curious about all grain brewing and looking for tips from experienced brewers? Come see all grain brewing for yourself at one of our brewing events, where our customers hang out and brew together.

If you have an award winning beer, why not enter it into our annual beer competition, The War of the Worts?

You'll get valuable feedback from trained beer judges and a chance to win valuable prizes.

Just want to hang out and enjoy the summertime? Bring your kids and come along to our family picnic, scheduled in July.

Additionally, we have seasonal offerings including:

Hop rhizomes that arrive in the spring. Rhizomes are roots of female hop plants that will grow to provide several ounces of your favorite variety fresh hops year after year.

Fresh wine grapes and juice from California, arriving in September.

Freshly pressed cider, arriving in November.

Limited Edition Wine Kits available by advance order only.

Brehm's Ultra Premium frozen wine grapes, which offer vintage quality potential. Available only by preordering in the summer/fall for delivery in December.

Grow-at-home mushroom kits.

This year will be an exciting one for Keystone because we are planning to expand our Website with on-line sales. Soon you will be able to browse our products from home and place orders for shipping or speedy pickup. Check us out at [www.keystonehomebrew.com](http://www.keystonehomebrew.com) to see how we are progressing.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Do I have to sanitize my equipment, even the first time I use it?** You do if you don't want the effects of contamination to rear its dirty head. Perhaps the most important procedure in beer and wine making is sanitizing your equipment, even the first time you use it. Rinsing your equipment with hot water just

doesn't cut it; you need to use a sanitizing solution.

There are many different types of sanitizers including Iodophor, One Step, C-Brite, and potassium metabisulfite. No matter which one you chose, it is essential that all equipment that comes in contact with your beer or wine is sanitized. We stock them all and can help you decide which is best for you.

**It's been two days since I added my yeast to my fermenter, but the airlock isn't bubbling. Is this a problem?** It might be. First, double check that the lid, airlock, and gaskets are tightly sealed. If not, the gas will escape through a leak rather than pushing through the airlock.

If your seals are good and there is no bubbling, check the temperature of your fermenter. We recommend using a stick-on thermometer (\$2.25). Fermentation slows, and can even stop, at cooler temperatures. Keep the temperature within the range recommended for the yeast type.

If temperature isn't a problem, then the yeast is probably weak or dead. If making beer, are you sure it was below 80 ° F before you added the yeast? High temperatures kill yeast. If making wine, did you use fresh yeast or a leftover package from last year? In either case, the solution would be to add more yeast as soon as possible, before bacteria can take over and ruin your beer or wine.

**I bottled wine in December and now my wine is bubbly and my corks are getting pushed out of the bottle.**

**What's going on?** Sounds like the wine is still fermenting or under going a malo-lactic fermentation, in which case you bottled too soon. If you are making wine from grapes or fresh juice, you need to let the wine age until at least June or July of the following season before bottling. If you must bottle sooner, you'll need to prevent refermentation by adding a combination of sulfites and sorbate to the wine before bottling. Otherwise wine may continue to ferment and create gas for many months.

**I made some beer and it tasted great when I bottled it. Now it's a month old and carbonated, but it tastes bad.**

**What happened?** Did you use a bottling wand to fill your bottles? If not, oxidation is probably to blame. Filling bottles directly from tubing or the bottling bucket's spigot can introduce lots of air into your beer. After a few weeks this oxygen will interact with the beer, creating stale, cardboardy, and sherry-like flavors. To avoid oxidation, always use a bottling wand to fill bottles from the bottom.

**What is a hydrometer and how does it work?**

Hydrometers are weighted, sealed glass tubes that float in liquids. You read the density measurement by floating the hydrometer in a small sample of beer or wine. Using either the plastic tube the hydrometer came in, or a test jar (a thicker plastic tube with a base), fill the tube with beer or

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Keystone Homebrew Supply, 779 Bethlehem Pike, Montgomeryville, PA 18936 **215-855-0100**

E-mail: [sales@keystonehomebrew.com](mailto:sales@keystonehomebrew.com)

[www.keystonehomebrew.com](http://www.keystonehomebrew.com)

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wine and drop the hydrometer into the liquid. The top of the liquid will line up with printed numbers on the hydrometer.

If the sample taken before fermentation, the reading tells the beer or wine maker the potential alcohol. If taken during fermentation, the reading will give you an idea of how much more fermentation remains, and, if repeated, can tell you if the fermentation has stopped. After fermentation has stopped, take a final reading subtract that number from the reading taken before fermentation, and you'll know the amount of alcohol in your wine or beer.

Our hydrometers have three scales: Balling, specific gravity, and potential alcohol %. Balling is the scale used by professional breweries, and wine makers, who call it brix. Specific gravity is the scale most often recorded by home brewers. Using the potential alcohol is the quickest way to determine alcohol: just subtract your final reading from your original reading and that is how much alcohol by volume.

It is critical not to contaminate your beer or wine while taking samples. We suggest either collecting a sample while siphoning or using a sanitized wine thief (works like a straw). Be sure to sanitize anything used to dip, siphon, or draw off samples for your hydrometer. Close the fermenter as soon as possible. Do not risk infecting your beer or wine by returning the sample to the fermenter; sample the flavor for yourself instead.

## Homebrew Competition *War of the Worts VIII*

Keystone Hops Homebrew Club is holding its eighth annual homebrew competition on Saturday, February 22, 2003 at The Drafting Room Restaurant in Spring House, PA. War of the Worts is sanctioned by the American Homebrewer's Association and provides an opportunity to have your homemade beer and mead evaluated by BJCP-registered judges. Prizes and awards will be given for beers placing first, second, and third in each category, and for Best of Show.

Volunteers are needed for judging (BJCP judges) and for stewarding (no experience necessary). Entries will be accepted at Keystone from February 2 through February 16, 2003. You do not need to attend to enter. The judging starts around 9:00 a.m. and winners will be announced at 4:30 p.m.

More information, including rules, style guidelines, entry forms, fees, and directions are available on the web at [www.keystonehops.org/worts8/worts8.htm](http://www.keystonehops.org/worts8/worts8.htm), or via our Web site at [www.keystonehomebrew.com](http://www.keystonehomebrew.com).

## Grow Gourmet Mushrooms *in your own home!*

I found a product that sounded so cool I had to try it myself. The Shiitake mushrooms that grew in my kitchen were fascinating and tasted great.

The next featured mushroom is the Cinnamon Cap Mushroom (*Hypholoma sublateritium*). It produces chestnut-colored mushrooms with bright yellow edges. Its wonderful nutty flavor is delicious with red wines. This aggressive mushroom is an excellent species to naturalize in your backyard. No wonder it's a favorite in Japan and popular among mushroom hunters in the midwest.

The kit contains everything you need to grow mushrooms except water. Each kit produces new crops of mushrooms every 3 to 4 weeks for months! If there is continued interest, we will offer other mushroom varieties like Oyster, Pioppino, and Shiitake on a rotating basis. This time we are offering the Cinnamon Cap kits on a preorder basis only. Each kit will cost \$29.00. All orders must be placed by 3/15/03.

## In the next mailer ...

Coming in the spring, we'll discuss hop rhizomes and how to grow your own hops for brewing or just decoration. We plan to offer at least five hop varieties.

We'll announce the Best of Show winner from War of the Worts VIII and reveal the award-winning recipe.