

Hand-Crafted Beer

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Photos compliments of
Old Forge Brewing Company

Beer



Mmmmm...the sweet aroma of the mash in the morning. Malted barley steeped in hot water, allowing the natural enzymes to do their work, breaking down the starches and larger sugars so the yeast will have something to eat. It's the first step in a long process to make that wonderful, natural drink we call beer.

Before we can call it **beer**, however, there are a few critical steps. Most of them involve hard work, attention to detail, a strict cleaning and sanitation regimen, and proper planning. This is my job at Old Forge Brewing Company in Danville, PA. You could say I'm lucky, my job is to make beer. To be truthful, I don't really make beer, I make wort (what beer is called before fermentation). All I do is set up the process and conditions to ensure an optimum wort. Then, the most important step falls to a much lesser known worker in the brewery, yeast. Without those amazing, mysterious, single-celled organisms, we wouldn't have beer.

Beer is made through a process called **fermentation**. Yeast feed on sugars present in the wort, made possible by the brewer's mashing process, yielding alcohol (ethanol, to be specific) and carbon dioxide as the main by-products. I develop the wort recipe taking into account the local water profile, the intended final color, the contribution from various malt flavors, and how much hop bitterness, flavor, and aroma I want. Then I choose yeast which will complement and highlight those characteristics. The result is an amazing concoction full of complex

flavors and subtle nuances which are greatly influenced by the yeast themselves.

What makes this concoction so amazing? That depends on who you ask. **A lager drinker might say it's the clean, crisp flavor. An ale drinker might say it's the fruity profile they prefer.** I say they are both right. I try my best to be practical yet discriminating when choosing a yeast strain for a given recipe. I think about how it will affect the balance of malt and hops as well as taste and aroma. But the most important factor that influences the final presentation of beer itself, regardless of yeast strain, malted barley, hop variety, or water profile, is the freshness. The best brewed beer in the world is no good if it is old, stale, or skunky. You see, freshness is the key.

Since freshness is the key, a good brewpub or local craft brewery is the place to be. You are guaranteed to get a unique flavor experience from a beer served at its peak freshness. Yes, I'm lucky to be a brewer. But I'm more fortunate to be living here in Pennsylvania, surrounded by many good breweries and brewpubs that serve some of the finest, freshest beer possible. Visit us at **Old Forge Brewing Company** to experience fresh beer for yourself, and while you're at it, make plans to visit the other local brewpubs and breweries ... **you won't be disappointed.**

