

November
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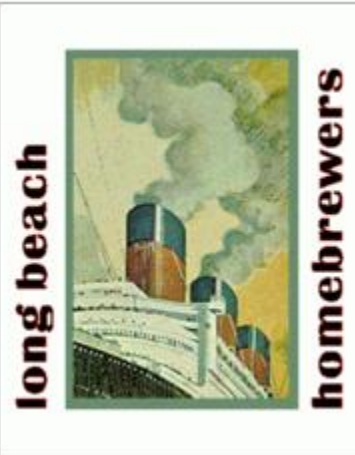
Tuesday, November 12
at 7 pm. At

Stein Fillers

4160 Norse Way
Long Beach 90808
562-425-0588

brew@steinfillers.com
<http://www.longbeachhomebrewers.com>

The Brews Telegram



President's Message

Greetings Fellow Homebrewers!

Halloween is behind us and we are now charging headlong into the holiday season! I usually don't get much brewing done in November and December because of all the holiday mayhem, but I do package up holiday beers to share with family and friends.

I've been collecting beers for the advent calendar and it looks like we'll have a few empty spots this year. So if you didn't get in on it and you have 24 bottles of beer to contribute, please bring them to the meeting and we'll try to fill all 24 openings by the end of the evening.

Our November Big Brew didn't come together as planned, so we are looking to move it to January when we're all past the holiday season. More details will be announced as soon as Mark has the date and more details nailed down.

November is also the final month of our Homebrewer of the Year competition. It's a horserace down the stretch between our reigning HBOY, Derek Johnstone (22 points), and Tom Fontes (19 points). The only chance for Tom to win is for Derek to not place, so bring your best Belgian Dark Strong to keep things interesting!

The theme for the November meeting is Winter Warmers and other seasonal beers. I look forward to trying this year's batch of holiday beers from everyone.

And finally, we have our styles of the month for 2020. The website will be updated in the near future (possibly by the time you read this newsletter), but for now, here is a brief list of the upcoming styles:

Continued on page 2

Month	Style or theme	HBOY Month
January	Qviek	
February	ESB (English Style)	HBOY 1
March	Session Beers (Beers under 4% ABV)	
April	SCHF Bragging Rights Style (TBD)	
May	Munich Helles (German Style)	HBOY 2
June	Mead, wine, or other fermentable	
July	Anything American	
August	Belgian Tripel (Belgian Style)	HBOY 3
September	Wild Beers	
October	English Beers	
November	IIPA (American Style)	HBOY4
December	Winter Warmers or other seasonal beers	

Happy Brewing!

Jon Silvertooth

2019 Tasting Schedule

November Belgian Dark Strong (2015 BJCP Cat 26D)**
December Winter Warmers or other seasonal beers

** Homebrewer of The Year Competition

Tastings at the September Meeting (Fruit Beers)

Derek J	It's a Surprise
Tom F	New Kambucha
Richard C	Marbo Florida Weisse
Kevin	Lemon/Blackberry Cider

Other Beers:

Derek J	Belgian Trappist Single
Derek J	IPA from Brew w a Veteran in a Bag
Gabi	Session Saison
Richard C	Juicy IPA

[Beer](#), [Beer styles](#), [Craft beer](#), [Rants](#)

Yes, it's VERY possible to define a 'sessionable' craft beer

[3rd October 2019](#) [Martyn Cornell](#) [10 Comments](#)

I was thinking of ignoring the “what does sessionable mean” debate, even though I was dragged into it by my ear by having my research quoted. Then I saw a tweet yesterday from someone talking about “a sessionable 5.5 per cent smoked oatmeal stout”, and the world swam and dissolved before me as I plunged screaming and twisting into a hellish, tormented pit of dark despair.

Let me make this as clear as I can. This is an egregious and unforgivable total failure to understand what the expression “sessionable” means, is meant to mean, and was coined for. A 5.5 per cent alcohol beer is not, and cannot be, “sessionable”. A smoked oatmeal stout, while I am sure it can be lovely, is not and cannot be “sessionable”. Nobody ever spent all evening drinking four or five, or six, pints of smoked oatmeal stout.



This is NOT a session beer ...

The rant you are now reading springs less from that particular beer review than a piece this week by the British beer writer [Lily Waite](#) on the American website Vinepair headlined “[It's Impossible to Define 'Sessionable' in Craft Beer](#)”. I don't think Lily wrote the headline, which looks to go further than her article does, but her piece, which references [my research back in 2011](#) into the origins of the term “session beer”, raises a number of potential difficulties around a definition of the term “sessionable”, not least the existence now of beers called “[session barley wine](#)” with eight per cent alcohol and 75 IBUs, and “[session double IPA](#)“, again at eight per cent abv.

I try not to be prescriptivist about language, but for me “sessionable” is a very useful word with, actually, yes, a precise meaning, and if people are going to start being stupid with it by releasing something called a “session barley wine” or “session double IPA”, even as a “joke”, then we are in great danger of destroying an important descriptor, and losing an easy way of summing up one of the fundamentals of British pub culture.

It’s entirely possible to define “sessionable”, but only if you understand what the expression was coined to describe, which many American beer drinkers – and brewers – apparently do not. A large part of the problem is that the word springs from a very British practice, the “session”, and Americans don’t really understand what the “session” is about. Britons and Americans are fooled into thinking that, because they speak the same language (more or less) and drink the same sorts of beers (more or less) in places that are called “bars” (even if the British “bar” is actually a room in a pub, rather than the descriptor for the whole establishment), then their out-of-home drinking cultures are entirely similar and compatible. They’re not. “Sessionable” means “beer capable of sustaining a session”, and “session” means “extended period of three or four hours drinking pints and engaging in conversation with friends”. That is why the fundamental definition of a session beer has to be that it has a comparatively low gravity and is comparatively unobtrusive. Americans, in my experience, do not generally spend entire evenings in one bar drinking pints. (See also the bizarrely tiny glasses used at American beer festivals.)

Another problem is that people are confusing “sessionable” with “drinkable”. The two are very much not the same. An eight per cent barley wine may well be “drinkable”, in the sense of that great beer-reviewer’s cliché, “dangerously drinkable”, that is, it slides away down the throat very easily. But “sessionable” means “you can drink several and still walk out the door without bumping into the frame.” An eight per cent barley wine is therefore NOT “sessionable”.



... and this is not a session beer either

Lily Waite’s piece is specifically looking at “sessionability” in the context of terms such as “session IPA”, and the craft appropriation of a term than applies much more to mainstream, non-craft beer drinking in the UK, and beers such as Carling, Fosters and the like. She interviewed some people with – ahh – interesting takes on sessionability, including James Rylance who helped create the now highly popular Neck Oil, Beavertown Brewery’s “session IPA”, which comes in at 4.3 per cent abv, and “masses of hop additions during the whirlpool and a huge dose of dry hops” (I quote from the brewery’s website). I’ve never tried a session on Neck Oil, but while 4.3 per cent is just on the edge of sessionability, I’m not sure about “masses of hop additions”, even ignoring “a huge dose of dry hops”. The classic British session beers are milds

and light bitters, which generally have low hop rates. High hop rates are, I suggest, the antithesis of sessionability: too many hops, and you really can't drink more than a couple of pints without hop overload.



This MIGHT be a session beer, if the hops aren't overdone

James Rylance told Lily Waite that sessionability was less about abv than “balance”, and insisted: “I think ‘sessionable’ is a beer that can be drunk repeatedly, multiple times, in its correct volume. There’s a lot of Belgian beers that are super sessionable, like Saison Dupont at 6-point-something percent — that’s sessionable, but I’m just not drinking a pint of it.” No, sorry, couldn’t disagree more. You’re confusing “sessionable” with “drinkable”. You might be able to drink several small Duponts, I’m sure, lovely beer, and one is certainly not enough, but a true session beer has to be gulped in pints, not sipped. And probably I drink too fast, but after a four-hour session, I wouldn’t even be able to find the bar if I were drinking something that was 6.5 per cent. So no, Saison Dupont is NOT “sessionable” either.



But this is DEFINITELY a session beer – or was ...

I can't agree, either, with another of Lily Waite's interviewees, Chris Hannaway of the London-based alcohol-free beer venture Infinite Session (see what he did there?), which launched last year with a 0.5 per cent pale ale brewed at Sambrooks in Battersea. "A 'session' is no longer about everyone ordering the same 4 to 5 per cent lager rounds for everyone in the group," he says – but it never was. It was about people drinking 3.2 per cent to 4.3 per cent milds, bitters or lagers, depending on what they wanted, and drinking them all night long.

So: what's the definition of "sessionable" and does it apply to craft beer? Sessionable means a beer you can drink over an extended period without getting too drunk and without growing tired of it and wanting something else. And yes, clearly that can apply as much to craft beer as it does to macro, mass-market beer. (Indeed, personally I find mass-market beers entirely unsessionable because they bore me after half a pint. Dull is not sessionable either.) A sessionable craft beer is going to be one that is not too strong, and not too challenging in terms of massive hop flavours or other flavour attributes such as roastiness, sourness or whatever. There – not impossible at all.