

## Beer at the Ship Inn

Not too cold, not too fizzy

English ale brewing is characterized by a single infusion mash, open fermentation, natural conditioning, clarification by gravity, low carbonation, and serving temperatures at around 48-55 degrees F. We



achieve this here at The Ship Inn. A single infusion mash describes how our English barley malt is steeped only once for an hour and a half at 145-155 degrees F to extract all the sugar. 225 gallons of this sugary extract, called wort is piped to the kettle where it is boiled for an hour with hops. To give you a sense of proportion, a beer might use 350 pounds of malt but only 6 pounds of hops. Hops are added during the boil for bitterness, and after the boil for aroma.

Following the boil, the wort is moved to one of our two open fermenters. These stainless steel tanks are insulated with wood and have cooling coils inside to moderate the temperature of the fermenting beer. This is an absolutely crucial aspect of fermentation; if the beer temperature rises above 73 degrees, the yeast will produce nasty flavors such as butterscotch and nail polish remover. Below 66 degrees, the ale yeast does not work fast enough to convert the sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. We keep our fermenting beer at 67-71 degrees to ensure speedy, healthy fermentation with good flavor. Once the desired amount of sugar has been converted, the beer is stripped of its yeast and chilled to 50 degrees. At that temperature, the yeast stops working (mostly) and drops out of suspension. Open fermentation (the fact that the top of the tank is open to air) allows us to skim healthy, happy Ringwood yeast :- ) from the top of the beer to save for the next batch. Air, the stuff that turns good beer to vinegar, never really touches the beer for several reasons 1) the room in which the fermenters reside is small with no windows to stir up air currents 2) the yeast produces so much carbon dioxide that the top of the tank is sealed with an invisible layer of carbon dioxide gas. Because this gas is heavier than air, it rests on top of the beer's surface and creates a natural seal.

After 6 days in fermentation, the beer is transferred downstairs for conditioning. Natural conditioning means we don't filter the beer, nor do we pasteurize it because both would detract from the flavor. Instead, the yeast drops to the bottom of the tank. We allow the yeast resting in the

sediment at the bottom (and to some small degree still floating in the beer) to continue developing the flavor of the beer and build up a bit of fiz. In order for this to happen, the beer must not be dropped below 45 degrees. So we store all our beer at about 48 degrees.

However, in our view too much carbonation is not good for flavor either because it upsets the hop / malt balance. Consequently, any beers we have which are NOT on the hand pump are only given 2 volumes of CO<sub>2</sub>. That way, there is enough fizz to be refreshing to the American palate but not so much as to upset the English palate.

The serving temperature also affects how beer flavor is perceived. Too warm is, well..... too warm, but too cold means that the flavor becomes unidimensional, and bitterness is unnecessarily accentuated, without the balance of the other flavors in the beer. So our carbonated beers come out of the tap at about 48 degrees and our hand pumped beers at about 50-55.

We believe a beer should be so much more than just drinkable. It should contribute to your dining or social experience but not necessarily distract you from it. Almost none of our recipes seek to overpower you with flavor on the first sip: no face full of hops, no cloying roastedness or sweetness on the tongue. This can be a characteristic of some American-style microbrews. We believe the flavor impact should be cumulative. This can be achieved by beers with low to moderate amounts of alcohol, about 3 to 5% abv. It yields flavor without excessive amounts of booze. If you get to the bottom of your first beer and feel like another, we feel we've done well. If it leapt down your throat without you realizing, then we've really hit the mark. If we've achieved none of those things, well, there's always wine....or gin for that matter.



Tim Hall  
Brewer