

December 2016 Victor's Newsletter

I've recently engaged in discussions about how to improve access to locally produced grapes and possibly other fruits by our home winemakers. After a couple years of bringing grapes to Albuquerque from outside of the region, I began thinking more about the vast amount of fruit that we have right here and how we could at the same time provide a more reliable market for small and medium-sized growers while also offering locally sourced fruit for consumers. Part of it is economics, and part wanting to nurture local agriculture. Well, actually, it's all about economics when you get down to it. Better economics in producing food offers more opportunities for engaging in small-scale agriculture. Better economics translates into openings for people, especially young people wanting to return to living on the land and raising a family there. Better economics leads to a viable small-scale agricultural economy which can help ensure that our land and water don't get forever lost to development. We preserve our land and water and we'll be better able to feed ourselves in the future.

An argument goes that agriculture constitutes up to 70% of our water consumption (depending on who's counting). But much of that water, especially that which is used in flood irrigation, returns to the shallow aquifer where it is stored and either withdrawn at other points through wells, or slowly returns to surface waters like the Rio Grande. Studies conducted by NMSU of acequia systems in Northern New Mexico have shown that flood irrigation water is not only stored and later released back to the river, but also is cleansed in the process. The subsequent recharge of the shallow aquifer also supports the ecosystems that we so cherish such as the bosque-cottonwood complex. Much of what we consider the natural landscape has been shaped by the historic use of acequias in the Northern and Middle Rio Grande regions. So anything we can do to promote local agriculture can have a positive effect on much more than the simple joy of harvesting and eating local foods, although that's reason enough.

There are a lot of parts to the puzzle of how to create a web that connects producers and consumers so it will take time and lots of discussion to come up with a viable plan, but I'd like this to initiate those discussions and to generate ideas. The immediate goals that I envision will be to help producers of grapes get a fair return on their efforts (which are considerable), provide an efficient means by which to connect grower with consumer, and in the process provide feedback to the producers on quality, and selection of desired products. So any thoughts you might have on this subject will be greatly appreciated. I'll report in the future what I hear and how this is going.

NEW PRODUCTS, SUPPLIES, AND OTHER OFFERINGS

New hops that we're carrying include:

Comet is a cross of English hops with a wild American variety and was first released in 1974. Commercial production actually ceased in the 1980s as it was phased out in favor of new super-high alpha varieties, but it has enjoyed a comeback thanks to its unique profile. Intended as high-alpha bittering hop when first release, Comet has found a second life as an aroma variety in IPAs, wild ales, farmhouse beers, and other cutting-edge craft styles. Dominated by citrus zest and fragrant grassy character, with undertones of wild forest fruit and old-school earthy bitterness Alpha 9.0 – 12.0%

El Dorado™ is a unique, dual-purpose hop with exceptional aroma qualities and high alpha acid levels. A relatively new variety, its consistent performance eliciting fruity notes, especially tropical fruit flavors, has quickly made El Dorado™ popular for hop-forward styles or beers with complex flavor profiles. Tasting notes commonly specify aromas of watermelon, pear, candy, or stone fruit. There is often an undertone of citrus, and sometimes an identifiable fresh-cut-grass taste. Alpha 12.0 – 16.0%

Medusa™: One of the newest hops on the scene, Medusa™ is unlike anything you've encountered before. Native to Colorado and New Mexico, *humulus lupulus neomexicanus* is an entirely different species from its European cousin, *humulus lupulus lupulus*. Grown exclusively by [CLS Farms](#) in Yakima WA, where 8 different varieties of neo-mexicanus are being developed.

Medusa™ delivers strong flavor and aroma characteristics of intense guava, melon, apricot and citrus fruit. Along with these highly desirable aroma and flavor characteristics, it comes in with low alpha levels. Excellent as an aroma hop in IPAs, Pale Ales and anything that is looking for strong aromatics. Probably one of the most striking features of this hops is its multi-headed cone; it adds to the allure and story of Medusa™, truly a unique hop that is sure to become the talk of the industry. Alpha 4.8%

Idaho 7: Primarily aroma and dry hopping due to its potent aroma and flavor, but high enough alpha acids to contribute good bitterness. Excellent as a single hop or part of a blend for IPA, pale ale, and hop-forward American wheat beers. Pungent tropical fruit and citrus (think apricot, orange, red grapefruit, papaya) with big notes of resinous pine and hints of black tea. Alpha 14.1%

Improved display of kegging hardware. This is a work in progress, but I am making progress in getting all the hardware out in full view so you and I can better see what's in stock. Please ask me if you don't see what you need.

Recent additions to grain selection include:

Carafoam – Use for foam improvement, improved head retention, fuller body. 5-10%, and up to 40% of the grain bill

Carahell – Use for fuller body, improved aroma, full round flavor, deep saturated color, and improved foam. Up to 30%

Carared – Fuller body, improved malt aroma, deep saturated color, red color. Up to 25%

Mesquite-smoked malt (smells like a delicious barbeque) – us in a variety of styles to develop complexity or rich, robust smoky flavor.

Caramel Munich Malt 60L – imparts caramel, roasted and malty flavors with amber to red hues.

CO₂. We have been getting a good response to our addition of CO₂ service. I've added an additional supply tank to try to make sure I never run out. If possible, bring in your cylinder ahead of time to allow me to chill it in order to get a good fill, then pick it up at your convenience; or hang out for a while and visit a bit.

Grainfather. One of our brewers on Learn to Brew Day brought his Grainfather to do his brew, so we got a first-hand demonstration of its operation. Very cool. The whole mashing, boil, and cooling process is

in one compact unit that can sit on a kitchen counter or out on the bench in your brewing cave. I have it priced below tax-free internet sales. You can get a glimpse of it at: http://hosting.brewcraftusa.com/assets/POS/Grainfather_Anatomy.pdf. Among other features, the system includes: a magnetic drive pump, pump filter, expandable grain basket, built in electric element, temperature and pump control, recirculation pipe, optional attachment for a pot still setup, 8 gallon capacity, and counter flow wort chiller.

Malolactic Cultures. I still have plenty in stock in case you still have wine needing to go through malolactic fermentation. It's always a good idea, especially with red wines to smooth them out and prevent spontaneous ML fermentation in the bottle. We have paper chromatography supplies with which to test for ML fermentation completion.

Wine Bottles. We have a full supply of various sizes, shapes, and colors

Beer and Wine Kits. We have a new batch of beer and wine ingredient kits. Plus, I've been starting to get caught up with replenishing the Victors beer kits, including the popular clone kits. I'm always happy to get requests for new ones to put together. We have found that some of them actually taste better than the originals.

Blue Corn. I'm expecting to receive a sample of locally grown blue corn which we'll use in a test brew. We're looking to see what level of milling will work the best. I've already heard from some folks wanting to purchase some when we get a supply. Hopefully by next month.

Wine and Beer Filter System. I am evaluating a gravity wine and beer filter system that appears might be a good alternative to the pump and other type filters we are used to. Its designer and developer brought me one to try out and so far looks good. I will be ordering some shortly. You can see a demo at <https://klrfilter.com>.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

CLASS SCHEDULE

Our "Learn to Brew Day" activities were a great success. Those attending got a real treat in learning from experienced brewers, not only getting to watch the whole process, but seeing how four different brewers use their own methods to achieve great beers. We'll do this again when we participate next May in the National Home Brew Day.

We won't have any classes this month. Too much going on for all of us. We will resume classes in January, with a Brew Class in the middle of the month and Wine Class toward the end.

Cheese making. In the on-going effort to provide some level of support and training in cheese making, I've hit upon an idea that may be more successful than my previous efforts. There are already quite a few cheese makers out there that have varying levels of experience, from novice to commercial

producers. There appears to be some interest in our providing a venue for cheese makers of all stripes to get together and exchange information, techniques, and hopefully some samples. We could have such a meeting, or series of meetings at our shop starting next year. If you are interested, or would like to learn more of the idea, please let me know. We'll set it up if there's any interest at all and get the word out next month. .

Shop Schedule. We will be closed December 25 & 26 for the Christmas holiday. We will also be closed December 30 and 31 to conduct year-end inventory. We currently have of 1900 individual products so it takes time to do all the bean counting. And of course we'll be closed January 1. Otherwise, same hours.

It's always a pleasure to hear from you and have you visit the shop. Thanks for coming in.
Happy fermenting and happy holidays, Jens