



Club Scene:

Unique Free State Guild Finds Strength in Numbers

By Alexander D. Mitchell IV

The **Free State Homebrew Club Guild** is a group effort: it unites 16 homebrew clubs across the state, from the Libation Association of Northern Maryland to C.R.A.B.S. (Chesapeake Real Ale Brewers Society) to the Yeast Culture Club (a newer group started by graduate students of the University of Maryland-College Park).

According to the American Homebrewers Association (AHA), this is the first, and thus far only, statewide homebrewing "club of clubs" ever attempted.

It began in January 1998 when seven Baltimore-area clubs held a "Gathering of the Tribes" at the now-defunct Oxford Brewing in Linthicum, followed by a homebrew contest three months later.

Original guild president Ed Hudson (who now lives in Texas) recalls, "All clubs may suffer from inbreeding by learning about beer and how to homebrew from the same people all the time." A "mega-homebrew



The Free State Homebrew Club Guild held a mass "brew-in" outside Maryland Homebrew in Columbia, Md. on May 7.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER D. MITCHELL IV

club," he reasoned, would allow "cross-talk of ideas and recipes" and expose Maryland homebrewers to other beers, organizations and people. "The social aspect was very

important. I learned more about brewing beer and the industry from people I met at guild functions than I did with my own club."

He continues, "I guess the final reason was to try and get a homebrew competition in the Maryland State Fair—a cause championed by Ron Kodlick."

Each member club runs all its own operations and events independently. However, the guild acts as a conduit for all Maryland clubs to interact with one another at gatherings such as campouts ("mash-outs" in their parlance), picnics, parties, and promotions and demonstrations during the state's "beer weeks."

"The guild has made it possible for smaller clubs to accomplish activities that may have been otherwise impossible because of their size," said current treasurer Christiana Anderson, also part owner of Maryland Homebrew in Columbia.

Among the guild's most recent projects was a group brew for National Homebrew Day on May 7. Eighteen teams of brewers gathered at Maryland Homebrew to brew 18 different batches of beer, from an ESB to an imperial stout. About 200 showed up to help and share food and homebrew.

Several more teams of homebrewers from guild clubs also participated in a smaller "group brew" demonstration at Nepenthe, the homebrew shop and brew-on-premise in Baltimore's Woodberry neighborhood.

More information can be found at mdhomebrewers.com.



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