

Beefing Up Second Runnings Beers

Written by Mark Emiley

Tuesday, 15 July 2008 20:09 -

For those of you who make big all-grain beers and decide to use the second runnings of the mash to do a small beer, you may notice that even with all of the grain in there, you still end up with a slightly lifeless beer. You are typically squeezing out the last bit of goodness in the grain and that last bit may not be the most flavorful.

So, while it is tempting to just call it a "meh" beer, you can do one simple and pretty cheap thing to add a bit more oomph into it. After you've run off your runnings for your first strong beer, leave a little extra sparge water on top of the bed. Grab an extra pound or so of specialty malts (crystal, chocolate, biscuit) and steep them in on the top of the mash (you can stir it in a bit, and if you are careful, you won't even need to do any more recirculation). Let them soak for a half an hour or so while you tinker with your other brew before starting your second sparge. You can do this with base malt as well if you would like, but with the second beers, it typically is the flavor which is lacking the most. Hence, using the specialty grains will benefit your second runnings beer the most.

I tried this with the second runnings of a barleywine I made a while back. I added a pound of lightly smoked malt and a pound of chocolate malt in. Simple, let it sit for a bit, and ended up with a nice robust porter (not very smoky). In a recent competition, it scored over a 40. Not bad for a second runnings beer.