



# SO I MARRIED A HOMEBREWER

**BY DIANA DAVIS**

**ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE MORAN**



**S**ome people think I'm nuts. I married a homebrewer. What in the world could have possessed me to happily scamper down the aisle and into the forever loving arms of a man whose bubbling, blobbing, odd-smelling hobby has severely cut down on my personal closet space and contributed to what some of my friends call "aroma couture"?

It's not as if I didn't know what I was in for. We first lived together for almost 10 years, a fact that already had me condemned as a lunatic in some minds. I was there when the whole homebrewing hobby was started by a well-meaning family friend on his birthday. My beloved's eyes widened with joy as he unwrapped the huge mysterious package to reveal a set of white buckets, odd hoses and assorted things I still have no clue the function of. Well-meaning, sure. It wasn't *her* party dress that caught the full fury of the annual cider fermentation. I'll tell you, the smell never fully goes away, and it really is too complex an explanation to satisfy the people I meet at parties. It's easier to just let them go on with the belief that I'm either soused or devoted to one of those odd French perfumes.

I remember the premier brew well. He put pineapple guavas in it. We all learn some of the best lessons the hard way, I guess. It was an interesting beer, and I say “interesting” in the same spirit here as someone who can’t think of anything nice to say. Thank goodness he never did it again.

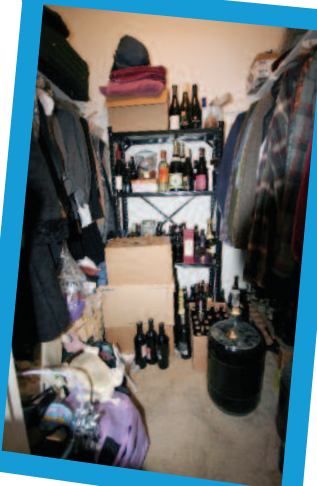
The pineapple guava recipe went out the window, but enthusiasm didn’t. Ha! Enthusiasm couldn’t reach the window! It’d have to climb over carboys, chillers, fermenters, secondary fermenters, spoons, skimmers, cappers, endless boxes of brown bottles, bags of caps, kegs, CO<sub>2</sub> tanks, hoses, pipes, fittings, sanitizing supplies, huge pots and blow-off tubes. How can we have four beers, an ale, cider and mead fermenting amid my shoes, dresses, blouses and gowns when all the equipment is out here?

The mishaps and sacrifices have been many, but at least varied and entertaining. I’m proud to say only one bottle exploded, ever. And I really never liked that leopard-print shirt Mom gave me for my birthday, anyway. I’ll miss the negligee, though. My kitchen floor is lucky it was a mottled brown pattern to begin with, and really, the dog rarely sticks to it anymore. My stovetop gave up trying to look white years ago. Our housecleaner just laughs. I’ve learned to stop asking about the mysterious crusty stains in the closet carpet around the blow-off bucket, and after a half hour of patient explaining, so has she. Although why he seems to only brew the day after she comes and uses her super powers to scour the apartment sparkly clean still remains unclear.

Really, who needs a bathtub in these rushed, modern times? Like I have time to spare for that long, relaxing bubble bath in fragrant, scented, bubbly-soft water. Even if I never use it, though, I’m proud to say it’s the most sanitary tub in the building, despite the ever-floating brown bottles, caps and collection of Dr. Frankenstein-looking glassware. My guest bathroom has doubled as a keg and equipment storage for so long, I barely blink at the arrival of a new tall metal cylinder. Besides, who else can enjoy a relaxing glass of the finest brew



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in the most delicate of times? It beats those boring Uncle John books. Closet space is overrated, too. And counter space. And floor space. Who needs space indoors? That’s what outside is for, right?

I admit it, I’m guilty of adding fuel to the fire. Look, he’s just easier than many guys to shop for. I jaunt down to the supply store on the off chance he’s not there, look around madly for a half hour or so, and buy the thing with the name I remember him mentioning sometime in the year. I don’t know what a refractometer does, really, but it was well received. The wort chiller was difficult to wrap, copper tubing coiled like a cobra, but it did mean I get my kitchen sink back a whole lot faster and ice was once again available in the freezer. The beer gun wasn’t as fun as it sounds like it should be, but he seems to like it. Yes, I did orchestrate the gathering of funds for the first of the kegerators, and yeah, I went out and bought an entire matching bar to go with it, but I hated the kitchen table, and eating breakfast at a bar has an element of adventure and living life “on the edge.” He didn’t flinch when I spent my Christmas bonus on a wine fridge. He didn’t dare.

I have to say, I’ve met some of the most fun people I know through his club. I’m not sure why they all have goatees, with the exception of most of the women, but they really do know how to have a good time. They are some of the most cheery, friendly people I know, even before the fourth glass.

We’re always invited to parties with our non-brew friends, too. At each fling, we’re eagerly welcomed by our hosts, who rush open-armed as we come in the door to relieve us of our heavy clinking bags and replenish the bar as quickly as they can. OK, I’m just kidding. I’m sure we’re valued as guests for more than our endless supply of free tasty brew. Mostly sure, anyhow.

I could never say I live a boring life of predictability. Who knows what I’ll find the next time I come home from work? It’s exciting, seeing those huge pots heading for the stove, never being sure exactly what he’s going to brew up or if I’m going to spend the night cleaning wort off the stove, floors, countertops and ceiling. It’s an everyday thrill guessing what the sound and smell emanating from the depths of my walk-in closet really is.

How many girls can say their father is thrilled with his son-in-law? I’ve never seen Dad’s smile so sunny as the day he found out. All of his friends are so jealous! Their sons-in-law all pale in comparison! Programmers, engineers and surgeons. Can they whip up a case of nut brown ale? What do they know of hops in their world of technology, engineering, medicine and criminal law? Those men get microchips for Christmas, sweaters for birthdays and golf clubs for Father’s Day. My Dad suppresses a smug smile as he pops the caps off a few well-matured bottles of birthday brew and lets them all taste what they’re missing.

Photos courtesy of Diana Davis

“Tell me again about your daughter’s husband’s hobby, Fred. Something to do with stamps? Here, let me refill your glass. Oh, don’t worry, it’s no trouble—they sent me up a whole case! Plenty more where that came from!” He practiced his toast for a year and practically sprinted with me down the aisle on the blessed day.

Speaking of which, thanks to the homebrew club, my bill for a completely open bar was a big, fat zero. *Zilch. Nada.*

Yeah, I’m the crazy one.

**Diana Davis lives with her homebrewing hubby, Cullen, in Sherman Oaks, Calif.** 🍷

### Iron Brewer Showdown *(continued from 49)*

pint rule: Is this good enough to drink a second pint?

As Table 1 shows, the 12 entries were quite varied ranging from a Dortmunder and Helles more easily made from a pilsner malt wort than the Imperial IPAs and a number of Belgian ales. The Old Ale and Rauchbier certainly took ingenuity to get pilsner malt to yield these styles with the limitations on added fermentables. All involved were amazed at the styles that were created from the same starting point.

### THE WINNERS

Third place in this unique competition was Clair with his Belgian Specialty, a Unibroue Maudite clone. Second place was Ted Johnston with his Tripel. And first place was yours truly with an Orval clone. All were Belgian styles that benefited from originality as well as drinkability. The announcement of the winners took place during the awards ceremony of the Buzz Off in June. First prize was indeed a wonderful beer dinner for four featuring a number of the Iron Brewer beers. The chef had prepared a one-of-a-kind dinner with each course paired to one of the Iron Brewer beers supplied by the entrants of the competition. The menu for this special dinner is shown in Table 3. The chef’s pairings were excellent, blending as if they were just made to be together.

Even better, it’s become an annual event. BUZZ members once again teamed with Iron Hill, collecting wort last December 29 for the second annual Iron Brewer competition. More club members participated this time, with entries including schwarzbier, Maibock, Northern German Altbier, California Common, Imperial IPA, Belgian Specialty, Oud Bruin, Belgian Tripel, English barleywine, classic rauchbier, ECU 28 clone and an herb beer containing lemongrass and ginger. John Reagan took first place with his Northern German Altbier, Jared Spidel was second with his Belgian Specialty, while Russ Hobaugh was third with his Schwarzbier. All the beers scored in the 30s, so there was no marinade for the cook but we’re sure that there will be great food to go with these beers for the winner and his guests to enjoy.

Your club and the local breweries and brewpubs can have a close and symbiotic relationship like the one BUZZ and Iron Hill enjoy. If a brewery chooses to brew the winning entry in your homebrew competition, consider entering it in the GABF Pro-Am competition. Or create your own unique project like the Iron Brewer and include your professional brewing friends in your project. We are all craft brewers and these fun projects build great relationships—and great beer.

**BUZZ member David Houseman is a BJCP Grand Master III certified judge and competition director for the BJCP as well as a regular contributor to the Commercial Calibration department in Zymurgy. He lives in Chester Springs, Pa.** 🍷



### TABLE 3: IRON HILL BEER DINNER MENU

#### **Cheese Plate**

Ossau iraty (French sheep’s milk)  
Farmhouse cheddar (Massachusetts)  
Groundhog Orval Clone, David Houseman

#### **Angel Hair Pasta**

Red snapper, shrimp, clams and basil pesto sauce  
Belgian Tripel, Ted Johnston

#### **Grilled Beef Tenderloin Medallions**

Sour cream smashed red skin potatoes  
Asparagus spears, smoked Vidalia onion-portobello relish, marsala wine sauce  
Classic Rauchbier, Bob Purrenhage

#### **Old Fashioned Oatmeal Cake**

Served warm with vanilla ice cream  
Old Ale, Russ Hobaugh



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