



Brewhog University

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To Make a Pennsylvania Swankey 18th Century Version

The Pennsylvania Swankey is an interesting small beer brewed on the homesteads, primarily by the German immigrants that made their way to Pennsylvania. Although it was popular with them, this is a home brew made for the house. It took simple ingredients that were grown on site and maybe a few that were bought.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot of information on this particular drink except in old 18th or even 17th century manuscripts. Some are found in the earliest cook books and some even in 18th century apothecary or physician books.

Let's take a look at how it was done in the 18th century. This is a really different way to make a small beer.

Ingredients for the receipt

Star Anise - 4 to 6 pods
Wheat Bran - 4 1/2 cups
1 1/2 Gallon or water
1/4 water

Anise Seed - a few pinches
Handful of Leaf Hops
3/4 cup of molasses or brown sugar or maple syrup
Yeast

Process

Add the Star Anise and Anise Seed into a mortar and pestle, work until all is cracked. Combine the star anise, anise seed, wheat bran, and handful of hops into a kettle. Then add 1 1/2 gallon of boiling water. Stir, then place over fire to boil for 20 minutes.

Remove from fire and pour over cheesecloth into another vessel. Place a cloth over top and let chill until blood temperature. Once chilled take 3/4 cup of molasses (or brown sugar or maple syrup) and mix with 1/4 cup of water. Stir until combined.

Add the sugar mix to the wort, stir in, then add in your barm (yeast). Cover with cloth and ferment for 4-5 days. After 4-5 days, pour the swankey through another cloth to



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strain. Transfer into a corked jug and drink within 2-3 days. Save the emptains (yeast from the fermenter) and use it to make bread or spread out to dry to use again.

What Does It Taste Like

It has a strong licorice taste, almost Root Beer like. The molasses is present, but if you don't like molasses, substitute in brown sugar or maple syrup.

Hops and Yeast Selection

Here we are again, they used what was on hand. What hop they grew on the homestead would have been used. The most common would have been something related to Cluster. So use Cluster or East Kent Golding. In all the manuscripts, it just says take a handful of hops.

When selecting the yeast, they used the yeast multiple times by collecting and saving them. If they ran out they would go to the local bakery, a neighbor or a local brewery if they had one to get their yeast. Or they would make their own like a sourdough starter. When making this to be as authentic as possible, go with some active dry baker's yeast or a clean english yeast strain.

The Numbers

This is a small beer that was enjoyed on warm summer days. The numbers for this beer are relatively low. When brewing this beer, we are looking for a small beer that is from 2% alcohol to 3% alcohol. As far as the bittering units are. No clue, because how can you figure that out from "A Handful of Hops?" But probably in the 15 to 20 range.

Take a chance on this gem from history, you may like it. Doesn't take long even. It is actually a nice refreshing beverage on a hot summer's day. Happy Brewing!