

# Making your own labels and pump clips for your home made beer

As many of our regular blog readers will know, I enjoy making labels and pump clips for my home-made beer almost as much as I enjoy making the beer itself. From this I've had a request for a blog post from some friends in the home brewing community to write a blog entry about how I go about making my own labels and sticking them to the bottles. I think this is something a lot of home brewers are



thinking about just now as we sometimes give beer as Christmas presents so obviously you want people to know what beer you have given them but also it's nice to give a gift that looks good.

## Step 1

so where do I start? Well usually by looking at beers available in my local beer store or supermarket and deciding which labels I like and why. A lot of the time, the labels can influence our decision to buy a beer (even if we don't like to admit it), so it's a good exercise to do, what do I like about the label, what does the label imply, what assumptions am I making?

I also look online and one blog I have found which I love just for looking at really nicely done graphic design for the beer

industry is [OhBeautifulBeer.com](http://OhBeautifulBeer.com). They regularly show fantastic labels and poster and other beer paraphernalia and usually with a nice back story from the designers about they came to their decisions when designing. I would recommend popping onto the blog for a look and some ideas.

## Step 2

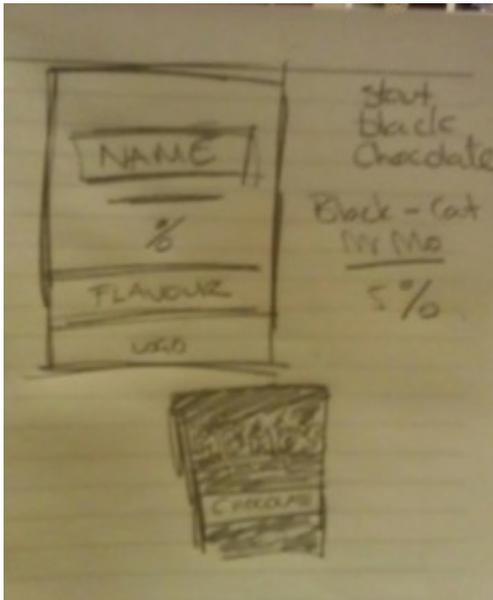
So you have looked at other beer labels and decided on the kind of thing you like. Now you need to work out what size your label should be. The simplest way to do this is to measure one of the labels you liked.



## Step 3

You have your label style idea, you have your label size. Next sketch your idea out on a bit of paper. This way you can keep adjusting your ideas if you realise you've forgotten something important or if things don't look as good on paper as they did in your head. The important thing here is just to get your ideas down on paper; it doesn't matter if you are a fantastic artist or if you just draw some boxes and a stick man. After

all a lot of artisan products these days go for the "rustic/handmade" look.



#### Step 4

You have your label idea, now you need to decide how you are going to create it. Are you going to draw your label and then photocopy it or are you going to create it on the computer? What way suits you best?

If you do decide to create it on the computer, you might want to think about what software you will use. Graphic design

software is great and offers you so much versatility in what you can do, but it's also expensive. But a lot of software comes with a 30 day trial for free or there is even some free graphic design software out there.

### Free software to try:

- GIMP – <http://www.gimp.org/>
- Paint.net – <http://www.getpaint.net/index.html>
- Inkscape – <http://inkscape.org/>

Try something out, look up YouTube videos to teach you how it works and then have a good play and see what you can do.

Here's the finished label I made.



## Step 5

Once you have your labels designed it's time to print them out and attach. I'd recommend using a laserjet printer for this as the ink is less likely to run. I've found that the ink runs a little on deskjet printer so if I use a deskjet I also spray hairspray onto the labels after printer to help "fix" the ink.

Now you have some choices on how to attach your labels to your bottles. It depends on how you are going to treat the beer.

If you are giving the bottles away as gifts, you might want to either print onto sticky paper labels which you can buy in stationery stores or you could use PVU glue to attach them to your bottles. The last thing you want is for the label to come off.

The down side to doing this is that if you want to reuse bottles for another brew, these glued or sticky labels can be a right hassle to get off the bottle again.

If I'm just bottling for us to drink at home my solution is that I stick the labels on using milk. Yup plain old milk. If you coat a very thin layer on the back of the label it sticks perfectly to the bottle and in about an hour you have a

perfectly affixed label that will come off really easily in a little hot water when you clean your bottles. I know some folk worry about the idea of using milk incase it smells but don't worry. I don't know the science bit, but it doesn't smell.

Perfect.

There has been an update to this post published: to read it click on the link below

- [An update – making your own bottle labels for your home-brew beer](#)

**Some of my labels and pump clips**





# CINDERELLA'S RUIN

SPICED PUMPKIN ALE

6.8%







HODGEHEG  
**SEASON DEFECT**  
SAISON  
BELGIAN FARMHOUSE  
- 6.9% -  
HAND CRAFTED IN MUSELBRUNNEN

HODGEHEG  
**SEASONALLY DEFECTIVE**  
SAISON  
BELGIAN FARMHOUSE ALE  
- 6.9% -  
HAND CRAFTED IN MUSELBRUNNEN

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SAISON  
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- 6.9% -  
HAND CRAFTED IN MUSELBRUNNEN



**EDINBURGH**

**GOLDEN ALE**

**5% abv**



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# The Road To Ruin: the original Hodgeheg seasonal ale

Well it's that time of year again, pumpkin ale time. If you don't remember from last year, we made pumpkin ale for thanksgiving at Mole End. It was such a success that we're doing it again.

We opened the naming of the beer up to a poll right here on the blog with Valerie's idea of "Cinderella's Ruin" winning. It's such a good name that I almost feel guilty that we've stolen a possible beer name from her and Dave.

So the road to ruin all started yesterday with the almost impossible task of finding 8 kg of pumpkin flesh about a month earlier than it is generally in the shops. All the usual beer ingredients were easy enough to get our hands on, in fact easier than usual as I now cycle home from work past the brewing shop, although cycling with that extra 6 kg of grain in my backpack was hard going. The pumpkin however was a bit of a challenge, so after visiting various supermarkets it was time to take on the advice of Luke and Valerie and look for tinned pumpkin.

Last year worked out perfectly as Luke (the very Mole of Mole End) had a load of frozen pumpkin in his chest freezer. Unfortunately we don't have a chest freezer to store pumpkin in, but Valerie and Luke recommended trying tinned pumpkin. Our American friends will be very familiar with tinned pumpkin, but I must confess to having never seen such a thing. So off to the organic, slightly specialised green grocers in Edinburgh.

Tinned pumpkin is pureed pumpkin flesh, in a tin. That simple, so theoretically it should be just the same. The only thing I am concerned about is that it's pureed, so I'm a little worried about how it will affect my ability to run water through my mash to extract all the lovely stuff from the grains. I didn't have that worry last year as when I originally made this beer I used a different type of brewing where all the grain and pumpkin was in a fine mesh bag. I may resort to at least putting the pumpkin into a bag this year.

Unfortunately, the style of beer we are making takes around two months to be ready to drink (at its best anyhow) so to have it ready for thanksgiving on Nov 28th means getting a head start so until we have a huge chest freezer where we can store pumpkin flesh for the coming year, tinned pumpkin it is..

There may be some of you reading this and thinking, "Pumpkin beer? I'm sure I've never seen that in my local." And you'd be right. Pumpkin ale is very much an American thing, especially around thanksgiving when all things pumpkin go bump in the night.

There are records of pumpkin beer in the states as early as 1801 although maybe not as we would recognise it today. The beer I'm making uses pumpkin as an additional flavouring, whereas back in the early years of the US, pumpkins were used as a source of fermentable sugar from which to make beer as the availability of barley wasn't great. Nowadays chances are

when you pick up a commercial pumpkin beer there's no guarantee that there will even be pumpkin in your pumpkin beer. A large amount of commercial brewers add pumpkin pie spices to their beer to give it the association of pumpkin, but don't actually include any pumpkin in the production of the beer.

I'm adding both, the spices are from Valerie's pumpkin pie recipe, but it's very subtle.

If you fancy trying to make my version of pumpkin beer, here's my recipe (very simplified).

## **Cinderella's Ruin -spiced pumpkin ale**

- 5 kg pale malt
- 0.7 kg crystal malt 20L
- 0.03 kg chocolate malt
- 8 kg pumpkin flesh

Mash the grains and pumpkin at 68 degrees C for 60 mins

Boil the resulting wort for 60 mins with the following hop additions

- Styrian Goldings 5.19% 30 g at beginning of the boil
- Styrian Goldings 5.19% 30 g for 10 mins
- Styrian Goldings 5.19% 30 g for 5 mins

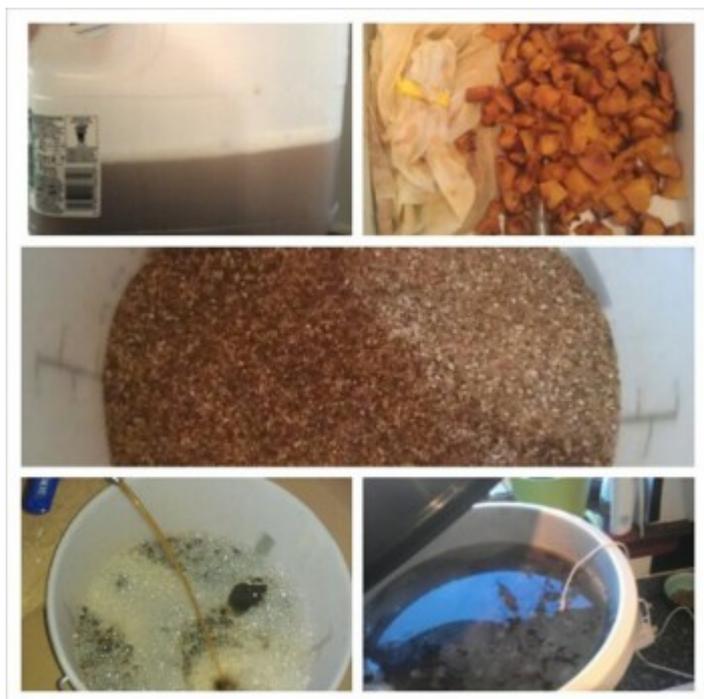
I do a 2 stage fermentation;

2 weeks primary

2 weeks secondary (add your spices)

Then 30 days to condition.

Then enjoy, preferably with friends.



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## Kate's Springfest Ale

Winterfest has been and now spring has sprung... so... next comes Springfest :0)

Springfest is our celebration of spring and friends and we'll be hosting a wee shin dig at ours in March. A shindig at ours means a beer for the occasion so Kate got to work creating her first beer recipe based on some of the beers she likes and little tweaks she'd like to make to them. So she came up with a recipe for a pale ale bursting with hoppy goodness.

It's a bit of an American Pale Ale in style light and refreshing, perfect for a spring party, and we'll be serving a keg of this to friends.

Kate has previously helped me with some kit brews, but she hasn't seen much of my all grain brews, except today she helped every step of the way, so this beer is her idea, her

recipe and she helped brew it too.

**If you want the recipe it's below.**

<b>Amt</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%/IBU</b>
4.20 kg	Pale Malt, Maris Otter (5.9 EBC)	Grain	2	98.8 %
0.05 kg	Crystal Malt (135.0 EBC)	Grain	3	1.2 %
10.00 g	Perle [9.37 %] – Boil 60.0 min	Hop	4	11.3 IBUs
10.00 g	Citra [14.40 %] – Boil 30.0 min	Hop	5	13.4 IBUs
0.25 tsp	Irish Moss (Boil 10.0 mins)	Fining	6	–
10.00 g	Cascade [8.20 %] – Boil 10.0 min	Hop	7	3.6 IBUs
5.00 g	Citra [14.40 %] – Boil 10.0 min	Hop	8	3.2 IBUs
10.00 g	Cascade [8.20 %] – Boil 5.0 min	Hop	9	2.2 IBUs
10.00 g	Citra [14.40 %] – Boil 5.0 min	Hop	10	3.5 IBUs
10.00 g	Cascade [8.20 %] – Boil 0.0 min	Hop	11	0.0 IBUs
10.00 g	Citra [14.40 %] – Boil 0.0 min	Hop	12	0.0 IBUs
1.0 pkg	Ringwood Ale (Wyeast Labs #1187) [124.21 ml]	Yeast	13	–
25.00 g	Cascade [8.20 %] – Dry Hop 7.0 Days	Hop	14	0.0 IBUs
25.00 g	Citra [14.40 %] – Dry Hop 7.0 Days	Hop	15	0.0 IBUs

So as usual here is a quick blurb of what happened today with some pics.

## The Mash



The first thing we did was weigh out our grains and make a porridge out of them with hot water. I looked after the water and temperatures as Kate has less experience of this, but she was right in there mixing it up.

We mashed at 66 degrees Celsius. Once it was all mixed and at the right temperature, we left it for an hour to allow all the sugars to come out of the grain.

As is now the tradition of my brew days, while the mash was going, I made some bread for dinner tonight (we're having pulled pork – yum! Recipe will be on here soon).

We also had a little bit of unexpected help today, you've maybe heard of the Scottish brewers "Brew Dog"? Well we had Brew Cats...



You turn your back for two seconds and these two are in to everything to see what they aren't involved in.

Shame I can't actually put them to work!

**The Boil**



So, mash done, bread made and time to get the boil going, and true to her word, Kate measured out all the hops and added them at the intervals. Lots of citra and cascade, so this should be a nice, fresh, zingy beer.

Once the boil was over and cooled, I had a wee taste, and so far it's spot on.

It's a nice pale beer as well, which was Kate's request – I have a tendency to make copper or ruby beers because that's my preference. This time we made sure she got her request and this is a nice gold.

## **Fermentation**



So last thing, all chilled, we transferred it to the fermenting bucket and added the yeast. Using Ringwoode yeast again as I was really pleased with this last time. So fingers crossed it doesn't disappoint me this time round.

So that was Kate's first all grain brew day :0)

I promise we'll update you with the beer once it's finished and also with stories and pictures of Springfest.

## **UPDATE**

The beer is absolutely lovely!!!



Kate's first beer – her own recipe and she helped to make it.

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**Lots of snow, so this weekend's project will be indoors**



Musselburgh was hit yesterday afternoon by the snow storms that have been travelling around the UK, so it doesn't look like much garden work will get done this weekend.

Instead I have a little indoor project. I'm going to build a brewing thermostat controlled power supply... yup, I am. :0) It will basically be a thermostat which switches power on and off determined by temperature, if it's too hot power goes to one plug switching on maybe a fridge, if it's too cold power goes to the plug with the heater. Simple concept. I'll use it to regulate the temperature my beer is fermenting/conditioning at.

You can buy these things for about £80 but I'm going to make one and save myself around £50.

### **Step one – all the bits I need:**



- Casing to mount it all too – £13
- 3 core cable – £2
- Gromit to be neat – £1.50
- Wire connectors – £2.50
- Digital Thermostat – £17

I had made one error which I didn't realise until today, I bought a double socket but I actually needed two separate sockets so that they could be wired separately, so a wee trip to B&Q later and I was all set. (another £2.49 spent)

First thing to do was drill and cut the wholes in the box to fit the wires, the thermostat and the sockets, that made quite a mess but wasn't as difficult as I thought, although the finished product isn't all perfectly neat and symmetrical... but I don't care I made it and it works!!!!

One all drilled out, I fixed the sockets and thermostat into place and then wired all the different bits and pieces together using the cable connectors. I've been planning this project for a few weeks so had lots of time to research and get wiring diagrams from the web or help from the friendly people at various brew forums I use.

And once all wired, I switched on and hey presto... no bang!

I set it to switch heating on at 19 degrees and cold on at 23 degrees and then tested it with a glass of water and my now very warm hands (I got quite excited). It all works perfectly and am I feeling smug??

Hell yeah!!!!!!

**Finished product**



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## Our first official beer review



At the beginning of December I sent some beer away as part of a brewers secret Santa, where beer from one brewer could be anonymously reviewed by an other brewer.

It was a bit nerve-wracking but I sent out a couple;

- Hello Dolly, (which is the first blog post I wrote telling you about how I make beer) and
- Cinderella's Ruin, our pumpkin ale.

It took a couple of months get the first review back but it was worth the wait and it has definitely given me confidence in our beer. We're just waiting on the second review now.

Hello Dolly tasting notes.

A very interesting brew, this one, with excellent clarity, colour and head retention, superior to other extract brews I have had (and made, for that matter). The crystal malt gave some very good, rich colour and balanced nicely with the hop flavours (both bitterness and dry hop). The label said this was the brewer's first attempt at extract – in which case, well done, and I look forward to trying the next one!

Tal

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## **All grain brewing – Eli's first brew with her fancy new kit**

Well I'm at it again, more beer being made. I'm trying a strong belgian ale – it should be similar to Pauwel Kwak. If I do it properly.

This time it's a bit special, this time I am brewing what's called "All Grain". If you remember the last beer post I wrote I talked about the different ways you can make beer... well this is the one I called the big brother of the home brewing world – all grain.

Thanks to two brilliant presents I now have the equipment and ingredients to do this. (Thanks Leigh for the sack of grain).

Essentially what it means is that I started with grain and water, added hops and yeast and at the end you have beer. Previously when I posted it was about brewing where you buy some of the ingredients ready-made for you.

All grain brewing needs a wee bit more kit than I originally had, so I treated myself to a new electric boiler and a new mash tun so that I could make beer this way. I'm quite excited about the whole thing and so far I think it was a good idea. (Last year I spent my bonus on the greenhouse, this year on beer kit)



I also got a fantastic present from my little sister Leigh, a sack of grain!



**So what have I done then? Here goes....**

I started about 10 am getting things set up and the kitchen cleaned and sanitised (while Kate baked a lemon drizzle cake for us to eat later when the beer is done) – I know, I know, I know exactly how lucky I am.

First thing I had to do was get 14 litres of water boiled to what's called strike temperature. This is the temperature you add the grain at and mix it with the water. The grain then causes the temperature of the water to fall and hopefully if your maths is right it falls to the temperature you want to "mash" at. This is the temperature that makes all that lovely grain turn its starch into sugar, to make your lovely beer.

It all seemed to go well although I may have to ask for help to calculate just how efficiently everything went.

As usual the main obstacle I have to overcome is my height... so out came the steps so I could reach to add the water to the boiler – no laughing peoples!



Now once you have the water ready, you add it to the “mash tun” (big picnic cooler you can see which has a tap) and stir in the grain. In this recipe it was 7kg of grain (Munich and Pilsner).

The idea is to get the grain and water all mixed together so that all the grain gets a chance to get wet, no “dough balls” or little pockets where the grain is dry.

Once this is done, and the temperature is right, you close the lid on the big cooler and leave it for an hour to give it time for all the starch to turn to sugar.

So far I have to say I am amazed at how simple it's all been. I had expected it to be way more complicated considering what a pain it was trying to do partial mash before – I guess having a proper mash tun (big cooler) makes a difference.

So what was next?

Well when the mash was done – 60 mins up, I wanted to check that I got all the sugar I could and didn't leave any starch unconverted, so a wee drop of iodine on Kate's white Denby plates (oh I panicked when the iodine stained – but I scrubbed and scrubbed and I think I got away with it) and added a wee drop of the sugary liquid that came out of the grains and it didn't turn blue. That's a good thing!

So that meant time to drain it off and rinse the grains to get as much sugar as possible – this is called sparging. I had planned to be a bit fancy and do something called fly sparging with a fancy spinning shower arm thing, but it was a bit of a pain, so I went for batch sparging which really is as simple as dumping hot water (again a certain temperature) in, stirring it, leaving it for 10 minutes and then draining. I did this twice.



By this point it was after 1pm and I was starving, but Kate to the rescue again with a lovely lunch of homemade bread and pate. So I put the lid on to protect the wort (sticky, sweet liquid) from curious kittens and we had some lunch to fortify me for the last two hours – the boil.

This one needed to boil for two hours, with hops being added at various points. The new boiler came into its own here, with the old stock pot on the stove way I used to do this, I had to stand over it the whole time to stop it boiling over. Not today, I left it and went and made bread and wrote this blog post :0) I think it's safe to say I am happy with the boiler. The only down side to today has been the yeast – I bought a Belgian ale yeast for this beer, but the activator pack was a dud so I'm having to use a pack of dried yeast I had as a spare for emergencies (I guess this counts), so a bit disappointed in that, but all in all, it seems to have gone ok.

If anyone out there is thinking of switching to all grain brewing but you are a bit nervous.... it's just as easy as extract brewing, just needs a mash tun and a bigger pot :0)

Phew... Six thirty and that's me finished, cleaned up and got a cup of tea.

If you want the recipe, get in touch.

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**And the winner is...**



## Cinderella's Ruin

Given the clear lead that this beer title had in the poll, we have closed the poll a few hours early to announce the winner we all knew was coming.

Well done to Valerie for her fantastic beer name which won the vote by a huge amount from both homegrown votes and those of our friends in the states.

We're in the process of getting the bottles labeled ready for our thanksgiving/winterfest feast on December 1st.

We just hope no angry fairy godmother sprinkles fairy dust in the beer before then.

Personally, I can't wait to see how the beer works alongside one of Valerie's famous pumpkin pies – maybe we can convince her to blog her recipe and let you all try some too.

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# Hello Dolly...



I thought it was about time I told you a bit more about my beer than just that it tastes good so I think it's time to share some secrets.

I am an extract brewer (or I was at the time of writing this post). Big statement... But what's that?

[Extract brewing](#) is the most popular type of home brewing in the US and it's quickly picking up popularity in the UK too.

It's a bit simpler than its big brother "[All Grain](#)" where you have to coax all the sugars out of the grains through a variety of processing to make your liquid wort. Wort is the sugary liquid which fermented to become beer.

Extract brewing jumps in after the sugary stuff has been done. You can buy this malt extract already to use. Saving time and the need for equipment. Which leaves you able to add speciality grains to alter the colour or flavour and hops for bitterness and aroma.

Of course if that sounds too involved, you can buy kits where all the hard work is already done, you just add water and yeast and let it ferment.

"Hello Dolly" was the first extract brew I tried and also my first attempt at creating my own recipe. It's amazing what you can do in a large huge stockpot.

"Hello Dolly" came about because Kate and I are both fans of a

particular ale called “Black Sheep”. So my recipe was an attempt to copy it. When you copy an other beer it’s called a clone beer. Hence Hello Dolly... (Sheep, clone, Dolly the sheep).

Ok so here’s the skinny on “Hello Dolly”

## Ingredients

Amount	Name	Type	%
0.30 kg	Caramel/Crystal Malt – 40L	Grain	11.2 %
0.05 kg	Roasted Barley	Grain	1.8 %
2.10 kg	Light Dry Extract	Malt Extract	9.6%
0.26 kg	Wheat Dry Extract	Malt Extract	9.6%
60.00 g	Goldings, East Kent [5.22 %]	Hops	
35.00 g	Fuggles [4.80 %]	Hops	
1.0 pkg	Ringwood Ale (Wyeast Labs #1187)		

## How to

### Step 1 – the steep

I steep the grains to extract the sugars, colours, flavours and aromas they contain– I am not talking about “[mashing](#)“, steeping is quicker and easier and temperature is nowhere near as important as with “mashing” .

So I start with three times as much water as grain by weight,

e.g. 400g of grain should be mixed with 1.2L of water, 500g grain with 1.5L water so basically I have a watery porridge in my big stock pot. (To help with clean up and to stop unwanted bits and pieces getting into my finished wort, I use a large mesh bag to hold all the grain – nice and easy to lift out again).

For the “Hello Dolly” recipe I steeped 0.30 kg of crystal malt and 0.05kg of roasted barley, the guy at my [local brew shop](#) had cracked these for me.

I steep these grains for 45 mins at as constant a temperature as I can get – between 60 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit and keep them moving to make sure all the grain gets wet and I get as much colour and flavour from them as I can. If you go to high in temperature you get a funny taste in your beer.

Once I have left the grains steeping for the required time, I take the bag out and sit it in a colander which fits nicely on top of the stock pot to let all the good stuff drain out of the grain bag (I help this along with a little warm water pouring it gently over the grains). I do this with the heat off.

When there is no more run off from the grains, they come out and go in the compost.

## **Step 2 – Adding the Malt Extract**

The malt extract is the bit that makes this type of brewing simpler. I don't make my own, I buy it from my local brew shop. You can get it as a dry powder or as a thick syrup. I prefer dry powder. It keeps longer and it's easier to measure but everyone has their preferences.

I let the hot liquid that the grains have been steeping in cool until there is no steam, as any moisture hitting my dry malt extract powder makes it go cloggy. Usually once the grains have released all their excess water and stopped

dripping, the water is cool enough so I can then add the malt extract to the pot, stirring like a mad stirry thing to get the lumps out (although as you start to heat and stir these lumps do go away).

So as I said, put the heat back on once you have your dry malt extract in there and keep stirring. You want to get rid of all the lumps but you also want to make sure you don't get anything stuck to the bottom of the pan where it can burn.

What you are doing now is called the boil, basically all the recipes have a timeframe attached, this one is a 1 hour boil, so once the malt is added, turn up the heat and the timer starts once I bring it to a boil.

### **Step 3 – The boil and adding your hops**

As I've said, this recipe is a one hour boil, but as well as just boiling the liquid in the pan, I add [hops](#) at various times throughout the boil. The purpose of the hops is to add the bitterness needed in the beer (otherwise it would be sickly sweet) and also to add aroma.

So hops, in the ingredients lists you'll see that I used two types;

- Goldings, East Kent, and
- Fuggles.

These are both English hops, so you' see these used frequently in English beers. In this recipe I add them at these intervals and amounts.

1. At the start of the boil – 40 grams – Goldings
2. 40 mins into the boil – 15 grams – Fuggles & 15 grams – Goldings
3. 55 mins into the boil – – 15 grams – Fuggles & 15 grams –

## Goldings

Once the 60 minute boil is over, it's time to cool the wort as quickly as possible. I only boils a small percentage of the finished amount so I can easily cool it by adding the boiled wort to the big fermenting bucket and then topping it up to the desired amount with sterile, cold water. In this case 21 litres.

Make sure you give this a really good stir, you want to get lots of oxygen into the mix for the yeast to live on.

So we've added the water and got things up to 21 litres and hopefully cooled the wort down to the temperature that your yeast likes, time to add the yeast then. Once the yeast is in, you have to put the bucket away out of eye level and be patient for a couple of weeks while it makes beer.

The last thing I did, in this process was dry hop. This means I added some hops to the fermenting bucket after about 4 days to add aroma to my beer. This is where I learned a valuable lesson. I just added the hops straight into the fermenting bucket thinking I'd scoop them out later before I bottled the beer, right? WRONG!

Those things are a nightmare to get out, some sink to the bottom, some float, some break up..... arrrrrrrggggggg. I have since learned to add the hops to a mesh bag and add them that way!!!

So the joy of that experience means that our beer is lovely, really enjoyable and every other bottle or so, if you are lucky, you get a free hop flower, or bit of hop flower in your beer – oops!!!



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## The Pumpkin Beer Is Born



Well Ladies & Gents, the pumpkin beer we have been brewing for Thanksgiving is now

ready to be bottled and put away to condition.

It's already tasting fantastic and can only get better.

A nice strong ale on the darker side of amber made with caramelised pumpkin and a little bit of pumpkin pie spices in the background.

It's a whopping 6.8% so a real winter warmer to keep us toasty through the evening if Hayley and Luke's range packs in leaving us without heating :0)

It's one of the new beers we've been doing using a method called extract brewing where we actually brew to our own recipe using malt extract, grains and hops to make it just how we want it. Again though the only extra bit of equipment you need to do this is a big stock pot. I'd definitely recommend giving it a try.

The quandary is the name, we have a few ideas but thought we'd open it up to a poll to let you decide.

The poll will open at 7:30 pm UK time tonight and will appear right here.

Place your vote and we will announce the winners here on the blog on October 15th.

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## **The Goblin Queen has landed**



Well we promised you an update on our beer making fun and so, here it is.

Our first attempt at making beer had been an aussie style lager which was “ready” for drinking at the end of June. We tested it at various points along the way and were really happy with it, and so were the friends we asked to test it. It was a really good sunny day beer and we have enjoyed one or two in the garden on a sunny day with a BBQ.

So buoyed with the confidence of that success we decided to try a dark ale (after all I am a big ale fan and Kate doesn't mind a wee ale either). So our first ale went in the fermenter, with a wee tweak or two to the recipe to add some of the things we like. We substituted some of the sugar for dry malt to give it a bit more of an ale feel.

We let this one sit for a fortnight in the fermenter to make sure the yeast had done it's work before we bottled it and added more sugar to allow the yeast to carbonate it.

The beer has more of a ruby colour than a brown ale and when we were playing with the idea of a name for it we came up with Goblin Queen as we are both fans of Hobgoblin ruby ale.

We even had a wee taste alongside a Hobgoblin just so that we could have a wee compare and we were really please. It's a bit warmer than the Hobgoblin, less hoppy and we absolutely love it.

The best thing, although we have tested it, it won't properly be ready until the end of July, so it is only getting better as it sits and conditions in the bottles.

We've already started planning for our next batch, we are going for an amber ale and we are going to play with the idea of "oaking it". Watch this space.