

An Ancient Beer Brewing Recipe

Among the topics touched on in the ceilidh house was the art of brewing, but it was an elderly man from Ness that gave us the following recipe. The name of the man was Iain Smith, and he lived at 14 Habost in Ness. He wrote this in a letter on 1st September 1971.

Dear Mr Macleod,

I promised you I would write a recipe on how they used to make 'Brewing' in our part of this Island, and as far as I know it's a very ancient method, and could never be accomplished from theory. It's what we may call a lost art. I believe I'm the last in this district that practiced it, and I told you I would try and explain the way I was taught.

A cheud nì a bha thu deanamh, bha thu a' cuir an t-siol ann am pochdannan ann an allt-ruith. Cha robh uisge tàmh freagarrach.

Dh'fhàgadh iad ceithir uairean fichead ann am bogadh e. Bheireadh iad às an uisg' e.

Chuireadh iad air clachan e gus a' sùghadh an t-uisg' às.

Dhòirteadh iad an deidh sin air làr e, agus dh' fhàgadh iad latha dh' ùine e gus am fàsadh e teth.

Bha fochann tighinn troimhe anns a cheud teas.

Sgaoileadh iad air an làr e, agus bhiodh iad cinnteach gum bitheadh an t-aon theas air a chumail ann airson làithean.

Bhiodh iad dha chuir troimh cheile tric airson nach leanadh e ri cheile, agus bhiodh iad cinnteach gum bitheadh an t-aon bhlàths' ann.

'Nuair a bhiodh e naoi neo deich do làithean dha sgaoileadh 's dha chruinneachadh, bhiodh iad dha bhriseadh 'n am beul gus an tigeadh an gràine gu fàs milis.

'Nuair a dh' fhàsadh e milis chuireadh iad air ball air an t-àth e airson cruathachadh.

'Nuair a bhitheadh an cruas ceart aige, dh' fhasgnadh iad a rithist e gus am falbhadh a fochann a dh' fhàs troimhe.

Bha iad a deanamh cinnteach gum biodh an t-siol glan.

Bhitheadh iad an sin dha bhleith air brà. 'S e dà leth air a ghràine a b' fheàrr leo.

Bhiodh iad an sin a goil an uisge. 'Se uisge allt' a b' fheàrr leo seach nach robh iarainn ann.

'Nuair sin bhiodh iad dha dhòirteadh ann an soitheach, agus chuireadh iad siol air a reir na bha aca de dh'uisge dha chuir troimh cheile mar a bhios tu 'deanamh lit.

'Nuair a dh' fhàsadh e cho fuar 's gu fuilingeachd do làmh e, bheireadh iad an uisg' a bheir a' bhroich agus ghoileadh iad an uisge sin.

'Nuair a dh' fhàsadh e meang-bhlàth chuireadh iad deasgannan ann, agus 'nuair a dheanamh iadsan an gnothaich fhein, bha e deiseil airson òl.

The first thing you did was placed the grain in a sack into a running stream. Still water was not suitable.

They would leave it soaking for twenty-four hours. They would take it out of the water.

They would put it out on stones so that the water would drain off it.

They would then pour it out on a floor, and leave it for a day until it got hot.

The barley in the blade would start to come through in the first heat.

They would spread it out on the floor making sure it was kept at the same temperature for a few days.

They would stir it often so that it would not stick, still keeping the heat at the same temperature.

After it had been spread for nine or ten days, it would be gathered up, and they would chew it in their mouths until the grain tasted sweet.

Once it got sweet they would put it on the kiln to harden.

When it had reached the correct hardness, they would sift it again, until they got rid of the barley in the blades that had come through.

They made sure that the grain was clean.

They would then grind it on a quern. They preferred the grain to split in half.

They would then boil the water. They preferred stream water, as there was no iron in it.

They then poured it into a dish, gradually adding the grain and stirring it until it resembled porridge.

When it had cooled down so as you could put your hand in it, they would add the rest of the boiled water, and boiled it up again.

When it cooled down to lukewarm they added yeast, and when it had done its job, it was ready to drink.