

HOWS YOUR ENERGY LATELY?

More of Hank's ramblings - as long as CCH continues to pay me 3 bux a word, I'll keep writing!!

A new valve (OPD) has been required since April, 2002 for propane which means any new burner is of the new style but the new tank will accept either type of burner. There is a slight silver lining inasmuch as, in the Pelican state, a tank with the old valve may legally be refilled as long as it is less than 12 years old and does not have the letter "E" on it. Good prices at Graham Ace Hardware near Vet's and Bonnabel or Baldwin True Value On Jeff Hiway near Central.

I've been rethinking fuels. Norman Crasson's 88 Cutlass is nuclear powered but he won't share the details because he fears retribution from George W and his thuggish oil company pals (That comment is for the Gore-lovin' sore losers in the club). Our Northshore cousins have room for raising hogs and you know that old saying - "spent grain in, Methane out" but I know nothing else about them.

So it's down to the Holy Trinity - propane, natural gas and electricity. A few weeks ago was a by week for LSU, the Saints and the Boutte Opera Guild so I had time to do a little research. Propane costs about 1.5 - 2 times per BTU what natural gas goes for, while electricity costs 4 to 20 times (each of the 6 people I talked to at Entergy gave a different number - good to know our power grid is in the hands of such an informed group).

Electricity requires little in the way of new expensive equipment. If you use 120 volts, a 2000 watt element which draws less than 20 amps is the highest you can use. Higher wattage is available with 4500/240 volts being the most common and near the wattage upper limit. You can have double elements as long as they are on separate circuits. Canadian/Northern brewers prepare their mash/sparge water inside in insulated tuns and then boil outside and report quick heatups. Ron LaBorde (is it true that he served as treasurer of CCH for only 4 years and then could afford to retire from his day job? Shades of Orleans Parish School System!) is quite committed to electricity. Check his excellent web site as well as those of C.B. Pritchard and Ken Schwartz.

What about boil times-these are theoretical since air temp, humidity, insulation affect heat transfer.

Watts rating-----time to bring 8 gallons from 70 to 180

2000(max for 120 volts)	64 minutes (6.8K BTU) NG Stove top burner = 5K-8K BTU
4500 (max for 240 volts)	24 minutes
10000	11 minutes (35K BTU) NG BBQ Grill/small hot water heater; small propane burner
23000	6 minutes (75K BTU) NG commercial 75 gallon hot water heater.
31000	4 minutes (110K BTU "jet" propane burner)

I've never gotten 8 gallons to 180 in this quick a time - shows how much energy is lost without insulation

Gas flames have two areas of combustion, the light blue inner flame where the carbon - carbon monoxide reaction happens, and the clear blue outer flame is where carbon monoxide - carbon dioxide reactions happen. Not a good thing to have the light blue flame touching the bottom of the pot as the carbon monoxide reduction is stopped leaving the telltale soot and unburned carbon monoxide to ruin your day. To get the most efficiency from the burner adjust the air shutter closed until you can see yellow flame tips, then open the air shutter until the yellow just disappears. To maximize time and propane, covering the top with an insulated cover for sparge/mash water and your boil pot until it gets near boil.

Natural gas is a great fuel and if you realize that most of your brewing is done in the same spot of the patio, you might consider running a gas line. SWMBO (she who must be obeyed) or (HWMB0) may be persuaded that this burner can be used for crawfish boils for her and her friends and that Oprah does her all-grain brewing this way. Scrounging around for a discarded hot water heater is advised-remember most of them are tossed because the tank leaks, not because of burner problems. A burner exploration and excision is a quick job.

And once again it comes down to - "ya pays ya money, ya takes ya choice". I've gathered some ideas about wort chilling which I might share if there is any interest.

Hank