

# Marcel's Helpful Hints by Marcel Charbonnet (6/2013)

## **Tips to Brewing with Extracts**

Malt extract is not just for beginning brewers! It remains a valuable tool in the experienced homebrewer's toolkit.

I've noticed some of our membership don't seem to use extract very often, or know how useful it can be in an all-grain brew. So here's a few of the insights I've found in my 2 years brewing (a lot of that with extracts).

**Dry vs. liquid:** These two are made in very different ways. Both start out as wort at a factory, but dry extract is evaporated at relatively low temperatures under a vacuum to make a powder. Liquid is boiled extensively under a vacuum to concentrate it into syrup. So when you're using them, remember. Dry extract has not been boiled before, so it **NEEDS TO BE BOILED**. Add your DME at the beginning of the boil. Liquid has **ALREADY BEEN BOILED**. You can add it in the last 10 minutes of the boil, just to sanitize it. Boiling liquid extract for an hour will darken it noticeably and alter the flavor you get.

In an all-extract brew, I like to use half dry and half liquid. You do want some sugar in your wort while the hops acids are isomerizing, and the dry extract provides that. Add the liquid extract at 10 minutes up to your target gravity. For a normal beer, you can make a lovely recipe with 3lbs dry and 3lbs liquid or 6 lbs. liquid (just add half at the beginning, half at the end).

**Controlling Gravity:** Light extract is great to have on hand. When your boil is nearly complete, check the gravity with a hydrometer/refractometer. If the gravity is low, you can add liquid extract to compensate. Light extract is made from just 2-row, all it does is up your gravity. This gives you much better control over the final alcohol content and overall balance of your beers. You can use cane sugar similarly, but simple sugars will dry out beers more than malt sugars because they are more fermentable. For beers that are not meant to be very dry, you want to use extract for this!

**Big Beers:** Eventually, everyone wants to brew a high gravity beer. When you have moved to all-grain, this is a pain. Your normal mash schedule is probably around 10lbs grain for a 5% ABV beer. For a 10% beer, you'll need 20lbs! You'd only use first runnings from the mash; probably have to boil the wort for a few hours to get your volume down to 5 gallons. This results in a big loss in efficiency and wasted grain. A much better option is to replace the extra grain with extract. Do your normal-sized mash and add in light extract to make up the difference. It is more expensive, but much easier and more reliable.

**Extract to Grain Calculation:** Replace 4lbs Base Malt with 3Lbs of Extract. Liquid is 10% less sugar, but close enough for homebrew. Easy!

**Specialty Extracts:** Extracts are all made like you would make a normal wort. The question is....what was the manufacturer's malt bill? Well, you don't always know. Gold/Light/Pale extracts all mean base malt with minimal specialty grains. Amber has some crystal, Vienna, or Munich. Dark is made with dark crystal or a small amount of black malt. Wheat extracts are generally made with 50% base malt and 50% wheat malt. Unless you are using all extract with no steeped specialty grains at all, I'd stick with light extracts. Add in your own specialty malts as needed.