

MOONLIGHT BREW

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Have you ever brewed with the devil in the pale moonlight? Members of the Hogtown Brewers (the 2016 Radegast Homebrew Club of the Year) do it every year, firing up their burners and mashing grain after the sun goes down.

Moonlight Brew is one of the highly anticipated communal brewing events the Hogtown Brewers put on each March down in Gainesville, Florida. The idea came from a then-new member (that's a shout out to you, Mr. Pries) who originally conceived it as Midnight Brew where we would start the brewing festivities at midnight. After pondering the proposal and quickly realizing maybe all of three brewers might show up that late at night, we tweaked and improved the concept so the event was more approachable. We then gave it a new name and launched Moonlight Brew in 2011.

Our 8th annual Moonlight Brew

was held on March 3, 2018. Moonlight Brew has a few unique rules to give it its character. The event is always scheduled on the Saturday in March that is closest to a full moon. Brewers bring their own equipment, ingredients, and recipes, as well as their own form of lighting, such as hanging Christmas lights on their canopy, lighting up a propane lantern, or wearing head lamps. We start brewing no earlier than 7 p.m. (when it starts to get dark) on a nice moonlit evening, usually completing everyone's batch by 1 or 2 a.m. Brewers must brew a dark beer (17 SRM or higher).

A local farmer brings an empty container to the event to collect the spent grain so it can be used to feed some lucky pigs. As with all of our group brewing events, everyone in attendance brings a potluck dish to share along with plenty of homebrews.

Like most communal brews where multiple stations are set up, the event is a great learning experience for new homebrewers (and new club members) since they get to check out the wide variety of equipment and techniques the Moonlight Brew-jockeys are using. But the greatest attribute of Moonlight Brew is simply the vibe. Brewing with your fellow club members at night in spectacular weath-

er (March is a great weather month in Florida), under a moonlit sky, with everyone's burner boiling their own custom wort, making the next amazing dark malt elixir, and relaxing together while sharing samples creates a unique festive atmosphere full of camaraderie.

When all the brewers have completed their batch and packed up their equipment, we then head out for breakfast together, usually at the local Steak-n-Shake. Yes, even though we had potluck snacks during the brew session, there is always room for the post-Moonlight Brew victory breakfast. When all is said and done, the evening usually wraps up between 2:30-3:30 a.m., and time to call it a day (or actually, a morning). The latest Moonlight Brew has ever ended (breakfast and all) was 5 a.m. — however, that occurred in the early years. We're a little less tardy these days with everything dialed in.

But we don't stop there with the Moonlight Brew activities. About three months later, those who participated get together again and do a "moonlight" tasting of what was brewed. In previous years, several brews created at Moonlight Brew went on to win multiple medals in homebrew competitions. That's the moonlight mojo working!



Photos courtesy of Hogtown Brewers