



# THE QUEST FOR THE PERFECT PUMPKIN BEER

BY SCOTT JACKSON

Ah, the sights and sounds of fall approaching—the crisp mornings, the kids back at school, football starting up (finally), the leaves starting to turn just a bit, and the harvest. It must be time to brew pumpkin beer!

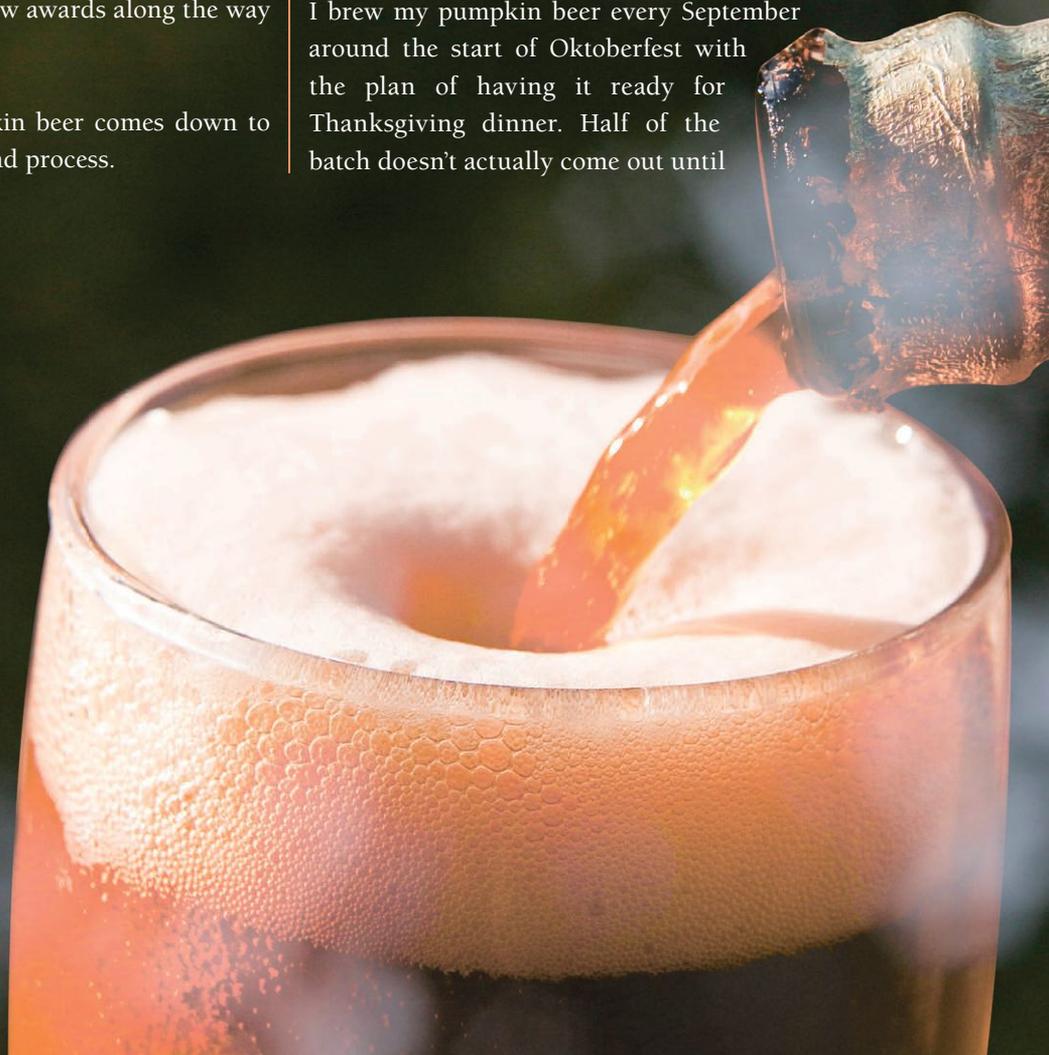
I have been brewing my pumpkin beer every fall for more than 15 years, and I've settled into brewing it the same way for about the last eight years. I think I have the process fully nailed down and have even won a few awards along the way for validation.

For me, brewing the perfect pumpkin beer comes down to three things—timing, ingredients, and process.

## TIMING

Every year, I am quietly amused when I look on the brewing forums the second or third week of October and see people asking about brewing pumpkin beer. I think to myself, “It’s too late now!” That’s like brewing an Oktoberfest the last week of September or brewing a Christmas beer the second week of December. It’s imperative to plan ahead.

I brew my pumpkin beer every September around the start of Oktoberfest with the plan of having it ready for Thanksgiving dinner. Half of the batch doesn’t actually come out until



December, but more on that later. Of course, if you want your pumpkin beer to be ready for Halloween, then you need to brew it even earlier—preferably the last part of August.

## INGREDIENTS

As with any beer, ingredients are important. But pumpkin beers require special ingredients not normally used in beer making. Over the years, I've brewed pumpkin beer with pumpkin, without pumpkin, with spices, and without spices. I have found that the best pumpkin

beers have both pumpkin and spices, plus a couple of other special ingredients.

In a nod to the first pumpkin beer brewers—the Pilgrims—I also use honey and maple syrup in my recipe. These ingredients would have been available to the Pilgrims and would probably have been used to supplement the malted barley in the recipe since it was in scarce supply. I have the good fortune of having my stepfather send me fresh maple syrup from the “sugar shack” just down the street from his office in New Hampshire, so I

get to add a little New England authenticity that way. I use local Colorado wildflower honey.

In formulating my recipe, the main goal is for a tasty beer, with the pumpkin flavors enhancing the taste. I use six-row malted barley as the base grain since it's indigenous to the United States and has the added benefit of helping with the stubborn mash. The specialty malts in the grain bill are chosen to enhance the desired orange color of the beer.

For the pumpkin, I've tried baking and processing my own, but it's very labor intensive and actually doesn't provide the consistency of a can of good old Libby's 100 percent Pure Pumpkin (or whatever brand you may prefer). Just remember to check the ingredients and make sure pumpkin is the only thing listed—do not use canned pumpkin pie mix. In addition, fresh pumpkins are sometimes not available when it's time to brew pumpkin beer, so this provides a convenient alternative.

For bittering, I use just one clean high alpha hop addition—no flavor or aroma hops so they don't interfere with the pumpkin and spice flavors.

## PROCESS

The biggest question involving this style is usually how to use the pumpkin. Does it go in the mash, in the boil, or maybe even in the fermenter? I put my pumpkin in the mash. That makes for a tricky mash, but allows me to get color and a little sugar from the conversion of the starches in the pumpkin itself. I am convinced it enhances the mouthfeel of the beer as well. It also makes for a uniquely orange-colored mash.

A protein rest will help break up some of the gumminess of the pumpkin in the mash and the six-row plus rice hulls help with the sparge and collection of the precious pumpkin wort. I put the spices in at the end of the boil, then again at keggling for half of the batch.

I brew all-grain batches, but the recipe could easily be converted to do at least a partial mash and still be successful. I brew this as a 10-gallon batch and split it

Photos © Topslakr, Another Pint Please and Dave 77459 through a Creative Commons License.



## POCAHONTAS PUMPKIN ALE/SAISON D'POTIRON (SPLIT BATCH)

### ALL-GRAIN RECIPE

#### INGREDIENTS

for 10 U.S. gallons (38 liters)

[Note: the ingredients are geared toward 12 gallons to allow for waste. Assumes 85 percent efficiency.]

<b>19.0 lb</b>	(8.62 kg) six-row pale malt
<b>1.0 lb</b>	(0.45 kg) 60° L crystal malt
<b>1.0 lb</b>	(0.45 kg) Victory malt
<b>1.25 lb</b>	(0.57 kg) melanoidin malt
<b>1.0 lb</b>	(0.45 kg) rice hulls
<b>6.0 lb</b>	(2.72 kg) canned pumpkin
<b>2.0 lb</b>	(0.9 kg) maple syrup (end of boil)
<b>2.0 lb</b>	(0.9 kg) wildflower honey (end of boil)
<b>1.0 oz</b>	(28 g) Magnum pellets, 14% a.a. (90 min)
<b>1 Tbs.</b>	McCormick's pumpkin pie spice (knockout)

#### FOR POCAHONTAS PUMPKIN ALE (HALF THE BATCH):

White Labs East Coast Ale Yeast

#### FOR SAISON D'POTIRON (HALF THE BATCH):

East Coast Yeast Saison Brasserie Blend (WLP 565 or Wyeast 3711 are also good choices)

**Original Gravity:** 1.070

**Final Gravity:** 1.014 (saison will go lower – I have gotten as low as 1.002)

**IBUs:** 28

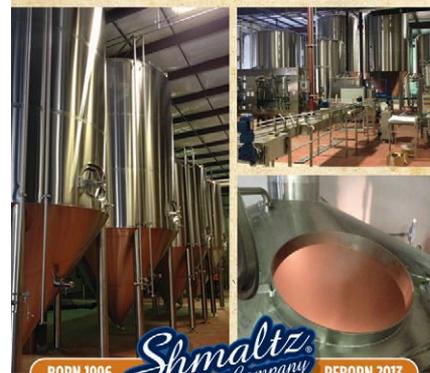
**SRM:** 13

#### DIRECTIONS

Perform a protein rest at 120° F (49° C) for 10 minutes and a saccharification rest at 154° F (68° C) for 60 minutes. Mash out at 168° F (76° C) for 10 minutes. Boil for 90 minutes. Ferment at 68° F (20° C) for two weeks. See the article text for brewing tips and more specifics.

## AFTER 16 YEARS, THE BREWERY IS OPEN!

A New 50-Barrel Brewery with  
20,000 Barrels of Capacity in Upstate NY.  
**COME AND VISIT US!**



See Website for Hours, Special Releases,  
Firkins, Small Batches, and more!

[ShmaltzBrewing.com](http://ShmaltzBrewing.com)  

for fermentation so I can use two different yeasts to end up with the regular pumpkin beer for Thanksgiving and a pumpkin saison for Christmas. Yes, you read that right! The subtle pumpkin pie spicing and the esters from the saison yeast are a good match.

### BREWING TIPS

A protein rest really helps with this recipe if you can do it, and so does a mash out. I have a HERMS system, which makes it easy for me. This can be done by direct

heat, RIMS, or infusion if you are careful. Mash in with a fairly high water-to-grain ratio. I use 1.75 quarts water per pound of grain.

For the pumpkin, I put it in a separate pot containing about 1 gallon of water, stirring it in to make sure it is fully dissolved. Put the grain in the main mash vessel, mix, then add the pumpkin/mash water mixture. Also, don't forget the rice hulls. Depending on your filtering mechanism, an entire pound is not overdoing it. Full

bottom screens can use less, but something like a Bazooka T would need the whole pound. Be sure to admire the bright orange mash!

Take your time with the sparge—one hour at least. The pumpkin can really muck things up if you try to rush it. Also, make sure there is plenty of sparge water on the

## THE GREAT PUMPKIN (IMPERIAL PUMPKIN ALE)

### INGREDIENTS

for 5 U.S. gallons (18.93 liters)

- 15.0 lb** (6.8 kg) six-row pale malt
- 1.0 lb** (0.45 kg) 60° L crystal malt
- 1.0 lb** (0.45 kg) Victory malt
- 0.5 lb** (226 g) rice hulls
- 3.0 lb** (1.36 kg) canned pumpkin
- 1.0 lb** (0.45 kg) maple syrup (see Directions)
- 1.0 lb** (0.45 kg) wildflower honey (end of boil)
- 2.0 lb** (0.9 kg) beet sugar (see Directions)
- 1.5 oz** (42 g) Magnum pellets, 14% a.a. (90 min)
- 1 Tbs.** McCormick's pumpkin pie spice (knockout)  
Yeast: Whatever monster you have a lot of—Safale US-05, WLP001, etc.

**Original Gravity:** 1.118 (yeah baby!)

**Final Gravity:** 1.020

**IBUs:** 71

**SRM:** 16

### DIRECTIONS

Perform a protein rest at 120° F (49° C) for 10 minutes and a saccharification rest at 154° F (68° C) for 60 minutes. Mash out at 168° F (76° C) for 10 minutes. Boil for 90 minutes. Anticipated gravity after boil is 1.096. Add honey at the end of the boil. Ferment at 68° F (20° C) for two weeks. Add oxygen again on day 1 (24 hours after pitch). Add maple syrup and yeast nutrient on day 4. Add 1 lb beet sugar and additional yeast on day 6. Add 1 lb beet sugar on day 8.

Obviously this one takes a while to age. At least one year is best. Your patience will be rewarded!

The best homebrewed beer starts with the finest handcrafted malt.

# Goldpils® Vienna Malt.

**Traditional-style malt for classic-style beer.**  
At Briess, we challenged ourselves to remake our Vienna Malt with more authentic character. The result? Briess 2-Row **Goldpils® Vienna Malt.**

Less modified and less sweet than Pale Ale Malt, **Goldpils® Vienna** delivers rich malty flavor with hints of biscuity notes to your classic Vienna, Oktoberfest and Marzen beers and finishes exceptionally clean. At 3.5° Lovibond, it contributes light golden hues.

**Ask your local homebrew store for handcrafted Briess malts and malt extracts!**

**BRIESS**  
MALT & INGREDIENTS Co.  
All Natural Since 1876

Chilton, WI, USA | 920.849.7711  
f | www.BrewingWithBriess.com  
©2013 Briess Industries, Inc.

grain. I have seen the whole thing turn into a brick if it gets too dry.

After you have collected the precious pumpkin wort, proceed as you normally would with a regular batch. Boil for 90 minutes using the noted additions. Cool to pitching temperature, separate into two vessels for fermentation, and pitch the appropriate amount of yeast. This is a pretty big beer (it's for the holidays, after all!) so do a starter or use harvested, washed yeast from a previous batch.

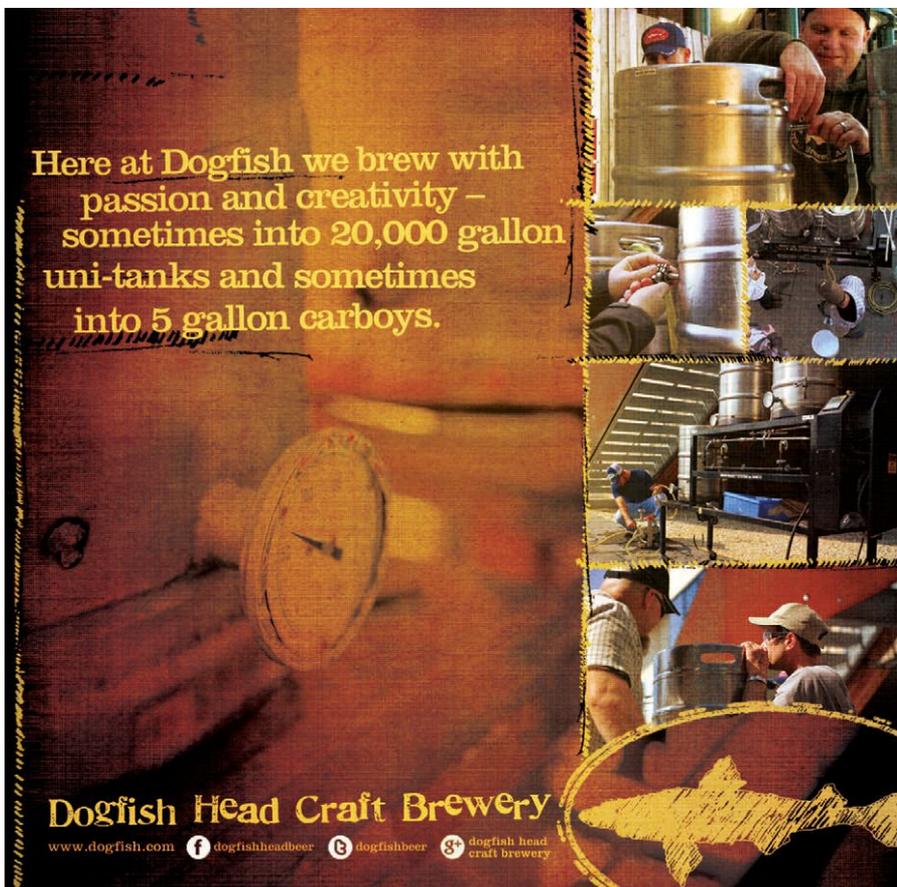
I normally ferment both beers at 68° F (20° C) for two weeks. I raise the temperature of the saison to 78° F (26° C) for a few days to ensure it finishes with the signature saison dryness.

I like to secondary the beers for at least a couple more weeks to help them clear. I normally keg the "regular" pumpkin beer (Pocahontas Pumpkin Ale) for tapping at Thanksgiving dinner. I also add a bit more pumpkin pie spice at kegging—usually one teaspoon will do. For the pumpkin saison (Saison D'Potiron), I bottle condition it, as I do with most of my Belgian beers, and do not add any more spices to it.

I've also included an imperial pumpkin recipe I did last year, called The Great Pumpkin. The techniques for the mash and spicing are the same, but it will require a bigger quantity of some hardy yeast, as it will have to work very hard.

The Pocahontas Pumpkin Ale is a fun beer to have around for the holidays. It can be fun to serve it in a glass rimmed with brown sugar. It is always popular and pairs well with fun pumpkin desserts such as pumpkin crême brûlée, pumpkin cheesecake, or even pumpkin flan (the best).

**Scott Jackson is a member of the KROC (Keg Ran Out Club) and Foam on the Range homebrew clubs in Colorado. He has been brewing for more than 20 years and is a National-level BJCP judge. He enjoys brewing all types of beers from lagers to ales, but his favorite style to brew is saison.** 



Here at Dogfish we brew with passion and creativity – sometimes into 20,000 gallon uni-tanks and sometimes into 5 gallon carboys.

**Dogfish Head Craft Brewery**  
www.dogfish.com  dogfishheadbeer  dogfishbeer  dogfishheadcraftbrewery



**ST. LOUIS**  
WINE & BEERMAKING



Item	Price
5 Gallon Brewable Kit	\$49.99
Brewery Kit, American Amber Ale	\$39.99
Home Brewing Equipment	\$163.99
5 Gallon Brewable Kit, Raspberry Lager	\$139.99
Home Brewing Equipment	\$99.99

**Free Shipping  
September  
&  
October**

**On orders over \$50**

Use Checkout Promo Code: **Zymurgy913**

**wineandbeermaking.com**

Blichmann Products dropshipped free. Some restrictions apply: no bottles or carboys