

## BREWERY GUIDE

# Brewing a fine beer involves equal parts art and science

BY L.M. SMITH

Special to the Record-Eagle

Thankfully, the low-brow targeting of beer commercials does not reflect the incredible amount of work and craft required to make a brew. If it did, we wouldn't see scantily clad girls argue the classic "great taste/less filling" debate or watch a dog retrieve a can

from the fridge.

No, ads that truly reflected the amount of work, precision and expertise required to brew a fine beer would go over our TV-watching heads — much like the process of microbrewing itself.

Mike Dwyer, brewmaster at Mackinaw Brewing Co., is meticulous, calculating and intense as he looms over a

couple hundred pounds of grain. You can see the wheels turning in his head as grain amounts, water temperatures and the day's agenda rattle around his brain.

Today, and over the course of the next seven to 10 days, 400 pounds of grain and 290 gallons of water, with the help of an English-designed brewhouse and a highly skilled brewmaster, will be transformed into one of Mackinaw's microbrews — in this case, London Bitter.

The grain (a top-grade milled barley), which tastes strangely similar to grape nuts, is sitting around in massive bags. Dwyer is getting ready to load it into the crusher. From there, it will siphon into the mash tun, where the crushed grain meets boiling water.

The cereal-like mash releases the wort (pronounced "wert"), a sugary sweet, tea-like liquid with a color similar to the final brew.

Dwyer ambles around the front room of Mackinaw Brewing (yes, the room you can see from the street). His water temperatures are in order, and now he checks the temperature for the mash tun.

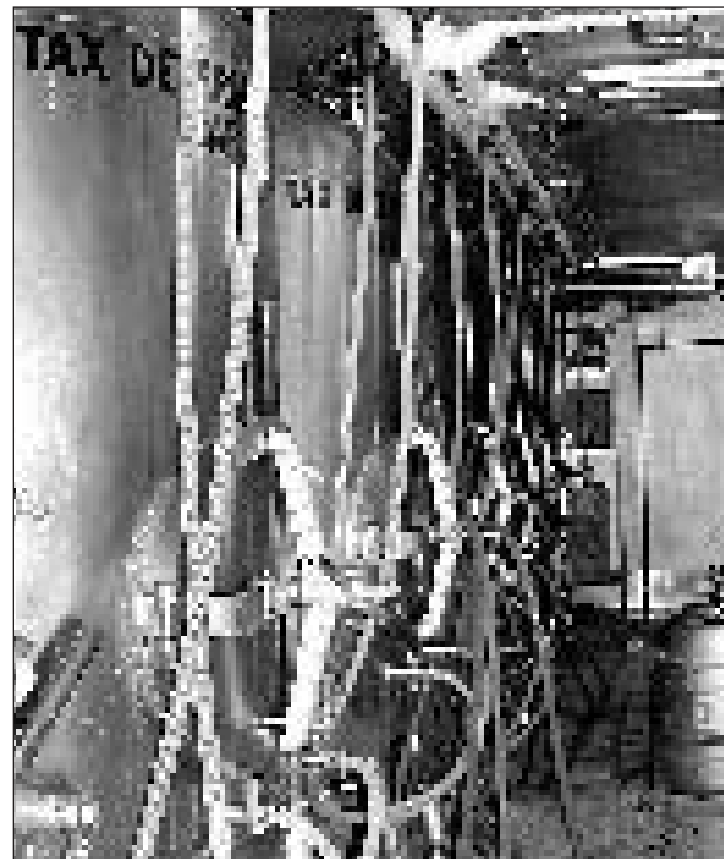
"Any sound or smell that is out of the ordinary usually means trouble," Dwyer says. When you see his eyes dart from the mash tun to the grain and to the water levels and temperature, it's clear Dwyer is in his element.

"Once it gets too hot to touch, it's about right," says Dwyer from the floor, where water pours out of the mash tun on to his hand. When



Record-Eagle/Jim Bovin

**Brewmaster Mike Dwyer checks the quality of the beer at Mackinaw Brewing Co. in Traverse City.**



Record-Eagle/Andy Taylor-Fabe

**Above: Hundreds of gallons of beer are stored in the basement of Mackinaw Brewing Co. The brewery can have up to 11 beers on tap. Left: Dwyer examines the grain that he will use to make a batch of English Bitter.**



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