

The Yankee Beer Swap — ‘Tis (Almost) the Season

So you're done trick or treating, you've eaten more Sugar Babies than should be physically possible and now you're curled up on the couch cursing your over-indulgence and trying to ignore the sharp pain in your stomach by reading this article. It's ok, we've all been there. When the Pepto takes hold and the pain subsides it's time to turn your attention from raising the dead and inhaling pixie sticks to the long winter ahead and the season of giving. I may be biased, but I can't think of a better gift than beer.

This year, I'm not going to tell you what beer to get, but instead I will share with you a tradition I started a few years ago. The Yankee Beer Swap. For those of you who are already familiar with a Yankee Swap, you can skip ahead to the mix-a-six section secure in the knowledge that it is a standard swap but with beer instead. Real creative, huh?

For the rest of you, a Yankee Swap is a wonderful holiday party game where the spirit of giving is carefully balanced with the art of taking. At a Yankee Swap, each participant brings a wrapped gift for nobody in particular and under a previously decided cost limit. The host then puts a number for each guest in a hat, leftover pumpkin pail, or whatever is the most handy container. Each guest will then draw a number out of the hat, which will decide the order in which they get the beers. [PSA: Don't forget to have plenty of liquid cheer on hand while all this is happening.]

In rounds, starting with number 1, guests can take one present of their choice and open it. It is usually expected that the guest will show their loot to the other guests. The next guest to take a turn can decide to take [forced trade] someone else's already opened present or keep their own. There's only a few rules. 1. The first guest to pick gets to make the last swap after everyone else has opened their gifts and made their choice. So the first guest is usually the best number to get. 2. A single gift can only be taken two or three times. That's it! Oh, and no whining.

This whole scheme works great with regular presents and even better with rare and desirable beers. For example, a 6-pack of Heady Topper from Alchemist would probably be the most traded gift and may even start a fight. Conversely, a really terrible beer or Smirnoff ice could start a riot, but it makes an excellent gag. Just make sure you have the real gift close by. I used a gag gift before — a Heineken Light bottle that had a rusty cap and had been sitting in my fridge for an unknown amount of time — and unknowingly crushed my friend's spirits. The whole room was outraged someone would give such a gift.

If you're going to do this type of event make sure your guests love beer, or at least appreciate it. You could always do wine or liquor if you're not in the beer loving crowd. But then why are you reading this article?

Mix-A-Six:

1. Doherty's Ale House in Warwick will host a Sam Adams Utopias dinner on January 27 at 6:30pm (this is a rescheduled date). They will have a sample of every Utopia ever made as well as a mystery beer. One of the head brewers from Sam Adams will be on hand to talk about the beers. Call the Ale House to purchase tickets.

2. Bucket Brewery Released 9 Men's Misery, their new Imperial IPA, on November 1. The beer weighs in at a hefty 7.6% and is commemorative of battle in King Phillips war 1676. It also has 10 hop additions to commemorate the colonists involved in the conflict.
3. Crooked Current had a successful soft opening just before Halloween. Grand opening will be coming soon.
4. Revival is getting their beers into bottles and onto store shelves around the state. Keep your eye out for Burnsider Pale Ale and in the coming weeks, Zeppelin.
5. Narragansett and Revival just announced a collaboration on a new Lovecraft Honey Ale.
6. RI Brewing Society will host a statewide homebrewers meeting on November 13 with representation from RIFT, JBREW and East Bay Homebrewer's clubs. All home brewers are welcome. ribrewingsociety.com