

THE BIG LEBOWSKI WHITE PRUSSIAN

original recipe by Rich Higgins at Social Kitchen & Brewery

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Originally brewed at Social Kitchen & Brewery for Strong Beer Social 2011, The Big Lebowski was released on February 1, 2011, and it quickly became my most popular and cult-iest beer. It's two beverages in one — one one hand, it's a nerdy, esoteric beer style re-envisioned as a contemporary strong beer, an "imperialized" grätzer (a Polish and Prussian smoked, sour beer; *grodziskie* in Polish). On the other hand, it's my attempt to redeem a fairly ridiculous (but sinfully delicious) cocktail by capturing its essence in really tasty beer. And if you have a Big Lebowski in both hands, you've got the beginnings of a quite a night.

The super talented and passionate guys that run Bicycle Coffee Roasters — sourcers and roasters of delicious, organic, fair-trade coffee beans, and who deliver them on bike to all their clients and retailers — got their start a block away from SKB, so they were obviously the folks I wanted to source my coffee from for the Big Lebowski. Sitting down with Bicycle co-founder Brad Butler, watching him roll his eyes as I brewed his amazing beans on SKB's terrible Bunn drip machine and then diluting this stuff with my sweet beer, was pretty hilarious. (Kahlua's not really known for it's coffee connoisseur tasting notes.) But I still feel a little bad that I dumbed down his amazing coffee by adding it to a sweet beer to recreate Kahlua.

Just like a White Russian cocktail, this beer is slightly sweet, slightly coffeeish, nice and alcoholic, light in color, full-bodied (from malt dextrins and proteins), and cloudy (with kolsch yeast, which is a terrible flocculator).

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ORIGINAL MENU TEXT

The Big Lebowski White Prussian \$7

When it's time to brew something that's over the line, why not brew a beer inspired by The Dude's favorite cocktail, the White Russian? For our experiment, we brewed an old-school, unfiltered German ale called a grätzer, but the German is not the issue here. We upped its alcohol, left a little residual sugar in it, and switched out the grätzer's smoked malts for coffee roasted by our friends at Bicycle Coffee Roasters. That coffee's interesting, man. It really ties the brew together.

original gravity 21.0 degrees Plato · 15 bitterness units · 9.0 percent alcohol by volume

ANALYTICAL TARGETS

- OG: 20.5° P
- FG: <4.0° P
- Attenuation: 80.5%
- IBU: 12
- ABV: >9.0%

BREWING LIQUOR

San Francisco tap water*, unfiltered, with no additions of salts or acids

MALT BILL AND MASHING

- 91.75% Organic Pale 2-Row (1.8° L)
- 4.25% C15 (15° L)
- 4.25% Weyermann Melanoidin (27° L)
- Single infusion mash at 156 deg F

KETTLE BOIL AND HOPPING

- Total of 60-minute boil
- 60 mins: German Magnum (14.5% AA) - I used T90 pellets
- No flavor or aroma hops

YEAST

- GigaYeast Altstadt strain, or any other well-attenuating, low-ester Kölsch yeast
- you want very high viability of your yeast and good aeration of the wort
- consider pitching a high cell count — this is a big wort that you want good attenuation on and this is not supposed to be an ester-driven beer

FERMENTATION AND AGING

- 75-80 deg F (a hot fermentation, so as to increase attenuation and fusels)
- lager long enough for all the sulfur to dissipate

FINING/FILTRATION

None -- leave it somewhat hazy to make it seem more cream-based-cocktail-esque: milky-looking and creamy-feeling

ADDITIONS: Brewed Drip Coffee

- the goal is to impart coffee flavor and aroma without altering the color of the beer — keep the beer light in color, just like a White Russian
- amount: to taste; but it'll probably be approximately 4.5%-5.0% of the volume of the final blended Lebowski (the blend will be 95%-95.5% beer, 4.5%-5.0% coffee)
- how I brewed it: medium-roast beans brewed in the restaurant's Bunn filter machine
- add after fermentation, as close to date of service/drinking as possible, in case the coffee acts as a fining (which it can to an extent, increasing the clarity of the beer)

PAIRING RECOMMENDATIONS

white chocolate, bacon, peaches, pork

* San Francisco's tap water comes straight from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park, where the Tuolumne River was dammed in 1915 as a reaction to watching the City's fire hydrants drip dry while the city burned for three days after the 1906 earthquake. It was and still is a hotly contested dam and of dubious necessity, but it was a pork project that benefits San Francisco breweries to this day. Its pH tends to be about 7.0-8.0 pH, and is just soft enough to not bring a lot of minerals or salts to the party but hard enough that your hands don't feel slimy when you try to rinse them after you wash 'em. The City adds chloramine to it for sanitation, which probably affects the mash a bit in ways I don't claim to understand, but all the chloramine boils off during the boil.