



## AROUND THE BEND

JUDY  
STEFFES

### Taste test of Lithia

A private taste test was held Wednesday afternoon at West Bend Mutual Insurance Co. as the first batch of Lithia beer was sampled.

"I made five gallons," said Riverside Brewmaster Christopher George, who is working with Gunter Woog to bring the beer back to the community.

A quick and dirty preview is how George described the taste test. Early reviews indicated the beer had a less malty but grainier flavor, significant bitterness and a lot of hop flavor.

"People tell me the original Lithia had a very bitter taste, a very sharp brew; however I think we've arrived at a light, easy drinking, but flavorful beer," said George, whose initial attempt at Lithia was admittedly made without using the actual recipe.

"We had the brew records and that gave me an idea of where to start; I formulated something and we went from there."

George said he knew the amount of hops, yet not the specific kind of hops.

"I used hallortauer, which is a noble hop with low acid, but provides a good bitterness and flavor, similar to typical German beers such as Hacker-Pschorr," he said.

Other differences in the brewing process included letting the beer ferment for just two weeks and not using water with a lithium base.

"It was lighter than anticipated but that's something we'll address in the big run," said George, who plans on adjusting the body of the beer and adding significantly more malt.

Although George now has the benefit of a recipe, he said the process is still going to be a challenge.

"I'm trying to reproduce something that people know. Lithia had a following," said George, acknowledging things are different than they were in the 1940s.

"West Bend was a commercial brewery; they were brewing in 150 barrel batches specifically for bottling. They had equipment I don't have. I know there are ways to compensate but I'm trying to produce something I've never tasted."

Next week, George will begin brewing 28 half barrels of Lithia. Woog hopes to have the beer available by summer and West Bend Mutual wants to have the beer on tap for the grand opening of its new expansion in May.

*Judy Steffes is a West Bend resident. Her column runs on Saturday in the Daily News.*