

**BACTRACK BREATHALYZER**

I'm all for toting personal breathalyzers as a responsible move, but there's no denying a bit of gadget novelty mixed in with the noble pursuit of public safety. How can one resist showing off a pocket-sized lump of sophisticated modern technology that can display boozitude via digital readout? Exactly. Herein lies the appeal of one strong contender: BACTRACK, pure sleekness for the soused.

It's probably one of the rare instances that 'sexy' and 'blood alcohol content' can be used in the same context. Roughly resembling a 'personal massager' in form, the shiny plastic casing is lightweight and slightly curvilinear. Pop in two AA batteries, press the single button on the front for several seconds, and be mesmerized by its fancy calibration: blue luminescent rings radiate like glowing ears from the breath tunnel as an LED display counts down to the precise moment for blowing.

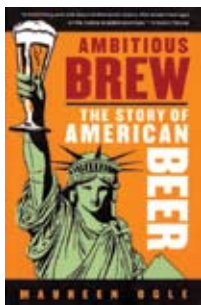
But what comes next is strictly business, a tricky maneuver in exhaling closely, broadly and extensively for five endless seconds. Although this thing goes to 0.40% BAC (an enclosed chart handily informs that you should be comatose or dead by that point), the readout is only as accurate as your following the rules: Waiting 20 minutes after eating, drinking or smoking, and blowing into the device properly. To avoid lameness at all costs, all I can say is that you'd be best performing sober dress rehearsals. You definitely don't want to be fumbling with the paper instructions come blow moment, thereby sucking any semblance of sex from your glossy, glowing sidekick.



[\$79.99, available at [bactrack.com](http://bactrack.com)]

**AMBITIOUS BREW: THE STORY OF AMERICAN BEER**  
BY MAUREEN OGLE (HARCOURT)

The history of American beer, as Maureen Ogle explains in her introduction, could easily be reduced into simple timeline points: Ye olde local artisan breweries, the damning squelch of Prohibition, emergence of corporate money-grubbing breweries, the preponderance of thin yellow cheap stuff, and the reactive generation of modern craft microbreweries from which we enjoy today. However, we all know history—with a peculiar serendipity of characters and happenstances—is far more complex (and interesting) than expected.



Ogle writes in rich narrative, with imagery so imaginative and lively that it's almost as engaging as film. However, be prepared for some nuggets of eyebrow-raising flamboyance like, "Milwaukee behaved like a living creature, a boisterous infant to be precise, whose insatiable appetite fueled seam-ripping growth."

Sixteen pages of black and white photographs and visuals occupy a signature wedged between chapters four ("The Enemy at the Gates") and five ("Happy Days?"). You can pore over the pleasantries of historical documents like a smug 1890 portrait of Adolphus "I am an eternal optimist" Busch, the horrific truth of civilian prohibitionists dumping and demolishing illegal brew, and a youthful, grinning Jim Koch double-fisting in front of the White House in 1987.

[\$25 hardcover, \$15 paperback]

**BEER MUG CANDLES**

Whether it's an alarming truth or not, there is always an occasion for candles: birthday cakes, bathroom décor, blackouts. Yet what better type of candle for Beer Advocates than ones shaped uncannily like brew mugs? These miniature glowing beauties (a boxed set makes for a perfect hostess gift) come in real glass-handled cups, with clear golden gel wax topped with clustered white bits resembling a head of foam. And in true form, they appear all boisterously a-froth.

A tiny wick emerging from each inch-high mug invites you to ignite the passion that only beer can provide. And as you can predict, flames licking skyward give these brews some extra bad-boy oomph. It's guaranteed that everyone at your next brew party who spots these suckers on fire will be secretly seething with envy and desire. But you—you!—will be the victor, the investor of great taste, the Martha Stewart of beer-related novelty embellishment.

Cheers to that.

[\$11.95 (set of 6), available at [Papyrus.com](http://Papyrus.com)]



*Christine Liu loves respecting a good beer, especially when it happens to match her shoes. When not slurping—and photographing—a bowl of spicy noodles, find her canvassing Boston's lifestyle scene and taking her Macbook out for a walk.*