Agri Articles
(e-Magazine for Agricultural Articles)
Volume: 03, Issue: 01 (JAN-FEB, 2023)
Available online at http://www.agriarticles.com
©Agri Articles, ISSN: 2582-9882

The Magic of Malting: How Barley Transforms into Malt

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Abstract
Barley is a versatile grain that has been used for centuries in the production of beer, whiskey, and other distilled spirits. The process of malting is a crucial step in converting barley into malt, which is essential for the production of these beverages. Malting is a natural process that involves the controlled germination of barley grains, followed by drying and roasting. During malting, barley grains are soaked in water and allowed to germinate, which activates enzymes that break down the starches in the grain into sugars. The germinated grains are then dried and roasted to create different types of malt, each with its unique flavor and color profile. The level of roasting determines the color and flavor of the malt, with lighter malts being used for lighter beers and darker malts used for darker beers and whiskeys. The malting process also increases the nutritional value of barley by increasing its protein content and reducing its carbohydrate content. Additionally, the enzymes produced during malting are used in the brewing process to convert the malt sugars into alcohol.

Introduction
Barley is the most important raw material used for malting from ancient times. Generally hulled barley is used for malting purpose because it helps in infiltration during brewing as well as prevent growing acrospire during malting. Malting is complex and controlled process of inducing barley grains for germination and then halting it at the desired point through a controlled drying process. This results in the production of malt, which is an important ingredient in brewing purposes as well as in pharmaceuticals and confectionery. During malting, the barley grain undergoes a series of chemical and enzymatic changes that are crucial to the brewing process. Overall, malting is a critical step in the beer-making process and is responsible for producing the essential ingredients needed to create the rich, complex flavors of many popular beers.

Process of Malting: The process involves the following three steps as shown in Figure 1.
Steeping: The barley grains are soaked in water to increase moisture content and trigger germination. The barley grains are steeped in water with continuous aeration and moisture content increased up to 45%. Higher content of moisture with proper aeration is required for germination.
Germination: The moist barley grains are allowed to germinate, which activates enzymes that will later convert the starches in the grain to sugars. Most important enzymes like alpha and beta amylase are activated and hydrolysed the starch into sugars.

Kilning: The germinated grains are dried in a kiln, which stops the germination process and imparts flavor and color to the malt. During kilning process moisture content reduced up to 4% by increasing the temperature.

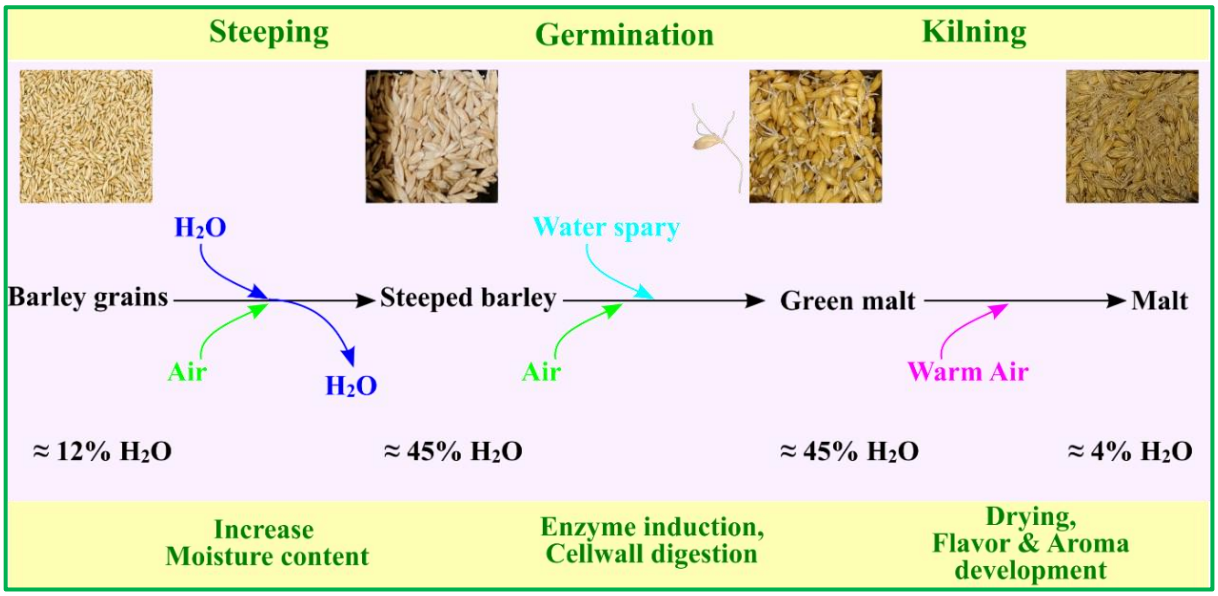

Figure 1. Schematic representation of malting process.

Biochemical Changes during Malting

During malting, the barley grain undergoes a series of chemical and enzymatic changes that are crucial to the brewing process.

Enzymatic Modification: Barley contains enzymes that are essential for the brewing process, but these enzymes are not active in raw barley. During malting, enzymes are produced that will be used to break down complex carbohydrates, beta-glucan and proteins into simpler compounds.

***Starch degradation*:** Starch is the most important compound of barley grain that accounts around 55-75% of grain weight. During malting only 20% of starch is degraded rest of starch hydrolyzed during mashing process. This process is called saccharification and is a key step in the beer-making process. Starch content and structure are major contributors to malt yield as well as quality of malt. The heating process causes the starch in the malt to gelatinize, making it more accessible to enzymes during brewing. The enzymes alpha-amylases and beta-amylases breaks down starch molecules into smaller sugars such as glucose, maltose and maltotriose.

Protein degradation: The enzymes protease and peptidase break down proteins into smaller peptides and amino acids. These compounds will be used by the yeast during fermentation and can also contribute to the flavor and aroma of the finished beer. Around 40% of proteins is degraded in this process. For malting purposes 9-11% protein is desirable. Higher content of protein creates haze in the final product and deteriorates the quality.

Beta-glucan: The enzyme beta-glucanase is degrades the beta-glucan into tri and tetrasaccharides. Most of the beta-glucan around 90% degraded during the malting process. Barley genotypes that have ≤4% beta-glucan content is suitable for malting purpose. Higher content of β-glucan s poses a problem in proper modification of endosperm. Further higher grain β-glucan content makes the wort more viscous leading to a lower filtration rate. The components of grain β-glucan also led to deterioration in beer quality.

The overall changes that occur during malting are crucial to the brewing process, as they create the necessary enzymes and sugars for fermentation, as well as contribute to the flavor and aroma of the finished beer.

Properties of Final Product

Malt plays a crucial role in the brewing process, as it provides the fermentable sugars, flavor, and color that are essential to the final product. Around 60% of malt used in brewing and rest is used in distillation and confectionary.

Color development: The Maillard reaction, which is a chemical reaction between amino acids and reducing sugars, results in the development of the characteristic color, flavor and aroma of the malt. Lightly kilned malts will have a lighter color while heavily kilned malts will have a darker color.

Fermentable Sugars: The enzymes that are developed during the malting process convert the starches in the malt into fermentable sugars i.e., glucose, maltose, maltotriose. These sugars are then consumed by yeast during the fermentation process, which produces alcohol and carbon dioxide.

Flavor: The malt also contributes to the flavor profile of the beer. The type of malt, the degree of kilning, and the brewing process all impact the flavor of the final product. For example, lightly kilned malts tend to produce sweeter beers, while darker malts can produce more complex flavors.

Mouthfeel: The proteins and carbohydrates in the malt also contribute to the mouthfeel of the beer. These components can give the beer a smooth, creamy texture or a more full-bodied feel.

Conclusion

Malting and brewing involve a series of modifications that transform raw barley grains into the final product of beer. Enzymatic modifications such as starch and protein degradation, and physical modifications such as color development and starch gelatinization occur during malting, while enzymatic modifications such as sugar conversion and alcohol production, and physical modifications such as hop addition and clarification occur during brewing. Understanding these modifications is essential for producing high-quality beer. Malt is an essential ingredient in the brewing process, and the type and quality of the malt can greatly impact the flavor and quality of the final product.