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Spent grains — making their way into crackers, pretzels, cookies — have never tasted so good



Makers of Brewer's Crackers use spent grains from Lamplighter Brewing Co.

NORTH HAMPTON, N.H. — Enter Throwback Brewery’s large white barn, which houses both its restaurant and beer-making facility, and you’re quickly enveloped in the boisterous atmosphere and sweet, malty-yeasty aromas. Fifteen beers are on tap, with a variety also represented on the food menu. Chef Carrie Dahlgren not only cooks with beer, but often incorporates the brewery’s primary byproduct: spent grain.

Dahlgren adds the chewy nubs (mostly barley) to the dough for sandwich bread, burger buns, and German-style pretzel knots. “It’s a way to tie into the brewery other than just using the beer,” she says. The chef also dries spent grain and grinds it into coarse flour which she uses in the pub’s chocolate chip cookies. “It gives a richer, toastier flavor that pairs well with the dark chocolate,” she says.

In the beer-making process, very simply, crushed malted barley and sometimes other grains, such as wheat and rye, are soaked in hot water (a process called mashing), which converts the grains’ starches into fermentable sugars. The liquid, called wort, is drained off and continues through a number of steps, including the addition of hops and yeast, to ferment and become beer. The grain becomes a waste product typically used for animal feed.

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