

Binge drinking: Are you guilty?

Many USC students classified as binge drinkers

JEANNE GREELEY Staff Writer

College weekends begin Thursdays, but the drinking usually starts long before. Weekends and weekdays blur together as students find excuses to head down to Five Points.

Monday night football. Tuesday night bands at Elbow Room. Wednesday 25-cent-draft night, and before you know it...it's Thursday again.

Hangovers are remedied with a nice buzz, remaining faithful to the ancient tale that a stiff drink is the best answer for a sorry head. The spontaneous swearing of "I'll never drink again" is usually drowned with the next evening's festivities, and realization often doesn't set in until your father calls wondering "what's a Jungle Jim?"

So how bad have college students become? Are USC students no more than bar mongrels and liquor fiends? Or are students simply infamous "social drinkers"?

Would most college students ever go as far as to label themselves "binge drinkers"?

All the students asked this question responded unanimously and adamantly, "No." Many students equate binge drinking with binge eating, seeing it as some sort of psychological or social problem. However, it was obvious most were unclear of the definition of a binge drinker.

According to Rick Gant, coordinator of Student Life Programs, binge drinking is "having five or more servings of alcohol in one sitting."

According to an anonymous survey conducted by the Office of Alcohol and Drug Programs, 46 percent of USC students say they never have done binge drinking.

The students interviewed must fall in the other 54 percent because many students in the survey admitted they qualified as binge drinkers.

Matt, a sophomore, initially said he wouldn't consider himself a binge drinker, seeing that as "someone who drinks constantly; who has to be drinking."

Yet after hearing the definition, he said, "I'm definitely a binge drinker."

"A binge drinker is 'someone who drinks and goes overboard. I'm a social drinker,'" a junior said. She later said, "Yes, I would consider myself a binge drinker."

One senior said if a binge drinker was someone who only had five drinks in one sitting, she is "a psycho-kamikaze drinker."

Gant reported 10 percent to 12 percent of college students nationwide abstain from using alcohol. At USC, 22 percent of students abstain.

Gant groups students who drink into two risk categories.

The first category contains long term risks, such as physical addiction, increased tolerance and impairment of abstract-thinking ability.

The second risk category consists of alcohol-related impairment problems. These could range from driving under the influence convictions to violence to relationship conflicts.

So what's the solution? There isn't one.

College students have drunk in the past, drink now and will most likely continue to drink in the future. The only thing that seems to change is the sophistication with which students drink. Where once students were forced to stick keys into beer cans in order to "shotgun," they now have the convenience of a wide variety of funnels, shot glasses and the "Jungle Bucket" in Five Points.

After all, much of the attraction of binge drinking is its link to sociability. This sentiment was voiced most eloquently by one USC student who said, "The whole point of Five Points is social, but I drink to get f---d up!"

According to an anonymous survey conducted by the Office of Alcohol and Drug Programs, 46 percent of USC students say they never have done binge drinking.

Ideas for gifts on a small budget

COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

The holiday shopping season is here, and for most students, that means opening a pencil-thin wallet to buy presents for loved ones.

"Anything I can't afford is going on my credit card," said Maureen Golga, 21, a DePaul University junior. "So I'll just be paying it off the rest of my life, along with my student loans."

Stop right there! Presents for family, friends and even your favorite profs don't have to cost a fortune. With only a few dollars and lots of creativity, you can give someone a fabulous present.

"To make the ultimate cheap gift, go to a coin store and get coins that have a hole in them," suggested Adrienne Harvey, 19, a sophomore at Stetson University in Florida.

Buy different colored silk cords and make necklaces.

"It'll only put you out \$5-\$10, and you can make them all different to give to all of your friends," Harvey said.

Jason Buehler, 19, a Miami University of Ohio freshman, offers two words of advice for holiday shopping: thrift store.

"For the past two years, I've gotten people things from the thrift store," he said. "Thrift stores are the absolute best places to get gifts. Even if it's dumb, they'll laugh."

Shannon MacLaughlan, 29, a Stetson junior, said she fills small baskets with tins of flavored coffee or cocoa.

"They are inexpensive to make, and you can even use stockings instead of baskets," MacLaughlan said. "They

make great gifts for relatives and extended family members."

It's all good advice for those students whose generous impulses might leave them with a depleted bank account come the New Year.

According to a recent Gallup poll, the average shopper expects to spend about \$800 on presents this holiday season.

Of course, that forecast comes from a poll of 1,009 consumers with a mean income of \$32,730. Most college students, even those with full-time jobs, don't earn nearly that much.

Maxine Sweet, vice president of consumer education for Experian, a credit information services company, offers tips for students short on cash.

First, to save extra money for holiday shopping, "consider skipping those costly snacks from vending machines," she suggested. "Think about other treats like video rental and magazines that you can do without...in the spirit of holiday giving."

Also, "an act of kindness is worth more than any holiday gift money can buy," she said. "Look at your gift-giving list. Would an elderly relative rather have a room painted or a garage cleaned than a cheese-of-the-world assortment pack?"

A student might offer free babysitting services to an older sister or brother with young children, she said.

And just spending time with your family can be a great gift. "It doesn't cost a cent, and it makes the season truly special," she said.

Golga, of DePaul, said she always has that idea in mind when she tells

her parents she'll take them out to dinner as a gift.

"I take them some place where they have gift certificates, and so I just buy the drinks," she said. "But they just like that I spend time with them because I'm never home."

For friends, Golga said she will probably give her old standby: candles. "They're always cheap. I always buy my friends candles," she said. "They're probably sick of it."

DePaul senior Jason Brown, 23, ticks off all the people on his shopping list: "My folks, my brother, my sister-in-law, my other brother, my next-door neighbors. Then I have my girlfriend, and her folks and her brother."

Brown works full-time at a mountain outfitter store. "I make decent money," he said. "Most of the gifts I buy are from my store, so I get, like, 70 percent off. So that's a little easier."

A good gift idea, he said, is a subscription to a beer-of-the-month club. "You can pay the first couple of months, then they can pay if they want to keep it up," he said.

Melissa Morris, 21, a Miami senior, said she likes to give gift certificates.

"You can always give gift certificates to music stores, like a \$5 one," she said. "Then they can go buy a CD, and it will be real cheap."

Even with a host of inexpensive gift ideas, holiday shopping is still out of the question for some college students.

"I don't think I'm going to do any this year. I have no money," said James McArthur, 21, a student at Wright Community College in Chicago.

"The greatest gift is no gift at all."

HEY GAMECOCKS

The Gamecock is looking for section editors, assistant editors, photographers, graphics editors and copy editors for the spring of 1997. Sign up for an interview in The Gamecock newsroom, RH 333. Interviews will be held Wednesday-Friday. The Gamecock. Take our word.

Then dive into
Internet access with
a free trial from
AT&T WorldNetSM Service.

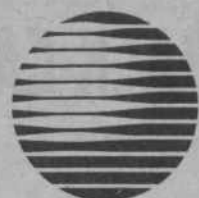


Life's a day at the virtual beach if you're an AT&T long distance customer. 'Cause we give you the first 5 hours of Internet access free every month for a whole year with AT&T WorldNet Service. Or get unlimited Internet access for just \$19.95 a month.*

AT&T WorldNet Service makes the Net easy to access and easy to use.

It's updated daily and comes complete with leading search directories and global e-mail. And the software is free!

This is a limited-time offer, so call now.
1 800 654-0471, ext. 32189



AT&T
Your True Choice

<http://www.att.com/college>