



Sail & Anchor

Join the words *March* and *beer* together in a sentence and what might come to mind is a drink that's quaffable and refreshing – something more likely to quench thirst than inspire thought. But that's not all there is to beer: a growing number of micro-breweries are crafting innovative options which will arouse the taste buds and fire the imagination. Anyone for chocolate ale?

text Anthony Williams

# for the love of beer

**western** Australia's warmer months will bring on a parched throat in all but the hardiest souls and an ice-cold beer is the commonly prescribed remedy. But are we selling the world of ales and lagers short by regarding them merely as thirst quenchers?

For the brewers lovingly hand-crafting beer in WA's micro-breweries, the answer is a resounding "yes". Passionate about their work, these brewers are producing a diverse range of fresh, local products that will open your eyes and palate to the possibilities of beer.

The micro-brewing industry has exploded in WA over recent years. Ten years ago, local micro-breweries could be counted with a single finger but now a full two hands are required. Another couple are in the pipeline and expected to open by the end of the year.

According to **Sail & Anchor** head brewer Peter Nolin, the resurgence in the craft of brewing beer is a response to the mass-produced product of large breweries and reflects a pattern in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany.

"They are not meant to take over from the big

breweries and mainstream products. What they do is round out the range of beer available to people," he says.

"Beer is a spectrum of different products with different colours, flavours, textures, aromas, and it all reflects traditional styles of brewing... the complexity that can be found in wine can be found in beer as well."

The Sail & Anchor is a landmark on Fremantle's South Terrace and an essential port on call on the micro-brewery tour. It was originally set up by the Matilda Bay Brewing Company (then known as Brewtech) in 1984 and was taken over by Carlton and United in 1990.

Peter has been brewing at "The Sail" for almost four years, having developed an interest in micro-brewing in his native United States. He moved to Australia in the early '90s with a desire to learn more. "We offer unique styles of beer, we try to brew true to style, we try to brew a complex product and we only use the four basic ingredients of beer, which are water, malt, hops and yeast," he says. "In doing so, the idea is to offer our local community a fresh, complex, craft-produced product."

Using an English-style, deep-infusion mash brewery, Peter and fellow brewer Bill Hoedemaker produce a permanent range of five beers – India Pale Ale, Iron Brew, Strong Ale, Brass Monkey Stout, Anchor Light, and Queens Special Bitter. They also offer a "special", which gives them the opportunity to explore different styles of specialty beer such as Chilli Beer, Chocolate Bock and Oktoberbrau Lager.

The small scale of the Sail & Anchor's micro-brewery gives Peter and Bill the flexibility to produce such a wide range of beers – all fresh and exclusively on tap at the pub. A number of Sail & Anchor brews have taken out Australian International Beer Awards and the long-term popularity of the Seven Seas Real Ale saw it become a mass-produced Matilda Bay product late last year.

Ian Jeffrey, the passionate brew master and director of **Inchant Brewing Company**, is also intent on widening the range of beers available here in Perth.

Previously a graphic designer and keen home brewer, Ian came up with the brewery concept more than six years ago and created the bull-ant logo which now adorns the company's flagship ale, the

# bestbeers

## SAIL & ANCHOR

### IRON BREW STRONG ALE (7 per cent)

Head brewer Peter Nolin: "A strong ale, very high in gravity. It is seven per cent alcohol by volume but it's an incredibly complex beer. It has lots of berry fruit notes to it, it has a nice 'hoppiness' to it, it's very well balanced, but it's a big beer. It's more akin to a big red wine."

## INCHANT BREWING COMPANY

### BULLANT BITTER (5.5 per cent)

Brew master Ian Jeffrey: "The flagship and also the most popular... A Munich-style German beer, so it's very sweet. It is a dark beer, a coppery amber, very malty, but the hop finishes at the end. We use three hops in that, and they are select European hops."

## DARLING RANGE BREWING COMPANY

### PILSNER (4.8 per cent)

Head brewer Jan Bruckner: "A golden lager, a full-bodied beer because we are using 100 per cent malt. It's a very fine, aromatic, bitter beer and it's

slightly higher carbonated, which is how the original pilsner was made. Crispy and spicy, the crispness from malt and the spice from Czech Zaas hops. Comes from Pils in the Czech Republic."

## DUCKSTEIN BREWERY -

### BOHEMIAN BLACK BEER (5 per cent)

Brewer Eric Massberg: "A black lager, it's not a stout and it's not like a Newcastle Brown. It's a bottom-fermented beer, which is bitter-hopped. It's an interesting mixture of the bitterness of a lager and the taste of a stout. Comes from an old German recipe."

## BOOTLEG BREWERY

### RAGING BULL (7.1 per cent)

Head brewer Gary Beale: "An English-style ale, a very old fashioned style, a really strong, dark, winter-type beer. It's not designed to be a drink that you would go mad and drink lots of. It's full of body, we use a lot of roast barley in it which gives it its dark colour. Definitely a beer to taste, not a thirst quencher as such."

Bullant Bitter. Inchant, which is located behind the Rose and Crown hotel in historic Guildford, has brewed for about 18 months now and currently produces five beers - Bullant Bitter, Bullant Light, Thomas Jecks, Guildford Porter and Bock Bier.

According to Ian, the brewery aims to offer "absolute difference in beer product" that acts as a complement to food in the same way as wine. He admits the products are more expensive than the standard brews but justifies this on the grounds that considerable time and effort goes into making them.

"A brewer always has to be happy, and I mean that sincerely," he says. "If you have a brewer who comes in and he's got the shits on, that's going to come out in your beer. If he just pushes a button, that's going to come out in your beer. But if he comes in and he enjoys it and he knows that what you are going to get is what he created - that's what we brew."

While Ian and the Inchant team use traditional brewing techniques, they certainly don't mind a little experimentation. Cinnamon, coriander, ginger, canola honey and orange peel are all additives in

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## the brewing *process*

### **step 1 – milling**

Most of beer's colour, flavour and alcohol comes from grain, usually barley or wheat. This grain is malted by soaking it in water and allowing it to sprout and release its sugars. Then it is dried in a kiln and the mill crushes the malt to grist.

### **step 2 – mash mixing**

The grist is combined with hot liquor (hot filtered and treated water) in a mixer and fed into a tun (a large beer cask) where the malt starches turn into malt sugars, otherwise known as sweet wort.

### **step 3 – boiling**

Grain husks are sieved out of the wort as it passes into and fills what is known as the brew kettle.

Here the wort is boiled with hops (vine flowers or

herbs that grow in colder climates) which add bitterness and character to the brew.

### **step 4 – fermentation**

Spent hops are filtered and the wort passes through a heat exchanger on its way to a fermentation vat. Yeast is added and fermentation occurs for three to 10 days – three for ales and 10 for lager.

### **step 5 – kegging**

The beer is placed in kegs and allowed to condition for another seven days. Finings (natural collagen proteins) are added to clear the yeast from the beer and rid of the need for filtration. From there, it is off to the pub cellar and the beer is ready to be served.

*\*Information supplied by Sail & Anchor Pub Brewery.*

T A K E   A   R E S T  
T R A N S P A R E N T   L I Q U I D  
O B S E R V E   O R   H U N T . . . . . ?



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one yet-to-be released beer. Ian jokes that the Guildford Porter is "the one where we put in everything bar the socks, and that's because we wear them". It contains ginger, licorice, molasses, four types of hops and "a lot of secret ingredients".

The Inchant Brewing Company has taken the bold and rather costly step of bottling its products. They are also on tap at the Rose and Crown, Guildford Hotel, Midland's Junction Hotel and Settlers House in York.

Alternatively, visitors are always welcome at the brewery. "We are the theatre of brewing," Ian says. "People come in and they want to see the brewer at work, the witch over the cauldron. 'What is he putting in, why is he doing this?' We very happily tell people. We want people to get the fragrances, we want people to see the action... without being involved physically, but involved. And that's what brewing is."

The art of craft-brewing is also alive and well in the hills close to Armadale, with the **Darling Range Brewing Company** nestled into the rustic, rural setting of the Elizabethan Village. The brewery was built about eight years ago by German Horst Kemf, who also built the Matilda Bay brewery in North Fremantle.

Using a brew house imported from Germany, head brewer Jan Bruckner creates three lagers (a pilsner, light lager and a dark beer or bock) and a German ale (wheat beer). He uses yeast cultures

imported from Germany, hops imported from Germany and his native Czech Republic, and a wealth of brewing knowledge gained from studying and working in the breweries of Prague.

Jan's award-winning beers are exclusively supplied to Perth's three Last Drop Inns (Kalamunda, Nedlands and Warnbro) and are also on tap at the Elizabethan Village Pub, each one brewed according to a traditional Czechoslovakian style.

"It's different to your standard commercial beers," Darling Range Brewing Company managing director Walter Lenz says of the fresh, preservative-free product. "It's a bit more full-bodied and we find that once people get used to drinking it, they don't want to go off it. Not that it's addictive but you can notice a difference in quality after drinking the boutique beer."

For a taste of authentic German beer culture look no further than the **Duckstein Brewery** on West Swan Road in Henley Brook. Owners Erich and Gisela Massberg have created a warm and friendly slice of Germany right here in Perth, combining traditional German brews and home-style meals.

Erich's range of five beers varies with the seasons but the Copper Ale and Classic Pils are always available, brewed fresh in 100 litre batches and to German purity law requirements (as are the Darling Range Brewing Company's range of beers). A Bohemian Black Beer and Rockstocker Red are

intended features for autumn.

Joining Inchant and the Duckstein in the Swan Valley is the **Ironbark Brewery**, scheduled to start brewing in March this year. Further afield there is the **Broome Brewery**, based at Matso's Restaurant in the State's north, and the **Black Stump Brewery** in Kalgoorlie. For those heading south, there is the **Bootleg Brewery** in Willyabrup, near Margaret River.

The Bootleg Brewery opened its doors in November 1994, with owner Tom Reynolds seeing plenty of room for a brewery among the many wineries in the region. Head brewer Gary Beale produces five staple beers, including the award-winning Light, Bitter and Raging Bull (the brewery's benchmark beer), and also brews regular "specials". This includes the Chocolate or Milky Stout which Tom expects will be ready for March. "People come down and they are used to what they have," he says "but they can also try something a bit different again".

And that's the point. Micro-breweries are not seeking to steal people away from the mainstream beers. They simply offer an another option – a fresh, pure, hand-crafted, local alternative. The brewers agree that beer does not travel well, and with these character-filled micro-breweries and their outlets only a hop (pardon the pun), step or jump away, it's time we explored. ★