



# liquid meal

Thought sustagen and smoothies were the only available meals in a glass? Wheat beers are a lip smacking alternative.

text Anthony Williams main image Darryl Peroni

## Never let it be said

that Scoop's regular beer feature is neglectful of its readership's dietary requirements. Breakfast is often forsaken for early starts and caffeine-fuelled crusades towards deadline, leaving the Weet-bix to later-risers and making wheat beer a social and time-friendly 'have-you-had-your-wheaties today?' alternative. Of course, this substitution theory has been totally unproven by not a moment of laboratory testing, but it's one way to approach a range of beers ideal for WA's approaching warmer months.

As the name suggests, wheat beer is produced by utilising both wheat and barley, rather than just barley, to produce the malt required for brewing. Alternatively, unmalted wheat may feature in the recipe, which, along with the particular yeasts used, results in a sweeter, less bitter (but no less thirst-quenching), full-flavoured ale beer.

The region of Bavaria is widely regarded as the birthplace of wheat beer, where it is known as Weissbier (German for white beer) or Weizen (wheat). The Degenberger family holds the exclusive brewing license, which was issued by Munich-based Bavarian royalty in the early 1400s. Wheat beer also has a recorded history in Berlin, Hamburg and Lubeck, as well as in Holland, Austria and Belgium (where its local name is Witbier – white beer – or Bière Blanche).

Perth also has a much more recent history of traditional, German-style brewing. The Matilda Bay Brewing Company's Redback Original (4.7 per cent alcohol by volume) was first brewed in the mid-'80s and was the first commercially produced wheat beer in Australia. Redback was originally made from 65 per cent wheat grown locally in the Avon Valley, although there has been some adjustment of the beer's taste and wheat-to-barley ratio since its early days as a pioneering micro-brew. Nevertheless, Redback Original took out the title of Grand Champion Beer at the 1993 Australian International Beer Awards, and is now accompanied by its mid-strength (3.4 per cent) counterpart Redback Light (both Carlton and United/Matilda Bay products).

Joining those beers as a major-label wheat beer available in the west is the recently-released Hahn Witbier (five per cent), from the Lion Nathan stable. Spiced with orange peel and coriander, it is brewed using roughly 50 per cent wheat and 50 per cent barley and, according to Lion Nathan chief brewer Bill Taylor, with our local climate and lifestyle in mind.

"We based our brewing approach for this beer on the Belgian style," he says, "but we've thrown in a few of our own, Australian-learned, brewing secrets to create a very drinkable beer."

"Very drinkable" would also be one way to describe the small, but definitely premium, range of imported wheat beers available in WA. These include the Grand Champion Beer at this year's Australian International Beer Awards – the Schöfferhofer Kristallweizen (Kristall meaning crystal-clear, the brew being a filtered wheat beer), which came in ahead of 489 other entries from 28 countries. Produced by German brewer Binding-Brauerei AG, the Schöfferhofer brew (five per cent) is also offered as an unfiltered Hefeweizen – the bottle contains a fine measure of hefe (yeast) which gives the beer a cloudy appearance and additional flavour.

From Munich comes Münchner Kindl Weissbier (5.1 per cent), the beer that established the city's famous Hofbräuhaus München brewery when the Duke of Bavaria gave it the exclusive license to produce the style in 1516. Eventually the royal exclusivity was lifted and all Bavarian brewers could produce wheat beers, leading to products such as Maisel's Weisse Original (5.7 per cent).

Hoegaarden White (five per cent), judged Grand Champion Beer by AIBA judges in 2000, is Belgium's high-quality contribution to the selection of wheat beers available in WA. Canada's Unibroue brewery (based in Quebec) has a presence here with its Blanche de Chambly (five per cent), winner of the Silver Medal at the 1995 World Beer Championship.

WA's micro-breweries have also embraced the unique style of Bavarian wheat beer. The Swan Valley's Duckstein Brewery keeps a Hefeweizen on tap year-round and Fremantle's Sail and Anchor Pub Brewery hand-crafts a similarly unfiltered drop seasonally. Willyabrup's Bootleg Brewery has the unfiltered Sou' West Wheat (4.7 per cent) as does Yallingup's Wicked Ale Brewery, while Perth's Last Drop Inns, the Elizabethan Village Pub and the Old Austria Club exclusively serve a traditional, filtered Bavarian Wheat Beer (4.8 per cent) brewed by Jan Bruckner at the Last Drop Brewery.

The options are definitely out there, so make a point of discovering the flavoursome properties of wheat beer during these spring months – and remember, you'll be getting your wheaties at the same time.

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## Brewers' Tasting Notes

### REDBACK ORIGINAL (4.7 per cent)

#### Matilda Bay Brewing Co.

A premium example of a Southern German-style wheat ale, Redback is distinguished by a pervasive, clove-like spiciness and an almost bubblegum-like aroma. The delicately complex, fruity, malty palate is gently brought to a close by the soft bitterness of the hops.

### BAVARIAN WHEAT BEER (4.8 per cent)

#### Last Drop Brewery

A very traditional type of wheat beer produced from 60 per cent barley malt and 40 per cent wheat malt and using a yeast culture from the Weihenstephan brewery (established in 1040 and believed to be the world's oldest brewery) to achieve a classic Bavarian character. Very refreshing and naturally carbonated, with clove, banana and apple aromas dominating the flavour, and Hallertau Hersbrucker used as aroma hops.

### SOU' WEST WHEAT (4.7 per cent)

#### Bootleg Brewery

Designed to suit a greater spectrum of people in that it has a low bitterness threshold and is relatively sweet. The hops used in the wheat are aromatic in nature (Hersbrucker and Willamette), allowing for gentle hop flavours to emanate rather than being a distinct, bitter flavour. Coupled with this is a residual sweetness, which combines with the grassy and floral hop flavours to form a beer that is well-rounded, soft, and generates a pleasant mouth feel.

### MÜNCHNER KINDL WEISSBIER (5.1 per cent)

#### Hofbräuhaus

The beer that established Hofbräuhaus back in 1516, it has a distinctive fruity aroma with a lovely malty character and a rich, mouth-filling taste on the palate. It's so well balanced that you can add lemon to taste, or just enjoy all the fruits in the flavour. This is a great Munich beer from one of the best bars in the world, to be enjoyed with seafood or Asian cuisine.

# The Anchor Sails On

Peter Nolin and Bill Hoedemaker, the brewers at Fremantle's Sail and Anchor, are back doing what they do so very well after a \$500,000 redevelopment of the pub's in-house brewery. The new facilities give the duo greater control and flexibility over the brewing process – an automated grist mill replaces some hard labour and conditioning tanks allow for filtering and improved brew maturation.

"In the old days we were cask-conditioning all our beer, which is great, but we couldn't do it on site," Peter explains. "After primary fermentation – when the beer is fermented and ready, but hasn't matured, or conditioned, or gained its carbonation – we had to put it into a keg, and we added sugar and finings at the time to prime it, condition it, bring it to maturity. Then it was basically out of our control.

"Now that final third of the brewing process can happen here on site. It's under Bill's and my control

[and] will give us more flexibility to tailor our products.

"That's what craft-brewing is all about – putting that attention to detail in that gives you a superior product, and the renovation will allow us that."

To coincide with completion of the redevelopment (which will also make the brewery more visible to the public), Peter and Bill have launched a new addition to the brewery's craft-brewed range – a traditional-style English Special Bitter known as the Fremantle Extra.

"Whereas our India Pale Ale is a much crisper palate with a citrusy hoppiness, the Fremantle Extra is a little bit richer and maltier, and has caramelly, biscuity flavours in it that are indicative of the style," Peter says. "It's a very complex beer."

The Sail and Anchor Pub Brewery also picked up a Gold Medal for its Chilli Beer (a summer special) at the 2001 Australian International Beer Awards.



## THE BUZZ ON CARLTON G

If energetic socialising and energising drinks are your thing, then add what's described as the 21st Century Beer to your list of beverage options. Carlton and United Breweries has launched the groundbreaking Carlton G, a full-flavoured, full-strength (4.6 per cent) beer brewed traditionally with an addition of Guarana. The taste is described as similar to that of Carlton Cold; the guarana (sourced from the Brazilian Amazon jungle) has been carefully chosen to create an uncompromising beer product. Each bottle contains 0.2 per cent of the natural berry extract which improves stamina and endurance. According to CUB, three bottles of Carlton G are equivalent to one standard energy drink (such as Red Bull), while, of course, having the same effect as three regular full-strength beers. Sounds like a buzz.

