



BREWING AN AUSSIE LEGACY

EUROPE WAS ONCE THE HOME OF BOUTIQUE BEER. TODAY, **CHRIS SHEEDY** SAYS, OUR OWN MICROBREWERIES RIVAL THE WORLD'S BEST.

The major beer companies may have a stranglehold over the taps at your local pub, but you don't need to dig too much deeper to find far more adventurous and flavoursome choices – boutique beers that have been brewed neither by Belgian monks nor by Dutch aficionados, but instead by beer devotees here in Australia. A new breed of discerning drinkers has demanded unique beers which, compared to tap beers, offer a far more exciting drinking experience, and Australian microbrewers have answered the call. We tracked down six of the best.

BARONS BREWING

Until two years ago, Scott Garnett and Richard Adamson were just a couple of mates who loved brewing beer. For 15 years they'd been taking their home-brews to parties, and eventually people attended the parties just to drink the lads' beer!

"At one party, we were casually discussing becoming beer barons with a close group of friends, when they literally said, 'Enough is enough, you boys need to start your own company. We'd definitely buy your beer'," Scott says. The first commercial Barons brew appeared in late 2005, and this year the company will produce one million litres.

SIGNATURE BREW :: Black Wattle Ale – "The Black Wattle Ale starts with a blend of Australian and European malts, creating a rich flavour base of caramel with a hint of chocolate. The smooth malt flavours are then lightly hopped and infused with roasted wattle seed. The resulting red ale offers a creamy mouthfeel and delivers a long and lasting flavour, the wattle seed delivering a unique flavour profile."

CONTACT :: www.baronsbrewing.com

REDOAK BOUTIQUE BEER CAFÉ

David and Janet Hollyoak, founders of Sydney's Redoak Boutique Beer Café, have overcome their fair share of problems along the way to becoming one of Australia's most awarded boutique beer cafes.

"There have been plenty of technical problems," Janet explains, "from poor quality ingredients to power failure in the middle of a brew, a yeast strain wrongly labelled, fatigued yeast and customs demanding to fumigate our carefully chosen imported organic grain!"



Thankfully they overcame the lot and developed beers to die for in a classy restaurant environment.

SIGNATURE BREW :: Framboise Froment – "It is brewed in a traditional Belgian style. The beer conditions and matures on premium fresh raspberries from our farm in the Yarra Valley. Fresh, herbaceous flavours and aromas of raspberry are intertwined with the tartness of the wheat. Served in a flute or a balloon – flutes are typically for ladies, enhancing the sweetness and lowering the bitterness, where the balloon, typically for the guys, enhances the bitterness and lowers the sweetness."

CONTACT :: www.redoak.com.au

NORTHERN RIVERS BREWING CO.

Andrea and Kevin Rowland set up Northern Rivers Brewing Co. on the north coast of NSW in 2005. The pair, she English and he Canadian, met and travelled before settling in Australia, and decided to bring a little of what they loved with them.

"Beer consumption in Australia is declining but premium beer is on the rise. This means the nation is drinking less but tasting more," Kevin says. "Our aim is to help move beer to the same level as wine whereby it can be enjoyed as a great complement to a nice meal."

SIGNATURE BREW :: Pale Ale – "The beer that I like the most is our Pale Ale," Kevin says. "It's brewed with a generous amount of Cascade hops, giving it a nice citrus aroma and a great hoppy finish. It is nicely balanced with a good maltiness, so it's bitter but not too bitter. It goes well with pizza, steak, Thai food or anything spicy."

CONTACT :: www.nrbrewing.com.au

MURRAY'S CRAFT BREWING CO.

As hard as it is to believe, Murray Howe, who founded Murray's Craft Brewing Co. near Coffs Harbour in 2005, was introduced to the joys of microbrewing in beer's 'land of bland', the USA. He says that once he'd experienced true flavour in beer, it was impossible to go back to mass-produced lagers.

"This was a key reason that I decided to build a craft brewery," he says. "I couldn't get the beers I wanted to drink in Australia, made by an Australian brewer, so I decided to brew them myself."

SIGNATURE BREW :: Murray's Nirvana Pale Ale – "It's a hybrid of an American Pale Ale, combined with classic English Pale Ale. It's bottle-conditioned and pours a fine mahogany colour. It has a classic pale ale bouquet and a big, creamy finish. It tastes beautiful on its own or paired with spicy Thai, Vietnamese or Indian food."

CONTACT :: www.murraysbrewingco.com.au

BOOTLEG BREWERY

In 1994, Tom Reynolds opened one of Western Australia's first boutique breweries, Bootleg Brewery, in Margaret River. Thirteen years later Bootleg is still going strong, and now has a restaurant, a bar, a playground overlooking a lake and several very happy staff.

"We love designing and creating enjoyable beers," says managing director Annette Magnus. "Craft



brewing is about providing an alternative range of styles for both ales and lagers. We receive a very positive reaction from the public."

SIGNATURE BREW :: Raging Bull – "At 7.1% alcohol volume, the Bull begins with intense malty flavours ranging from the crystal flavour and all its diversity to the coffee flavours of the roasted barley. A slight bitterness is apparent from the Pride of Ringwood hops but the main essence remains with the intense warming body structure. The Bull finishes with a resounding sweetness which, like chocolate, begs for another mouthful."

CONTACT :: www.bootlegbrewery.com.au

MOUNTAIN GOAT BREWERY

Legendary within the world of boutique brewing, Mountain Goat Brewery kicked off in 1997 after Cam Hines had an eye-opening experience during a backpacking trip across Canada.

"I was struck by how many microbreweries they had and how awesome the beer tasted," Cam explains. "I had only ever had mainstream beer and I thought beer was not too exciting. How wrong was I! So at this same time I had a mate back in Melbourne who was home-brewing in his backyard. I immediately thought of him and called him and said, 'Dave, you've gotta leave the bank and we need to start a microbrewery!'"

SIGNATURE BREW :: Hightail Ale – "A traditional, English style 'real ale'. It's deep amber in colour with a rich malt body and floral hop aroma." Pale Ale – "Has golden straw colourings, floral honey aromas and spicy hop bitterness. An imported American Ale yeast imparts a soft, dry fruitiness. This beer is best enjoyed ice-cold."

CONTACT :: www.goatbeer.com.au