

MARTLET



The University of Victoria's
Independent Newspaper

2006-09-14
Volume 60 No. 6

The University of Victoria's Independent Newspaper | www.martlet.ca

This Issue

News
Opinions
Feature
Life
Arts
Sports

Archives

Download latest CUPcast

Search:

Advanced search

We're Hiring!
Contact Us
Unarchived Issues
Advertising Rates

Statement of Purpose
Submission Guidelines
Writing/Style Resources

Beer as unique as the brewmasters making it

Great Canadian Beer Festival showcases various blends of micro-brewery beer

by Steve Carey

This year, the Great Canadian Beer Festival's football-sized field at Royal Athletic Park was filled with 27 B.C. brewers, six from outside the province, eight U.S. brewers and two Belgians.

With estimated guest counts at 2,500 on Friday and 4,000 on Saturday, festival director John Rowling said this is the largest craft-only beer festival in Canada.

In the late 1960s, big breweries all over the world started loading their beer with carbon dioxide. This invention led to the age of big fizz and bland beer.

"They filtered everything out of it so it would never go bad. This was the end of the hand pump, pulling beer by hand, and the start of the CO2 mega-fizz," said Rowling.

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) was created when Rowling and three other men sick of drinking mega-brewery beer visited Ireland and were introduced to regional breweries that produced traditional cellar-temperature ales. CAMRA is a consumer advocacy group promoting natural fermentation of beer with natural ingredients, rather than the cornstarch and carbon dioxide additive beers that the big breweries produce.

"The use of real malt is what characterizes craft beer. It's made from malted barley or malted wheat," said Charles Finkel, of The Pike Brewing Company in Seattle, Washington. "By contrast, a Molson or Labatt would be made with half malt, and half of corn syrup, rice, or filler, designed to have no flavour, no taste, no nutritional value, no character, and the only function is that it's cheaper than malt and it ferments into alcohol."

The brewmaster is the chef of the beer kitchen, getting ingredients specific to the recipe for the beer they're trying to create. By roasting the hops, different flavours can be brought out such as chocolate, caramel and espresso. By modifying the yeast, banana and clove flavours can be introduced.

Each attendee was greeted at the door with a four ounce plastic glass and a map of the massive festival. Beer recommendations came from everywhere and everyone's tastes were different. Some hated the lemon flavouring, while some loved it.

Chris Gress, brewmaster for the Craig Street Brewing Co. in Duncan, and Terry Schoffer, brewmaster for Cannery Brewing Company in Penticton, both started making beer in their



Linley Faulkner Photo
Rebecca Kneen (right) from Crannóg Ales serves organic beer at the festival.

backyards. Gress got into it from his interest in chemistry, while Schoffer wanted to make all the quality beer he could drink.

Craft brewery beer is in demand. At the 14-month-old Craig Street Brew Pub, Gress goes through 500 litres of their Cowichan Bay Lager a week.

Craft breweries often sell growlers, reusable ceramic carrying jugs for beer, to be filled at the brewery. Some have bottled their beer, some sell mini-casks, others have taken to canning it.

Much of the beer served at the festival was dispensed from casks: gravity fed mini-kegs. These contained a mixture of regular brewery beer and unfermented beer with more yeast and extra hops, to allow it to rework to add body, potency and flavour to the drink.

According to Rowling, beer is measured in IBUs: International Bittering Units. Most mega-breweries ring in at seven IBUs, which is why their beer is so easy to drink. A craft beer, such as the Cowichan Bay Lager, would run about 20 IBUs. The Arrogant Bastard by Stone Brewing in California runs a mouth-puckering 100 IBUs.

"To make it drinkable, they balance it with a huge amount of malt. It's a great experience for the aficionado," said Rowling.

A standout was Crannóg Ales, the only organic brewery in Western Canada. Based in Sorrento on a 10-acre farm, they brew non-pasteurized, unfiltered ales using hard water in the Irish tradition. They produce all of the hops they use on their own farm, and are currently on the lookout for more organic hop producers.

Any waste from the integrated farm and brewery goes back into the farm in some way; the livestock can be fed from the brewery, the farm provides hops and the livestock provide fertilizer. Water comes from a well fed by mountain fed springs.

"Different kinds of hops will carry different flavours," said Crannóg's Rebecca Kneen.

Exposing people to great beer is what the Great Canadian Beer Festival is all about. Each of the 130 different beers was brewed up to the high standards of the CAMRA code, offering unique beers to the taster.

With the massive variety of hops, malt, barley, wheat and even water, each beer is as individual as the brewmaster making it.