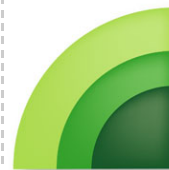




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Bittersweet devotion

PETA Fielding is a very nice lady, the possessor of what are commonly referred to as “a sunny disposition” and a “bubbly personality”. Describing someone who co-owns a brewery on the Gold Coast as “sunny” and “bubbly” appeals to an old journo’s love of puns and wordplay.

The Burleigh Brewing Company, which Peta founded with her husband, brewer Brennan Fielding, clearly shares such a love and has given it full rein with its latest beer.

Casual observers might conclude that there’s been a little too much sharing of love down at Burleigh, because the name of the company’s new brew is My Wife’s Bitter and it is the first outing for BBC’s special projects division, called A Bit on the Side.

Anyone who knows the Fieldings can tell you that if anyone is bitter in that relationship it is Brennan, a man who loves his beer so much he despises having to sell it and hands over a glass of his precious liquid with the demeanour of Scrooge. I checked with Peta a couple of days ago and she didn’t seem bitter at all: still as chirpy as ever and completely unconcerned about Brennan’s straying.

“As far as I know, the only bit he has on the side comes out of a tank,” she said.

“I’d like to think the beer hasn’t



been named about me; it has been named for me.”

Ah, an expression of devotion rather than a personality critique. Scandal averted.

The Bit on the Side is BBC’s indulgence in a habit common to other craft brewing operations, namely making small one-off batches of beer instigated more to satisfy the brewer’s need to experiment rather than make money.

My Wife’s Bitter is Brennan’s take on classic English ale. It has 4.8 per cent alcohol, a deep amber colour and can be drunk at temperatures significantly warmer than your average Aussie lager.

To make it he has used English hop varieties Fuggles and East Kent Goldings, a blend of crystal and chocolate malts and a centuries-old English yeast.

There are only 400 cases (12 x 650ml bottles) of it and it has just gone on sale, mostly around Brisbane and the Gold Coast. There’s a list of stockists on the website, www.burleighbrewing.com.au

It takes a lot of effort to do these limited releases, particularly considering that the beer may never get a second chance.

“If the brewers here had their way we’d be doing something like this every week,” Peta said. “They love playing around making different beers but luckily I hold the purse strings. Just adapting the bottling line to handle the long necks took a whole day.”

She couldn’t say whether there would be another batch of My Wife’s Bitter even if it proved a resounding success.

BBC threw a bit of a party for more than 200 people at its brewery in Burleigh on Friday night, ostensibly as part of the Tastes of Gold Coast festival but really it was a birthday celebration.

It was only two years ago that the Fieldings sold their first BBC beer and since then their Duke range of beers has quietly built a loyal following. BBC also raised eyebrows in December last year when it stormed into the diet-conscious end of the beer market – which these days is a very big end, pardon the pun – with its Big Head no-carb beer, winning the race to be the first in the world to make such a brew. No easy task.

So really, life for the Fieldings couldn’t get any bitter.

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