



Australian House And Garden

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HOP TO IT

Small-scale artisans are redefining the art of making beer. **Toni Paterson** finds rhapsody in brews from some of Australia's finest boutique operations.

Australia's boutique beer market is brimming with energy and innovation. There's a plethora of brands and styles to choose from, ranging from the wild and wacky to the serious and refined.

One company making a big splash is Queensland's Burleigh Brewing Company, founded by Peta and Brennan Fielding. Their Duke range includes Pale Ale as well as Mid Strength and European-Style premium lagers. But the beer that has really captured my attention is the Hef Hefeweizen, a German-style brew with astonishing balance and finesse.

Another husband-and-wife team doing extraordinary things, this time in Tasmania, is Jane and Ashley Huntington of The Two Metre Tall Company, who grow the barley and heritage varieties of hops used in their production process. They produce Forester Pale Ale, Huon Dark Ale and Cleansing Ale, as well as the new Derwent Clear Ale. As they make 'real ale' - that is, using traditional bottle fermentation - the yeast remains in the bottle. Hence, their ales are naturally cloudy and full of flavour.

Although the name may leave something to be desired, Feral Brewing Company from Western Australia is making some very interesting beer. In fact, it was named Champion Exhibitor at the 2009 Australian International Beer Awards. Visiting the brewery is the best way to experience the beer but for those who can't make it to the Swan Valley, there's the nationally distributed Feral White, made with equal quantities of barley and wheat. Coriander and orange peel are added, contributing citrus and spice to the finish.

Barossa Valley Brewing has made a name for itself with Bee Sting ale, a divine barley and wheat beer touched with orange blossom honey. A recent release from the same company is Organic Ale, full of flavour and character.

Another name to look for is Stone & Wood Brewery, a new operation in NSW established by a team with many years of experience in the industry. It produces a nationally distributed lager as well as an unfiltered, unpasteurised ale sold only in and around the company's home base of Byron Bay. Stone & Wood's philosophy is to sell most of its ale locally, to maintain freshness and quality. This is a trend seen with many craft breweries, making it well worth your while to seek out boutique beers.

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YOU'VE GOT ALE

If you love fine beer, go to the source and raise a glass at these venues:

- * **Schwartz Brewery**/Macquarie Hotel, Surry Hills, NSW; (02) 8262 8886. www.schwartzbrewery.com.
- * **Sail and Anchor Pub Brewery**, Fremantle, WA; (08) 9431 1666. www.sailandanchor.com.au.
- * **Feral Brewing Company**, Swan Valley, WA; (08) 9296 4657. www.feralbrewing.com.au.
- * **Mountain Goat Brewery**, Richmond, Victoria; (03) 9428 1180. goatbeer.com.au.
- * **Burleigh Brewing Co**, Brewery Lounge, Burleigh Heads, Queensland; (07) 5593 6000. www.burleighbrewing.com.au.

Toni's best brews

1 Burleigh Brewing Company Hef Hefeweizen, about \$18/six (330ml). This German-style wheat beer is an incredibly classy drop. There's no excessive sweetness or bitterness: it's perfectly balanced. Fine bubbles give a fabulous creamy texture.



2 Burleigh Brewing Company Bighead No Carb Beer, about \$15/six (330ml). Perfect for those watching carbs and kilojoules (only 88kJ per bottle) and an exceedingly pleasant drop for anyone. Clean and fresh, not too gassy and low in bitterness.



3 The Two Metre Tall Company Derwent Clear Ale, about \$9/bottle (500ml). A superb ale made from heritage hops. Bright and clean with faint floral aromatics and a unique taste. The lemony palate is great with fish and chips.



4 Barossa Valley Brewing Organic Ale, about \$16/four (330ml). A full-flavoured ale that's floral and aromatic, with a generous mid-palate. Great to pair with food, as the bitterness helps cleanse the palate between mouthfuls.



Photography by Alana Landsberry