

The 10 best new Aussie beers

The finest brews from the Australian International Beer Awards. Hiccup!

Last week saw the grand final of the prestigious Australian International Beer Awards in Melbourne: 938 beers from 189 brewers from around the world, whittled down to the very best. Beer guru Frank Vriesekoop, chief steward of the awards and

lecturer in beer at University of Ballarat, picked out for ZOO Weekly ten top-notch local beers that were all gold-medal winners in their class, and we sampled all of them in the time before deadline. Which was about two hours. It got a little messy...

"Could be a good session beer - if you don't sink too many in the first hour"

4 HOP ALE

BILLABONG BREWING, MYAREE, PERTH, WA



THE JUDGES SAY: "The gold medal for best packaged ale from a small brewery. The name '4 Hop' is because it's hopped at four different stages during brewing, which is to balance out the sweet flavours of the malt - it has an intermediate colour and it's mid-range in alcohol as well, under four per cent."

ZOO SAYS: Could be a good session beer - it's quite refreshing, and not so strong that you'd get pissed quickly.



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BALLYRAGGET IRISH RED ALE

WIG & PEN,
CANNBERRA, ACT

2 THE JUDGES SAY: "A top draught ale.

The Wig & Pen does mainly draught beers that are only available at the tavern. With Irish red ales, the colour comes from using roasted barley as well as the malt, and it tastes less bitter than an English ale – the Ballyragget has different types of malt, balanced out with hops they bring in from New Zealand."

ZOO SAYS: Quite unusual, nice though – could help dull the pain of being in Canberra.



MUNCHNER DUNKEL

WIGRAM BREWING COMPANY, WIGRAM, NZ

3 THE JUDGES SAY: "The best small brewery

draught lager – this is actually a dark lager, a Munich-style one that's full of malt that's nicely balanced with the hops. It's actually a New Zealand beer, near Christchurch – it's really a very small microbrewery, a lot of microbreweries only supply locally or to one pub, but this beer is quite widely available."

ZOO SAYS: Ooh, that's lovely – can we have a second one? C'mon, giss another. Fine then.



ZOO
WEEKLY

Seven more
beers this way

REDOAK OLD BALTIC PORTER REDOAK BEER CAFE, SYDNEY

4 THE JUDGES SAY: "A draught porter. Porter is a darker beer but not as dark as a stout. Baltic porters tend to have a bit more body and a higher alcohol content. The Redoak Old Baltic porter is a good example, it has roasted characteristics but everything is well in balance. When you're working with roasted grains and dark grains, it's a difficult thing to make a well-balanced beer." **ZOO SAYS:** Mmm, that'd go nicely with a pie.



LITTLE CREATURES PALE ALE FREMANTLE, WA

5 THE JUDGES SAY: "This is a textbook Australian pale ale. It's got low-hop bitterness, the colour is quite light, and there's a fruity essence – you're looking for subtle hints of banana. It's not heavy, pale ale shouldn't have an overwhelming taste. And all pale ales have medium carbonation, unlike lagers." **ZOO SAYS:** Bananas? In beer? Sounds a bit iffy – but better give us another one to make sure...



ZOO Man auditioned for new specialist German flick



MR NATURAL THE WIG & PEN, CANBERRA, ACT



6 THE JUDGES SAY: "Mr Natural is a draught-reduced-alcohol beer, another one from the Wig & Pen in Canberra. I believe this is the most difficult type of beer to produce, because the alcohol carries a lot of the flavour and the aroma of the beer. I always look out for high-scoring, reduced-alcohol beer because it's the mark of a good brewer. And you don't have to worry if you have to work later." **ZOO SAYS:** Phew, a light – starting to feel a bit pissy.

REDBACK ORIGINAL MATILDA BAY BREWING, FREMANTLE, WA



7 THE JUDGES SAY: A draught wheat beer. The Redback Original has actually changed a little bit over the years, my feeling is that it had stronger wheat characteristics in the past. It's an extremely easy to drink wheat beer with a really nice balance. Wheat beers have to be at least 30 per cent beer – beers made completely from wheat aren't particularly pleasant, they're not thirst quenching." **ZOO SAYS:** That's quenched our thirst – quenched it so hard we can't see straight...

FERAL WHITE FERAL BREWING COMPANY, BASKERVILLE, WA

8 THE JUDGES SAY: "Belgian-style wheat beer, like a Hoegaarden. Feral White smells extremely nice – I'm not sure what percentage of the wheat it is, but it's balanced against barley. There's some acid there, so it's very refreshing because you've got that tartness, like a hint of citrus. And there's what we call the 'phenolic flavour', which comes from the yeast metabolising the wheat." **ZOO SAYS:** Mmm... where's the dunny in here?



LAST DROP WHEAT LAST DROP BREWERY, CANNING VALE, WA

9 THE JUDGES SAY: "Draught wheat beer from a small brewery. A small brewery is one that can produce a maximum of 3000 litres in one batch – that can make it more difficult to produce a consistent beer. The small breweries usually show great craftsmanship by producing great beers. This is a Bavarian-style wheat beer with very little bitterness." **ZOO SAYS:** You want bitterness? She said she loved us... then she left...





PADDY'S STRONG SCOTTISH ALE

MARKETS HOTEL, FLEMINGTON, NSW

10 THE JUDGES SAY:

"This is what we call a Scotch ale or barley wine. They're not the same thing but it's not much of a difference. These are high-alcohol beers, up to 10 per cent alcohol. It's much thicker and that high alcohol content carries a lot of flavour – it's a dessert beer almost, you could drink this with a chocolate tart, it has enough sweetness to carry the tones."

ZOO SAYS: You're our only friend. Let's fight!



Mmm, just blowing the top off a couple...

BEER AMMO

133

Billions of litres of beer consumed globally per year

397

Billions of dollars spent on beer globally per year

3100

Years BC that the earliest known beer was brewed

1516

Year the German Purity Law was introduced

29

Per cent: the strongest beer ever made, Hair of the Dog Dave's barley wine

78.8

Billions of dollars spent on beer globally per year

14.1

Litres: amount of low-alcohol beer consumed per person each year in Australia

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