

ASK THE EXPERT

Who Janet and David Hollyoak, Redoak Boutique Beer Cafe, Clarence Street, city.

What Sunbeam Beer Mate, \$569

First impressions We were very impressed with the appearance of the Beer Mate, its size and the quality of finish, but shocked by the price. It came with a five-litre keg of Heineken, which didn't excite us as it was 10 months old and was basically no different to just a big can of beer that has been processed and pasteurised. Pasteurised beer is "dead" beer.

Test We were interested in using the universal empty keg supplied. However, as the pump in the Beer Mate pressurises the keg with air, which oxidises the beer, it is no good for most beers. An exception is English real ales, which are enhanced by air. We used the Beer Mate for a cask-conditioned ale. We slowly racked a casked real ale into the five-litre uni keg under slight pressure, which took about 10 minutes. The instructions say to allow a four-hour wait until the beer cools. However, by chilling the keg in the fridge then placing it in the Beer Mate, the time was reduced to 15 minutes. After cracking the tap, cleaning the line and pouring the first beer we noted it had the perfect two-centimetre tight foam and the correct carbonation for an English real ale. It



Photo: Domino Postiglione

was surprisingly easy to pour and ideal for a novice.

Verdict The Beer Mate is perfect for a home brewer who enjoys cask-conditioned ales or keg-conditioned beers. It is well suited to Coopers ales or small boutique beers that are fresh.