



Brew heaven ...  
the Heritage  
Belgian Beer Cafe.

Photo: Natalie Boog

## THREE OF A KIND Beer cafes

### Heritage Belgian Beer Cafe

From the team who inserted "beer cafe" into our restaurant vocabulary (with *Epoque* in Cammeray) come the soaring ceilings and mahogany panelling of this booming Belgian-style brasserie, a brilliant reproduction in a one-time Catholic girls' school hall. I reckon school patron St Pat would have liked the long marble-topped bar, the gleaming beer taps and foaming balloon glasses in which each drop is expertly served. After all, monks started Belgium's great brewing tradition, using everything from wheat to malt to hops and even cherries – as in the deep red lambic (natural fermentation) drop known as Kriek, my top girlie beer. There are litres of fascinating on-tap and bottled beers (from \$6.50). Match them with an enormous charcuterie platter (\$19.50), carbonade (a beer-braised beef stew, \$23.50) or a groaningly heavy black enamel pot of fabulous pinky-orange, freshly steamed mussels (\$22.90) – the Belgian national dish – with crunchy fries and mayo on the side. Try the mussels simmered in celery, parsley and Hoegaarden (a light, lemony, white beer). And if the beer list makes your head spin, there's always Stella on tap. 135 Harrington Street, The Rocks, 9241 1775; [www.belgian-beer-cafe.com.au](http://www.belgian-beer-cafe.com.au).

### Prague Czech Beer Restaurant

If Kriek and Hoegaarden are hard to get your lips around (pronunciation-wise), have a go at Krusovice or Zlatopramen. Like the Pilsener and Budweiser styles, these are typical tipples from the Czech Republic, particularly the region known as Bohemia. You'll find them at Prague – not the Czech capital but a pretty corner terrace in downtown Kings Cross. For a real mouthful, have them with a staroprazska posvicenska misa

### Need to know

#### WHAT ARE THEY?

Today's equivalent of the beer hall.

#### WHO RUNS THEM?

Beer-loving types such as Czechs, Germans, Belgians, Aussies.

#### IS IT ALL JUST BEER?

No. Each brewing nationality has brew-matched eats.

(\$24.90). That's a modest Bohemian "party dish" of smoked pork, roast pork, duck, sausage, red cabbage, sauerkraut, potato and onion pancakes and two kinds of dumplings. The enormous, fluffy bread dumplings alone are pure Bohemian rhapsody. 42 Kellett Street, Potts Point, 9368 0898; [www.prague-restaurant.com.au](http://www.prague-restaurant.com.au).

### Redoak Boutique Beer Cafe

If boutique beers, micro-breweries and beer-matching are the newest thing in Aussie drinking, Redoak is right up there with the trends. With a humungous screed of locally brewed beers and a full mod-Oz menu, hanging here is a bit like coasting around the planet. Beer-wise there's everything from Bavarian to Belgian. Likewise with the food. A sampler plate of seafood bits (\$20) goes from a French-ish oyster veloute to a prawn and avocado samosa stack, dropping by Morocco (spiced salmon and chickpeas) and Thailand (scallops, cucumber pickle and coriander) on the way. The best bit is accompanying each with little beer tasters, served in mini beer balloons. 201 Clarence Street, city, 9262 3303; [www.redoak.com.au](http://www.redoak.com.au).

## HISTORY OF A DISH