

# Chocolate drop

Rory Gibson



**Y**OU will be reading this with a chocolate hangover, no doubt. After days of Easter egg frenzy, it's probably the last thing on your mind. You might think that beer and chocolate are incompatible, so why would I even mention it?

Certainly on the rare occasion I have inadvertently washed down some Dairy Milk with a cold lager, it has not been pleasant.

But there is a beer made in Australia that not only provides a suitable companion to chocolate and desserts generally, but actually uses chocolate in its brewing.

If you get a chance to try Redoak's Belgian Chocolate Stout you will be amazed at how well the beer and chocolate combine.

Regular readers will recall the heart-warming story of how rabid homebrewer Dave Hollyoak was given an ultimatum by his girlfriend that it was either the beer or her.

Instead of making what would have been a tough decision to kick his girlfriend out, he brewed her a love letter in the form of her favourite Belgian-style beer, winning her hand in marriage and launching his career as a brewer.

Hollyoak, a Queenslander, now runs the Redoak beer cafe in Sydney with his sister Janet, supplying it with an eclectic range of beers from his Redoak brewery.

His beer menu is an education in itself, featuring stout, bock, various lagers, hefeweizens, ales and a framboise froment (raspberry beer), all made preservative-free, but he is particularly proud of the chocolate stout. "My wife is

Belgian. I played around with it for her really," he says. "It is very difficult to make, and took me a good four years to master."

"We use real chocolate — a rich Belgian chocolate that is like liquid gold — rather than chocolate essence like other brewers."

The secret lies, as with many worthwhile things, in the timing, and when the oatmeal stout is infused with the chocolate is a closely guarded secret. "That's what took me four years to work out," Hollyoak says.

There are not that many chocolate beers in the world. Notable examples are Young's Double Chocolate in Britain and the US has Brooklyn Chocolate Stout.

"The trouble is that the fat content of the chocolate destroys the head," Hollyoak says.

And that can be a turn-off if you are not used to it. When you pour one of Redoak's chocolate stouts it foams up OK and the glass quickly looks as if it is full of Coke.

But the lack of head is more than compensated for by the rich flavours. "When it is first poured chilled, the flavour is more mocha, but as the glass warms the chocolate intensifies. It is fantastic with desserts," Hollyoak says.

And with the weather turning autumnal, it's pretty good knocking back a couple in front of the Friday night footy.

The judges at the 2004 Australian International Beer Awards gave it the gold medal for best specialty beer.

And it is a favourite at the cafe. "It has been accepted really well," Hollyoak says. "People are a bit shocked at first and then surprised at how well the chocolate comes through."

A 250ml bottle costs about \$5 and it's available in Queensland at the Spotted Cow Hotel in Toowoomba or order it from Redoak. Ph: (02) 9262 3303; info@redoak.com.au; www.redoak.com.au

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