

Brew Love



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They have diverse backgrounds and work in breweries of various sizes, but all these beer nuts share the one all-consuming passion. It's all about the beer, as CHARLES COLL discovered.

Beer Engineering

Brewery: 3 Ravens Brewery, VIC.

Who: Ben Pattison and Marcus Cox

After spending big bucks on meetings at the local pub, engineering firm Zetkin installed their own bar within their building. And of course, once the bar was successful, it was only natural to develop their own brewery and beer.

This passion for beer then required a brewer who could also complement the business. Enter Ben Pattison, who studied Chemical Engineering at the University of Adelaide, having previously worked for Santos, and an engineering consultancy. The Zetkin board was largely old colleagues who tempted Ben across with the concept of starting a brewery. But Ben's expertise began demanding more time on the road with 'engineering stuff', so there enters fellow 3 Ravens brewer, Marcus Cox. He got his start as a hospitality guy and considers this the 'best job out'. There have been stints at Belgian Beer Café Bluestone and the like, and he is passionate about his hometown of Melbourne.

What is the biggest issue for beer or breweries in 2007?

Ben: Winning marketshare from other alcoholic drinks, particularly wine and RTDs.

Marcus: Manufacturing and selling good beer, and alerting the public to its existence.

What was your defining moment when you knew you would be a brewer?

Ben: My first Belgian beer, Toison d'Or. I remember getting really excited about the flavour and feeling I had to get out there and put taste back at the centre of the beer experience.

Marcus: I was 17, looking more like 15, and discovered supermarkets sold homebrew kits.

What has been the biggest change since you've been in the industry?

Ben: Taste matters now.

Marcus: Large breweries trying to make small brewery style beers and the anticipation of the reverse.

What keeps you passionate about brewing and the industry?

Ben: Trying other people's beers. Bland and flawed beers annoy me but there's plenty of inspiration out there. I got a real kick out of discovering a brilliant beer made by a small brewer, and I guess there's a bit of a nervous thrill in tasting a (rare) brilliant beer made by a large brewer.

Marcus: Beer

If you hadn't become a brewer, what would you be doing today?

Ben: Wishing I could be a brewer.

Marcus: Would you like fries with that?

Were you apprentice-trained or from an academic background?

Ben: I'm an engineer.

Marcus: I turned up to work, 'they' handed me the keys and said 'make beer please'. I've certainly come a long way since the

What is your least favourite task in the brewery?

Ben: Disposing of an off spec batch. Much gnashing of teeth.

Marcus: Bottling - manual application of 3500 caps.



Brewers

What is your beer of choice - other than your own?

Ben: Any fresh Munich Helles if I could get it. Otherwise Anchor Liberty Ale.

Marcus: Moretti 'la rossa' boags honey porter. Something with a kick to overcome my oft-jaded palate.

Where is your all-time favourite drinking spot?

Ben: Had great times at Adelaide's Austral Hotel in the 80s. Cool people, great bands and Coopers on tap.

Marcus: Great new bar near my house - The Alderman, Lygon Street, Brunswick.

What do you think will be the next fastest-moving beer category?

Ben: If you mean fastest-growing, I would tip wheat-based beers. They've got the best combination of refreshment and taste, and there's a lot of exciting new ground still to cover.

Marcus: Exciting new ground being 3 Ravens Dark - a smoked beer.

Son of a Brew

Brewery: Coopers Brewery (SA)

Who: Timothy J. Cooper,

MSc MD MBA MRCP (UK)

A fifth generation brewer from Coopers Brewery. Tim Cooper began professional life as a doctor, completing medical studies (MBBS, Adelaide) in 1979. He practised for nine years, working in hospitals mainly in the UK, and completed his Doctor of Medicine (Bristol) in 1990 - the same year he joined the family company. Tim has written several papers on various cardiopulmonary conditions but took a break from medicine in the 1980s to study brewing science (MSc, Birmingham). After starting as the brewery's Technical Manager, Tim became Operations Manager in 1993, and subsequently Director of Brewing and then a director of Coopers Brewery in 1997. Tim oversaw the development of the new brewery at Regency Park and took over as Managing Director from his father Bill in early 2002.

What is the biggest issue for beer or breweries this year?

SABMiller entering Australia's market through Coca-Cola's joint venture Pacific Beverages is the biggest issue. SABMiller is a global beer player, with extensive experience in Europe, Russia, Africa and the US. The formation of Pacific Beverages is similar to our own Premium Beverages that we formed in 2002/03 from discussions with Bruce Sney of American Beer Distributors Pty Ltd, which had the import agency for Budweiser. Premium Beverages has been growing at 30 per cent or more per annum since we started. I think Pacific Beverages will add an additional dimension to the premium beer market in Australia, which will be very noticeable to the other market participants.

Have you adapted any brewing requirements due to any changes in consumer trends?

We are increasingly aware of our consumers' interests in conservation and environmental issues. At Regency Park, we have therefore incorporated processes to reduce energy consumption by 15 per cent on a per-unit basis, and to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions through our cogeneration facility.

What do you think has been the biggest change during your time in the industry?

The consolidation of breweries, with only four major brewing companies now producing in Australia - Fosters, Lion Nathan, Coopers and Boags. Similar consolidation has occurred elsewhere, particularly in the UK and Europe, with global players now representing a larger proportion of the global market. Since the mid-90s, the top 20 brewers in the world increased their share of the global market from around 55 per cent to more than 75 per cent by 2005.



What keeps you passionate about brewing and the industry?

I'm passionate because of our heritage at Coopers, and the contribution we make to the brewing industry. We're now 3 per cent of the national volume, with increasing recognition here and overseas. Finally, beer is good for you in moderation, and I continue to enjoy drinking it with the knowledge I'm doing myself some good, providing that I don't overdo it!

What is your least favourite task in the brewery?

Reading emails and responding. I'm still hoping for a whopper virus that knocks out the email system and forces everyone back to faxes and telephones.

What is your beer of choice - other than your own?

Hoergaarden White.

Where is your favourite drinking spot?

The West Arms, Llanarmon DC, near Llangollen, North Wales

What do you predict will be the next fastest-moving category?

The reduced carbohydrate beer category.

The Lady Sings the Brews

Brewery: Schwartz Brewery, NSW.

Who: Samara 'Sam' Fuss

Sports-mad Sam Fuss gained selection to the state soccer team growing up as well as an invitation to the Academy of Sport in Canberra for volleyball. Sam's father is credited for encouraging her interests, including work as a blacksmith and welder. Sam's first taste of the brewing bug came after her father heard about a new brewery opening in Fremantle called Little Creatures, so she headed west. Under the direction and inspiration of brewer/winemaker Janet McDonald, Sam worked at Little Creatures for three years. Sam then became head brewer for Melbourne's ALH pub breweries Gurn Island as well as Three Degrees at the QV Square. Sam then joined the team at the Garage, where she experienced everything from saisons to coffee roasting to racing cars and later did her first wine vintage at Victoria's Galle Estate winery. From there she moved on to Sydney's new Schwartz Brewery and they have since tripled sales, started bottling and doubled capacity.

In your opinion, what is the biggest issue for beer or breweries this year?

I think excise will be a continuing focus this year for microbreweries.

What was your 'defining moment' when you knew you would be a brewer?

When I walked through the doors at Little Creatures to ask for a job... I'm kind of stubborn like that.

What do you believe is the biggest change since you've been in the industry?

I think the diversity of beer drinkers. It's great seeing different generation and sexes enjoying quality beer.

What keeps you passionate about brewing and the beer industry?

Being involved in new ideas and the freedom of expression.

If you hadn't become a brewer, what would you be doing today?

Getting paid to surf, fish and cook in exotic locations... Dreamer.

Were you apprentice-trained or from an academic background?

Very fortunate to be apprentice trained by some of the best in the industry.

What is your least favourite task in the brewery?

Anything to do with spent grain bins.

What is your beer of choice - other than your own?

Depends on the day and my mood, but I do like a spiced ale like Fringante.

