

Brad Rogers



SMOKE SIGNALS

Brad Rogers finds that where there's smoke, there's fire...

S smoked salmon, smoked cheese and smoked meats. There's nothing extraordinary about these as most flavour junkies would understand — but smoked beer? Now that's a little far fetched, or is it?

As we have already seen in previous Weird Beers things are not always as they seem. There's so much choice out there in beer world for the brewer and it seems there are some brewers willing to have a real crack at brewing interesting beers, either by process changes in the brewery or by raw material selection.

Let us cut straight to what is arguably the world's best known example of a smoked beer. The brewery is Schlenkerla and these brewers have been making smoked beers for a very, very long time, more than 300 years in fact. The beer is their Rauchbier. They even

have their own smoking rooms as part of their maltings. Yep, their own maltings as well. (Not that unusual for the guys at the Cascade brewery in Tasmania, as they still malt a large amount of their own grain as well.) So how does it all happen? Firstly, specific varieties of barley are grown and delivered to the maltings. Towards the end of the malting process, in specially designed smoke rooms, smoke is created and slowly infused into the barley, giving it a smoked character. Pretty simple really.

The barley smoking process for beer is very similar to that of the whisky industry where the maltsters smoke specific grains. The source of the smoke for great whisky is usually from peat, thus creating very distinct flavour in the grain.

Once the barley has been smoked it is then up to the brewer to dictate the amount of smoked grain to add to the grist bill. This is very important as too much will dominate and overpower the brew, while too little will not be tasted. It's just like adding chilli to a curry, some like it hot, while others don't.

Now there are some good examples of the style around Australia at the moment. Brewers like 3 Ravens in Melbourne, Redoak in Sydney and the Indian Ocean Brewing Company in Perth are doing fine examples. ☐

