

Media Release Biological Farmers of Australia, 27 January 2010

## **BREWING UP A STORM; THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT BEER**

The classic image of summer in Australia is barbecues, cricket and beer. You'll get as many arguments about which is the best beer as you will about who is the best cricketer and in the search for a deeper, more meaningful beer experience some brewers are turning to traditionally brewed beers.

Steel River Brewery's Ian Partland is a main contender. He produces certified organic beers and says that Australian palates need to be re-educated to appreciate the true flavours of traditional beer.

"Australians are used to drinking high-sugar adjunct beers which plague every bottle-shop, restaurant and bar in the country and the majority of beer consumers still buy on price and habit," he says. "However, an ever-growing sector of the market has gained a discerning taste."

"High-sugar adjunct" beers refers to the practice of most commercial brewers adding up to 30% cane sugar syrup – which ferments to alcohol but adds no body, colour or aroma to the mash - rather than extra quantities of the more expensive malted barley.

Ian says that since the 1980s small brewers have striven to sensitise our palates to quality beers, and as a result there has been a consolidated growth in all malt beers.

"We're the first ones offering organic beer priced to suit the mainstream market so we have to be persistent and position it as something that's different. Adapting the brewery to produce certified organic beer was fairly straightforward; sourcing sufficient organically grown barley and hops is sometimes difficult."

Ian says that the domestic market has been difficult to woo but persistence and quality product are overcoming market reluctance and the export market, particularly in view of Australia's "clean, green" reputation, holds real potential and has attracted interest from the USA and Japan.

There are no Steel River organic home-brew kits in the pipeline at this stage; beer aficionados will have to leave the hard work to Ian for the present and enjoy their brew at leisure.

### **A Touch of History**

The recipes used are the brewery's own, based on the Reinheitsgebot. This 16<sup>th</sup> century Bavarian/German law, first propounded in 1487, protected the purity of beer by limiting its ingredients to water, barley and hops.

It also limited the price of beer to 2 pennies a litre, a practice which has sadly fallen into disuse. (Yeast was a later addition, subsequent to Pasteur's discovery of the role of microorganisms in fermentation.)

Despite repeal of the Reinheitsgebot by the EC in 1987, most German breweries continue to adhere to it in the interests of producing traditional high-quality beer.

Advances in DNA technology have revealed that both ale and lager strains are genetically the same.



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**Links to Australian Certified Organic beers:**

Burrumbidgee (Nelinda Groves) [www.burrumbidgee.com.au](http://www.burrumbidgee.com.au)

Mountain Goat Beer [www.goatbeer.com.au](http://www.goatbeer.com.au)

Virgin Blonde (Steel River Brewery) [www.steelriverbrewery.com](http://www.steelriverbrewery.com)

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**Organic alcohol/ meat related stories (available on request)**

Australian Certified Organic Magazine, Summer 2009: *In a Glass of their Own – Organic Wine A Marketer's Dream?*

Australian Certified Organic Magazine, Autumn 2009: *Certified Organic meats- Organic Wagyu*

Australian Certified Organic Magazine, Autumn 2009: *Organic Against the Odds – Jervoise Organic Meats*



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