



Is that guy talking to himself or his beer?

If we ignore him, maybe he'll go away

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The Sunshine Coast Brewery's chilli beer tastes like drinking a kebab

Ben Burke, director of Burke's Premium Hemp Ale holds up – not a beer, sadly – but a gauze-type thing. "It's brewed through environmentally sustainable hemp. Cartridge filtration or pulp filtration is brewed through wood fibre (*Give us a taste, then*). We've replicated that with hemp cellulose (*God, how much longer?*), which is more environmentally sustainable. It gives the beer a lovely, crisp, refreshing taste (*Just pass the beer*). We're exporting to the UK and Cambodia.

"Cambodia, good. Could I possibly have a beer?"

It's the best one so far. Hemp is very mellow and quite sweet, with good depth of flavour. And environmentally friendly.

Beer 14 is a Hahn Witbier. Halfway between a lager and a wheat beer, I could drink it all day. Boag's Strongarm Bitter is a treat. Good and malty, rich flavours, although a little too cold, but who's complaining?"

I tackle a chilli beer from the Sunshine Coast Brewery. It's like drinking a kebab – not necessarily a bad thing. "You find yourself drinking more and more," says Jim Robinson, owner and brewmaster. "It's not the alcohol you get addicted to, it's the chillies. The more you drink, the better you feel. Two weeks ago I had the flu. Had some chillies and felt beautiful."

I'm falling behind. The place closes in four hours and I have to try 35 more beers to give myself a chance.

I run into the home brewers Peter and Simon while I'm enjoying a Kent Old Brown. They reckon they've had 36 different beers now. "You've got to try a Southwark White," whispers Peter, as though passing on KFC's secret ingredients.

Southwark White is slightly cloudy

and slightly spicy. Southwark Brewing must be slightly pleased with it. Before I can think too hard about it, I go through a Bootleg Brown (a bit sherbety) and a Matilda Bay Pils (erm, fine) as well.

I lean against the bar – not that I have to, it's just so I can think. A bloke says he had four Kilkennys for lunch before he even got here. "Most of the beer's been average so far. Except the Wobbly Boot. Wobbly Boot is the worst beer I've tasted."

I buy a lamb burger, just to give my stomach a break. It's getting busier. I'm glad to see Brisbane girls like beer as much as Brisbane guys.

I get the unpleasant business of drinking Swan Mid out of the way, try a XXXX Gold, then tackle a Cairns Draught. It's reasonably mellow, with undertones of something or other.

Alternating a St Arnou Pilsner (crisp) with a James Squire Porter (thick and chocolatey) is a good idea. But I follow it with Old Dark Ale from the same source as the Chilli Beer. I can taste chilli in this, too. Or is it bacon?

In the Stockmen's Bar, where a comedian I can't see is saying things I can't hear, I buy a Scharers Lager. Scharers is a German word, pronounced the way you'd say it if you were drunk. Clever, really. It's fruity and so raw it sinks into my wrecked palate like hydrochloric acid. Which is good. I think.

After a quick Emu Bitter, I head backstage, where Bachelor Girl are getting ready to play. Keyboard player James Roche is surprised when I pass him a Bootleg Tom's Brown and ask for comment.

"Refreshingly different," he says, although he could be taking the piss as well as drinking it. "I'll give it a good seven and a half."

Photos > Mick Richards

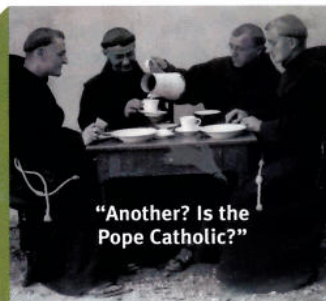
3698 YEARS AGO
HAMMURABI, still in a decreeing mood, decides that the punishment for serving low-quality beer should be death by drowning. Sadly, this commonsense law has since been repealed.

3600 YEARS AGO
ANCIENT Egyptians start brewing using unbaked bread dough and dates. Ancient scribes create a special hieroglyph for "brewer", while booze is included in burial provisions for the journey to the afterlife.

3595 YEARS AGO
EGYPTIAN physicians set a fine example to modern medical professionals by prescribing beer, beer and more beer as the cure for 100 ailments.

2057 YEARS AGO
ROMANS introduce beer to northern Europe, even though they reckon it tastes like crap. This act constitutes perhaps Rome's greatest contribution to Western civilisation.

2000 YEARS AGO
WISE Finnish poets pay tribute to the wonder of beer. The famous poetic epic *Kalevala* devotes no less than 400 verses to beer, compared to just 200 verses on the Earth's creation.



"Another? Is the Pope Catholic?"

1000 YEARS AGO
BORED senseless with praying and fasting, European monks decide to develop the brewer's art scientifically, turning their monasteries into giant beer factories. The monks are allowed to skol up to five litres a day.