

Introduction to Craft Beer

I always recommend trying new beers and wines, even if there are plenty of old favourites easily available. Over the last few years the number of small, independent breweries has skyrocketed leading to an explosion of brands and styles of beer. If you're not sure where to start head to the Local Taphouse in Darlinghurst and their well trained and passionate team will point you in the right direction and serve you a tasting paddle – five small glasses of different beers to sample.

It's impossible for me to narrow down my favourite beers. Just like with wine different occasions will change how much I enjoy a beer. I loved Monteith's Radler (a lager flavoured with lime) the first time that I had it, on the beach in Fiji. The next time I tasted it, on a cold and wet night, I thought it was dreadful. I enjoy complex beers that work with different styles of food but they seldom work when I'm just meeting the lads for a drink. The following list isn't necessarily my favourite beers, just some that I've really enjoyed recently and would recommend that you try.



Stone and Wood Pacific Ale, Byron Bay, NSW

I like to try new beers all the time so I seldom drink the same beer regularly. Pacific Ale is an exception. It's such an original beer; it looks similar to a Coopers Pale but has a huge tropical fruit aroma which comes from using the Galaxy hop. There is now a worldwide shortage of Galaxy hops due to everyone imitating them. The beer is widely available in major and independent bottle shops and bars.

Bridge Road Chevalier Saison, Beechworth, Vic

Bridge Road are making some great beers in the Beechworth wine region and this is my favourite. Saison is a complex beer made with similar ingredients as pale lagers but using a special strain of yeast which produces a much more savoury style. It is also a great beer with food – relatively light with peppery spice, try it with Thai dishes. Available at specialist beer bars and bottle shops such as the Oak Barrel and Camperdown Cellars.



Feral Brewing Watermelon Warhead, Swan Valley, WA



Brewed especially for Melbourne's Great Australasian Beer Spectacular last year, this beer has gone into constant production. It is a Berliner Weisse style – very low in alcohol and slightly sour produced using watermelon juice producing an incredibly refreshing, slightly tart beer. It's perfect on a hot summer's day or with fried fish and chips. Available on tap at craft beer bars, will be available in bottles later this year.

Murray's Punch and Judy, Port Macquarie, NSW

Murray's has a wide range of different styles and make sure that they are not short of flavour. The Punch and Judy is an English style bitter ale with relatively low alcohol. If you are lucky you can find it served in the traditional English "Real Ale" method through a handpump. It is served slightly warmer than usual for Australia which allows the full flavour to really shine, especially with rich food. Available on handpump at the brewery, Murray's at Manly and the Union Hotel in Newtown or in bottles from the Oak Barrel.



Yeastie Boys Gunnamatta, Wellington, NZ

This brewery from Wellington, NZ not only has a great name but also some great beer. This was voted the best beer at the Great Australasian Beer Spectacular. Earl Grey tea leaves are added to their IPA recipe producing an incredibly refreshing and easy to drink full flavoured beer. Available at specialist beer bars and bottle shops such as the Oak Barrel and Camperdown Cellars.

McLaren Vale IPA, McLaren Vale, SA

IPA is the favourite beer style for most craft beer drinkers. It is a very full flavoured style, packed with hops and alcohol, originally brewed to withstand sea trips from Britain to India, over the equator and around South Africa. I really enjoy the McLaren Vale IPA, it has a malty sweetness which balances the hops and it is relatively easy to find in major and independent bottle shops and bars. I'd also recommend Mountain Goat IPA which has a slightly sharper hop bitterness.



4 Pines Stout, Manly, NSW

This beer has been especially designed to be the first beer served in space when space tourism starts in the very near future. In space your taste buds don't work as well as they do here so a strong flavoured beer is essential. The other problem is burping in zero gravity is very unpleasant so it has to have relatively low carbonation. The beer is very dark with a savoury, slightly smoky taste. Widely available but get on the ferry and head to Manly. As Murray's also has a bar over there it's a great day out for sampling craft beer.