

American brewer's Irish beer wins in Britain

Franciscans do well for St Patrick's

Former Seattle and New York brewer Russell Garet can doubly celebrate St Patrick's this year. Garet is a partner in the Franciscan Well brewpub, in the city of Cork, Ireland, and one of his products has just been chosen as the country's beer of the year.

Franciscan is on the site of a 13th-century abbey with a holy well. Its winning beer is Rebel Red, an ale of 4.3 per cent alcohol by volume, brewed from pale ale, crystal and a touch of chocolate malt; hopped with Challengers, Fuggles and Goldings; and fermented with "Sierra Nevada" yeast. The brew has a very good amber-pink color and the malt accent of an Irish Red Ale. It is on the dry side for the style, but beautifully balanced. It has plenty of complexity, too, with a restrained fruitiness, and a peppery hop acidity.

Before becoming overall champion, Rebel Red had to win its category. The brewery it beat into second place was itself, with its stronger (6.4 abv) Bellringer, bigger, fruitier and maltier, with a hint of coffee. Third place among ales went to Brainblásta, a powerful (7.0abv) strong ale, exploding with flavor, from the Porterhouse brewpub, of Dublin.

The Porterhouse organises this annual judging of ales from independent breweries. For the first two years it was held at the brewpub, in Dublin. This year, it was moved to the London branch which has no brewery. The Dublin brewpub's beers are developing a following at the Porterhouse in London, and over St Patrick's weekend the products entered by other breweries will also be on offer. There were a total of 29 beers in the competition.

The judges in this competition have two worries:

1. What if the Porterhouse doesn't win anything?
2. What if it wins everything?

The judging being blindfold, they have no means of steering to a politically-acceptable decision. I know, because I have been a judge each year. My fellow judges were Irish brewer Brendan Dobbin and New Zealander Willie Simpson, who writes a beer column for the Sydney Morning Herald. If you are interested in Australian beers, or plan a visit there, look out for Willie's upcoming book *Amber and Black*.

The Porterhouse's Wrassler Extra won the Stout category, with the same brewery's Oyster Stout as runner-up. Third place went to the Extra Stout from Messrs Maguire's brewpub, also in

Dublin. Maguire's also won the Lager category, with an extremely hoppy Pilsener. Also among the awards were a more malt-accented, bronze lager called Finian's, from Celtic Brewing, of Enfield, County Meath; and Curim, a peachy-tasting wheat ale from the Carlow Brewery.

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