

Thrills and chills

Home brewers have a chance to test their beers on the public through some friendly competition

They meet monthly, testing each other's beers, inviting guest speakers to discuss aspects of brewing, helping each other in their quest for the perfect brew. "We are a brewing club, not a drinking club. People who join are usually home-brew kiln beer makers who want to take the next step to becoming an all-grain brewer," Mowbray says.

In other words, they want to progress from following the instructions on the back of a packet to becoming a micro brewer in their own right.

But it sounds like an adult education class at the TAFE, that would be inaccurate. "It involves beer - it is a lot of fun," he says. Brennan Fielding at Oxford 152 will have the job of turning the

INVENTOR'S SPIRIT... Michael Mowbray and daughter Christyne.



SOME time in August, maybe in September, one lucky Brisbane home brewer will get the thrill of his beer-making lifetime.

He will be able to sit at the bar of a pub and watch as the barman serves up his home brew to the paying public.

Michael Mowbray hopes it will be him sitting on the stool as the customers line up at the Oxford 152 bar and order a schooner of his finest, but he knows how tough the competition will be to get his beer on tap.

He has 15 chances. Fifteen different categories in the Brisbane Amateur Beer Brewers club annual brewing championships, each one vying to win their class but also in with a shot to take out the overall champion beer.

And that's the biggest. The champion brew of the club championships this year will be handed over to the brewmaster at Oxford 152's microbrewery, Brennan Fielding, who will make a batch for sale over the bar at the popular Bullimba pub.

"I think the best chance of winning is with my India pale ale," says Mowbray, an IT specialist who lives at Calamvale.

He knows the competition will be tough because as webmaster of the club he is intimately acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of the 43 members of the BABB. He knows their passion, because he has it himself.

"We have a broad range of members, all of whom are devoted to becoming better brewers," Mowbray says.

Surprisingly, with such a great prize on offer, there has been little evidence of industrial espionage or personal rivalry. "Everybody wants to win," he says. "It would be a dream come true. But we are all males and everyone has been very open about the brews they have entered."

The club has been in existence since 1977, when 21 people turned up to the inaugural meeting at the Holland Park RSL hall. Two people who were there that night, Bill Gorton and Kymie Melville, are still members.

It is one of a raft of home and craft brewing clubs in Queensland. The Pine Rivers Underground Brewing Society is another strong association.

The members of these clubs are diverse in both the people they attract and the brewing skills they cater for.

"Our club has a refrigeration mechanic and a doctor, and just about everything else in between," Mowbray says.

"The fridge mechanic is particularly popular," he chuckled. "But the doctor is also very useful helping us with the sterile handling of yeasts."