



RIGHT now, across this wide brown state, in garages, sheds, spare bedrooms or temperature-controlled workshops built specially for the purpose, students of the ancient art of brewing are striving to harness nature in an attempt to win beer glory.

If they get the magic combination of malt, water and hops right, tickle the yeast into doing their bidding and their knowledge of chemistry is up to scratch, these amateurs could get a shot at the big show — a chance to pit their beers against Australia's best in the national brewing championships.

First they must put their beer up for scrutiny in the Queensland Amateur Brewing Championships, which is being hosted this year by the Brisbane Amateur Beer Brewers club and will be judged next month.

The competition is open only to Queensland residents and a major incentive to enter is that those who get first, second or third placings can enter the Australian Amateur Brewing Championships, to be held in Melbourne in October.

That is normally motivation enough for the delightfully engaging folk who brew beer out of passion, not for profit.

But this year there is even more reason, for this state's backyard brewers to offer their bounty up for judgment by others.

The champion brewer will get a rare chance to play at being a beer baron. The winner will be entitled to make a commercial batch of their beer at the

Home brews up for glory

Rory Gibson



craft brewery run by the Brewhouse which will then be made available on tap at the Brewhouse bar in Albert St, Brisbane.

Not only that they get flights and accommodation to the Australian National Homebrewing Conference which will be held in conjunction with the national brewing championships, "I had intended not competing in comps this year until I saw the prizes on offer," said Michael Mowbray,

who is the webmaster for the Brisbane Amateur Beer Brewers club. He and some of his fellow members will be busy enough making sure the

state titles run smoothly without having to fret over their own brews, but the chance to sell their own beer in a real bar and get to Melbourne for mix proved too big a lure.

"We will have no idea of entry numbers until the week prior (judging is on September 20 at the Brewhouse) as we enter as late as possible to ensure fresh product," he said. "But we believe we will have in excess of 200 entries."

"Many brewers show little interest in competition, but the prize pool this year will overcome that."

One home brewer who falls into the category of someone who shows keen interest in entering competitions is IT consultant and BABB member Ben Conney, pictured.

"I will most certainly be entering the championships. I will be submitting at least four beers, probably more," he said. "I will definitely be

entering a stout, a porter, an English brown ale, an India pale ale, and possibly an English Bitter or English dark mild.

"I am confident of being competitive, and hopeful of winning a few places. The standard of this year's comp will be very high as it will be attracting a lot of interest."

Conney is typical of a lot of homebrewers in that what fascinates them about their hobby is not the prospect of an endless supply of beer but the process of making it.

"Brewing means a lot of things to me," he said. "One of the main reasons is the chance to brew styles of beer that aren't readily available here, or are quite expensive to buy more than a few of, such as English ales and Belgian styles."

"That certainly was the main reason in the beginning but now I really enjoy the process of creating a beer.

"I design my own recipes, reading from what others have done and adding my own ideas and twists from there or building a recipe from scratch from the information known about particular styles."

The prospect of having one of his beers on sale to an admiring public appeals to him but it won't break his spirit if he doesn't win the top prize.

"It would be very nice, but isn't really the main reason for entering," he said.

"What is great to see is support from the commercial brewing community for those who share a passion for brewing and beer."

"It emphasises the point that what many people are brewing now is really no different to commercial beers and sometimes better, as homebrewers aren't bound by economic factors or the need to worry about commercial success."

Conney, of Mt Gravatt East, is married with two children and has been brewing for five years.

"My wife is very understanding," he said. "She was the one who brought me my first home brew kit, although she jokingly says she occasionally regrets that now. My extended family also enjoys the fruits of my hobby. I have semi-converted my Dad back to beer after years of being a wine person."

For Brisbane Amateur Beer Brewers go to www.babbrewers.com.

For info on the state brewing titles go to www.qabc.org.au, and for the national championships look on www.aabc.org.au

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Trade secret

PLEASE persuade Wordsmiths at The University of Queensland (St Lucia campus) to provide the recipe for their delicious vegetarian scones. Thank you. S.C., St Lucia

WORDSMITHS CAFE SAVOURY SCONE RECIPE

Makes 6 large or 10 small
2 cups self-raising flour
Pinch salt

1 egg, lightly beaten
1 cup milk
50g butter, melted
60g creamed corn
60g fetta, chopped
60g black olives, chopped
60g tasty cheese, grated
30g good quality tomato relish

Preheat oven to 150C or 160C. Sift flour and salt into a bowl. Add beaten egg and milk, mix and then add all the savoury ingredients, the corn, fetta, olives, tomato and tasty cheese. Mix together gently -

don't overwork it. Turn mixture on to a floured tray or work surface and roll out gently to about 3cm thick.
Cut or score the mix to the desired size scone. Place these on a floured tray and bake for 35 minutes in a gas convection oven or 40 to 45 minutes in an electric convection oven. Enjoy with butter, relish and a dollop of sour cream.

Send your request for recipes to Trade Secrets, The Courier-Mail, GPO Box 130, Brisbane 4001 or email donnellyf@gqp.newstfd.com.au

