

Mountain Goat sampler paddle; Facing page, top: Good Beer Week promotional material; Facing page, below: satisfied beer drinkers

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AT A GLANCE

The Tipping Pint

Melbourne's affinity for ale is well known, but a craft beer boom is adding fresh flair to the city's drinking scene. Chris Canty takes a heady swig

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elburnians claim that their city is the capital of nearly everything,

from sports to culture to fashion. Good Beer Week (GBW) – an epic celebration of suds – certainly bolsters the Victorian city's claim to being Australia's craft beer capital.

An addition to the social calendar that began modestly just three years ago, Good Beer Week now lasts for nine days, spotlights more than 115 venues citywide and boasts a schedule

of 140 events designed to showcase craft beer in all its foamy glory.

Cam Hines, co-founder of Mountain Goat, one of Melbourne's first micro-

starting to wonder whether Australia was ever going to really embrace craft beer, but I can tell you that in the last two years it has happened in a big way," he says.

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breweries, notes that Australia's appreciation for craft beer was slow to develop but has boomed in recent years. "I was

According to Xavier Verhoeven of Temple Brewing Company, one of a new breed of breweries, the growing interest

in craft beer is attributable to an ongoing increase in the number of brew houses here. "There are some great new breweries opening up and as that happens, there are also exciting new beers released," he says.

Good Beer Week with its beer degustation sessions at five-star restaurants and roving scavenger hunts through the inner suburbs has further fuelled the trend.

The highest-profile event of the week is the Great Australasian Beer SpecTAPular



(GABS), whose origins lie in a casual conversation over a few pints but which has become the nation's biggest beer festival. Held at Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building, this year's edition of the event features at least 90 beers from more than 60 breweries in Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

Dave Ong of the multi award-winning 2 Brothers Brewery says GABS offers him a chance to experiment. "We have a special brew currently underway called the Magic Pudding," he says. "It's possibly the most complex and left-of-field beer we've made. Spiced with homely and sweet flavours, we combine cinnamon, nutmeg and fresh Tasmanian hops and allow for a generous amount of aging time in new French oak."

Josh Uljans is part owner of Moon Dog. One of Melbourne's newest breweries, it has quickly gained a reputation for its complex and often strong beers – some come in at over 15%.

"The GABS festival allows people to try some innovative, one-off beers," he says. "The

beer we're doing will be pretty special. It's a collaborative beer with Norwegian brewery Nøgne O. We can't wait."

With a crowd of more than 12,000 people expected at this year's third edition of GABS, even co-creator Steve Jeffares is amazed at how far it's come. "We really want to champion what many independent, localised microbreweries are doing with high quality ingredients," he says.

Anyone unable to attend can take solace in the fact that Melbourne is home to a growing number of speciality beer bars. Among the leading lights are Josie Bones (josiebones.com), Mrs Parmas (mrsparmas.com.au), The Alehouse Project (thealehouseproject.com.au) and The Local Taphouse (thelocal.com.au).

Such is the popularity of Good Beer Week and the Great Australasian Beer SpecTAPular that it's just a matter of time before the weird and wonderful beers showcased will be available year round. And that's another reason to lift a glass. 🍷



EVENTS:

- **Good Beer Week** 19–26 May, www.goodbeerweek.com.au
- **Great Australasian Beer SpecTAPular** 24–26 May, www.gabs.com.au

TOP TAPS:

If you can't make Good Beer Week, don't fret. These breweries are open to the public year-round:

- **TEMPLE BREWING COMPANY** 122 Weston St, Brunswick, tel: (0)3 9673 4545, www.templebrewing.com.au (Wed–Sun)
- **MOUNTAIN GOAT BEER** Cnr North & Clark Sts, Richmond, tel: (0)3 9428 1180, www.goatbeer.com.au (Wed & Fri)
- **2 BROTHERS BEER BREWERY** 4 Joyner St, Moorabbin, tel: (0)449 254274, www.2brothers.com.au (Thu & Fri)
- **TRUE SOUTH BREWERY** 298 Beach Rd, Black Rock, tel: 1300 878360, www.truesouth.com.au (Tue–Sun)
- **MATILDA BAY BREWING CO** 89 Bertie St, Port Melbourne, tel: 9673 4545, www.matildabay.com.au (Mon–Sat)