



Urban Alley's head brewer Shaya Rubinstein

How have tastes evolved?

"We wanted the experience of the All Nighter to be refreshing, low in alcohol, but not in taste or body so we designed a recipe with a careful balance of malt body and selected hops that would provide just a touch of floral and fruity notes. Everything had to be dialed in with much more tighter control measures than usual, since with a beer like this, imbalance and inconsistencies can be much more apparent due to its delicate expression of flavours," **Shaya Rubinstein, Urban Alley.**

"Our Stage Roadie is a full flavour ale, loaded with four different, but finely balanced, hops to supplement the malt profile and bittering hop used in this beer. The beer has a full mouthfeel, so it gives the punter the feeling of having a full strength beer but without the alcohol. It also holds a good head, and when a beer looks and feels like a full strength, the response is one of surprise and happiness," **Corinna Steeb, Prancing Pony.**

"The fact we brew to strength, and don't artificially extract the alcohol, means we can produce flavour styles in an 'ultra-low' category that quite simply have not been possible until now. The Big Drop range reflects all the styles of beer you would expect to find in a craft brewery - just without the alcohol," **Rob Fink, Big Drop.**

"With the Summit Session Ale, we set out to brew a beer that rivalled its full-strength counterparts. It's brewed with oats for a creamy, full mouthfeel and the hop combination of Simcoe, Citra and Galaxy rounds out the experience nicely," **Wade Hurley, Capital Brewing.**

"Monteith's offer a range of gateway craft beers that deliver on taste and quality with a lower ABV. Draught is the latest addition to the range, offering a highly sessionable and refreshing craft lager that delivers on flavour, with a hint of citrus (and) late hopped for a crisp finish," **Niamh Galvin, Drinkworks.**

"UpFlow Draught (formerly Wheat) shows how a crushable refreshing beer can still have perfect body, weight and a true 100% malt flavour, with hop character that only comes from boil hopping a traditional brewing process. We've built it as an isotonic to allow it to pair with training - the sheer joy of crushing a frothie after a physical session is incompatible with this little gem," **Julian Sanders, UpFlow.**

Hargrave began his tutelage under Watkins, and Wig and Pen co-founder Lachlan McOmish, when he enrolled in the brewing course at Canberra's Institute of Technology.

"Way back in my formative years, when I first met Richard, there was always a couple at the Wig," Hargrave said.

"Those ones, and Rogers, were the pioneers really. Now there's a bunch, and I think most breweries have got something that befits the category in their core range. And I think that's because it's bigger than just a geographical thing. It's bigger than just the folks in tropical North Queensland needing to drink XXXX Gold because they don't want to be splattered after two beers. It's a national, if not a global, thing that people sometimes just want to have a beer without having to commit too heavily to it."

SMALL BY NAME, NOT IN STATURE

In his time with Lion, Justin Fox would work on a number of session beer iterations before heading east to head up brewing at the Colonial Brewing Co in Port Melbourne. He recalled Small Ale (3.5%) was one of the first project beers they did. It was destined for their core range within a week of its release.

"The aim was to put everything we loved about big American IPAs into something we could have a pint of after work and drive home," Fox said of Small Ale.

"When we chose it for our second can release, that's when things really exploded. Cans were unproven at the time, let alone a mid-strength in a can, but the



Colonial's Small Ale

acceptance was great and we struggled to keep up. I'm stoked it is still tasting great (if not better) and grown to a national go-to option for a flavour-driven session beer."

For Fox, the challenges of brewing a mid-strength are the same as they are for all beer styles - getting the balance just right across both aroma and flavour.

"Across all the lower alcohol beers I have brewed, consistency is an ongoing challenge. The first few brews have always had what I describe as a hole in the mid-palate. The aromatic and initial flavour is enticing and appealing, yet it all disappears in an instant, only for any residual bitterness and hop flavours to take a little longer to build. Small adjustments eventually lead to a more linear journey that gives the drinker a more fulfilling flavour experience. Changes in hop crops, and small movements in attenuation, can throw this balance off very quickly, so it's not a beer that you can set and forget. We were pretty happy at Colonial when we learnt that one of the big commercial breweries had purchased some Small Ale and had it sent for analysis as they were convinced it was over 3.5%. A little squirrel divulged the attempt to derail us some months after the fact, only the test came back at 3.48% and the attack was duly called off!"



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