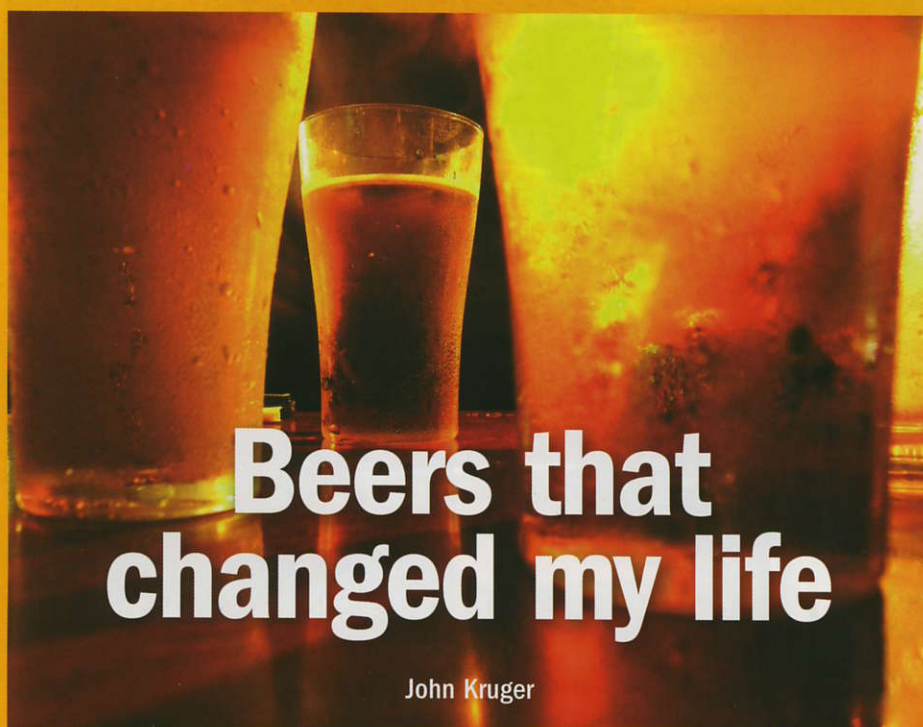


# BEER RADAR



## Beers that changed my life

John Kruger

**W**e continue our series of interviews with people we admire and respect about, "The beer that changed my life." We've chosen these two people because of their respected palates and award winning contributions to the wonderful world of food and beverages in the Barossa.

### **Mark McNamara, executive chef, Appellation Restaurant, The Louise**

"The beer that changed my life wasn't the first beer—getting smashed with friends as a teenager in the early '70s on longnecks of Southwark 'Green Death'. In fact this (and my Dad insisting I have a beer with him the next day—and I thought at the time he was unaware of the night before) pretty much put me off beer for years—a kind of aversion therapy.

"It wasn't until I moved to the UK to work about 10 years later that I discovered what I think beer is all about: micro-breweries, cask conditioned real ale, hand drawn beer engines, real beer stored in cool cellars and dispensed unrefrigerated at 8°C in pints on cold nights, in front of an open fire in small free houses. The key to this door was a

small brewery, Rayments, in a village called Furneux Pelham on the Herts-Essex border near Bishops Stortford. Unfortunately the brand owner 'Greene King' closed the brewery in 1987.

"The beer I was introduced to was Rayments BBA (variously referred to as Best Bitter Ale or Best Burton Ale) and I spent a cold winter trekking around the 30 independent pubs in tiny local villages (as these were the only stockists—no bottles, only draught). It was a revelation that beer could be savoured and flavourful, not frozen and bland, that hops were fragrant and floral, and that beer doesn't have to be gassy yet this was certainly not ever flat.

"And the beauty was that each pub was responsible for cask conditioning their own beer, it was always hand drawn, no gas or temprite or superchillers anywhere near it. There was a slight variance in pint from pub to pub with the best batches being closest to the brewery, but the beer didn't travel much wider than a 30 mile radius anyway. Over the years other British beers have come close but nothing has ever equalled it. Maybe it is simply a romantic memory or the fact I can never again compare this beer with any other,

but Rayments converted me and I have been seeking out great beers ever since."

### **Darryl Trinne, owner and head brewer, Barossa Brewing Company**

"The lights really came on for me when visiting Sydney for an engineering conference in the mid '90s. My partner Gaye and I were aimlessly wandering around The Rocks looking for a decent bar when we stumbled upon The Australian Hotel. They had gourmet pizzas, it was a fantastic old pub that was pretty much unmolested, and only two beers on tap: Scharer's Lager and Scharer's Bock. Fantastic beers. Clean, unfiltered, free of preservatives and flavoursome.

"The Bock had a malty richness, most likely from Vienna and Munich malts. Hop bitterness was low but still detected. Slight sweetness, and its colour was at the dark end of the style. Off-white head with good retention. A good, gutsy, very drinkable session beer. Shits not too black, solid stools etc.

"The lager, as with the Bock, had malty richness but with slight sweet honey tones. Well hopped for aroma, and was not too bitter. She was a cloudy little number. I'm not sure how long he lagered it for. I suspect not for long. Some of the cloudiness would have been a protein haze. It was just one of those beers I couldn't stop drinking.

"I suspect the grain bill for both beers was pretty much the same apart from the roasted barley malt used mainly for colour. We stayed for the duration and taxied back to our digs. I ditched the engineering conference to return to The Australian. We traced the beer back to its source, Geoff Scharer's George IV Inn at Picton. The copper-clad brew house was on display in the front bar, and only two beers on tap. We made regular trips to Picton to meet with Geoff and enjoy the beer. He wouldn't ship the beer as he was afraid of spoilage. So we would fly to Sydney from Adelaide, hire a car, drive to Picton, fill the vehicle with Scharer's, and drive back to the Barossa. I believe this was the best Lager and Bock in the country at the time."