



MEDIA RELEASE

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Playing politics to pick New Zealand's beer capital

Given it's the city where our nation's important political decisions are made often over a beer, it makes sense that many people might also consider Wellington the country's beer capital.

With 18 breweries vying for top gongs at the 2015 Brewers Guild of New Zealand Awards this weekend, Wellington again has a strong presence at the brewing industry's annual showcase event.

But this year's awards won't be held in the city widely considered to be the country's home of brewing. For the first time, the awards will be hosted by a rival for the capital's brewing crown – Auckland.

Not surprisingly, New Zealand's most populous region has the most entries at this year's awards, with 23 brewers in the running.

However, despite a population less than a third that of Auckland, a total of 18 breweries entered from the Wellington region show brewing is booming in the capital.

It's a boom that New Zealand brewing is enjoying nationally and internationally, says Wellington's Fork & Brewer head brewer Kelly Ryan. Wellington is to brewing what Silicon Valley is to tech, he says.

"I'm a Taranaki boy but what I've seen in Wellington since moving here 18 months ago has blown me away. We've got breweries like Garage Project, Tuatara, Yeastie Boys, Panhead and ParrotDog doing amazing things on the national and international stage.

"Auckland's up and coming, and there's a lot of cool stuff happening, but what's coming out of Wellington is incredible. It's also got a lot to do with Wellington's compact geography and culture – no matter where you go you see a great cross-section of people enjoying good beer together, from people in suits to people in hi-viz vests and everyone in between."

Ryan has just returned to Wellington from the United Kingdom, where he was one of 12 brewers from around the world invited to be a guest brewer with Wetherspoon's, a pub chain with 1000 outlets throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

He produced 40,000 litres of Fork & Brewer's "Low Blow" lower alcohol beer for sale at Wetherspoon's pubs, further enhancing the New Zealand brewing industry's international reputation.

“They love our beer over there because what we produce is so good. They can’t get enough of it.”

Ryan’s attention is now focused on this weekend’s Brewers Guild of New Zealand Awards at Sky City in Auckland, where his Fork Brewing has 15 beers entered in a field comprising nearly 800 beers from 100 breweries across 14 beer categories. Of the breweries entered, six are from overseas.

Canterbury has 12 breweries entered and Otago/Southland nine. While big city operations are thirsty for the prestige a Brewers Guild award brings, past winners have shown the little guys can still foot it with brewing’s big boys.

Martin Townshend’s “one-man band” operation in Nelson won the champion brewery title last year, leading to a national and international distribution deal with Tuatara. While his boutique brewery’s profile has taken off, Townshend still prefers to keep things small, making brilliant beer in his backyard.

“I guess the major benefit is that I get paid to dick around and I can experiment a great deal. The whole craft beer industry is so welcoming to new and interesting products and that’s something I really enjoy.”

2015 BREWERS GUILD OF NEW ZEALAND AWARDS

Brewery entry numbers by region	
Auckland	23
Wellington	18
Canterbury	12
Otago/Southland	9
Nelson/Tasman	7
Hawke’s Bay	7
Coromandel/Bay of Plenty	6
Poverty Bay	3
Marlborough	2
Waikato	2
Northland	1
Taranaki	1
Wairarapa	1
West Coast	1

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About the Brewers Guild of New Zealand

The Brewers Guild is a membership-based organisation established to grow the value and quality of New Zealand’s \$2.2 billion beer sector.

It operates as a collective voice for more than 80 commercial brewers in New Zealand. The Guild works with Government on legal, licensing, fiscal and excise issues. It delivers education programmes to its members and helps promote the value of the sector to the public.

The Guild organises New Zealand's most prestigious annual beer awards, the Brewers Guild of New Zealand Awards.

For more information visit <http://www.brewersguild.org.nz/>

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