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English Monthly

ATLANTIC TRAGEDY

Catch up with the latest food and drink gossip over a coffee



Coffee Break



MARY BERRY IN HOT WATER

Oh, Mary! What have you done? In the last edition, we described you as Britain's grand dame of the kitchen but this month you are persona non grata with British viewers. Has she murdered the kitchen porter? No, but some say she's murdered a meal. In her BBC programme, Mary Berry Everyday, she's only gone and suggested people add white wine and cream to their Bolognese sauce. Really, what was she thinking? Maybe she swigged a little too much cooking brandy.

Discussion points

Do you have your own favourite variation on a classic dish?
Have you ever cooked a meal that went disastrously wrong?

Vocabulary

To be in hot water - idiom: to be in trouble

Grand dame - an old woman who is highly admired and respected

Persona non grata - a person unwelcome or out of favour

Kitchen porter - the lowest job in the kitchen, carrying, fetching and cleaning

To swig - to take and swallow a large quantity of drink in one go

Microbreweries and Craft Beer

Years ago, I'd heard the term 'microbreweries' thrown around, usually by Americans attempting to redeem themselves when criticised by their European counterparts for unleashing such watery concoctions as Coors or Miller on the world. East Coast USA had a wealth of these small breweries producing small amounts of beer in a traditional way. A great many of these beer styles originated in England and were developed specifically for export to British colonies or trading partners.

Those early beers lost their microbrewery tag when they became popular but the market for more personal beers made by small companies has spread across the world.

There's hardly a country that hasn't jumped on the craft beer bandwagon. Poland in particular, has spawned several well-respected small breweries. The choice can be overwhelming to those unfamiliar with the differences between an IPA and an APA or an Imperial stout and a Baltic porter. So let's have a little look, at some of the main types of beer.

Imperial stout – Word has it that the well-travelled Peter the Great had a fondness for British stout and quickly began importing it. Typical stout would have spoiled during the journey, so English brewers increased the alcohol content. Despite having an alcohol by volume (ABV) of over 9%, these are often dangerously palatable. It goes without saying that this kind of beer was a favourite tippie of Rasputin.

Baltic porter – A kind of dark beer, lighter than Imperial stout but sweet and generally packs a punch. Baltic porter was one of the preferred beverages of the Prussian, Polish, Finnish and Swedish upper classes, in the 18th century. ABV is usually around 7.5%.

India pale ale – During the political stand-off between Britain and Russia in the



Anyone for a glass of Sheep Szt?



1800s, the export trade to Russia dried up. British brewers quickly sought to enter a new market. By adding hops to traditional ale, they found that ale could be shipped to India where refreshing pale ale was welcomed by the sunburnt, thirsty British. India pale ale has a strong flavour, which is not to everyone's liking. ABV ranges from 5% to 9%. Go easy on them.

American pale ale – American pale ale emerged much later on the scene and can trace its roots back to 1975. The owner of Anchor Brewing Company set out

on a trip to London, Yorkshire and the Midlands in England to uncover brewing techniques and recipes. He used these to recreate something similar in the States to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the start of the American War of Independence. APAs are sometimes slightly lower in alcohol content but the main difference is that they use American hops. ABV is typically between 4.1% and 6%.

Of course, there are many more varieties out there, such as smooth oatmeal stout or peaty whisky ale, your best bet is to get down to your local and get supping.



What do you recommend?



There is no shortage of craft beers on offer

Beerhub

Warsaw neighbourhood Jelonki may be far away from the fashionable centre but the unassuming Beerhub on Ulica Powstańców Śląskich is the perfect place to get acquainted with the many beers on offer, whether it be while watching football, playing a board game or enjoying the beer garden in the summer. This cosy watering hole has six craft beers on draught, two very affordable draught lagers and cider or wine on tap for the spoilsports. If you're feeling really thirsty don't worry for there are hundreds of bottles to choose from too. Landlord and landlady Patryk and Magda are usually on hand to offer advice and help you with your choice, should you be struggling. We caught up with them for a little natter about the pub's first year in business and the Polish craft beer market.

When did you open?

We opened last year on the 30th of April, so we are going to celebrate our first anniversary soon.

Was the first year what you expected? If not, why?

Totally! We can even say that our first year in business has been beyond our wildest expectations. We are receiving a lot of positive feedback from people who frequent Beerhub. It gives us the energy to continue evolving.

What made you decide to open a pub specialising in craft beer? Do you have a bar background?

We decided to do something for ourselves and create our own place. We used to work from 9 till 5 but we really like challenges. One of us used to work in Dublin and has some bar experience from a traditional Irish pub.

What do you say to people who just want a 'normal' beer?

We have Czech lagers, so this is a substitute for 'normal' beer. Anyway, we always give them the chance to try a small sample of craft beer and sometimes they go for it.

Do you regularly get asked if you sell spirits?

Not really. Most of our clients are satisfied with what's on offer – besides our wide variety of beers on tap and in bottles, we also sell ciders, spritzers and wine.

Do you think craft beer has changed the way Poles view beer?

This is a long process, unfortunately. There is only a small percentage of Poles

that are really into craft beer, however, Poles have become more aware of and interested in craft beer.

Are people more likely to spend time in the pub now than in the past? Is a pub culture developing?

We think that people have always loved to spend time in pubs, so it hasn't changed, but since pubs with more draught beers have grown in popularity, people are more demanding and interested in the quality of the product that they get.

Do you see the market for craft beer getting bigger or waning?

The market is definitely growing. There are a lot of new contract brewers (*), new beer styles and pubs with a lot of beers on tap. It is thriving.

What is your favourite beer and why?

It is a West Coast IPA from one of the Warsaw craft breweries. They seem to have found the perfect balance between malt and hops, and bitterness.

What is the strangest beer you have stocked?

It was a stout called "Sheep szit", also from a Polish brewery, called Browar Birbant. The concept was introduced from Iceland, the beer malt had actually been smoked with sheep dung.

How can a buyer avoid buying a poor example of craft beer – e.g. one labelled as being original but in fact mass-produced?

Buyers should buy from beer specialists rather than big supermarkets if they want to avoid this scenario.

You introduced food last summer, are there any new plans afoot this summer?

We have a couple of ideas, and will definitely treat our clients to something new. At present, we are toying with the ideas of weekend brunches and showing films in the summer.

So there we have it, according to the experts, the craft beer craze shows no sign of letting up and might be here for good. Why not head out and taste it for yourself now that you are armed with a little more knowledge.

***a contract brewer is one brewer hiring another brewer to brew its product for them, satisfying the modern punter's desire for variety without actually having to fork out on the real estate and machinery a brewery requires**



Vocabulary (article)

To redeem oneself - to do something that makes up for former wrong doing

Tag - name, label, reference

To jump on the bandwagon - to follow a popular trend

To spawn - to give birth to, to produce

Spoil - here: go bad/off

Palatable - easy on the palate and pleasant to taste

It goes without saying - it is obvious that

Tipple - an alcoholic drink taken regularly

To pack a punch - to be very strong

Stand-off - a deadlock between two equally strong opponents, usually politically or in industrial disputes

To dry up - to cease to exist

Hops - the flowers of the hop plant used to flavour beer

Peaty - having a smoky, earthy character

To sup - to drink

Watering hole - informal term for pub or bar, particularly a favourite one

Spoilsport - someone who does not join in with the fun and spoils it for others

Landlord and landlady - the term given to the proprietors of a pub

Natter - chat, informal conversation, often to share recent news

Vocabulary (interview)

To frequent - to go somewhere on a regular basis (stress on second syllable opposite the adjective form)

Spritzer - a mixture of wine and soda water

Waning - weakening, reducing

Thriving - doing very well, flourishing

To fork out - to pay (often a high price, reluctantly)

Punter - Brit. inf. customer.

Malt - barley or other grains that have been steeped, germinated, and dried for

brewing or distilling purposes

Bitter - having a sharp taste or small, not sweet

Dung - the excrement of animals

Afoot - in the pipeline, soon to happen

To toy with an idea - to lightly consider something

Brunch - a late morning meal taken instead of breakfast and lunch

To let up - to abate, to stop

Language Test

Without referring back to the interview, match the questions and answers.

1	Was the first year what you expected? If not, why?	a	One of us used to work in Dublin and has some bar experience from a traditional Irish pub.
2	What made you decide to open a pub specialising in craft beer?	b	There is only a small percentage of Poles that are really into craft beer, however, Poles have become more aware of and interested in craft beer.
3	Do you have a bar background?	c	The market is definitely growing. There are a lot of new contract brewers (*), new beer styles and pubs with a lot of beers on tap. It is thriving.
4	Do you regularly get asked if you sell spirits?	d	It was a stout called "Sheep szit", also from a Polish brewery, called Browar Birbant. The concept was introduced from Iceland, the beer malt had actually been smoked with sheep dung.
5	Do you think craft beer has changed the way Poles view beer?	e	We decided to do something for ourselves and create our own place.
6	Do you see the market for craft beer getting bigger or waning?	f	We are toying with the ideas of weekend brunches and showing films in the summer.
7	What is the strangest beer you have stocked?	g	Totally! We can even say that our first year in business has been beyond our wildest expectations.
8	You introduced food last summer, are there any new plans afoot this summer?	h	Not really. Most of our clients are satisfied with what's on offer.

