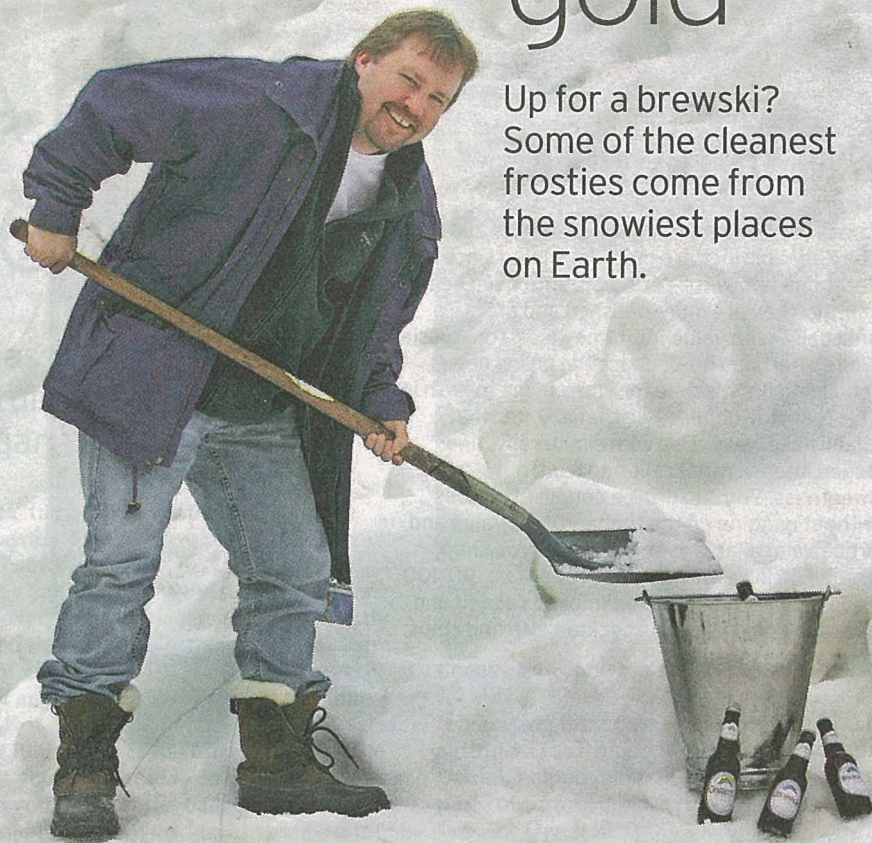


WILLIE SIMPSON
BREW

Cold gold

Up for a brewski?
Some of the cleanest
frosties come from
the snowiest places
on Earth.



Malt and shovel ... Snowy Mountains Brewery founder Kevin O'Neill.

"SKI hard, drink well" could be the motto of any number of powder hounds but a pair of enthusiasts has started a beer importing business based around their shared philosophy. Boutique Alpine Brews is the brainchild of business consultant Geoff Cope and his close mate Graham Blackley a corporate trainer and the direct result of their passion for discovering good beer while skiing overseas on holiday.

The theme has also inspired Kevin O'Neill, of Snowy Mountains Brewery, who has experimented with the white stuff in his latest brew.

Cope recalls how their business began: "We were on a chairlift ride at the Hirafu resort in Japan after discovering Otaru beer the previous night at the pensione I stayed at." One thing led to another and the pair cooked up the idea of a business importing beers from alpine areas. Otaru Export was the first alpine brew in their portfolio, hailing from a brewery in the Niseko region of Hokkaido. The whole exercise had a multicultural touch with the pair of Aussies importing a Japanese beer made by a German-born brewer. Otaru is a clean and malty lager and while it was an acceptable enough beer, Cope and Blackley were soon looking further afield.

A network of friends and French business connections led them to Mont-Blanc Blonde produced by the Brasserie du Mont-Blanc near Chamonix in the heart of the French Alps. Not only does this beer shout its famous alpine connections, it has a Belgian-inspired character and elevated alcohol content that lends itself nicely to apres-ski behaviour.

Further beer and skiing research led the blokes behind Boutique Alpine Brews to the well-known Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, which represents the snowy peak of flavoursome US craft brews.

"We are in current conversations with Sierra Nevada to bring in their pale ale in small quantities," Cope says. Meanwhile, a looming skiing holiday to New Zealand has Cope and Blackley sizing up a few Kiwi brews to augment their portfolio.

Mont-Blanc Blonde is available at Hotel Storrier or from www.boutiquealpinebrews.com.au; Otaru Export is currently between shipments.

At Snowy Mountains Brewery, owner Kevin O'Neill has collected a couple of bucketfuls of the first snow to fall at Charlotte Pass last month and dumped it into a batch of his Charlotte's Hefeweizen. "If you're drinking one of the beers with a batch date marked July, you are likely to be drinking some of Charlotte's Pass's finest," he says.

O'Neill is another skiing fanatic inspired to launch his own beer company after a session in a Snowy Mountains resort watering-hole.

He couldn't believe there were no local craft beers in the bar fridge and it set him on a journey to start Snowy Mountains Brewery.

TASTING NOTES

MONT-BLANC BLONDE

5.8 per cent. Clear, pale-gold. Aroma: malty, sweetish, faint spice. Palate: Soft carbonation, little hop bitterness but finishes dry and tannic. Overall: a top-fermented blonde beer with a firm nod in the direction of Flanders.

CHARLOTTE'S HEFEWEIZEN

4.7 per cent. Hazy, pale amber-gold. Aroma: delicate spice and banana notes. Palate: fruity characters upfront with clove hints later, some tropical fruit notes mid-palate, finishes crisp.