

Hashigo Zake Best of 2012 Survey Results

New Zealand's most discriminating consumers of beer have had their say, and it's time to announce the results of our customer survey about what was good in 2012.

Favourite Lager

There was an early surge in support for the sentimental favourite and winner two years ago, Emerson's Pilsner. However Tuatara Pilsner pulled away and won comfortably. There were solid showings for Croucher Pilsner (last year's winner), Three Boys Pils and Garage Project Pils and Thrills.

Favourite Wheat Beer

In a close contest, Tuatara Hefe has pipped Three Boys Wheat Beer. The nearest chaser was San Diego import Coronado Orange Avenue Wit.

Favourite Porter or Stout

Once again we offered Yeastie Boys PKB as an option in this category, even though it's often labelled a Black IPA. It came out ahead, but with solid competition from (in order) Three Boys Oyster Stout, Cassels and Sons Milk Stout and Renaissance Craftsman.

Favourite Pale Ale

This category was just a benefit for Tuatara. Their American Pale Ale led the voting initially, only to be overtaken by their Aotearoa Pale Ale. It was some way back to Funk Estate Oh Lordy!, Epic Pale Ale and ParrotDog DeadCanary.

Favourite Amber, Red or Brown Ale

This category had a runaway winner in the form of Liberty Yakima Scarlet. Although Garage Project's Red Rocks Reserve made some ground up on the winner in the latter stages of voting. There was solid support too for ParrotDog BloodHound and previous winner 8 Wired Tall Poppy.

Favourite NZ Brewed IPA

It's as good as official now that IPAs are the foremost style in the world of craft brewing and we've had literally dozens that were good or better on tap over the last year. So the field wouldn't end up too spread this year we divided the category into local and imported examples. We then, slightly controversially, included Liberty Yakima Monster in this category, instead of Pale Ale, and it ran away with the voting. Runner up was 8 Wired Hopwired, with Yeastie Boys Digital IPA and ParrotDog BitterBitch not far behind.

Favourite Imported IPA

This turned into a battle of the iconic Californian IPAs, with Northern California's Bear Republic Racer 5 holding out San Diego's Green Flash West Coast IPA, Ballast Point Sculpin and Ballast Point Big Eye.

Favourite Imperial IPA

Last year's beer of the year - Liberty C!tra was run incredibly close by Garage Project's Pernicious Weed. 8 Wired Superconductor and Tuatara Double Trouble were also tied in third place.

Favourite Imperial Stout

Four beers dominated the voting here, with Liberty Never Go Back holding out Nøgne Ø Imperial Stout, Green Flash Double Stout and Rogue Double Chocolate Stout.

Favourite Handpumped Beer

Like last year the beer of Townshend Brewery dominated this category, collectively picking up the majority of votes. But no one of Martin's beers fared much better than any other and it was Cassels and Son's Milk Stout that scored the largest number of votes. Maybe we should introduce a category of "favourite producer of beers for hand pumps", that Martin would win in a canter.

Favourite Beer in No Other Category

Traditionally Renaissance's Stonecutter Scotch Ale has won this "non-category" but this year it was well beaten by two unconventional beers that have been runaway successes – Yeastie Boys Gunnamatta, followed by Garage Project Day of the Dead.

Favourite Overseas Brewery

This decision really divided voters but once again Bear Republic, brewers of Racer 5 IPA and Hop Rod Rye came through ahead of Rogue, Nøgne Ø, Ballast Point, Green Flash and Feral.

Beer of 2012

For this category no suggestions were given and any answer had to be written in. And voting (and spellings) were well and truly scattered. But it didn't take too much forensic vote counting to determine that the most popular beer in this category was the Yeastie Boys bergamot beer – Gunnamatta. Clear second was Liberty's C!tra.

New Zealand Brewery of 2012

Again voters were offered "no hints" and were asked to write in their answers. There were three clear leaders with Garage Project coming out on top, Liberty second and ParrotDog third. What's extraordinary about this result is that no single Garage Project beer won a category. This award must reflect consistency across their range and/or their willingness to experiment.

Favourite New Release Tuesday

This category really was a test of participants' memory and attendance at Hashigo Zake. Little wonder then that the winner was the day that four popular young locals turned up with their first ever commercial beer, packed Hashigo Zake as it never had been before and had everyone in the bar drinking a black beer. In other words, the Funk Estate Black IPA launch.

Favourite Pie

Yes again the superb Beef Rendang pie led the early voting but was somehow (suspiciously?) overtaken by Pork and Chorizo.

Most Enjoyable Hashigo Zake Event

This was taken out by our second ever (and very successful) Pacific Beer Expo. But 2012's new and experimental festival X-Ale came in strongly for second.

Most Promising New or Emerging Brewer

Maybe it was a mistake to include breweries that, while still new or emerging, already had decent profiles at the start of 2012. Because the results actually mirrored those of "New Zealand Brewery of 2012", with Garage Project pipping Liberty and ParrotDog.

What Was The Story of 2012

Unsurprisingly this was taken out by "The Sale Of Emerson's". But very close behind was "Wellington Craft Brewing". Considering the way that the Emerson's sale dominated news within the brewing industry in November and December this says a lot about what is happening in Wellington. Full credit to those who wrote in "the Funk Estate launch".

What Will Be The Story of 2013

The clear winner here was "The Industrial Breweries Striking Back Against Craft Brewing". Ominous indeed. Finishing fourth in this category was "Auckland Craft Brewing", which wasn't even an option initially, but was added after one voter wrote it in.

What Will Be The Next New Zealand Brewing Company To Be Sold

A slightly mischievous question, but fun to talk about. The overwhelming favourite was Tuatara. Well now, plenty of people have speculated about this possibility before and have been waiting a long time to be vindicated. Epic and Renaissance were the next most popular choices.

Conclusions

While it's risky to infer too much from a relatively unsophisticated survey like this, we think there are interesting stories and trends behind the numbers.

Garage Project's popularity in the Brewery of the Year category suggests that the promise they showed when they launched in late 2011 has turned into an ability to consistently satisfy their customers. It seems inevitable that as more of their beer makes it into bottles and out to more customers that more accolades will follow.

The same applies to Liberty who were runner-up as brewery of the year and ran away with four categories.

But Liberty and Garage Project did well in our survey last year. Arguably the big mover has been Tuatara. Over the last year they've moved to new premises and added a lot of capacity to their

brewery. They've also hosted some contract brewing. And with all that going on their quality and variety appear to have improved. It's a great credit to the very brewery that are considered the most likely to be sold.

Meanwhile Yeastie Boys clearly have another runaway success with Gunnamatta. And PKB is as popular as ever.

Finally it's clear that Wellington breweries are dominating our survey. Since we're a Wellington bar that's hardly surprising. Except that two years ago every category except one was won by a South Island beer.

The Winners Again

Lager	Tuatara Pilsner
Wheat Beer	Tuatara Hefe
Porter or Stout	Yeastie Boys PKB
Pale Ale	Tuatara Aotearoa Pale Ale
Amber, Brown or Red Ale	Liberty Yakima Scarlet
NZ Brewed IPA	Liberty Yakima Monster
Imported IPA	Bear Republic Racer 5
Imperial IPA	Liberty C!tra
Imperial Stout	Liberty Never Go Back
Handpumped Beer	Cassels and Sons Milk Stout
Beer in No Other Category	Yeastie Boys Gunnamatta
Overseas Brewery	Bear Republic
THE Beer of 2012	Yeastie Boys Gunnamatta
THE NZ Brewery of 2012	Garage Project
New Release Tuesday	Funk Estate Black IPA
Pie	Pork and Chorizo
Most Enjoyable Hashigo Zake Event	Pacific Beer Expo
Most Promising New or Emerging Brewer	Garage Project
The Story of 2012	The Sale of Emerson's
The Story of 2013	The Industrial Breweries Striking Back Against Craft Brewing
Next New Zealand Brewery to be Sold	Tuatara