

Ironbark - the food

55 Benara Road, Caversham

Phone: 9377 4400

If you wanted to introduce an overseas visitor to the archetypal Aussie then you would be on safe ground by introducing them to Ironbark's founder and brewer Graeme White.

Graeme, whose aim was to create the perfect environment in which to enjoy a beer on a warm Aussie afternoon, has injected his 'dinky di' credentials into Ironbark Brewery and the result is a relaxed informal venue with a distinctly Australian feel.

The rough walled alfresco dining area is furnished with a random variety of bulky timber tables and chairs, 44 gallon drum tables, corrugated metal, and a smattering of Aussie memorabilia. The 'tucker' menu is peppered with Aussie favourites such as "the big mallee bull" [\$25] a triple decker scotch fillet steak sandwich with egg, salad and much more. Be warned, this sandwich is very, very big!

Three baguettes, a corned beef, a chicken, and a vegetarian are at \$14 [\$17 with wedges] and there are a number of salads on the menu including three Caesar salads [from \$14.50] and a warm garlic prawn salad at \$21.50. Other favourites include spring rolls [ten per serve!] at \$13, wedges with sour cream and sweet chilli sauce [\$12], nachos [\$14], three dips and damper with salad at \$16, and salt

and pepper squid [ten per serve] at \$15.50.

We noticed that the wood fired pizza oven had been fired up so we decided on a small wood fired pizza with the works for \$15.50. Our pizza's very good base was topped full of goodies and very tasty.

There are a couple of platters on the menu and we decided on the 'rouseabout' platter [\$55] which was described as being a crowd pleaser and huge.

It seemed as though there was enough on the platter to feed a small army and contained an excellent selection of cold meats, cheeses, and an impressive array of fresh salad ingredients, dips, nuts, fruits, crackers, damper and garlic bread.

We spent a very pleasant hour or so grazing on our platter and enjoying a cold white wine - the brewery has a good selection of mainly local wines that are available by the bottle or glass and even have their own label.

Ironbark is a very relaxed, friendly brewery/restaurant that serves good, fresh food without airs and graces and is a delightful venue in which to while away a lazy, sunny afternoon.

Ironbark Brewery is open Wednesday to Sunday from 10.30 am and meals are served on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.



Ironbark - the beer

I know, I know, this is a wine column but I must confess that as the weather warms up I am more likely to be seen reaching for a beer rather than a glass of wine.

With the temperature rising and lunch beckoning, a visit to a local brewery/restaurant seemed to be the way to go and with five such establishments now located in the Swan Valley, we are spoiled for choice.

We headed for the Ironbark Brewery, just off Benara Road, Caversham as I was keen to check out the food component that has been added to the brewery since my last visit there.

Beers are available by the glass, ranging from a 200 ml glass [\$4] to a 425 ml schooner [\$7.50] but we opted for the \$10 tasting tray which consists of 5 x 80 ml tasting glasses, each with a different beer of your choice.

With our two tasting trays we were able to cover most of the available beers and we were battling to find a beer that we didn't like, so we decided that all the beers were good and that some were simply better than others. We took a vote [of sorts] and came up with our top three beers.

As I had lived in Kalgoorlie when its own Hannan's Brewery was in operation I remember, with fondness,

Hannan's Lager and was delighted to discover that owner/brewer Graeme has the rights to the Hannan's name and that he produces his version of Hannan's Lager at Ironbark.

Whether nostalgia played a part, I'm not sure, but I rated this full strength [5.8 per cent alcohol by volume] lager highly, enjoying its full flavour and ever so slight bitterness.

Our runner up, the Cherry Ale [4 per cent ABV] is a beer that is likely to polarise beer lovers and I'm sure many die hard beer drinkers are likely to dismiss it completely.

It is brewed using real pureed Australian cherries and has a strong cherry flavour and although it is sweet, it does have a balancing tartness to it. This is interesting, well made beer that Graeme tells me is "very popular with the ladies".

Our favourite beer was the Aussie Pilsner [4 to 4.5 per cent ABV], a pale, aromatic Czech style lager that is delightfully clean and crisp, and is the perfect summer thirst buster.

Although we generally associate the Swan Valley with wine, there is a wide variety of very good beer being produced at its five micro breweries and there is no doubt that Ironbark is producing its fair share of quality beer.