



➔ HE ONLY STARTED A YEAR AGO, but more than 25 brews later, Tom Innes is already a beer brewing enthusiast extraordinaire, and he'll be passing his skills on at this week's Sustainable Living workshop on Food Preserving and Beer Brewing. Having tasted a couple of Tom's efforts, I was keen to find out more about his new hobby:

👉 Why brew?

The real reason for me is that it's taking back some power. We've been inculcated into thinking that we need corporations and factories when we can brew our own beer. Why support big corporations for a product that's inferior to what you can do yourself?

There's also the recycling side. I love recycling all those bottles that would normally just go into the recycling [bin], but I just clean them all up and they get reused. You recycle your yeast, and my neighbour out at Springfield, he recycles his bottle caps, so I've started doing that.

👉 How did you get started?

I'd talked about it for years and then the kids gave me the equipment for Christmas. When you start, one of the things you're looking for is bottles, so I turned up at a 50th birthday party with my bike trailer with two recycling bins

and I got in the kitchen and just rinsed all the ones with pop tops, threw them in the bin, and rattled home. The hosts were rapt, they didn't have to deal with it, and I had enough bottles to get me started.

👉 How can you make beer more sustainably?

I haven't done it yet, but it is doable to grow your own hops – so really the only thing that you have to buy in is your malt. You can do your own malt, but that's getting pretty high quality. Some people do it – it's just amazing.

My next project's going to be bee-keeping, because after fermenting, the bottles are primed with a wee bit of sugar so they carbonate. I'm going to use honey for that, and that's another thing I can provide myself.

👉 What's next?

I've just bought a carboy – a 23-litre glass, big bottle thing, so once the temperature drops I'll start doing lagers, because they require lower temperatures. Ales are quite quick to do – from brew to bottle is a week, and you can be drinking it in two weeks, but lagers take longer.

👉 So how do you see this as relating to the students doing eco-my-flat?

There are lots of environmental reasons to brew. The amount of water needed to produce a litre of beer commercially is unbelievable – it's just horrific how much water they use. So from that, through to the recycling aspect, to choosing local ingredients, right through to composting the grains and hops.

There's also the community building aspect. When you brew it's like honey to bees – everyone sort of appears and they have a poke, and a stir or a sniff and they try a bit of last month's brew.

👉 So you're a brewer for life?

I think so – it's got that kind of ring about it. It's just the smell. When you brew – even if you brew outside – you still get that nice malty smell through the house. ←

If you would like to find out more about how to brew your own beer, please join us at the Eco Living workshop on Preserving and Brewing, Wednesday, 1pm (Geog-Psych 413), and Thursday, 1pm (Forestry 139).

Email Matt Morris for more information, matthew.morris@canterbury.ac.nz
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