



JOE DUNCAN... "IT TOOK US OVER A YEAR UNTIL WE FINALLY HIT THE RIGHT RECIPE."

JOE DUNCAN

Bowral Brewing Company, operating out of Moss Vale

As business start ups go, this wins the prize for "most unusual". The Bowral Brewing Company came about when two mates, Joe Duncan and Gav Fisher, entered the 2004 Nescafe Big Break competition with their outline for a boutique brewery.

"We'd done a lot of home brewing and come up with this great recipe for a beer. So we did some more research, called our product "Pig's Ear"— which is cockney rhyming slang for beer — and submitted a business plan for the Nescafe Big Break."

Getting to the sharp end of the national competition convinced the pair that

they were on to something; the \$5000 runners-up prize was useful too, though Duncan admits most of money was swallowed up when they began

producing test batches of their new ale. "It took us over a year until we finally hit the right recipe," he says, "and a lot of beer got poured away!"

Twenty-four-year-old Duncan, a winemaker whose CV lists a number of Southern Highlands wineries, eventually began working with a hop called "Chinook".

"It's grown in Australia, but is originally from the United States. It's very bitter and tends to give good length to a beer, as well as crispness," he says.

Certainly, the copper-coloured ale is an upright little number (the tasting notes rightly say it has "backbone") helped by a sprightly carbonation and a head that lasts, but it's the blend of malt, fruit flavours (some citrus-y Cascade hops are added to the mix) and an edgy bitterness that keeps the palette occupied.

Good branding helps a beer tremendously, and the Flying Pig in question does a top job: this happy porker looks like it's had its snout in the troughs at the bottom of the bar.

But wait a minute — what happened to the pig's ear?

"Well, we can't say too much about it, but someone saw what we were doing and trademarked the name 'Pig's Ear'. But it actually worked out well for us. We had to come up with 'Pigs Fly', which is a more Australian phrase. Plus, it was a name we could play with, so we were able to arrive at a new slogan..."

"Anything is possible" reads the label, and so it has proven. The team have given their flying pig some extra lift by teaming up

with Moss Vale transport owner John McGill and former 2ST/PowerFM Southern Highlands manager, Steve Anderson, who is busy getting the product into local pubs.

"This is my dream

job!" says Anderson. "Our market is basically here in the Southern Highlands and that's perfect for us, especially with the way the area is developing its food and wine reputation. Our beer looks good and tastes good, so it fits. I'm working my way around the area and no one's saying 'no'. Everyone is really positive."

The AIB in Camden is already producing some 2500 cases a month and the Pigs Fly team is hoping to get clearance to land their ale in Sydney and Wollongong. "The boutique beer market is growing at something like 10 per cent year," says Duncan. "In Europe and the Unites States, you might see 10 different beers on tap and I think Australians are ready for something similar. We've already seen it happen with coffee — suddenly everyone in Australia was trying new types of gourmet coffee.

"Now I think it's the turn of beer." **ML**

"In Europe and the United States you might see 10 different beers on tap... I think Australians are ready for something similar."

HIGHLIFE JUNE/JULY 2006, BY MAX ANDERSON