

FOOLS AND FANS

CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL

ROB CASS



Set against a backdrop of sweeping hills with the old-world charm of horses pulling carts along the main road and a sense of peace and calm you get in a town without a shopping mall, sleepy and beautiful Greyton plays host to what is fast becoming the best festival on the South African brewing circuit.

Situated a two-hour drive from Cape Town, there is an element of adventure which adds to the experience, one which shows in the eagerness of vendors and participants alike to be involved. There is a sense that all who are there have made the effort, and are all determined to have a good time.

Since its inception in 2017, Fools and Fans has been touted as a festival 'by brewers, for brewers'. This may seem to limit its appeal upon initial consideration, but that's not the case at all. What it offers is a platform for brewers to flex their creative muscles seemingly without constraint, as well an opportunity for engagement between brewers and consumers on a level unparalleled by any other festival in South Africa – a vital element in spreading the good word about good beer. This is a festival which celebrates all the spirit and gees in the South African brewing community.

To have a small town filled with beer folk – from commercial brewers and home brewers to all the beer fanatics and casual beer drinkers – creates a wonderful atmosphere, almost like going on holiday with an extended group of friends. This sense of community is such a vital part of the craft beer story.

The general standard of beers at South African festivals is continuously improving, and the offering at Fools and Fans was no

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exception. Notable creative and well executed styles included a Wild IPA from Frontier Beer Company and a Sour Brut IPA collaboration between Metal Lane Brewery and Feral Brew Co. Other beers which stood out for me were the Tart & Soul Barrel Aged Sour Saison from Little Wolf, the dry hopped cask pale ale from Shackleton Brewing Company, and the collaboration between Richmond Hill Brewing Company and The Kennel Brewery – a hibiscus infused

New England Pale Ale.

There were also some interesting beer alternatives which caught my attention: the port barrel-aged cider from Little Wolf, which is one of the best liquids I have ever ingested, as well as the incredibly sophisticated and delicious brut-style Mead from Melaurea.

Another drawcard was the newly launched collaboration platform Fermented.co.za. I was very fortunate to be able to attend the food and drink pairing which they created and curated. Featuring a range of fermented products including kombucha, wild fermented wine and local agave spirit, with dishes beautifully paired and prepared, this was a fantastic experience and a nice change of pace during the festival.

With the festival scene struggling to draw the crowds it once could, events need to offer something special and unique. Fools and Fans has this in buckets: a great selection of beers in a beautiful setting, while bathing in the spirit of camaraderie and passion for craft brewing – and a little impromptu karaoke to boot. The festival has grown steadily over its three year life but still has room to hold a bigger crowd, without losing the intimate charm that makes it so special. I will definitely be back next year, and I hope you will too. ☺