

UP students make the best beer, again

They might not have state-of-the-art brewing machinery and technology, but students in the University of Pretoria's Department of Chemical Engineering know how to make good beer.

For the second consecutive year and for the third time in the competition's four years of existence, UP's microbrewery team outperformed nine other universities in the South African Breweries (SAB) Intersarsity Brewing Challenge 2011 and walked away with the Ben Lamaletie Institute of Brewing and Distilling (IBD) Intersarsity Beer Challenge floating trophy.

It all started in 2003 when SAB sponsored the first microbrewery at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Since then, SAB has sponsored a number of microbreweries at many other academic institutions across South Africa. This is how UP's microbrewery came to be established in 2005.


In 2008, the first Intersarsity Brewing Challenge was held to see which university team could make the best lager, ale and speciality beer. A floating trophy, named after Ben Lamaletie, the SAB brewer who conceptualised and launched the competition, is at stake in the competition and gets awarded to the overall winner. Other prizes include prize money for the winning team members, bursary money for the faculty of the winning team, and prize money for the further development of the winning university's microbrewery.

This year's Intersarsity Brewing Challenge took place on 26 and 27 August 2011 at the SAB Training Institute in Kyalami. The competition is held in partnership with SAB, the FoodBev SETA and the Institute of Brewing and Distilling. It was hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand.

Since 2008, UP's brewing team has outshone the other universities, winning the trophy for the overall best beer in 2008, 2010 and 2011. The UP team also won the categories for best ale and best lager this year.

Beer-brewing forms part of a laboratory practical for third-year Biotechnology students at UP, but the team that enters the SAB Intersarsity Brewing Challenge may comprise students from any academic year. Students vote internally to pick the final five-member brewing team.

According to Mr Carl Sandrock, the lecturer in charge of the University's brewing team, the microbrewery provides students with an opportunity to learn important basic aspects of the brewing process. "Our microbrewery is relatively simple in comparison to other breweries. We dedicate our time to developing our brewers' skills, rather than automating the brewing processes. The microbrewery offers valuable practical experience to students who are interested in careers in brewing or microbiology," he says.

Mr Sandrock added that the competition is about more than just the prize money and skills development. "The competition is an excellent opportunity for students who are potentially interested in this line of work to meet and network with researchers and potential employers. Importantly, it also serves as a great marketing tool and is excellent for team-building among the students." 



→ One of the adjudicators inspecting a glass of student-made beer.



→ The award-winning team with their Imperial Troll Stout lager. From left to right: Krappie Eloff, Ben Lamaletie, an unknown representative of the IBD, Edward Mills, Anré van der Merwe, Harald Golob, Lofté Grobler, Ryan Merckel, David Wilson, Carl Sandrock, Mike Heydenrych and Anton Erasmus. Photographs courtesy of SAB.

