

Sunshine Brewing – 30 years young

New Zealand's original craft lager is marking 30 years since its creation and still enjoys its place in the sun at Gisborne's own Sunshine Brewing

IN THE late 1980s, when New Zealand's beer landscape was dominated by big breweries, a little bit of Gisborne sunshine radiated onto the brewing scene.

Not content with the mainstream beers available at the time, Geoff Logan and Gerry Maude had decided to reinvigorate the brewing industry in Gisborne and embarked on a mission to create a beer from all natural ingredients – a beer that championed flavour over profit. In September of 1989, Sunshine Brewing and its flagship beer Gisborne Gold were born.

Gisborne and beyond

Gisborne Gold was a sessionable, golden, all malt lager brewed with only malt, hops, yeast and water. It was made to be a flavour-driven beer that could quench thirsts on the beach after a surf, or once the tie came off in the fancy big city bars. Thirty years on, the country's oldest independently made craft lager continues to do just that.

Little did they realise, but Geoff and Gerry's dream of a Gisborne beer would put them and their small brewery in the vanguard of a new age in New Zealand beer. After its launch, Gisborne Gold steadily won over the locals then expanded to Wellington, where early adopters at Bar Bodega, The Malthouse and Regional Wines soon discovered it and helped fuel demand for more independent beers. Gisborne Gold quickly cemented its place in New Zealand's beer history and remains a beloved brew today.

The sun still shines

Back in Gisborne, 2019 has been a big year for the still independently owned Sunshine Brewing. It has invested heavily in its operations with a new brewery manager (Dave Huff, previously of Hallertau), a new state of the art brewhouse (the first from American Brewing Equipment to be commissioned in New Zealand) and new branding across the range, to reflect Sunshine's philosophy and origins.

"We've been heavily focused on where we're heading in the future and positioning ourselves to remain at the forefront in an increasingly competitive industry," says General Manager (and



Brewer Dave Huff (right) with assistant Josie Hicks at Sunshine Brewing

Gisborne local) Joe Williams. "It's nice to be able to take a moment to reflect on our history as we approach our 30th anniversary, a milestone most independent breweries can only dream of."

Going for Gold

In a market known for its ever-changing trends, Sunshine Brewing's flagship Gisborne Gold has shown incredible longevity, with its continued strong local and national following. "We're seeing a big return of this style in the industry," says Williams. "A no-nonsense, easy drinking lager that suits all occasions." The beer's style also demonstrates the skill of the brewer – without big complex malt bills or loads of hops there is nothing to hide behind: if there is a fault or a lack of balance it stands out.

"We're lucky to have a loyal following that have been drinking it for all of those 30 years and will quickly tell us if there is the slightest variation. We'd get chased out of town if we changed it," says Williams. "We respect that and are stoked that they still support us after all this time."

"While we love pushing boundaries with our seasonal releases there will always be a place for these more sessionable styles. We now have a regular production line-up of 15 beers and produce a new special release at least once a month, but Gold will always have a special place in our hearts and in those of our followers."

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Gisborne Gold

Enjoyed in the sun, since 1989.

It was called "Gold" because it came first. Part local legend, part New Zealand icon – Gisborne Gold is a lightly hopped drop with a solid malt backbone guaranteed to quench any hard-earned thirst.

Malt: Pilsner, Crystal

Hops: Green bullet, Dr Rudi, Motueka

ABV: 3.8%

