

Brewing trials part of the passion

By CLINTON LLEWELLYN

You can make wine from just about anything, according to Bob Avis.

True to his word, the Hawke's Bay Amateur Winemakers and Brewers Club member has been busy in his garage. He makes wine from Hawthorn berries and even parsnip, to sit alongside the homebrewed pilsners and pale ales he preferred to drink and a chardonnay he makes for his wife.

"It's amazing what you can make wine out of. Basically, anything that you can ferment," said the 63-year-old, self-employed Hastings handyman, who picked up the Hawthorn berries from a bush he saw alongside a road.

"I was after some elderberries as well, but the birds beat me to that."

Avis described his homemade "hedgégrow" wines made from

foraged items – and his parsnip wines – as "experiments". If they turned out to be drinkable, it was often a bonus.

"Unfortunately the parsnip wine isn't clearing very well. It might take me about another 10 years to get it right."

One wine Avis knows he has got right during the past 10 years as a "dedicated" homebrewer is his Rhubarb Sparkling wine. It won best in class at last year's regional amateur winemaking and brewing championships in Feilding.

It was the first brewing competition he had entered. But with his Hawke's Bay club due to host the national championships in Hastings in October, he was busy perfecting another batch to enter.

He was also looking forward to pitting his beers up against those made by the best amateur brewers in the country, but at the end of the day was more con-



Hastings handyman and homebrewer Bob Avis. The Hawke's Bay Amateur Winemakers and Brewers Club member is looking forward to the biennial national championships coming to Hastings in October. Photo: CLINTON LLEWELLYN.

cerned about his own tastebuds rather than the opinion of the judges.

While some homebrewers started from scratch and even ground their own grains, Avis

used readily available brewing kits and simply tweaked the recipe to suit his own liking.

"I definitely prefer mine to the commercial brands [of beer] because I can get the taste to just how I like it."

Apart from the taste, the other aspect of homebrewing Avis liked was the cost.

He said his wines cost just over \$4 per litre to make – and his beer was even cheaper.

"I can make 23 litres for just over \$30 – It really is cost effective," he said.

National champs

With around 15 members, the small Hawke's Bay Amateur Winemakers and Brewers Club is busy preparing to host brewers from around the country at the national championships to take place at the Angus Inn in Hast-

ings from October 16-18.

"We are excited to be hosting such a prestigious event and plans are well underway to make this an exceptional event," said club president, Brian Henderson.

The competition is open to all members of clubs affiliated to the Zealand Amateur Winemakers and Brewers Federation and was run to their rules using certified judges, he said.

"We are expecting 800 to 1000 bottle entries from up to 150 entrants in 48 distinct classes of wine, beer and liqueurs. All entrants are competing for the coveted Best of Show trophies as well as Best of Class and the more common gold, silver and bronze achievement medals."

Judging will occur on the Friday, with a formal awards dinner on the Saturday. The Federation's annual general meeting will be held on the Sunday.