

## Metalman : Craft Beer In A Can



Gráinne Walsh

Metalman Brewing is the brain-child of Gráinne Walsh and Tim Barber, a couple of beer enthusiasts who were frustrated by the lack of availability and choice of flavoursome, authentically Irish beer. Their first beer, Metalman Pale Ale, was launched in March 2011 in a small brewery in Tipperary, before they moved to Tycor in 2012, where they currently carry out all their brewing. We spoke with Gráinne about recent developments for Metalman and their plans for the future.

Metalman recently started distributing Ireland's first canned craft beer, which has received a phenomenal response. "We can't get over the popularity of it, our distributor is kept going trying to make sure everyone is stocked, and we're kept going canning as well. We've put out almost three times as much beer as we were expecting to in the first three weeks", she said.

The brewery produces a range of craft beers and are constantly experimenting in order to produce new varieties.

"At the moment, we've got a new beer, a smoked porter made with a hint of chili, that's something that we're trying to maybe release in a can later this year. It's always fun to try out different recipes with a view to maybe making them available in different ways. We're going to have an unfiltered wheat beer coming soon, made with orange, lemon and coriander. It's actually a lager, but with an interesting citrus flavour from the fruit", Gráinne explained.

Metalman is currently stocked in various bars and independent off-licences throughout Waterford.

"We're available in most of the independent off licences that carry a good range of craft beer, including Carry Out in Ferrybank, Worldwide Wines on the Dublin Road, Ardkeen Stores, Next Door in the Glen. In the Johnstown area, Geoff's, Bodega, Burzza, Revolution, on the Dublin Road, Oscar's, En Rue, The Cove. We've seen brilliant support from the people, it's great", Gráinne stated.

She continued "Our distributor sent cans to about 50 places to start with. I think they were rationing people, with a view to stocking an additional 30-40 over the coming weeks. So, you'll certainly see more and more people stocking Metalman Pale Ale in cans and we're continuing to put draught taps in, as and when appropriate. In the brewery, we are currently looking at an expansion plan, the brew house itself is undergoing an upgrade and we're looking at an additional four tanks for capacity which will double what we can do here".

"We're currently looking at exporting to Northern Ireland. That will be our first foray into the export market. That's a big step

for us this year, it's really the move into cans that allows us to look at that as a serious proposition. We're talking to people in the Scandinavian area as well. It's an exciting beer market over there and we'd like to be on the shelf".

Last year, Metalman won the Emerging New Business Awards and they were recently nominated for the Waterford Business Awards. "It's always nice to be recognised for what you're doing and that people think what you're doing is interesting and exciting, we're thrilled", Gráinne stated.

Additionally, Metalman are regular attendees at craft beer festivals throughout the country, including the recent Alltech festival in February and the Irish Beer and Whiskey festival in March, and have also previously judged the NHC National Brewing Championships.

"We love being able to judge competitions, it's always very humbling and fascinating. You drink some amazing beer made by people in their houses and get an insight into what people are trying in terms of flavour combinations. Some things going on in the home brew scene are really exciting".

"Festivals give us a chance to talk to people face to face about drinking our beer. As a wholesaler, it can be very hard to talk to people about how they feel about drinking your beer. Festivals are a great way to catch up with people and understand what they think about what we're doing, what we could do better, what they'd like to see us doing and what they love about what we're doing already. It's always fun, we try to go to as many as we can".

Gráinne added "Social media is an ideal platform for us to establish that connection both to the people selling and drinking our beer. We don't have the budgets that big beer companies have in order to engage with our customers, so we try to do it on a very personal level".



Inside the Metalman brewery.

The future looks bright for Metalman, who are currently operating at capacity and looking at expansion. "We've just hired another person, we're at seven people now, with maybe another one or two people working permanently here later this year, depending on how quickly we can develop our exports".

"We've had a very positive experience as a small business in Waterford. It was tough to start with and I think every small business has hurdles to overcome. You need to establish your reputation and product, to get the information out there about yourself and what you're doing. But I think that once you can show people that you're making a good, quality product, then the support is really strong and for us it's been a great experience", concluded Gráinne.

Metalman Brewing : [www.metalmanbrewing.com](http://www.metalmanbrewing.com) / 051-348-448 / [www.facebook.com/metalmanbrewing](https://www.facebook.com/metalmanbrewing)

Seamus Hanley