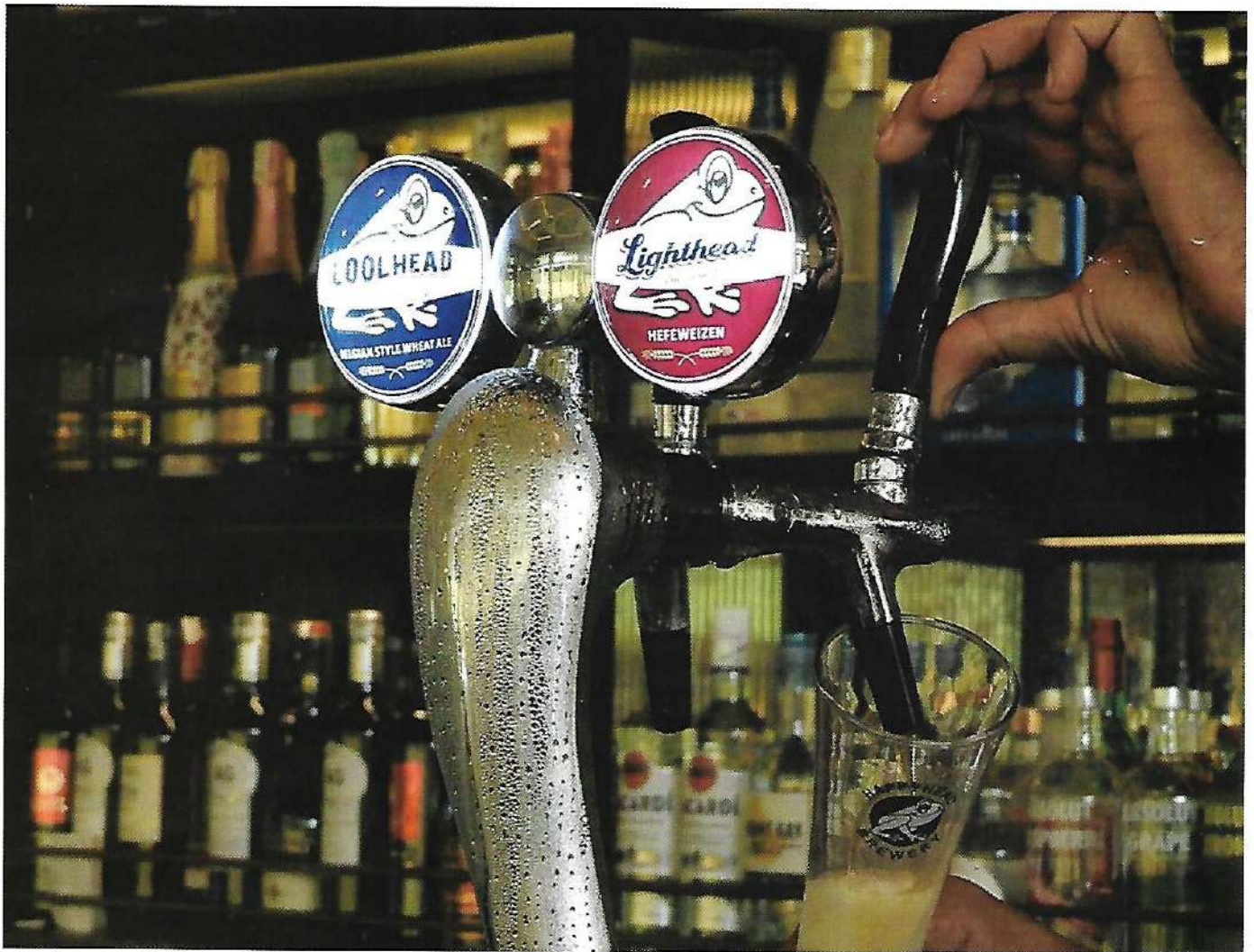




The Beer Rush

Be it bottles, cans or on tap, new desi beer brands are spreading frothy happiness



It's not the gold rush in India any more; it's the beer rush. The success of Bira and White Rhino, along with the mushrooming of micro-breweries and brew pubs, have drawn a whole host of entrepreneurs from varying backgrounds into the packaged beer segment, be it bottles, cans or kegs, brewing across locations, and experimenting with styles.

Chhattisgarh is not a place you might normally associate with beer, but Central India seems to be the magnet for India's

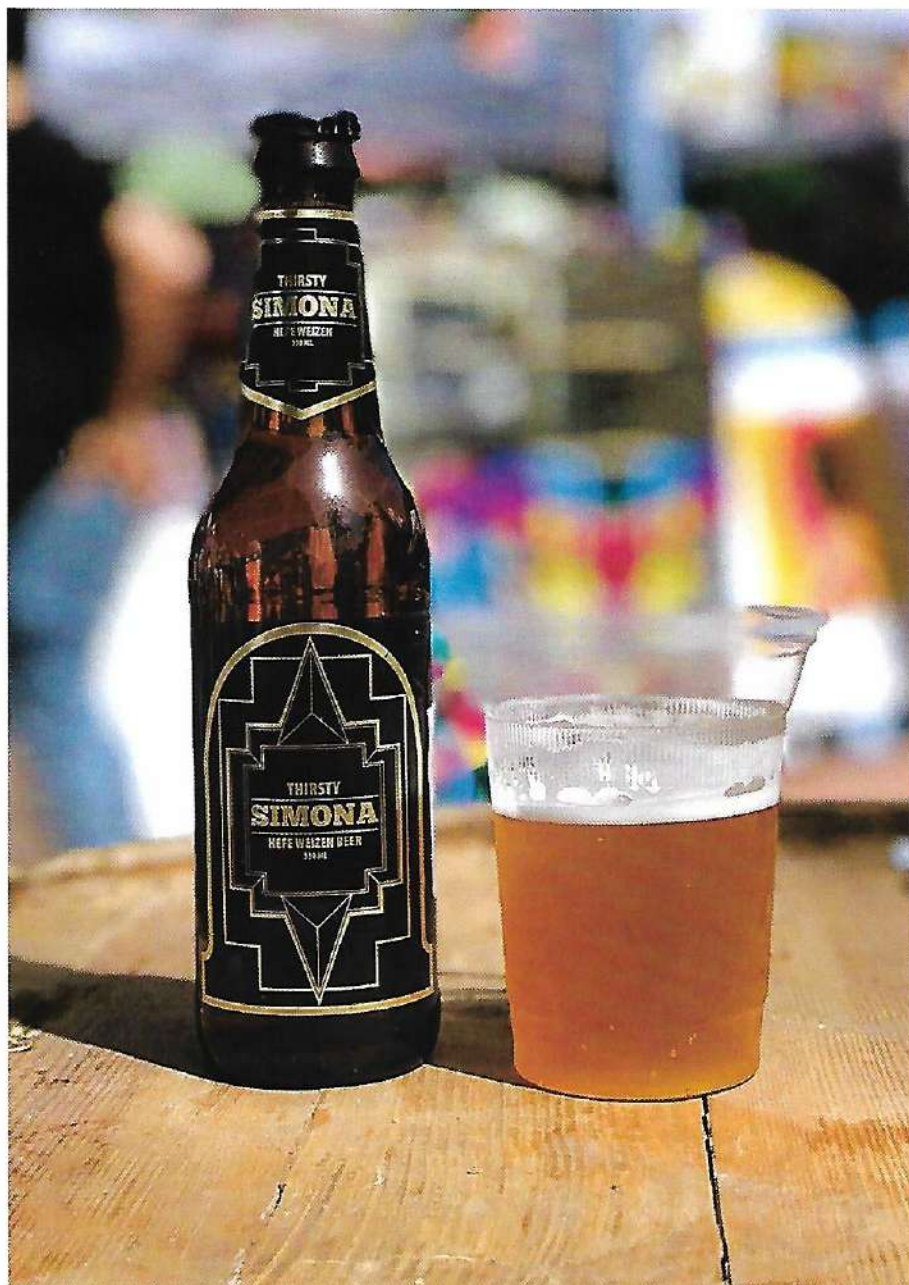
fledgling boutique beer industry, with Bira and White Rhino, brewing out of Indore and Gwalior both in MP respectively. Prabhtej Singh Bhatia, the founder of Simba beer, says, the fresh water from the nearby river makes a world of difference to the taste of the beer. Simba at the moment brews four beers, all bottled, three of which are the regular lager, a strong beer and a Belgian style Wit or wheat beer. It's the fourth which marks out Simba from the rest, a stout, a style of beer we haven't really seen too

much of in India, but with its coffee notes and rich dark colour, it's a style with potential, and a personal favourite of mine. I feel the Simba stout is still a work in progress, and I preferred the Wit, but these are still early days, and it's hopefully only a matter of time till it's brewed to perfection. Although only available in Goa, and select pockets of the Northeast, it's launching shortly in Bengaluru, Delhi and Gurugram, so you, too, can hear the lion roar yourself soon.

Our next beer comes from somewhat



VIKRAM ACHANTA



Beer style guide

- ❖ **Wit** – A Belgian style of wheat beer, often referred to as white beers, due to its cloudy appearance, it has a high level of wheat, and is always spiced, generally with coriander and orange peel.
- ❖ **Hefeweizen** – A German style of Wheat beer (weissbier), with the “Hefe” prefix meaning “with yeast”. Similar to the Wit, in that it also uses around 50 per cent wheat in its mix.
- ❖ **Stout** – Uses roasted barley, which gives the beer its dark appearance, and also its flavour notes, which can range from coffee to chocolate

further afield, and they run a microbrewery in Mumbai called Thirsty City, where they produce a range of beers. For their packaged beer, the folks behind Thirsty, went all the way to Bosnia, where they contract brew their two beers, Happy by Thirsty, a lager available in attractive yellow cans, and Simona by Thirsty, their Hefeweizen. Happy and Simona are both available in most cities, and are spreading their wings to oth-

ers. Sheffield-based brew master, Alex Barlow, has helped get Thirsty’s brews off the ground. I’m sure as their brews gain traction, Thirsty will soon move to a local brewing base.

“Beers have to have a good head,” says Satyan Malhotra, the co-founder of Happy Head brewery, which accounts for the names of their two beers, CoolHead, a Wit, which is brewed on source at Brewery De

Brabandere in Belgium and LightHead, a Hefeweizen. LightHead is also brewed on site in Germany at Hohenthanner Schlossbrauerei in Hohenthann, and it has 40 per cent less calories than traditional wheat beers. A light wheat beer is a first as far as I know in India. Both beers are available only on tap at the moment, and will shortly also be available in bottles. Satyan doesn’t rule out a shift to local production, but only if they can find a facility which can brew to their standards. **f**

Vikram Achanta is co-founder and CEO of Tulleeho, a drinks training and consulting firm and Bar X, a bar products start-up