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**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

# Pure geniuses prove their pint

Doctors travel the world to learn that Guinness truly tastes better at home however one researcher drank just 18 pints in the year-long study

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Glynn, below left, studied the drink first brewed by Arthur Guinness, above left

It was hard work, but somebody had to do it. Academics have spent a year tasting and testing Guinness around the world, and believe they have proved what Irish connoisseurs have long suspected: the stout does not travel well.

To test the theory, four academics — three GPs and a physiotherapist — tasted 103 pints of Guinness in 71 pubs in 14 countries, and concluded the brew was more enjoyable in Ireland than anywhere else.

The researchers, from general practice departments in NUI Galway and universities in the Netherlands, England, and Germany, rated the Guinness they consumed in Ireland at 74 on a scientific scale from one to 100, compared to an average 57 for the stout in 13 other countries. The findings are published in the latest edition of the *Journal of Food Science*.

Guinness, which was used in the 19th century to treat everything from scurvy to sleep problems, has been travelling to the ends of the world since Arthur Guinness founded a brewery at St James's Gate in Dublin in 1759. More than half of all Guinness sold worldwide is brewed here, though Ireland is only the third-biggest market, after Britain and Nigeria.

Liam Glynn, a GP in Ballyvaughan, Co Clare, who lectures at NUI Galway, decided to investigate the theory that Guinness tasted better in Ireland after meeting the other researchers in an Oxford pub. The four discovered that, apart from being members of the Brisbane Initiative, which focuses on improving medical treatment in clinics, they shared a fondness for an occasional pint.

They prepared for the research by undergoing training in crafting the perfect pint at St James's Gate, and decided to test a pint every time they travelled overseas. One researcher drank 18 pints in the year-long study, while another knocked back 31.

When they entered a bar, they noted the ambient conditions such as whether it was an official Irish pub, the number of male and female patrons, the price of a pint, and whether smoking was allowed. They measured the temperature with a digital thermometer. They inquired whether the bartenders were Irish, whether they had received training in how to pull a pint, whether the stout was served in a tulip glass, and whether the staff used a knife to cut the head or create a design on it.

Diageo, the global drinks company that owns Guinness, dictates that a "double pour" of a pint, including resting time, should take 119.53 seconds and it should be served at 6°C.

The academics used a stopwatch to time how long bar staff took to pull a pint, put a thermometer inside to take the temperature, and measured the height of the pint's head with a ruler. They then ticked off a checklist designed by professional beer tasters, measuring feel, flavour and aftertaste.

"Whenever we did this, the locals were either fascinated or a bit suspicious," Glynn said. "Some patrons asked us why we were using a thermometer and stopwatch and when they found out were generally almost rolling on the ground laughing."

The researchers rated the ambience of Irish pubs as the best and concluded that the pints looked better and were creamier here. "The chef Anthony Bourdain had a great saying about the best meals being about good ambience, good food and a little sense of adventure," Glynn said. "Company can have an effect on the enjoyment of an event, and that was the case in Ireland."

There was also some evidence to support the "line" theory often asserted by Guinness drinkers, who suggest the regularity at which pints are pulled means that the brew is not sitting in the "line" between the barrel and the tap for long periods. Appearance and creaminess, which indicate freshness, were higher in Irish pubs.

Glynn admitted the study had some limitations. Because Guinness is brewed in about 50 of the 100 countries in which it is served, using some locally sourced ingredients such as water, it could be argued that brews outside Dublin are materially different. He also acknowledged that when a researcher imbibed more than one pint, there could have been a "post-ingestion multiple enjoyment bias".

"We were aware we would be more inclined to say the Guinness was good if we had a second or even a third pint, because the alcohol might be affecting our ability to remain objective," Glynn said. "It was all done in the spirit of fun, but we are all conscious, as GPs who work with people who have alcohol issues, of the problems that alcohol can create."

## **Black gold**

Guinness is brewed in 50 countries and sold in 150 nations worldwide. The brand generates more than €1 billion or 12% of net sales at Diageo, the drinks giant.

The company's sales in Ireland were down 10% in Ireland over the last six months of 2010, but Guinness proved one of the company's most resilient brands, with sales growing by 1% over the same period.

**Guinness is the most international beer brand in Africa, on sale in more than 40 markets across the continent.**

**Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and South Africa account for five of the 10 largest markets by volume in the world for the distinctive drink.**

**In Nigeria, which overtook the UK and Ireland as the biggest market for Guinness in recent years, the stout is known as "black power" or "Viagra", named after Pfizer's virility drug.**

**In 2000, 1.6 billion pints of Guinness, or 5m a day, were sold across the globe.**

**In Ireland that year, 421m pints were purchased, while in Africa this figure was 385m, for which Nigeria accounted for 228m. In North America, 144m pints were purchased.**