

# lingua weekly

12th October 2006

## Vitamin G

Dónal Thompson



Every day 1,000,000 pints of Guinness are sold in the United Kingdom alone. It is one of the tippler's healthiest drinks as it contains malted barley, hops, yeast, and water. It is black because the barley is roasted like coffee beans.

Guinness was first made in 1759, the year Ferdinand VI of Spain died. Ten years before the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte. It is still the only drink in the world where the bubbles go downwards and every drop of the lovely stuff is brewed in Ireland using water from the Wicklow Mountains.

Good news for weight-watchers is that a pint of Guinness has only 210 calories. That's 50 less than a pint of semi-skimmed milk. In England, post-op patients used to be given Guinness, as were blood donors, to build their recuperative strength. Sadly, this is no longer the case in England. However, Ireland has not cast off its civilised habits and Guinness is still made available to blood donors and stomach and intestinal post-op patients. Guinness is known to be high in iron content.

For people who like to fix things that are not broken, you can mix Guinness with ordinary beer and create a Black & Tan or even mix Guinness with champagne and create a Black Velvet. Personally, I think that anyone who does this needs their head examined, but it's a big world and there's space for us all.

Guinness has less alcohol than just about all other beers with only 3.4%. That is nature's way to tell us to drink more of it. You should never only have one pint of Guinness; a bird cannot fly on one wing!

Flann O'Brien, author of the brilliant novel *The Third Policeman*, composed an eulogy to Guinness. He calls Guinness "a pint of plain."

*When things go wrong and will not come right,  
though you do the best you can,  
when life looks black as the hour of night -  
A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN.*

*When health is bad and your heart feels strange,  
and your face is pale and wan,  
when doctors say you need a change,  
A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN.*

In Spain, where people supposedly appreciate the finer aspects of good food and drink, it surprises me that so many people drink silly drinks like Coronita beer and Cuba Libres (what a terrible thing to do to a whisky!) But then I shouldn't expect the Spanish to be like the Irish.

The Irish, having the gift of the gab, are garrulous, gleeful, and gorgeous. We have great golfers, glorious girls, and a generous gallantry. And, best of all, we have Guinness - Vitamin G. God's great gift.

Copyright Planet Lingua 2006