Top guide’s star turn

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Campaign



As CAMRA marks the publication of the 50th edition of the Good Beer Guide, the Campaign has urged brewers and pub operators to use “the carrot, not the stick” when it comes to boosting flagging cask ale sales. At an event celebrating the publication, CAMRA chief executive Tom Stainer said suggestions cask could be removed from pubs found to be keeping and serving it poorly should be approached with caution. Discussion among some industry bodies about falling cask sales has focused on quality. Among the speakers at the launch held at the Star Tavern in London’s Belgravia, was Paul Nunny, director of guide sponsor Cask Marque. Nunny said some of the decline in cask sales post-lockdown is because “a lot of pubs are destocking, which is not a bad thing, because if they’re not serious about it, the quality deteriorates and the consumer’s going to be disappointed.” Tom said: “Every pub should be offering really well-made cask beer. That’s what CAMRA wants to see, and so it should be the carrot, not the stick. Get the quality of cask ale right, serve it well, and people will love it. We should support pubs to do that.”   He added that rather than simply call for cask to be sold at a higher price, as some brewers have, pubs should approach it as they do the wine list, with ascending price points. “Cask ale doesn’t always have to be the cheapest beer on the bar, but it should have accessible pricing, and really well-made, special beers should be priced in the same way as specialist lagers or wines.” The Star, owned by Fuller’s, is one of just five pubs that have been in every edition of the guide since it first appeared in 1974. Fuller’s chief executive Simon Emeny said cask accounts for 25 per cent of beer sales in its estate, and the business recognises real ale drinkers pick the pub for a bigger group. “If you let yourself down with the range or quality of cask beer, that group will give the pub a wide berth.” The guide also continues to expand the range of venues it includes. CAMRA Croydon and Sutton branch chair Dave Lands said of the new listing this year for the Cryer Arts theatre in Carshalton, Surrey: “It doesn’t feel like just a theatre bar, it’s also a great place to meet for a pint.” Pictured from left: Simon Emeny, Paul Nunny, Tom Stainer and CAMRA London director Geoff Strawbridge.