



zero emissions

photo: Robert Young

**Newfoundland entrepreneur
MICHAEL MCBRIDE
makes brewing beer
an organic experience**

BY HEATHER SKYDT

For 31-year-old eco-entrepreneur Michael McBride, the idea of blending his love of beer with a passion for the environment was serendipitous. Last year, Michael succeeded in establishing the first zero emissions microbrewery in Canada. "I had been working for several years in the microbrewing industry in Ontario when I had my first inspiration to create a zero emissions brewery," he says. "From that moment, I was hooked — I knew it would be my life's work."

Along with the success of his traditional British beers and specialty ales such as Kyle Mild, Killick Pale, Hemp Ale and Raspberry Wheat, the president and chief ale officer of Storm Brewing in Newfoundland Ltd. is generating international attention for his brewery model. "The goal of Storm Brewing as an eco-brewery is to turn every single waste product from the beer-making process into a value-added product which can be sold," says Michael, "as well as increasing productivity, creating more employment, generating higher revenues and eliminating pollution."

Recently, Michael and his wife Kristi took full ownership of Storm Brewing after buying out a third partner. While working with two brewery staff to produce 10 hectolitres of beer each week at the Mount Pearl, Newfoundland-based operation, Michael and Kristi also focus their energy on zero emissions endeavours. "Developing a zero

emissions brewery is an incremental process, it will be in perpetual development," explains Michael.

A self-described environmentalist, "but not a radical one," Michael's love for the reduce, reuse and recycle concept began in 1996 after reading *The Ecology of Commerce: A Declaration of Sustainability* by Paul Hawkin. Further investigation lead Michael to discover the Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives (ZERI) Foundation. "I thought the zero emissions theory was a very hairy idea before I went to the fourth Annual ZERI World Congress in Namibia, South West Africa, and saw a model firsthand," he says. "I find it so fascinating that a developing country conceptualized this model, which I was able to bring back to Canada. I thought, 'If they can have a zero emissions brewery in the desert in Africa, why can't I do it in Newfoundland?'"

Backed by a grant from the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program, Michael took the first step toward his zero emissions goal in June 1999 when he started growing oyster and shiitake mushrooms in his basement on brewery-spent grain. After three weeks of tender loving care, the verdict was success.

Michael's next step involved taking the used mushroom substrate, adding earthworms and eliminating excess nutrients from the raw material in order to sell it as a high nitrogen garden fertilizer (vermicompost).

This past summer, Michael scaled up the mushroom and vermicompost production, and next year he hopes to sell his fresh exotic mushrooms at the local market. "We have come a long way, and now we will figure out the economic side of things, then research where the market exists," he says.

Identified by the ZERI Foundation as a "role model and pioneer," Michael was invited to speak about his experience starting Canada's first zero emissions microbrewery at last year's fifth Annual ZERI World Congress in Colombia, South America. "This is a lonely business at times, but the conference revitalized me because people were as excited about my project as I am," he says. "Travelling to developing countries has broadened my horizons and expanded my life experiences."

On top of that, Storm Brewing was selected by the ZERI Foundation to be one of 10 projects showcased at EXPO 2000 last summer in Hanover, Germany. Michael was asked to speak as part of the ZERI Pavilion seminar series. His topic: the first Canadian ZERI brewery inspired by Namibia.

Michael credits his determination and resourcefulness for the success he's had in turning his microbrewery into an eco-friendly one. "I had people telling me I was crazy, but I chose not to listen to them," he says. "I'm a firm believer that if you are passionate about what you're doing, you can always make it happen."

As for long-term goals, Michael and Kristi plan to add a taproom to their eco-brewery. "This will be a place where the public can experience eco-tourism and great ales at the same time. Basically, it will be a beer lover's paradise," he laughs. ☺