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Beer on the house

THERE is an old Russian proverb that goes like this: 'The church is near, but the road is icy. The bar is far away, but I will walk carefully.' The lure of a drink could hardly have been captured more succinctly. The fact that the proverb is cited on the www.homebrew.com.sg website, devoted to beer lovers, makes eminent sense as well. Although roads are not icy in Singapore, and bars are hardly far away, brewing beer at home makes even a careful walk to the pub (and back) unnecessary. And true to Singaporeans' penchant for latching on to hobbies passionately, a small but growing group of brewing enthusiasts has emerged here since laws were relaxed in March allowing people to brew up to 30 litres of beer at home. Home-brew kits are selling well.

Although beer brewed at home costs substantially less than that in pubs, it is unlikely that price is the main draw. More important is the priceless pleasure of doing something that one enjoys, instead of having it served up by others. Also, home-brewers can choose from a customised range of light and dark beers, ale, stout and lagers. Websites on home-brewing describe methods in details precise enough to make even the uninitiated want to be connoisseurs. Since, according to another proverb carried on the beer lovers' website, there cannot be good living where there is not good drinking, it is easy to see why home brews are gaining in popularity. All this is well and good, so long as drinking does not lead to drunkenness. In this festive season especially, there is a particular reason why having beer at home might be a good idea: It removes the potentially lethal step from drinking to driving. Pubs and other drinking places, of course, will retain their allure for the party-minded, but a bit of in-house drinking is no bad thing.