



Beer expert Mirella Amato of Toronto will give two Ladies VIP Brew Tours during the Halifax Seaport BeerFest, which starts today.

(ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

Beer tours for women only

Guests at Ladies Night can sample many brews

By **BILL SPURR**
Features Writer

Giving new meaning to Ladies Night, the Halifax Seaport BeerFest is this year concentrating on women.

The fourth annual festival, held today and Saturday on the Halifax waterfront, has brought in beer connoisseur Mirella Amato to run the Ladies VIP Brew Tour.

"It's essentially a tasting of a series of beers, and with each beer we're going to be discovering some of the flavours that I find women gravitate to, because one of the questions people always ask me is: 'What kind of beer do women like?'"

"Personally, I don't think that's a fair question, because have you ever met two women who have the same taste in anything?" Amato said. "If I had to generalize, I'd say women like flavourful beer, and with the resurgence of the craft beer movement, the selection of imports that

we have, and the larger breweries coming out with different styles, it's time for women to explore those flavours."

Amato's tours, closed to men, will take place during the Friday night and Saturday afternoon sessions of the festival. Her talk will also address health concerns she's found a lot of women have.

"Not only women, but people in general will stray from beer because they think it's unhealthy, or fattening, which is nonsense. It's just not true. It's popular to consider beer the less healthy beverage as compared to, for example, red wine. But beer has just as many antioxidants as red wine, just as many health benefits," Amato said.

"I'm also weaving some of the history of women and beer, because a lot of people don't realize that women and beer have been very tightly linked from the very earliest records of beer. From thousands of years B.C. through to the Indus-

trial Revolution, brewing was a woman's job, always."

There will be more than 160 beers and ciders from throughout the Maritimes and around the world available to sample at the beerfest, which is expected to attract 4,000 people. Many of those beers will be small batch, or craft brews, which can be very different from mainstream beer.

"It's certainly difficult to bridge that gap, and my job is to do that," said Amato. "If you ask a craft beer enthusiast, or a beer geek, as I like to call us, which beer you should try, they're going to immediately suggest their favourite beer, which is probably not an entry-level craft beer."

"It will be amazing and delicious to them, but completely foreign territory to someone who drinks domestic beers. It's important to try a bunch of different things, starting out with wheat beers is great, Belgian-style fruit beers are a great start, and amber beers."

Tickets for the Halifax Seaport BeerFest are \$40, or \$45 at the door. The Ladies VIP Brew Tour is an extra \$10.