Belgian lab tapping genetics of yeast to brew better beer

Kevin Verstrepen's lab meetings can be pretty boozy affairs. Twice a week, several members of his group at Belgium's University of Leuven and the Flanders Institute for Biotechnology gather around a table loaded with black, tulip-shaped beer glasses, together with spit buckets and crackers.

But Verstrepen has loftier ambitions than helping beer lovers to select their next bottle. He wants to build the perfect yeast. His lab is deploying what it is learning about the chemical and genetic basis of beer flavour to breed yeast strains that generate unique flavours and other qualities coveted by brewers and drinkers.

The beer geeks in his lab straddle the worlds of curiosity-driven science and industrial brewing. They study evolution, biochemistry, and even neuroscience through yeast. But they also have contracts with beer makers worldwide, from multinational conglomerates to small trend-setting craft breweries. In an upcoming *Cell* paper, the lab will report the genomes of some 150 yeast strains used to make beer, sake and other fermented products, a project done in collaboration with a leading supplier of yeast to brewers and a synthetic-biology firm.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Tapping genetics for better beer