

Nuremberg, April 6, 2016

500 years of the German Purity Law

Curious and interesting facts about beer

Munich's mothers in beer heaven:

According to contemporary reports, in the 18th century many mothers living in Munich drank up to seven glasses of beer a day in the belief that this made for more successful breastfeeding.

Thirsty pyramid builders:

An American archeologist discovered that the pyramid builders of ancient Egypt drank around four liters of beer a day. The benefit was that the drink was healthier than the polluted waters of the Nile. The downside was that many of the laborers went about their work in a drunken state.

Heidrun, the magical goat of the Vikings:

The ancient Vikings believed that after their death, a magic goat whose udders provided an endless supply of beer awaited them when they entered Valhalla.

The Mayflower beer stopover:

The pilgrim ship the "Mayflower" was originally intended to voyage as far as Virginia, but actually made an unscheduled stop in Plymouth as the crew had already run out of beer. The reason why alcohol became so frowned upon in America and why the prohibition was subsequently introduced may have something to do with high levels of inebriation in the early days.

Pint-sized squirrel:

Scottish brewery "BrewDog" sells its beer varieties inside the bodies of actual dead animals. The bottles are inserted in stuffed squirrels or weasels before sale, leaving just the bottle neck projecting out of the animals' mouths.

London's Beer Flood:

In 1814, London was flooded with beer. A broken fermentation vat in the "Horse Shoe Brewery" led to the loss of 7,600 imperial barrels, almost 1.5 million liters. The beer flowed out into the street where it destroyed a number of houses and caused at least seven deaths.

How beer benches originated:

Czech beer used to be subjected to a very unique quality test to prove its strength in the town hall in Pilsen. A puddle was poured on a special bench, in which the brewer had to sit until his pants had soaked up every drop. If his pants failed to stick to the bench when he stood up, the beer was deemed to be too weak and incurred a punishment of blows with a stick for the brewer.

First rail freight in Franconia:

Beer was the very first freight to be transported on Germany's first railway line from Nuremberg to Fürth in 1836.

From medieval ale to modern beer:

The drink consumed by our forebears over 500 years ago had practically nothing to do with what we now call "beer". Sometimes beans, peas or other starchy grains which could be processed into malt were used. To prevent the brew turning sour or to mask the sour taste, brewers resorted to all kinds of extraneous substances: eggs, ham, tar and ox gall, horse-heal, soot or chalk. Every brewer had his own patent recipe to make beer "drinkable", and this was reflected in the taste.

Women as the first brewers:

The first professional brewers were women. In ancient Egypt, it was actually forbidden for men to brew or sell beer.

Alcohol tests on ants:

A research scientist in the 18th century experimented on ants which he fed with beer. When mixed with unaffected ants from the colony, the inebriated test candidates were "carried home" by their sober workmates.

Kids' drawing contest for beer vouchers in Denmark:

In 1972, a Danish brewery gave out beer tokens as prizes to over 20,000 children for taking part in a drawing contest. Youth protection laws meant that the token could only be cashed in 25 years later. The campaign, which was dreamt up as a publicity stunt, ended in 1997 when over 10,000 tokens were cashed in. The consumers were rewarded for their stalwart loyalty by receiving 30 bottles of beer per token.

Sources:

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This background information and further material are available at

www.siemens.com/press/500-years-reinheitsgebot

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