



Authentic German lagers can be produced in both Germany and America—with the Kaltenberg brand. The original brewing family from Germany has established a lager brewery in Vail, Colo.

The Story of the Reinheitsgebot

The history of Reinheitsgebot presents many interesting facets. The great number of ordinances that have been enacted and disabled on a regular basis from 1150 on clearly shows that pure beer was not the issue. Once it was inferior grain, because the good stuff was used for baking; at times it was rivalry among the guilds and sometimes it was just about money. History books prove that the first regulations on beer were more than necessary. The brewers were a bunch of crooks willing to do anything for a quick profit. Too much water and cheap grain was common procedure. Penalties for irregularities were on the daily agenda, despite grave brewing oaths and plenty of ordinances. However, beer prevailed as the people's drink. Indeed, in Bavaria, viticulture was almost entirely given up.

And while the landlords in Bavaria had a direct impact on the beer, in the northern part the guilds did what needed to be done. With the exception of the Brewing Order of Hamburg from 1695 there is no sign of legal initiatives. The breweries of northern Germany were, for a long time, leading in volume and quality of the beer, even without a Reinheitsgebot. Strict guild laws helped to fight competition and determined what could be sold. But the decline of the Hansiatic League—a once powerful trade collabora-

tion among various German cities—late in the 17th century began to disrupt distribution of beer. At the same time, fashionable new drinks such as coffee, tea and chocolate reduced the demand for beer dramatically.

Advocators of the Reinheitsgebot like to point out that, finally, it was the law in the whole German Reich, because it was so good. The truth is that the nationwide legislation of the Reinheitsgebot was the beginning of a conformity process lasting until today in the German beer culture. But this happened in the late 19th century, in 1871. What happened in the years between 1516 and 1871? These 355 long years are usually ignored the same way some folks in Germany ignore the time between 1933 and 1945. Many wars and revolutions scattered Germany into numerous small countries, and competition from abroad was eliminated. Everyone brewed what he wanted, needed or could sell. Beer was mainly brewed in households and monasteries. There was little or no control over beer.

Strange recipes were inherited from generation to generation and found access to the books. The variety of beers peaked like never before or after. The secularization in early 19th century set an end to the monastic brewing. And just at a time when lager was becoming very popular beyond Germany and beer could be exported in a pro-

fessional way, the brewers remembered the ancient laws. Was this really a coincidence?

The Reinheitsgebot in Practice

Paper is patient, they say, and paper for laws more than ever. So let's have a look into the brewing books of those days, because one practices what one learns. It is nice to see how very creative the brewers have always been in repairing sour and infected beers. If they couldn't find a witch or a thunderstorm to blame, they added very grubby herbs and spices in order to conceal the off-flavor. It was better than dumping a whole brew.

In the oldest book we found, the title says all that needs to be known about the former comprehension of the Reinheitsgebot: "The Perfect Beer Brewer or a Short Lesson to Brew All Kinds of Beers as well as Making Spoilt Beers Good Again, and All Kinds of Herb-Beers. With an Addendum for Brewing Mead," printed in 1784 in Frankfurt and Leipzig. It is interesting that the author points out various times the importance of good malt, good water and good hops. But this seems to be sufficient to serve the Reinheitsgebot. Because after a bloodcurdling history of beer he introduces recipes for the following: Vermouthbeer, Juniperbeer, Rosemarybeer, Mugwortbeer, Mintbeer, Lemonbeer, Laurelbeer, Marjorambeer, Lavenderbeer, Balmbeer, Anisebeer, Fennelbeer, Clovebeer, Veronicabeer, Cherrybeer, Raspberrybeer, Sloebeer and, as a sort of prophylaxis, an "herb-beer which is useful in times of plague." This is just an excerpt, followed by tips as to which herbs to use to conceal a certain off-flavor and which herb beer is a cure for which disease. For the real smart guys there is even a recipe: how to give the beer a wine flavor. A later edition of this book repeats it all word for word.

With the next book we go south: "The Beer from Bamberg," by a Mr. Seifert, printed in Bamberg in 1818. It also has a pragmatic subtitle: "Practical Procedures, Manuals and Advantages for Brewing the Bamberger Beer, Based on Chemical Principles, with an Addendum Containing Proven Means to Shine Up a Hazy Beer, Improve a Sour Beer, with Two Tables." All over the book we find the praise of the Bamberger beer, the good raw materials, all within the Reinheitsgebot—until the addendum. Salt, ginger, pepper and