

LAGER BEER: ITS MANUFACTURE AND CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Beer, or ale, as it is sometimes called, is a fermented and still slowly fermenting extract of germinated grain or malt. Strictly speaking, Beer is made from barley; but by common usage, the name applies to infusions of many other substances. Beer was undoubtedly known to the ancients, as Herodotus and Diederus Siculus mention a fermented decoction of barley as one of the ordinary beverages of the Egyptians. They called it Zythos, or Kourmi, or Kourma. The Egyptian Kourmi was not so strong as the Zythos, and was moreover mixed with honey to give it a milder flavour. The ancient Britons and Spaniards brewed their beer from wheat and honey, calling it Ceria, or Celia. The early Greeks had a beverage of barley, which they called Pinon. The Thracians had a drink brewed from barley, or from various kinds of fruit, which they called Bruton. The Gauls made beer of barley or of wheat; the latter having a disagreeable taste and a goat-like smell. The Romans despised all such beverages. They did not suit their more refined taste. With the Teutonic people, the Germans, and other Scandinavians, beer was the national beverage. They brewed it from barley, wheat or oats, and made it more pungent and spicy by adding the bark of the oak, and, since the eleventh century, hops. This drink the Scandinavians called *bjor*, and the Anglo-Saxons *beor*; whence the English beer, which is almost the same in pronunciation. With the introduction of hops as an essential ingredient began the manufacture of the now widely-known lager beer. The term "lager" implies that the beer has been stored for some months, and is about equivalent to the English "stock" ale. In 1524 the use of hops was introduced in the English breweries. Bavaria and Franconia then furnished all the hops raised in Great Britain. Weisbier, or white beer, was first made from wheat by a Low Dutchman, Hanskram, at Nuremberg, in 1541. Porter and ale were first brewed in 1730. The

Chinese have a beverage made of malted wheat and barley of a very strong nature, which is called tarasum. The Japanese make their beer called saki, of rice: the Mexicans of Indian corn: the Nubians and Abyssinians of barley and wheat, called saisor, or durrah.

Next to England, Germany produces and consumes the largest quantities of beer. In Germany, Bavaria may be called the land of brewers, and indeed the Bavarian beer enjoys a vast reputation, thus far unshaken by all the extremes of rival brewers in Austria and the other parts of Germany. The beers of Erlangen, Kelmbac, Bamberg and Munich are exported in large quantities to the East and North: and a patriotic beer-drinking German traveller will always find his national beverage in the Cities of Constantine, Pericles and Epaminondes, and even in the capital of the Promised Land.

In Bavaria beer has become an imperative necessity for the labouring classes. The hard-working man will content himself with meat only on holidays, provided he can at all times get his usual quantity of beer. This quantity is by no means small, and we do not over rate it, when we say that a gallon per diem is the average allowance of a frugal beer-drinker. Most of the hard-working mechanics live more on beer and bread than on anything else. The Government has been compelled more than once to diminish the malt tax, in order to prevent a rise in the price of beer, which has always been followed by serious riots, and in 1844 even by a revolution. In Bavaria beer is drank for and at breakfast, for and at dinner - takes the place of coffee in the afternoon, and is poured down at supper.

In the Rhine Provinces, Baden and Württemberg, the consumption of wine is far greater than of beer. As is

well known, they make a palatable wine and all classes prefer it to beer.

Northern Germany produces several kinds of beer, but none of them can be compared with those of Bavaria. The Northern beers are stronger, and in regard to health more dangerous than any other. The most known of them are: *Köestritz double beer*, strong, resembling the London pale ale; *Broyhahn* or white beer of Berlin, a piquant but flatulent beverage; *beer of Cassel*; *Mumme*, (mum), a beer of Brunswick, first made in 1492, by Ch. Mumme, and formerly exported even to East India. The “Mum” is dark brown, thick, very strong and of a sweet taste. It is made of malted wheat, barley-malt, hops molasses, juniper berries, dried prunes and several aromatic herbs.

Almost every German province produces a particular kind of beer, and its denomination is often curious and even ridiculous. The beer made at Boitzenberg, Prussia, is called *Bind den keel*, (tie the fellow;) the beer of Brandenburg, *Aler Claus*, (Old Nick;) the beer of Delitzsch, *Kuhschwanz*, (cow’s tail;) the beer of Jens, *Dorfteufel*, (village devil;) the beer of Kyritz, *Mord und Todtschlag*, (murder and manslaughter;) the beer of Wernigerode *Lumpen beer*, (rascal’s beer; the beer of Wittenberg, *Kuckuck*, (cuckoo;) the beer of Lubeck, *Israel*, and so on.

All these beers, however, have been put aside by the conquering Bavarian hogsheads, and too many of the above-named sorts remain only the fact that their names are recorded in the annals of beer production.

[Below] is a tabular analysis of the best-known European and American beers.

In almost every city and town of the United States, where a large German population resides, one or more breweries are to be found. We believe we do not make an exaggerated estimate when we rate the number of German breweries in the United States at upward of five hundred, and the capital invested at seven to eight millions of dollars. The City of New-York has twenty-seven breweries, and many of them, such as Turtle Bay, Gilley’s, and Schaefer’s, brew more than 10,000 barrels, of thirty-gallons each, of lager beer in the course of the year. Williamsburgh has 13 breweries; Brooklyn 3; Bedford 1; Morrisania 1; Staten Island 3; Albany 3; Rochester 1; Syracuse 1; Utica 1; Buffalo 7; Philadelphia 28; Pittsburgh 11; Pottsville, Harrisburg, Reading, Cincinnati, 10; Columbus, Cleveland, Chillicothe, Dayton, Toledo, Sandusky, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, 11; Madison, Guttenberg, Dubuque, St. Louis, 19; Louisville, Madison, Indianapolis, Evansville, New-Orleans, Hermann, (Mo.) Baltimore, Charleston, savannah, Newark, 17.

PER CENTAGE OF

	Water	Malt	Alcohol	Carbonic Acid
Lacherl’s “Holy Father beer,” Munich	81.95	13.03	4.94	0.03
Salvator beer, Munich	87.83	7.97	4.50	0.29
London ale	76.03	13.88	5.05	0.01
Double porter, Barclay, London	88.74	5.96	6.16	0.15
Pale ale, London	89.53	4.50	15.63	-
Philadelphia lager beer	92.16	4.36	3.40	0.06
Reading lager beer	91.30	4.66	3.76	0.13
Walter’s lager beer, Williamsburgh	91.80	4.65	5.44	0.11
Bavarian lager beer, Munich	90.95	4.76	4.34	0.01

The New-York breweries produce annually about 85,000 barrels of lager beer - 30 gallons per barrel. From Philadelphia are imported about 8,000; from Newark, 5,000; from Bedford, 3,000; from Reading, 1,500. This shows the amount of consumption in the City of New-York to be 102,500 barrels of 30 gallons each, or 3,075,000 gallons. The cost of production of a barrel of lager beer varies from \$3.50 to \$4, all investments included. The winter beer is sold at \$6 to \$6.50; the summer or lager beer at \$8 to \$9 per barrel. The price of the beer, of course, depends on the price of the grain and hops, which are at present very high. A bushel of malted barley stands now at 11 to 12 shillings, while in 1852, it was 8 to 9 shillings only. Hops are sold now at 45 to 50 cents the pound; at 21 cents in 1852. Forty barrels of lager beer require 50 bushels of malt, 60 pounds of hops, three gallons of yeast, and the necessary water. A single brewing requires a half tun of coals. The hands in a German brewery are paid monthly from \$10 to \$25, besides their full board and free use of as much beer as they can drink. The season for brewing begins late in October and closes early in April.

The beer is sold at retail from 4 to 6½ cents a glass, a sixpence being paid in the better houses, and four to five cents in cellars and small shops. Brewers and retail sellers thus gain from 80 to 100 per cent. cash.

According to our account, the beer-drinking public of the City of New-York spends, by paying for a glass of beer with five cents, or forty-five cents by the gallon, the enormous sum of \$1,383,750! There are about two thousand places in the city, where lager beer is sold, and the more thriving hotels and restaurants consume about \$5,000 to \$6,000 worth of beer in the course of the year.

LAGER BEER RETAILING IN NEW-YORK

We have shown how enormous the consumption of lager beer is. It remains now to answer the question: Who drink these thirty millions, seven hundred and fifty thousand gallons of lager beer annually sold in New York? By far the greater portion is consumed by Germans. It is quite probable that the Germans consume the thirty millions of gallons, and leave to all other nationalities here residing only the 750,000.

As we already said, there are about 2,000 places where lager beer is retailed. Let us take a survey of some of

those localities. But before we begin we ought to say a word about the people who keep and those who frequent them. The number of *ci-devant* professors, military officers, students, delegates to legislative assemblies, lawyers, judges and noblemen, who, compelled by the unfortunate issues of the years 1848 and '49 to leave their fatherland, now try to get a livelihood in this City by keeping lager beer saloons and hotels, is almost incredible. It may appear strange that gentlemen, who in their country occupied a distinguished position, should condescend to embrace a mode of living so many grades lower in the scale of society than that to which they had been accustomed. But *want* is omnipotent; and nearly all of those who left their country to escape a dungeon or perhaps an imperial bullet or royal rope, have left their property in the rapacious claws of their late rulers. Most of them are ignorant of the English language; they are skilled in no craft by which they could make their living; and if a man has been unaccustomed to manual labor for half a life-time, he will hardly be able to earn his daily bread by it here; at least, not until he has served a considerable apprenticeship. But they have a large circle of acquaintances and friends, who will be glad to see them in any situation where they can make a living; and a beer-house is very easily established. It requires no knowledge of English, very little money or credit; and if the new shopkeeper has good paying acquaintances, keeps order in his affairs and makes himself agreeable to his customers, he will accumulate more than he could do by the severest manual or intellectual labor. We may add, that without an iron stomach there is less chance for making money. The keeper of a beer-house must be always ready for any amount of drinking, and the more friends he has the stronger should be his stomach and his head.

Let us look in at a well-known saloon in William-st. We find a small, middle-aged man listening to the noisy declamation of a tall customer, who sports enormous whiskers and mustaches. The tall man appeals to the complaisant host to bear witness to some revolutionary feat which he asserts that he performed several years ago. The walls of the room are adorned with cheap pictures, the most of them being portraits of revolutionary celebrities, such as Kossuth, Mazzini, Hecker, Blum and others; the furniture is very simple, without a vestige of luxury. Seven or eight deal tables, covered with English, German and French papers, and the glasses of the customers present; a dozen chairs, nearly all occu-

ped; one or two smoke-stained looking-glasses, and a bar with the ordinary fixtures, constitute the inventory. Behind the bar, or rather hanging upon it, is a sleepy-looking barkeeper, roused only by calls for beer or payments. A peculiarity of the people is developed in these arrangements. A German must have time for his libations. He cannot march up to the bar, pour out a drink, dash it down without the possibility of tasting it, toss the money over the counter, and rush out like an ignited sky-rocket, as the majority of Americans do. Tables, chairs, newspapers, cigars or pipes and friends are not merely comfortable additions, but actual essentials to his enjoyment. Instead of a quarter of a minute he wants at least a quarter of an hour for the proper enjoyment of a drink. Conversation is another essential. However taciturn the German may appear among others, let him sit down at one of these tables and get his glass of lager beer, and a listening friend, and if any one desires to know how much talk a human tongue can reel off in any given period, then is the time to listen. But to our host. If you observe him closely, you will note that he is not yet at ease in his new location. He who was but a short time ago the orator to whom hundreds and thousands were listening, is apt to forget what he is now, an humble publican, subject to the rude commands of any one who chooses to show sixpence in money and any quantity of self-importance in his saloon. This landlord was one of the most influential leaders of the German Democracy, and escaped death, or at least the dungeon for life, by fleeing from his birthland. Without money and with precarious health, what could he do? he was a lawyer; but the knowledge of German and Roman law is hardly available here. Manual labor his health would not permit. Finally he joined with a partner, (who stays up nights and does the drinking) and here is our classically educated and talented gentleman - the keeper of the beer saloon. Had any one prophesied this ten years ago, the victim would have laughed at him. Now, he laughs at himself, and bears his blushing honors more philosophically than could have been expected.

The saloons kept by political exiles are nearly all in the lower part of the City. William, North William, Pearl and Chatham-sts. City Hall-place and the Bowery contain a large number of lager beer saloons. There are a large number in Greenwich, Hudson and Washington-sts.; but in these later streets there are no political exiles selling beer. The emigrant houses are, in the main,

respectable; but the cellars in the First and Third Wards are kept by a hard class and frequented by the lowest of rowdies and vagabonds.

Some better class of saloons have other liquors and eatables. There are a number of this sort in Broadway, frequented not only by Germans but by a constantly increasing representation of Americans. One place in Broadway numbers its daily customers by thousands. We have frequently seen more than a hundred at the tables at once, of whom a sixth part perhaps were Americans. Bread and cheese, bread and butter, sardines, and lager beer are the staple articles of trade here. Very little of other drink is called for. One attraction of these places is their cool and retired character. Being generally in large basements or cellars, and in some instances in the adjoining vaults, quite under the street, they are out of the heat, and out of the crowd. This applies particularly to the down-town saloons. Up-town, where rents are lower, the first floor is the usual location. A few years ago a German beer house was a sort of sleepy volcano in appearance, because of the enormous amount of smoke sent up from pipes. But now the case is different. Pipe-smoking is getting rare, and the common, low-priced cigars are too villainously bad for any human consumption, so that one may venture into almost any beer shop without immediate danger of suffocation. That man who has once used good tobacco, and is not entirely cured of any disposition to smoke after burning a hundred of the four-cent cigars of these days, may consider his case hopeless. He is past medication. We opine that the quality of the tobacco, and not a change of taste, has thus materially broken down the German smoking customs.

A well-patronised beer-house will sell from eight to ten kegs per day. One large establishment in Broadway sells fifteen to seventeen. A keg is seven and a half gallons, or a quarter of a barrel. So we have for this Broadway establishment four barrels per day, or 1,460 in a year; being 43,800 gallons, or about 525,660 glasses, at 6¼ cents each; making \$32,850 a year for beer alone. Beside this, other drinks are sold, to some extent, and a great quantity of bread and butter, bread and cheese, sardines, &c., is disposed. The annual receipts cannot fall below \$15,000. But this is a favourite place, frequented by the best class of Germans and a very large number of Americans, embracing gentlemen of distinguished literary and social position.

Considering the enormous amount of drinking done in them, the German beer houses are singularly free from rowdiness and noisy disturbances. Lager beer is not strong enough for the class of porter-house ruffians who make night hideous in other places. They take the worst sort of American brandy, a poisonous infusion of alcoholic and fiery drugs, the free use of which almost invariably results in delirium tremens, unless the victim reaches the state prison or the gallows at a very early period. The German people, too, are generally submissive to the laws. Since the tailor riots, there has been no considerable breach of the peace by this class of citizens, nor any serious disturbance in which they have been the aggressors. Except to the law forbidding the sale of liquor on Sunday, they yield readier obedience to the powers that rule over them than even Americans. We should like to be able to say as much for another large class of alien and adopted citizens.

Political questions, American as well as foreign, are a leading topic of conversation in the beer houses. The Germans are naturally inclined to political investigation, and as a class they are by no means so ignorant of such matters as has been widely thought. In this country they were for a long time deceived by that huge falsehood, the self-styled "Democracy" of Tammany Hall; and up to the period of the Revolution of 1848, they went in a solid phalanx for the "Democratic party," regular nominations and all. Any one who dared to acknowledge himself a Whig was looked upon and even treated as an aristocrat and a renegade. Like a large proportion of their kindred in Pennsylvania, who have hardly done voting for Gen. Jackson, they went it blind so far as par-

ties in this country were concerned, and Tammany used them to do the dirty work which she is now relying upon Irishmen to perform. But since the Revolution, and the advent of Kossuth and a large number of educated and talented exiles of their own people, the Germans have become enlightened, and now their votes are divided, Tammany holding scarcely a moiety, and those only because she constantly impresses the Germans with the idea that the Whigs are all Maine Law men, and will at the first good opportunity break up the lager beer traffic. Without his beer and his joke the German would be denationalized indeed.

It is but just to remark that there are a great many vile holes in the lower part of the City, with flaunting German signs, where thieves and prostitutes are harboured, and the vilest of sour beer and adulterated liquors are sold. It is only by chance that respectable people get into these dens, and they are not likely to go there a second time. Respectable Germans keep clear of them, and the only regular frequenters are of the worst class of idlers, thieves, runners, rowdies and vagabonds of the "rising generation." Most of these places are intolerably filthy, and scarcely a week passes without the shutting up of one or more on account of its dangerous moral and physical character. They are no more like a decent German beer-house than a Five-Point rum rookery is like the Astor House.

This article was first published in the New York Daily Tribune, 3 October 1854 and the editor wishes to thank Gary Gillman for bringing it to his attention.