

THE HISTORY CORNER

This article appeared in the Chicago Tribune on Sunday, April 9, 1933

An Expert Explains Common Terms of Trade

For the enlightenment of those citizens whose acquaintanceship with real beer dates from Thursday midnight and to refresh the memory of those who observed the bans of the Volstead act for thirteen years, Dr. Robert Wahl, head of the Wahl Institute of Brewing Technology, yesterday explained some of the common terms used in the beer trade.

Most American beers are of the "pale" or "extra pale" type Dr. Wahl pointed out. These terms refer to the light color and body of the beer in contrast to the heavy, dark beers of the German and English types which are necessarily of a higher alcoholic content.

Experiment on Heavy Beer

"Drinkers of beer in America must be content with the pale or Pilsener type of beer until a dark, heavy beer of a Muenchener or Culmbacher type can be manufactured with not more than 3.2 per cent alcoholic content by weight." Dr. Wahl said. "We are now making researches in our laboratories for the purpose of producing beers which will have the body and flavor of porter and stout (the heavy and dark beers) with the low alcoholic content demanded by law."

"The Culmbacher beer is the heaviest and darkest of the German beers". Dr. Wahl said. "It is almost black in color, contains a high percentage of malt, and is about 8.5 per cent alcoholic content by weight. The problem of the brewers is to reduce this alcoholic content without impairing the flavor or the body of the beer", Wahl said.

"Muenchener beer is dark and heavy, but not as much as the Culmbacher beer" Wahl declared. "These beers are meals themselves." He said.

"'Lager' beer is a light beer containing a small proportion of hops and is manufactured by prolonged fermentation over a period of four to six months at low temperatures", he continued. "'Bock' beer is an extra strong beer made in a shorter time. 'Weiss' beer is a light, whitish beer made from wheat malt."

"English ale, beer, and stout cannot be imported under the present law", Dr. Wahl said, "nor can the heavy, German beers unless the alcoholic content is reduced."

A Slightly Bitter Taste

"The 'pale' beer is the drink to be taken with food," Dr. Wahl said. "In testing this beer, we check its effervescence, its clarity, and its sparkle first." "If these are rated good, we examine the head of foam which must be creamy with fine bubbles."

"The color must be a light amber and the flavor fine with a slightly bitter taste. It must not taste sweet or tart or insipid but must have a mellowness and zest. Finally, and perhaps most important, it must have what the Germans call 'süffigkeit'."

"And what does that mean?" he was asked.

"The best translation of the word that I have heard is this:" Dr. Wahl answered. "A beer has 'süffigkeit' when you can drink it all afternoon and still not have enough."