

## Hank Speaks and speaks and ... so read & Listen.

We all received a few weeks ago, a note from our stalwart Neil Barnett (soon to perish in ETERNAL FIRES OF DAMNATION - you will understand why if you are stalwart enough to detect blasphemy woven into the fabric of sweet verbiage) and have stepped up as we Louisiana folks do - my family's home since 1795. Although officially the state motto is Union, Justice, Confidence that is not completely correct - we have a few unions BUT we DO have a lot of Jesters and Confidence men.

The **REAL** motto is **Let the good times roll** and that is why I will roll with the accursed Barnett.

NB wrote :

"I am also looking into styles for next year, one that has been brought to my attention is Heretic Ale (we can work on the name). Martin Luther's wife Kate made homebrew for him and the church community which was highly regarded. After some quick research, I found out he was an ex-monk and she was an ex-nun which meant they were both exposed to the best beer in the world at that time. I have some preliminary ideas about a recipe and would like reliable input. This would be a great beer to celebrate 500 years of the Protestant Reformation. For all Catholics, I promise to have the water blessed by a priest before we brew.

If you would like to sign up for an event, or have any ideas about styles for next year, let me know. Take care and keep brewing. Neil"

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I contacted the premier beer historian/writer Ron Pattinson:

"I e-met you a few years ago after a German beer expedition and you offered great insight into the GERMAN MICROBREWERY TRADITION (10 barrels/year). Your British beer history books are very much appreciated. My homebrew club is planning A MARTIN LUTHER beer brewoff and I wonder if you have any thoughts as to what it might have been?"

He responded that Gose or a 3% beer was likely.

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I then wrote to Weyermann, the prominent German malter:

"Attention Thomas,

I met you a few years ago in Bamberg at the great gift shop you folks offer and when you learned my home base, You inquired about Wolfram and life in New Orleans.

My homebrew club is planning A MARTIN LUTHER beer brewoff and I wonder if you have any thoughts as to what it might have been?"

And I got this:

*Hi Henry,*

*This is the Weyermann(R)-historian answering. We don't know what people drank 500 years ago. What we know is that all beers of that time must have had a more or less smoky taste because of the malt had to be dried over open fire. Despite the various purity laws (Reinheitsgebot), brewers were very creative and added all kinds of herbs and ingredients. Weyermann brewed a "Cerevisia Michaelbergensis" in the pilot brewery with a blend of herbs last year in order to commemorate the 1.000th anniversary of the Michaelsberg monastery in Bamberg (with its tradition of 900 years of brewing that stopped in 1969). Speaking of monasteries: it is common belief that monasteries brewed two types of beer: a thick and rich "convent" one of very high quality for the chapter itself and a low one ("gate-beer") for the common people... Hope that helps a little bit!*

*Kind regards from Bamberg, \*\*\*\* Christian M. Kestel, M.A. - Historical Collections & Archives - Weyermann@ Specialty Malts Brennerstrasse 17-19 D-96052 Bamberg, Germany*

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and then I found this:

### **Martin Luther's Beer**

April 9, 2008 By Jay Brooks 6 Comments

I stumbled upon this interesting write-up of the *Beers of Martin Luther* on a Lutheran website, Cyberbrethern. The post is based on notes from a talk given at a Men's Breakfast at Good Shepherd

Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, New York in April of 1997. Keith Villa of Blue Moon Brewing is thanked for “describing how the beers of Martin Luther’s era would have looked and tasted.”  
(See edited copy of this long lecture below)

The article discusses German beer in the middle ages, both homebrewed beer and brews made at Abbeys, and then speculates which beer of the time would have been Martin Luther’s favorite. This proved easier than you might imagine.

Frederick Salem, in his *Beer, Its History and Its Economic Value as a National Beverage* (1880) notes, “Luther’s fondness for beer is well known, and on the evening of that eventful day at Worms, April 18, 1521, the Duke Erich von Braunschweig sent him a pot of Eimbecker (Einbecker) beer, to which he was specially addicted.”

Michael Jackson also mentioned this connection in his *New World Guide to Beer*, saying “Luther received a gift of Einbeck beer on the occasion of his wedding.”

The article goes on to suggest that Luther preferred homebrew over beer from commercial breweries, finding the latter to be “a curse for Germany.” But in an apparent contradiction, Luther “drank at home.” One biographer notes, “The German prophet became a patriarch, and the living room was dominated by his presence. He enjoyed his beer and had a great mug with three rings on it, one ‘the Ten Commandments’, the next ‘the Creed’ and third ‘the Lord’s Prayer’.  
He boasted that he could encompass all three with ease.”

But he was also a champion for moderation, and in sermon he gave in 1539, preached the following:

“It is possible to tolerate a little elevation, when a man takes a drink or two too much after working hard and when he is feeling low. This must be called a frolic. But to sit day and night, pouring it in and pouring it out again, is piggish... all food is a matter of freedom, even a modest drink for one’s pleasure. If you do not wish to conduct yourself this way, if you are going to go beyond this and be a born pig and guzzle beer and wine, then, if this cannot be stopped by the rulers, you must know that you cannot be saved. For God will not admit such piggish drinkers into the kingdom of heaven [cf. Gal. 5:19-21]... If you are tired and downhearted, take a drink; but this does not mean being a pig and doing nothing but gorging and swilling... You should be moderate and sober; this means that we should not be drunken, though we may be exhilarated.”

There is at least one Luther-Bier, a German-style pilsner brewed by Einsiedler Brauhaus. I’m not sure what that adds to the story, but I found it interesting all the same. As far as I can tell, it was a special release and there’s even a separate website for Luther-Bier, but there’s almost no additional information there. But you can see the special box it comes in an etched mug at a Wittenberg website.

And I found this great quote on another church’s website:

“*We old folks have to find our cushions and pillows in our tankards. Strong beer is the milk of the old.*”  
— Martin Luther

Filed Under: Beers, Just For Fun, Related Pleasures Tagged With: Germany, History, Religion & Beer

## Comments

1. Shawn Connelly says

April 9, 2008 at 12:10 pm

This is fun stuff, Jay! Being that I have a graduate degree in Theology and Church History, I always enjoy hearing tidbits about the prominent role beer played in Christendom’s history – the post-Reformation heritage is particularly rich and Luther particularly quotable!

2. Elaine Saunders says

April 10, 2008 at 12:45 am



In Britain too, beer was an important commodity for monasteries up until the 16th Century. The Domesday Book, a nationwide survey made in 1086 has St Pauls in London brewing around 1900 barrels a year whereas the monks at Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire, in later centuries, brewed a staggering 60 barrels every ten days – 21,900 barrels annually.

After Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170 pilgrimages to his shrine (and other religious sites in Britain) became popular. At first travelers sought overnight refuge in monasteries but, when the numbers became too great, roadside inns were established, often taking religious names to imply a monastic connection. Obviously a great deal of beer was brewed to meet their needs, the water of the time being unsafe to drink.

In an odd twist of fate and considering what the tourist trade owes to him, Thomas a Becket had trained as a brewer during his time at ST Albans Abbey and is now the brewers' patron saint.

One further monk/beer snippet. "Sceot" is an Old Norse word meaning "cut". It was applied to a tax levied by the local sheriff, the money later being redistributed for the relief of the poor. (We still talk today about taking a cut.) Ale was one of the taxable items and, in order to raise money for the parish, monks sometimes brewed scot ale on special occasions, the proceeds being used for charitable purposes. Beer brewed secretly, without payment of this tax, was said to be "scot-free".

Elaine Saunders Author – A Book About Pub Names <http://www.completetext.com>

### 3. Jack North says

September 24, 2008 at 3:21 pm

Do you know of a quote ascribed to Martin Luther the gist of which is: "I know the devil is active, but I also know God is sovereign, so I will sit here and drink my beer."

### 4. Jeffrey C Faust says

July 30, 2012 at 11:13 pm

I am Missouri Synod Lutheran and a beer drinker and tobacco smoker. I like drinking beer and I believe it is much better for you than hard liquor. Once you get used to drinking beer if you have a brain it doesn't make you out of control. I wouldn't suggest driving or operating heavy machinery.

### 5. Jim Crute says

October 11, 2014 at 5:59 am

The reason for Pilsnerbier not listed as a beer of Martin Luther is that it was yet to be invented for about 300 years. The light malt required continuous flow kilns for drying, lager yeasts did not show up until after Magellan circumnavigated the world and pick up a species of yeast that would mate with the traditional European ale strains and become cold adapted.

### 6. John M says

December 29, 2015 at 6:19 pm

To enter the site "Luther-Bier" you have to click on the words "jetzt eintreten" (enter now) on the page at the link you provided above in your helpful story. There you will find a bunch of beers being produced in honor of the 500th anniversary of Luther's Reformation in 2017. If you do that you'll see there's quite a lot in there besides, but you must know German, which is why you missed it!

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DH is full of German speakers, so perhaps a CCH member close to DH can enlist a translator and follow the instructions above.

MACH SCHNELL

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Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, New York in April of 1997 LECTURE

### :: Einbecker, Luther's Favorite ::

Because he traveled, Martin Luther could have had many of these beers, but there is only one with claims to be his favorite. Frederick Salem, in his *Beer, Its History and Its Economic Value as a National Beverage* (1880) noted, "Luther's fondness for beer is well known, and on the evening of

that eventful day at Worms, April 18, 1521, the Duke Erich von Braunschweig sent him a pot of Einbecker (Einbecker) beer, to which he was specially addicted.”

Also, Michael Jackson, in his *New World Guide to Beer* (1988), noted that Luther received a gift of Einbeck beer on the occasion of his wedding. Luther scholar Luther Peterson recalls a visit to a restaurant in Einbeck where he found a beer coaster with portraits of Martin and Katie on one side and a tale about their receiving a barrel of Einbeck beer as a wedding present. Although he adds, “How authoritative a beer coaster can be is another question.”

Einbeck beer was known as early as 1325 and in *One Hundred Years of Brewing* (1903) was said to be the most famous beer of the Middle Ages, available everywhere in Germany and shipped as far as Jerusalem. It began with two thirds barley malt, one third wheat malt. Kiln-dried malt was not used as the beer was to be “yellow in color and clear.” It was a top fermentation beer. The author noted that it was vastly different from the present (i.e. 1903) top fermentation beers, nor to be compared to either the normal beer (probably lager), or the weiss beer, or the double-brew (probably doppelbock) beer. It was brewed only in winter, from about St. Martin’s day at the end of September until the first of May. As the beer kept its quality very long, enabling it to be shipped far away, it stands to reason that it was not only rich in malt, hence in alcohol, but also strongly hopped.

Von Bergzabern’s Herbal, the 1613 edition, is also quoted in *One Hundred Years of Brewing*, and describes Einbeck beer as “thin, subtle, clear, of bitter taste, has a pleasant acidity on the tongue, and many other good qualities.”

Einbecker evolved into the Bock style that flourishes to this day — an extra strong beer, malty with a smooth hop finish. We can be sure, however, that the Einbecker beers enjoyed by Martin Luther tasted nothing like the Einbecker Ur-Bocks of today. In Luther’s day, Einbecker was a top-fermented beer made with a large portion of wheat and fermented with multiple yeast strains, each vying to impart its own flavor to the beer. The thin, acidic quality noted in 1613 was probably a product of bacterial infection at the start and the multiple yeast strains, plus wild yeast from the air, all working together to ferment every last bit of sugar.

With today’s pure yeast cultures, only 75% or so of the sugars are consumed in fermentation, leaving some sweetness and body. And because today’s Bocks are bottom-fermented with a single yeast strain, they are far cleaner and simpler in taste. In spite of the evolution from Einbecker to Bock beer, the Luther identification has remained strong. In the 20th century, an Einbeck brewery even used a portrait of Luther on its label when its beer was first imported into the U.S.

If you do wish to drink beers similar to the beers Luther drank, the closest you will come are probably today’s Belgian Abbey Ales. Their top fermentation, complex flavors, full attenuation, and highly individual character are all in keeping with the beers of the monasteries that Luther knew as a young man, and with many more of the beers of Luther’s time.

#### SO WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED??

I am thinking that a Belgian Abbey style with some smoked malt is most likely but the final decision will be a great one because of the excellent brewers our club has plus the ultimate truth that in time, one realizes that awards are nice but that the beer is for the brewer's enjoyment.

And so the oft asked question- "Homebrewer, what is your favorite beer?" might be best answered "Only certain ones; only those at a temperature between 48 and 60 degrees F and drunk from a glass".

THNX Hank