

## BEER - MEDICINE FOR THE PSYCHE

by Mike Retzlaff

Beer is considered a foodstuff in Germany by both statute and social convention. To illustrate how basic the German perspective actually is, bottled beer is sold on passenger trains as well as in McDonalds. Beer is nutritious and an indispensable social lubricant. Recent articles in the HopLine illustrate how ingrained the Biergarten is to German society. Such places continue to thrive as a venue for social interaction.

The British Pub was born in an age long before radios, cars, TVs, computers and cell phones; when conversation was considered entertainment and a game of darts or checkers (draughts) the highlight of the week.

Shakespeare commented on this concept by writing that alehouses were “sites . . . where people of disparate status mixed . . . [which] . . . brought men, high born and low, into relation, fostering a propinquity that might secure, adjust or threaten hierarchies.”

Taverns throughout Europe have served the same function and continue to help transcend the barriers of dialect, religion, politics, and sports club affiliation. They are indeed social institutions.

A group from University Hospital, Basel, Switzerland conducted a study of the effects of beer on 60 subjects; 30 men and 30 women. The goal was to see how beer affected their ability to identify happy faces and to feel empathy. The results overwhelmingly showed that subjects who were given alcoholic beer were able to choose images of people with happy faces better than those given non-alcoholic beer. They were also much more likely to want to join those happy people in a social group. The study concluded “These effects of alcohol on social cognition likely enhance sociability.”

If we weren't already convinced that beer is conducive to a healthier mindset, this study seems to put other notions to bed.

I can claim with almost certainty that the vast majority of CCH members attend the monthly meetings for the social aspects rather than for a continuing education in the “Brewer's Art.” Our socializing is directly connected to our love of beer. Beer has brought us together while the friendships developed over the sipping of homebrew have kept us here. Beer allows us to flourish as friends by suspending, if only temporarily, our many differences.

It seems that beer is powerful medicine!



München

Halbräuhaus am Platzl, Festsaal

