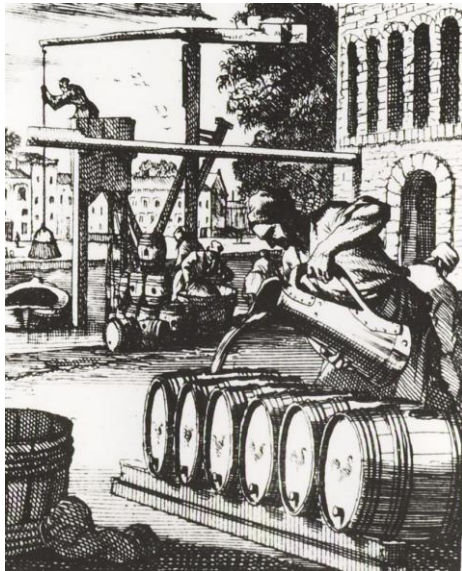




CZECH REPUBLIC BEER

BEER

Production and social impact in the Czech Republic





History of Czech beer production

Beer belongs to the oldest, widespread and most favourite drinks in the world. It is slightly alcoholic beverage made from malt, hop and water fermented with ale yeasts. A ready beer shall have a fine taste and aroma, crispy with rich and thick head. At present, countless types of beer are made but we can basically divide them in two main types: bottom-fermented and top-fermented. Both types can be further divided according to their colour: light, dark or semi-dark. Top-fermented beers are traditionally brewed in Great Britain (Ale, Stout), Belgium (Lambic), partly in France and Germany (Wheat). Most of today's beer is based on the bottom-fermented pale lager brewed in 1842 in Pilsen in the present-day Czech Republic – Pilsner beer (volume of hopped wort 11 – 12 %, noticeable carbonation /fizzy bubbles/ and a typical alcohol by volume content of around 5 %). Most of Czech beers slightly differ in used ingredients and production conditions.

The beverage made of fermented grain have been popular in the Czech lands since early Middle Ages. The Slavs brewed in the 10th century at the latest and with the help of hops (the vocable “pivo” was related to drinking and the old slavic “chmeleti” with overdrinking). Later, the monasteries had the concession for brewing. Beside it, beer was brewed unofficially almost in every household and women were in charge of this activity. Despite initial refusal, the aristocracy began to brew at their manors which led to the friction and fights between towns and nobility. Malsters founded their own guild at the end of the 13th century which later became the Brewers Guild as well. The patron of Czech brewers is St. Wenceslas but all over the world the patron is the mythical king Gambrinus.

In the 14th and 15th century the small breweries began to centralised themselves. Due to greater demands on beer production and technical equipment of better quality were founded town breweries. Originally were brewed top-fermented beers from wheat malt. In winter, the barley malt with bottom-fermenting was also used, even cheaper beers of lower quality and greater bitterness were brewed.

Around 1780, an extensive reform of Czech brewing industry began. Old methods were replaced by then latest scientific procedures – launching of malt and beer industrial production, Czech lands started to occupy front positions in production of the high quality beer. One of the

main initiators was František Ondřej Poupě called The Father of Czech malsters.

Between 1840 and 1870 the dominant top-fermentation was replaced by the bottom-fermentation. Another milestone was the year 1842 when the citizens of Pilsen with right to brew established the Burgess brewery, today's Pilsner Urquell brewery, and started brew entirely bottom-fermented beers.



Brewers in 1899 (*Brewery Museum Pilsen*) Brewery staff at Křivoklát in 1912 (*Zdeňka Kubásková*)

The brewing was fiercely interrupted by both world wars. Many breweries were destroyed or severely damaged. After communist regime took over the power (1948), breweries were nationalized and their production centrally planned. Majority of finance was invested into heavy industry, therefore breweries and malt houses had to use the old equipment. Despite that they were able to supply our market sufficiently and represent then Czechoslovakia in the world.



Two worlds: automobile transport and horse waggon (*Brewery Museum Pilsen*)



Barrel filling (*Photoarchive NMA Prague*)



Bottle filling (*Photoarchive NMA Prague*)

After the revolution in 1989 breweries and malt houses were returned back to its previous private owners during restitution. Family breweries and mini-breweries were formed and various special beers with various flavours are brewed, like apple, pear, pineapple, banana, plum, caramel, ginger, prune, raspberry, cherry, honey, even hemp.

Some statistic:

In 2007 the Czech Republic was the 16th biggest producer of beer in the world with yearly reserved tree of 19.897 million hectolitres and the 9th biggest worldwide beer exporter with unremitting growth. In 2008 it was 19.806 million hectolitres – 2nd highest score in Czech history. Total exports: 3.710 million hectolitres; total imports 0.140 million hectolitres; total consumption 16.240 million hectolitres = in the year 2008 is Czech Republic on the front position in the mean consumption of beer per person that reaches around 160 litres.

There are 48 breweries in the Czech Republic and approximately 80 microbreweries. The direct employment is 7 400 jobs. Further jobs are created in the supplying sectors due to purchases by the Czech brewers (12 300 jobs). In the hospitality sector approximately 32 000 jobs can be attributed to the brewing sector while in retail around 2 800 employees have jobs related to beer sales. The total employment effect thus consists of 54 500 jobs related to beer production and sales. The Czech government also benefits from beer production and sales, receiving approximately 676 million euros in revenues. These revenues consist of 133 million euros excise, 235 million euros VAT and the 54 500 beer related jobs generate 308 million euros of income-related contributions and taxes.



Beer tradition with social impact

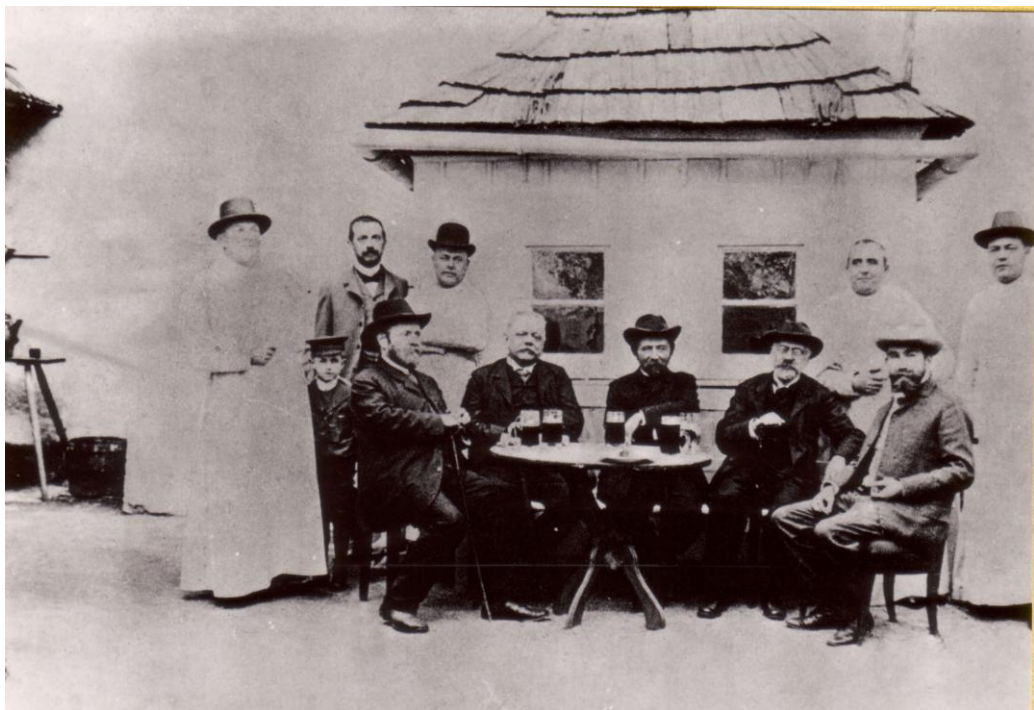
Culture: Czechs always treated beer as a national attribute (czechism), as an integral part of Czech life, society and culture. A pub (inn) was always a centre of cultural events. In the Middle Ages it was besides consumers visited by pretzelmen, old women with goodies, jugglers, musicians, mendicant pupils even strumpets. In the 16th century, insobriety was not considered as man's vice. Only major misdemeanours were criticised. A few sips of good potion raised sprightly mood that often led to various drolleries and mischieves such as singing improper chants. In these times spread a fashion of founding various drinking brotherhoods, e.g. *Brotherhood of an Old Axe*, *Grobians Club*, *Jacks Guilds* or *Brotherhoods of Jacks*.

In 1840's where also pubs in countryside turned to patriotism pubs were scenes for migrant theatrical companies, patriotic feasts and other cultural or social events. In the 2nd half of the 19th century pubs became also centres of political opinions and where even political parties were founded (like the *Social Democratic Czechoslovak party in Austria* in Prague Kaštan restaurant on the 7th April 1878) and table societies begun to meet to create some work and discussed it with fellows or critics. An artistic table society called *Mahabharáta* became famous outside its region, originated from meetings in the St. Thomas brewery in Prague district Malá Strana (Lesser Town). Its members were artists like Jakub Arbes (writer and journalist), Mikoláš Aleš (painter), Jaroslav Kvapil (poet and dramaturg), Eduard Vojan (actor), Jaroslav Vrchlický (poet), Karel Matěj Čapek-Chod (writer and journalist) and others.



Paseka table party (Brewery Museum Pilsen)

From the end of the 19th century wine and liqueurs were treated as more noble than beer. Beer was then oft an example of Czech passivity and narrow-mindedness. As examples could serve beer-drinkers in literature like the *Good Soldier Švejk* (author: Jaroslav Hašek, 1912) with simple-minded but natural behaviour. Public proclamation of pubs and beer could do only self-confident and free-minded people. That were mostly artistic Bohemians and pubs served as work-rooms and literary clubs for them. Best known artists: Zikmund Winter (writer), Jaroslav Hašek (writer), Josef Pekař (historiographer), Václav Rabas (painter), Alfons Mucha (painter) etc.



Beer session on the 1st May 1905 outside the Strahov Monastery cellar in Prague. Left to right sitting: Alois Jirásek (writer), Josef Stupecký (professor of civil law), Karel Václav Rais (writer), Zikmund Winter (writer) and Ignát Hermann (writer), F. X. Harlas (historiographer of arts) standing second right (*Photoarchive NMA Prague*)

To the legendary works from modern times belong *Postřižiny* (*Cutting It Short*; author: Bohumil Hrabal), *Audience* (a play by Václav Havel, former dissident and president in 1990 – 2003) or work from caricaturists like Petr Urban, Vladimír Renčín and many others.



Peasant wedding under the motto: *“I do not know better road than from kitchen to the beerhouse”*
(Photoarchive NMA Prague)

Music: Many of traditional or popularized tunes and drinking songs arose throughout the history and are even in country or rock music (like *Pivečko* by the band Orlik, *Jarošovský pivovar* by Argema or a traditional *Co jste hasiči*, or in songs from bands like *Tři sestry*, *Alkohol* or *Brutus*). With beer we can meet also in classical works like in operas from Bedřich Smetana (1824 – 1884) who was actually born and grown up in a brewery.

„Beer, this really is a heavenly gift, your ire and troubles leads to ruins and strenghtens and braces up...“

Jeník and Kecal’s aria from the oper *The Bartered Bride* from Bedřich Smetana, Premiere in 1866.

Kde je sládek

*Kde je sládek, tu je mládek,
tu je taky malý pivovárek,
kde se pivo vaří, tu se dobře daří,
píme ho, píme ho, až do rána bílého.
A pak ráno, bude přáno,
s česnekem k snídani dáno,
pak do té polívky, sušené topinky,
píme ho, píme ho, ale nejmenujme ho.*

Where is the Brewer

*Where is the brewer, there is brewer’s helper,
There is also a small brewery,
Where beer is brewed people are well and happy,
Let’s drink it untill the small hours.
And the morning will be coming,
With the garlic for the breakfast,
Then dry toast added into the soup,
Let us drink it, drink it, but not mention it.*

J. Němeček: *The old secular songs*, 1820

Food: Beer became also an integral part of food. Even in the 1st half of the 20th century were very favourite beer soups especially for breakfast and as an empowering medicine by various diseases. Housewives used also made beer sauces, mashes as well as flavoured meat with beer.

Health effects: Beer in the small amount (0,5 – 1 litre/day) is actually healthy, encourage breathing and the appetite, encourage the digestive system activity, is diuretic, decreases risk of cardiac disease, is a natural agent against stress due to the low concentration of alcohol and hop substances. Beer consumption strenghtens bones and protects from their refractivity. Brewer's yeast is known to be a rich source of significant nutrients including magnesium, selenium, potassium, phosphorus, biotin, and B vitamins. In fact, beer is sometimes referred to as „liquid bread“. And last but not least by beer drinking man express the human sociability and improves the interpersonal relations. Healthier beer consumption is a new approach from Czech breweries. The long-term effects of alcohol abuse, however, include the risk of developing alcoholism and alcoholic liver disease.

*“Vaše podlomené zdraví pivo upevní a spravi.”
“If you're worried, sad or sick, a pint of beer will do the trick.”*

Competitions: Yearly in the Czech Republic take place many beer competitions with the view to evaluate not only quality of beer but also beer Etiquettes, mats etc. These are various beer festivals and among the biggest are: Czech Beer Seal (Tábor), Gold Cup PIVEX (Brno), Beer of Czech Republic (České Budějovice), Czech Beer (Prague) or Czech Brewers Prize (Prague). The beer fans also invented many different games, for example collecting beer mats, etiquettes, bottles or beer heads. Very popular are table games like catching mats bounced off the table in a hand. Associated activities with beer drinking are also playing cards and darts, abroad is popular beer pong, flip cup or quarters. People can also compete by visiting a series of different pubs in one evening.



Cheers!

