



Krakow brews beer: from medieval 'marcowe' to contemporary IPA

2018-12-24

Beer has been the most popular beverage since time immemorial. It has been drunk both cold and mulled. People from all walks of life drink beer.

In the Middle Ages the quality of beer was monitored by the heads of guilds – both at the stage of production and sales. Brewers who did not meet the standards were temporarily suspended in their right to make beer. Repeat offenders were expelled from the city. Several types of beer were produced: white *cerevisia alba*, light *schayte*, more expensive *langwelle*, and black, thick *Märzenbier* brewed from barley. Wheat beer – *cerevisia triticea* was also very popular. People drank beer mainly in inns and taverns. The servants were provided with a certain amount of beer or a special allowance – so-called beer money. There were breweries and malt houses on every street corner.

Some beers were imported. In 1456, due to dwindling revenue of the royal malt house, importing beer was banned for several decades (with a few exceptions to this rule). One of the most commonly imported brews was a beer from Świdnica. It was sold in the well-known Świdnica cellar bar under the town hall. Krakow residents were also fond of mulled beer. Tin cups with beer were submerged in hot water and, after it warmed up, the beverage was lightly salted before serving.

The history of the Goetz family brewery

In the 1830s, a Swiss gentleman called Jenny established a brewery of Bavarian beer opposite Strzelecki Park. It seems that it was the first proper brewery in Krakow. "Before that only light, tasty and healthy beer was brewed in the Schauer brewery in Kazimierz and in Kleparz a man called Wytyszkiewicz made white and very fizzy oat beer sold in stoneware bottles with a cork which popped like champagne. People often jokingly called this refreshing beverage «Wytyszkiewicz's pee»" – as we can learn from the accounts of that time.

Years later, Jenny's brewery was bought by a brewer called Jan Goetz. The brewery was running until the war with a break caused by the workers' strike in 1936. After World War II, the plant was nationalised. It was managed by the Fermentation Industry Board in Zabrze and since 1968 by Okocim. In 2001 Okocim was taken over by Carlsberg and the company decided to close down beer brewing in the Lubicz Brewery.

The tradition of making beer in Krakow and its vicinity is nowadays continued by craft breweries such as Pracownia Piwa, Brokreacja, Piwojad and Twigg. Some of them are doing contract brewing, i.e. producing beer in another brewer's facility. In Krakow there are quite a few specialist beer shops and tap-bars (Multi Qlti, Weźże Krafta, Omerta) where beers from small brewers are sold, including bars that promote particular breweries from outside of Krakow (Miejscówka, Ursa Maior). Some bars such as CK Browar, Zajezdnia and Browar Lubicz brew their own beers. Craft beer festivals include Beerweek and One More Beer Festival.