

Tegernsee Bräustüberl through the centuries

From wise monks to kings with brewing expertise

Bavarian brewing started with the monasteries. The written records for this date back to the middle ages. You shouldn't imagine large breweries when you think of this though – brewing was just one of many professions performed in the monasteries by hand by monks and worldly servants - as required by the rule of St. Benedict:

"The monastery should, if possible, be designed in such a way that all that is needed is located inside the monastery walls, namely water, mill, garden and the various workshops in which work is carried out.. This way the monks will not need to walk around outside as this would not benefit their souls in any way.

The Benedictine monastery of Tegernsee, which was founded in the year 746, provides the first indications of monasterial brewing. But the earliest date of which we can be certain is that found on the marble plaque on the wall between the pub table and bar in Bräustüberl, which is there to this day. On it, in old German text, reads: "The monastery brewery of Tegernsee obtained electoral license for the sale of beer on 22 Feb 1675". This was the date of the official birth of Tegernsee Bräustüberl.

The date arose during the term of Tegernsee Abbott Bernhard Wenzl, who led the monastery from 1673 to 1700. Soon after his abbotship began, Bernhard started work on the new baroque monastery complex, primarily the church. At the same time, however, he also had the working areas constructed: stables, crop storage, mill, bakery and also a brewery. This was in no way about producing beer for the monks themselves because on the tables in the refectory was mostly produce from their own wine gardens

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in Wachau and South Tirol. It was also probably not important that the beer be used to pay the monasterial staff or be given away free to the numerous travellers and guests who knocked on the monastery doors daily.

No, it was, quite simply, about money. A brewery and the associated sale of beer (i.e. the public bar and the sale to the landlords) would, according to the abbot's reflections, contribute noticeably to the income of the monastery and thus also help finance the new monasterial buildings.

For this, however, the license to brew and sell alcohol first had to be brought back to Tegernsee from Monastery Market Holzkirchen. Electoral approval was required to do this. The authorities had strict control over brewing because a tax had to be paid on the beer sold - the 'beer premium'. Indeed the former governing elector Ferdinand Maria was on friendly terms with the monastery at the time, but the state budget obviously still always needed money. Abbot Bernhard therefore managed "not without effort and expense" to transfer the brewing and sale of alcohol licence from Holzkirchen to Tegernsee. 22 February 1675 was the date the monastery received the long-awaited electoral license to sell beer in Tegernsee.

The new brewery was then constructed just north of the church - with malting floors, brewhouse, beer cooling facility, cellar and a tavern for the brewery workers to drink the beer they made. This can be seen on an old ground plan displayed in the Museum of Tegernsee Valley.

With the dissolution of the monastery in 1803, Tegernsee was very different. The state seized ownership of the entire monastery. The monastery church became a normal parish church. The monks disappeared. But the lucrative brewery and Bräustüberl continued to run. This was the 'fault' of the first Bavarian king. Or to be more precise, his wife. Queen Friderike Wilhelmine Caroline, it is said, fell in love with the valley by the

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lake and persuaded Max I. Joseph to buy it. From 1817, the grand couple converted the former monastery complex into a royal summer residence, which heralded the start of the beginning of tourism in Tegernsee. The old monastery brewery became 'Königlich Braunen Brauhaus Tegernsee' – and King Max I. Joseph became the first in what is now five generations of a full line of Wittelsbach brewing men, and not to forget the Queen Dowager Friderike Caroline who also made a more than competent lady brewer. It has remained in Wittelsbach hands, passed down through the family, and today goes by the name 'Herzoglich Bayerisches Brauhaus Tegernsee'. It has been owned by Duke Max in Bavaria since 1968 and his daughter Anna is now managing the brewery.

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