

breweries and third Nordrhein-Westfalen with 131. These three states have almost 70% of all breweries in Germany. The number of breweries in Ger-



many increased in 2013 by 9 although the overall production of 94.6 million Hektoliter was the lowest since unification in 1989. 79.7 hl were sold in Germany while the export of German beer increased, especially to the United States and China. Germany produces more than 5000 different types of beer. In per capita consumption, Germany is in third place with 107.8 Liters per person per year behind the Czech Republic (148.6 L) and Austria (107.8 L). In the US, people consumed 77.1 Liter per person on average.

Contrary to popular belief, the # 1 beverage in Germany is not beer but coffee. The Germans drink about 150 liters of coffee per person per year, about 50% more than beer.

### Das Reinheitsgebot

In April 1516, a year and a half before the beginning of the German Reformation, the Bavarian state assembly convened in Ingolstadt under the leadership of Duke Wilhelm IV and decreed for all of Bavaria that only malt, hop and water ( Gerstenmalz, Hopfen und Wasser) are allowed for the production of beer. Yeast (Hefe) was later added. This purity law is still in effect today for breweries in Germany thus making the *Reinheitsgebot* the oldest food law in the world. Before hop was used for aroma and conservation all different kind of herbs were used for flavoring the beer. Some were outright poisonous or caused hallucinations such as "*Ochsengalle, Wacholder, Gagel, Schlehe, Eichenrinde, Wermut, Kümmel, Anis, Lorbeer, Schafgarbe, Stechapfel, Enzian, Rosmarin, Rainfarn, Johanniskraut, Fichtenspne, Kiefernurzeln und Bilsenkraut*". Five hundred years later, this purity law has not lost any of its importance, especially with all the negative headlines about certain food items. German beer still contains no artificial flavoring or additives – only Malz, Hopfen, Hefe und Wasser. *Na dann - Prost!*

# THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

## Friday Film Fest Series



## Beerland

By Matt Sweetwood

October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

Non-Members \$15, Members \$12

The German Society of PA

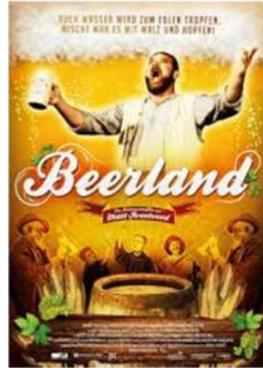
611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

## Beerland (2011)

### Credits:

Director: Matt Sweetwood  
Camera: Thomas Lütz, Axel Schnepapat  
Production: Peter Effenberg, Olaf Jacobs  
Language: German  
Length: 85 Minutes  
Genre: Documentary  
Distribution: Movienet  
Commentary: Karl Moehlmann



### Matt Sweetwood (Writer – Editor – Director)

Matt Sweetwood, born 1971 in Kansas City, Missouri, began making animation and video films while in High School. He studied television and film at the California State University in San Diego and developed professional skills with an emphasis on writing and directing. He worked as production manager, writer and assistant director on various independent projects. He moved to Berlin in 1995 and started a career as a writer with the *Verlag der Autoren* (Frankfurt), working on fiction and documentary film productions. His documentaries include “Homemade Hillbilly Jam” (2005) and “Forgetting Dad” (2008), before he won a documentary competition with “Beerland” in 2011. He is currently working on new film projects from his studio in Potsdam near Berlin.

### Biermekka

It seemed to be a good idea to start a documentary about the German beer culture at the famous Munich Oktoberfest. Not only is the Munich event the oldest *Volksfest* in the world (since 1810) but also the mecca of beer lovers with over 6 million visitors from all over the world. So Matt Sweetwood invites his American parents to Germany to show them the legendary festival. But their visit turns into a nightmare when he realizes that he cannot get into one of the famous *Bierzelte* without a reservation and that beer is only being served inside these large tents. Instead, they are being pushed around by the enormous crowd of drunken revelers.

So Matt embarks on a quest to unlock the mysteries of the national drink and the beer culture of the Germans. He learns about the historic circumstances of the *Reinheitsgebot* of 1516 which still governs beer production in Germany today. He finds out that the invention of the refrigerator by Prof. Dr. Carl Linde arose out of the cooling needs in the beer making process. He experiences the *Bierkrieg* in the Bavarian village of Dorfen and visits the Bamberg region which has the highest density of breweries in the world (168!)

Matt continues his trek along the famous *Brauereiweg* in Aufseß in the *Fränk-*

*ische Schweiz*, a 15 K walk among 4 different local breweries. He participates in the *Hopfenernte* in the Bavarian Hallertau and immerses himself in the crazy *Kölner Karnival*, where people drink beer (Kölsch) from small whiskey glasses and anything goes, at least for a few days until *alles ist vorbei* on Ash Wednesday. Finally, he lands in Northern Germany, in Wildeshausen near Bremen, where he encounters an extraordinary *Schützenverein* that admits only men and tests the *Trinkfestigkeit* of any new *Aspiranten* with old traditions and unique drinking rituals. He returns to his *Wahlheimatstadt* Berlin with a trunk full of beer bottles and some insights into the variety and vitality of Germany’s national beverage.

### “Beerland” vs “Beerfest”

This movie is not the first attempt by an outsider to observe and understand the German beer culture. In 2006, the American comedy group Broken Lizard came out with the movie *Beerfest* that was fairly popular with American audiences, especially younger ones. It grossed 20 million dollars and contained a *Stiefel* (Boot) full of clichés about the German beer culture with stolen recipes, comedic brawls and a drinking contest that of course ends in a glorious American victory when a single drop disqualifies the German team.

But while this Hollywood movie was filmed in New Mexico, Sweetwood’s documentary shows only authentic German people and places with a more serious and honest attempt to discover the secrets of the German beer phenomenon. What he shows is entertaining and somewhat insightful but falls short of revealing the essence of the German beer culture. Even after 2 years of intensive research, he comments quite frequently: “*Ehrlich gesagt, so richtig verstanden habe ich das nicht*”.

Matt concludes that there is no typical “German” beer culture but that each region expresses its own unique characteristics when it comes to the beer traditions and rituals. However, this seems a bit superficial and trivial for this complex topic. A balanced view would bear in mind the negative aspects of beer consumption, including under-age drinking, binge drinking, DUI related accidents and most importantly, alcoholism and other health issues.

Moreover, his description of the Munich Oktoberfest is certainly not typical; most people have enthusiastic and affectionate memories about their visit to the world’s most famous Oktoberfest.

It might be beneficial to include some facts about the *Bierland Deutschland* in this preview so that the viewer can get a more measured taste of the *Bierkonsum* in Germany.

### Bierland Deutschland – Some facts

There are 1349 breweries in Germany vs 2538 in the US. Most of the breweries are in Bavaria (623). In second place is Baden-Württemberg with 185