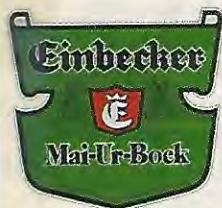


Was trinken die Deutschen? das Bier, die Biere

type of beer: die Bierart, die Bierarten
 bock beer: das Bockbier, die Bockbierarten

STYLISTICALLY SPEAKING

Alternatively known as helles (pale) bock, Maibocks are brewed in winter and released in late April and May. They are rich yet not overbearing, and are enjoyed before the searing throes of summer. They are transitional, as the warming offerings of winter and early spring give way to something lighter. Skilled brewers subdue the malty overtones of dark bock, and wrap them in the subtleties of lighter German fare. Gold to light amber, Maibock is the perfect compromise. Although relatively new, stylistically speaking, Maibocks might be the closest artifact of the brews that initially made Germany a brewing capitol. The origins of bock beer are akin to the roots of German brewing.



Einbecker Mai-Ur-Bock

Einbeck's commercial brewing history is virtually unrivaled (est. 1378), and its signature brewery has been around since 1794. The Maibock is a tribute to the original beers of Einbeck, and it is as well regarded. It pours pale bronze with a fluffy white head. The aroma is fresh with both bouncy, sweet malt and grassy aromatic hops. It is refreshing and bold on the palate, and finishes with a blend of malt and hop bitterness. Very clean and not at all heavy. Its name designates itself as the original. (6.5% ABV)

EINBECK AS MECCA

Bock may invoke visions of Bavarian castles and lederhosen, but its origin is accredited to the city of Einbeck in Northern Germany. Dubbed "Beer City," Einbeck proudly plays on its heritage, independence and importance in brewing history. After the Roman Empire (and throughout the Middle Ages), much of Europe existed as a fluid amalgam of cities and kingdoms whose ruling parties changed frequently. Along the corridor that ran from the North Sea to the Baltic Sea, trade (and strife) was waged on both land and water from Great Britain to the Baltic countries.

Maibock: To Helles and Bock

Seasonal brews can be many things: annual releases, even vintages, or some style that fits the season based on its strength. Some seasonal brews are steeped in tradition, born during the fermentation-friendly months, with an eye to the period when they will be served. Amid the winter warmers, summer wheats and fest-biers, one is often overlooked: Maibock (i.e., May bock).

The bottleneck that comprised Northern Germany and Denmark was the epicenter of this busy trade route, and home to some contentious commerce. Every city or settlement had self interests at heart, but many of these entities banded together to form the Hanseatic League, fostering cooperation and warding off the bandits and rogues that prowled the route. Commodities varied with local or regional specialization: Einbeck was famous for its unique, high quality beers. Even though beer was primarily a local or homebrewed product in the 14th century, Einbecker's beers were so renowned that they were sent to relatively far-flung markets, such as England, Russia and the Mediterranean.

Why were Einbeck's wares so revered? Their condition was superior to most brews, allowing them to be exported, a genuine feat for such a perishable product. Perhaps the Einbeck brewers had a knack that others lacked. Much of their success involved ingredients that were known to be softer in color and character than those used by their contemporaries, at a time when all beers were dark, turbid and either sweet or sour—or both. Einbeck's beers were made with one-third wheat, presenting a different and lighter persona than the status quo. They were also top-fermented, and employed paler-colored malt than was available

elsewhere.

Einbeck was located advantageously, at one of the earliest hop cultivation areas of Europe. Though serendipitous, Einbeck brewers had a head start in hop utilization, a significant event. Hop usage offered a balanced and easily-reproducible wort, and the antiseptic qualities of hops ensured unspoiled exported beer. Hop cultivation dates to 822 AD in Germany, but they weren't extensively used until the 12th century. Until then, proprietary mixture of herbs and spices could be used to balance sweet beer or to mask its sometimes suspicious flavors.

Einbecker beers were ahead of the contemporary curve in refinement and stability. Martin Luther subsisted on the strong gourmet beer during his Diet of Worms and praised the brew thusly: "The best drink known to man is called Einbecker Beer." Another notable writer described Einbecker beers as "Thin, subtle, clear, of bitter taste, has a pleasant acidity on the tongue, and many other good qualities."

MUNICH AS EINBECK

Though Munich had brewed for centuries, it was not held in high regard relative to Europe's other brewing centers. In fact, a good portion of the beer consumed in Bavaria was imported from the north. Saxon craftsmen migrated south over time, and these Einbeck-inspired brewers improved