

Was trinken die Deutschen? das Bier, die Biere

Mönchsbiere (monastery beers)

monastery, cloister, convent, nunnery: das Kloster, die Klöster
 monastery: das Monchskloster, die Monchsklöster
 convent, nunnery: das Nonnenkloster, die Nonnenklöster /
 das Frauenkloster, die Frauenklöster
 abbey: die Abtei, die Abteien / die Klosterkirche, die Klosterkirchen

It's better than wine:

The history of German beer goes back to the Iron Age. Brewing was kick-started with the arrival of the Romans, who needed refreshment far from their fine wines. In the Middle Ages, the art of beer was perfected by monks, who needed "liquid lunch" to get them through their long fasts.



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What nuns and monks have boiled, baked, mixed, brewed and distilled – that's what less pious people on the other side of the thick monastery walls also enjoy. Beer is still the money-maker among the consumable products of German monasteries.

Today's Bavarians are considered to be an arch-conservative people, but the worldwide renown of their beers was won by a whole series of revolutionary changes, each of which made an important contribution to the history of brewing.

The first of these revolutions was brought about by an Act of God. Bavaria was originally devoted to wine, being the southernmost part of Germany, with a temperate climate. Then a series of frosty winters hit the vineyards, and drinking habits had to be radically changed.

Happily for the Bavarians, their abbeys were already experienced in the brewing of beer. Unlike wine, beer provided welcome nutrition during Lent and other periods of fasting. As a result of this tradition, beer is still sometimes known in Germany as "liquid bread."

Germany still has at least a dozen active abbey breweries, mainly in Bavaria. These breweries produce a range of conventional German beer styles, with a bias towards the higher-gravity brews.

One of the earliest abbey breweries may have been at Weihenstephan, Freising, where the Benedictines recorded that they grew hops in 768. Hop-gardens are mentioned in records from several parts of Germany during the eighth and ninth centuries, though the evidence as to precisely when they were first used in brewing is less than conclusive.

Unlike the Belgian abbeys, with their *Trappiste* beers, the German "cloister" breweries do not have a distinctive mode of their own. Not that they lack style. In 1975, a 27-year-old Franciscan nun from Mellersdorf, near Munich, passed her brewmaster's examination. Her mark was the highest among 30 male and worldly students. Sister Doris subsequently became brewmaster of the Mellersdorfer Klosterbrauerei, producing some well-regarded beers.