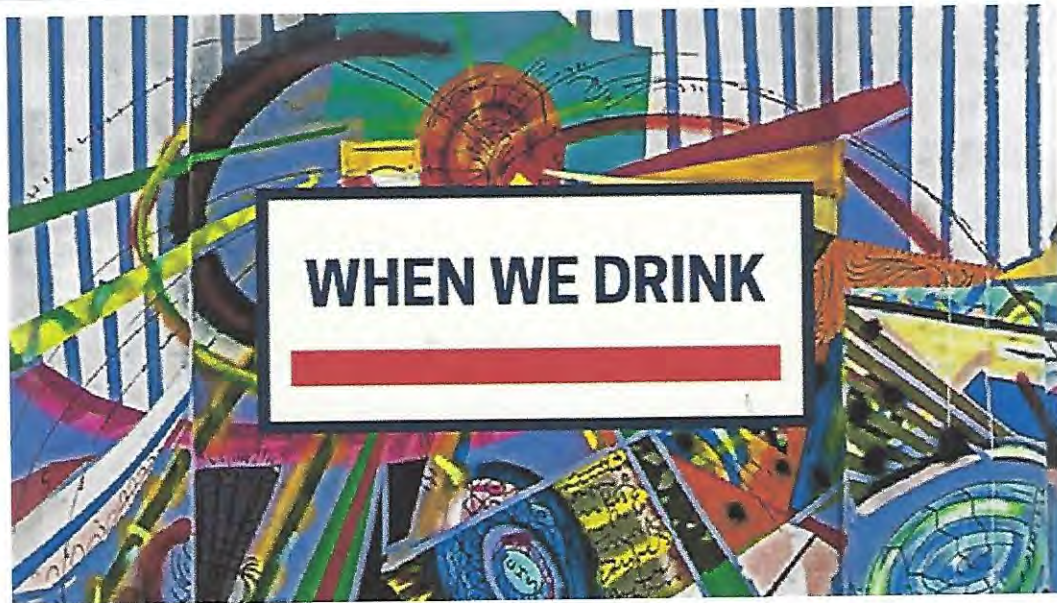


DRINKING CUSTOMS

THE WHERE / WHAT / WHEN OF DRINKING IN GERMANY



The first part of answering when we drink is addressing drinking age laws. At 16 in Germany, you can drink beer and wine. At the age of 18, all alcohol is legal for purchase and consumption. Both these ages strike Americans as pretty young—we know. We think that easing young people into the “drinking world” makes them more responsible drinkers, and that forcing young people to only imbibe in private could lead to an unhealthy relationship to alcohol. When a German hits 18, they aren’t knocking back 18 shots of Jaeger, but have by then generally learned how to integrate alcohol into their life in a way that is fun but non-destructive.

This isn’t the autobahn though—there are still limits when it comes to alcohol consumption. For beginners with less than two years’ experience or under the age of 21, the limit is zero. This is also the case for professional drivers, bus drivers, truck drivers, and drivers transporting passengers commercially. For those of us who aren’t driving professionally or new to driving, the limit is 0.03% in conjunction with any other traffic offense or accident and 0.05% otherwise.

Since many Germans use their bicycle to get around, there are also laws for cycling while intoxicated. For cyclists, the limit is set at 0.16%, when not in conjunction with any other traffic offense or accident. From 0.16%, cyclists face the same penalties as driving a car at that limit. To put it another way, you could lose your driver’s license for being drunk on your bicycle.