

**TAG DES DEUTSCHEN BIERES / GERMAN BEER DAY
DEUTSCHER REINHEITSGEBOT / GERMAN PURITY LAW
der 23. April 1516**

The keep-it-simple brews indeed suit a trend toward organic and wholesome food, agreed Frank-Juergen Methner, a beer specialist at the National Food Institute of Berlin's Technical University.

"In times of healthy nutrition, demand for beer which is brewed according to the Reinheitsgebot is on the rise too," he said.

Some simply follow their gut feeling as they hail the law, which will mark its 500th birthday at an April 22 ceremony in Ingolstadt, and nationwide a day later, the Day of German Beer.

"Munich's beers, they are so good -- I really believe there's no better," said Nick Zanic, sitting in a Bavarian bar, expressing a widely held local sentiment.

Beer is king

With even small towns and ancient monasteries making their own centuries-old brands, Germany has 3,500 breweries that exported about 1.5 billion litres (396 million gallons) last year.

In a country where beer has long been king, per capita consumption has dropped off to 107 litres (226 pints) a year from 150 litres in the 1970s.

Most of Germany's breweries stick to the old Bavarian regulation that evolved over the centuries and became imperial law in 1907.

Beer experts acknowledge that the intentions behind the rule may not always have been as pure as the beer itself, and that it was also aimed against international competitors.

Until the 1950s, Bavaria banned the import of beers from other states.

Germany did the same with foreign beers until the early 1990s when a European Court ruling forced it to open its doors to labels from other nations.

"Of course, the Reinheitsgebot until 1993 played a protectionist role," said Methner of Berlin's Technical University.

Today foreign brands account for nearly eight percent of Germany's annual beer consumption.

Quince, coriander

As it nears its half-millennium milestone, the law has again been criticised -- this time by a new generation of craft brewers who want to add new ingredients, from honey to cranberries, and find the law too restrictive.
