

The

Bierocracy

OCCASIONAL



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Welcome to Bierocracy!

A photograph of a smiling man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a light-colored shirt. He is in a beer hall, with other people and beer glasses visible in the background. The image has a yellow tint.

A Note From Bierocracy's Chairman

Welcome to Bierocracy! Founded by a group of friends who originally moved here from the great beer-brewing regions of Central Europe, Bierocracy plans to raise the standard for beer halls in New York and elsewhere in the U. S. — offering a unique place to drink, eat and meet that is much closer to the classic, Old World beer halls that we know and love. In addition to well-handled beers, ciders and other great beverages, Bierocracy aims to change the status quo for pub food as well, serving tasty and wholesome meals inspired by the delicious cooking of Europe's heartland. We pride ourselves on the quality of our beers and strictly follow our beer rules:

- Excellent beer
- Careful bartenders
- Short beer lines
- Stable beer temperatures
- “Beer clean” glasses

In your hands is a copy of our first publication, *The Bierocracy Occasional*, which takes its inspiration from the “occasional” periodicals that used

to circulate in Europe a century or so ago. In this issue, we cover several subjects that are very close to Bierocracy's heart: the refreshing, mixed beer drink known as radler, which we proudly serve; the Austrian-Italian history of schnitzel, one of our favorite meals; and the thousand-year backstory of Central Europe's great "noble" hops, the crowning glory of our favorite beverage. You'll also hear a seemingly impossible story about our hero Dr. Otto von Bierocrat, who founded the special place known as Bierocracy so very long ago. (And just like Dr. von Bierocrat, you might even become a Bierocrat yourself.)

We hope you enjoy your time with us. Everything you see — every piece of the décor, every beer and plate of food on the menu — was especially chosen for your pleasure, based on our traditions, though often with a twist. Our old-fashioned heating stove was built for us, by hand, by a traditional craftsman in the Czech Republic, and our most frequent guests can keep their own mug in our special glass case, just like a typical Bavarian *stammgast* does at his favorite pub back home. We hope you also feel at home here.

Thanks for being our guest!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marek Chatrný', written in a cursive style.

Marek Chatrný

How Dr. von Bierocrat Came to Understand Beer

From Our Archives, ca. 1879

While almost everyone knows the name of the illustrious founder of our dear homeland, Bierocracy, very few individuals know the true story of how the great Otto von Bierocrat — doctor of Beer Medicine and Bierology — first came to understand and even communicate with our favorite beverage. For while many others can claim to drink beer, or like beer, or even love beer, in our part of the world it is only Dr. von Bierocrat who can honestly claim to understand beer, and to keep that refreshing beverage in its very best shape, and this is only because of what happened at the communal fish pond.

It was a bright summer day and, as usual, Dr. von Bierocrat was hard at work in his laboratory near the brewery, finishing the only prototype of his sausage accelerator — a device which, had





it worked as planned, might have brought much prosperity to our small but noble nation. Instead, Dr. von Bierocrat somehow brushed of the floppy left wing of his butterfly bow-tie against the accelerator's single gas-powered gyroscope, which then caused a small, bright flame to smolder just under his not-insubstantial nose. As usual when preoccupied with scientific experiments, the great inventor paid no attention to it.

It was Ms. Strudel, the owner of the brewery, who first noticed that Dr. von Bierocrat's bowtie was on fire, while walking on the lane outside.

"Is something burning, Doctor?" asked the widow of Mr. Strudel, a local baker, who had so unfortunately overdosed on strudel during the Strudel Eating World Championship the previous year.

Dr. von Bierocrat shook his head, which slightly fanned the small flame under his chin.

"Not at all, madame. I believe you might have noticed the delicious aroma of a bratwurst approaching the speed of light."

Ms. Strudel nodded through the window toward Dr. von Bierocrat's collar.

"Perhaps you should examine your bowtie, Doctor."

The great man of science was about to ask what on earth the widow was talking about, when a sudden gasp of air from the front of the sausage accelerator blew across his necktie like a blacksmith's bellows. The flame expanded voluminously.

"Bejabbers!" he shouted.

Ms. Strudel could scarcely move the bustle of her skirt before the great man of discovery leaped over the windowsill toward the safety of the fishpond across the lane. Unfortunately, he still carried the sausage accelerator in his arms, the sudden fire having now preoccupied his attention, and was still holding the device when he dove, head-first, into the water.

After an initial splash and fizzle of flame, there was a deep sucking sound caused by the sausage accelerator hoovering up the pond water, and the pond's many fish with it. A moment later, a loud *whoomp* echoed down the lane as the sausage accelerator launched a pike — quite a beautiful specimen, really, of a rather large fish — at full speed toward the brewery.

We are all grateful that Ms. Strudel managed to duck just in time, as her quick response evaded a serious injury. Instead, the pike flew like a javelin through the open windows of the brewery. The fish bounced first off a two-wheeled malt barrow, then ricocheted off a hop-back to finish by crashing hard against the narrow wooden slats of a giant vat of beer.

It took almost three seconds for the vat to collapse, and the resulting wall of lager washed across the street in a massive wave, narrowly missing Ms. Strudel. Instead it completely overwhelmed our great scientist, carrying him off in a flood of beer that didn't stop until it joined the river.

To this day, we are not sure exactly how far Dr. von Bierocrat, still holding the now-ruined prototype of his sausage accelerator, traveled in the Great Beer Flood. Some have said that he was carried all the way to Munich, or even Berlin. What we do know is that when he returned three days later, looking remarkably well-groomed considering the circumstances, he made an unusual claim, even for a fellow Bierocrat.

“I understand beer,” he said, his eyes sparkling brightly in the light. “I know what it needs. I know how to make beer happy, how to keep it in the best possible shape. Beer talks to me!”

None of us were sure what to make of his words. But directly afterward Ms. Strudel asked Dr. von Bierocrat for his assistance in the brewery, and soon enough the lagers and ales from Bierocracy were widely said to be the very best in the country, if not in the entire world.



Sacrilege and Soda Pop



Originally for Cyclists, Radler Is the Perfect Summer Refresher

By Joe Stange

Profanity is subjective. To be offended is to have a strong opinion, based on your own cultural background. So it is with the German beer drink radler. One person's blasphemy is another's useful refresher.

If you didn't know: Europeans sometimes like to mix beer with lemonade. Or they add cola, fruit juice, sweet syrup, or any number of other things. In English we might call these shandies; the German word is either radler or *biermischgetränke* — pronounced something like “BEER-mish-guh-train-kuh.”

The first time I saw this, I was a twentysomething visiting Germany. I was nurturing a summer fascination with weissbier — so refreshing, glowing yellow-orange in the sun, so different from the beers I knew. I thought it was special. Then we visited a small, sun-drenched, hillside beer garden overlooking Stuttgart, and my friend ordered something she called a *weizenradler* — weissbier and lemonade.



image by Schöfferhofer Radeberger Gruppe

This struck me as unholy. I might have argued, that day, that it would be better to drink half a normal beer than to sully it with sweet soda.

But this reaction is nonsensical to a practical German — especially one who kindly remains sober enough to drive you around to beer gardens, or who needs a pick-me-up after a workout. Named after the German word for bicycle — a *fahrrad* in German — a half-liter of radler is big and refreshing and has half the alcohol. It's a useful thing.

Besides, beer is not exactly precious to Germans, however much they love it. It's impossible to profane something that is available just about everywhere.

You see? Context.

The usual radler is a mix of lager and lemonade. Understand, this isn't exactly like American lemonade. Modern German and Austrian

limonade tends to be clear and sparkling. Its sweetness is moderate. The best examples are fairly tart.

The myth is that Franz Xaver Kugler invented it on a hot summer day in 1922 while running low on beer at his Kugler Alm restaurant, a real place south of Munich. The area's many cyclists — called radler in the local dialect — loved the concoction. Instant sports drink.

It's a good story. Might even be true. Might also be nonsense. More likely, radler developed in the late 19th century as bicycling became more accessible to the masses. These days it is found on practically every drinks menu in Germany.

That includes Café Abseits in Bamberg, one of the country's most serious beer destinations. The bar's full-flavored lagers can be glorious, but that doesn't stop the locals from mixing them with soft drinks. Abseits offers nine different kinds of biermischgetränke, and six are different radlers. One is mixed with herbal lemonade; another with elderflower.

The drink is also common in neighboring Austria and Switzerland. The Austrian beer expert Conrad Seidl explains:

“The popularity of radler in beer gardens has a lot to do with drivers that do not want to get drunk,” he says. “But there are two more potential customers for radler: young people — remember, the legal drinking age [here] is 16 — who have not yet developed a taste for beer, but have grown up drinking sweetened soft drinks. And there are old, sometimes very old people who tend to drink very little at all — and mixed drinks containing beer seem to be the most pleasant drink for them.”

Opinions differ on how to make a great radler. Recipes vary from 50/50 blends to 75/25 in either direction, so do it to taste. Often radler is mixed at the bar, with busier places pouring lemonade from kegs alongside beer and sparkling water. But increasingly, radlers are pre-mixed at the drinks factory and bottled like that — something that was *verboten* in Germany until a 1993 change in beer tax laws.

Germany may be famous for these drinks, but they're currently popular throughout much of Europe. The names vary but the concept is the same: mixing beer with soda pop. Some examples frequently encountered on European drinks cards:

- *Diesel* — beer and cola
- *Gespritztes* — in Berlin, a mix of beer and *fassbrause*, a local fruit soda
- *Mazout* — French for diesel, i.e. beer and cola
- *Monaco* — radler spiked with grenadine
- *Panaché* — the French name for radler
- *Russ* — weissbier and lemonade, aka weizenradler
- *Tango* — beer and grenadine

Their popularity extends even to the Belgians, who treat beer with more reverence than most. Because — let's be frank — beer is not sacred. And once you plunk down your money for it, you own it. Beer is about pleasure, if anything. So defile it in a way that pleases you.

Originally from Missouri, Joe Stange is the author of "Around Brussels in 80 Beers" and the co-author of "Good Beer Guide Belgium." He lives in Berlin.

A Little *Cut*

In Europe, Everyone Loves Schnitzel. But Whose Is It?

By Evan Rail

From northern Italy to southern Poland, from the Swiss Alps to the banks of the Danube, one favorite recipe transcends a dozen national borders: the thin, delicately breaded slice of meat most commonly called schnitzel. Three or four countries have good claims on having invented it, and its true history is just as convoluted as the recipe itself is simple. So what is schnitzel and where did it come from?

Let's start with what we know for sure. In the case of the classic Wiener schnitzel, or Vienna schnitzel, it's clear that the name comes from *schnitz*, the German word for a "slice" or a "cut," referring to the cut of meat. As for how to prepare it: take a tender veal cutlet and pound it until it is thinner than a love note. After that, bread the meat in flour, eggs and breadcrumbs, then fry it to a satisfying crunch. That version has been listed on menus in its hometown of Vienna since at least the end of the nineteenth century.

This is where things get convoluted, as the Italians like to point out that a Wiener schnitzel is remarkably similar to a traditional recipe that comes from Milan: *coteletta alla milanese*. The only real difference? The Austrian version is boneless, while the *coteletta alla milanese* has a short rib bone still attached to the meat.

Not only are the two recipes very similar, but a common myth even tells exactly how the Austrian recipe emigrated from Milan. According to legend, the great Bohemian-born, Austro-Hungarian general Johann Josef Wenzel Anton Franz Karl Radetzky von Radetz brought the recipe back to Vienna after a tour of duty in Italy in 1857.

Unfortunately, that's pretty much impossible. As the food historian Heinz Dieter Pohl has pointed out, no reference to the myth

A LITTLE CUT

of the Austrian general and the fried cutlet exists before the year 1969, when that story first surfaced in an Italian food guide. Moreover, the earliest mention of “Wiener schnitzel” as such actually dates all the way back to 1831. (Ironically, this first reference was not found in Vienna, but in a German-language cookbook from Prague.)

Wherever it came from, it’s pretty clear that schnitzel has traveled far from its origins. In Milan, the original coteletta alla milanese has given birth to the newer *orecchia d’elefante*, or elephant ear, a thinner and bigger cutlet that more closely resembles the Viennese recipe. And as the American (but Czech-born) food writer Joseph Wechsberg



noted, the original veal cutlet of the classic Wiener schnitzel also led to pork, chicken and game versions, as well as dozens of cooking variations which some may consider unholy — schnitzels that are filled with cheese, topped with chopped ham or eggs, stuffed with anchovy butter, cooked with sweet chili peppers or covered in a rich cream sauce. “The list is almost endless.”

And those are just the variations that exist in Europe — by now, the original has cousins on many continents. What’s a chicken-fried steak? A variation on schnitzel brought by German and Austrian immigrants to Texas. What is tonkatsu? A schnitzel that speaks Japanese. In South America, it’s known as milanesa, after the Italian version. In Iran, it’s شنیٹسل, pronounced “shenitsel.”

Despite all the variations, nothing beats the classic — a thin, crunchy, delicate slice of meat traditionally dressed with little more than a squeeze or two from a lemon wedge. Typical side dishes include green salad, cucumber salad, cold potato salad, sliced red cabbage or sauerkraut. But whatever you pair it with, a good schnitzel is a masterpiece — right down to its appearance.

“All schnitzel cooks agree that the color of a Wiener schnitzel should be a light golden brown,” Wechsberg wrote. “Certain Breughel paintings and Stradivari violins have the perfect schnitzel color.”

A frequent contributor to the New York Times, Evan Rail is the author of “Why Beer Matters” and “Good Beer Guide Prague and the Czech Republic.” He lives in Prague.

On Tap

Notes and Stories About Some of Our Beers and Brewers

B-Dark

Though pale lagers, or pilsners, are far more popular today, dark lagers were actually the original lagers, the very first brews to use lager yeast and ferment at cold temperatures. Our house dark has classic notes of caramel and gingery spice, making it an excellent pairing with meat dishes, as well as an outstanding end-of-session nightcap.



Pilsner Urquell

The first pilsner beer from the Czech town of Plzeň, known as Pilsen in German, Pilsner Urquell invented the world's most popular type of beer when it first appeared on November 11, 1842. Made with 100% barley malt, Pilsner Urquell is among the richest and hoppiest of the great European lagers.



Weihenstephan Hefeweissbier Dunkel

Gesundheit! With a claim as the world's oldest functioning brewery, Weihenstephan is famous for its flagship golden wheat. This dunkelweizen, or dark wheat, turns that crisp golden wheat on its head, combining a traditional wheat brew's fruity banana notes with the delicious chocolatey flavors of roasted malts.



Bayreuther Zwick'l

Delicious zwickel beers owe much of their flavor to their natural, unfiltered state: sure, they might look cloudy, but the great taste of this authentic, German-brewed zwickel makes up for any lack of clarity. Look for sweet, toffee-scented malt and a well-balanced body followed by a crisp, dry finish.



B-Original

This fine European pale lager is brewed in the Czech Republic, the homeland of pilsner brewing, and is hopped with whole hop cones — not hop pellets — exclusively using the legendary Saaz hop. A slightly different take on the pilsner style, this golden brew has a light body and an elegant, noble-hop bitterness.



HB Original

Originally a possession of a royal family, the Hofbräu, or court brewery in Munich is now completely owned by the state of Bavaria. This full-bodied pale lager perfectly balances sweet barley malt and the refined bitterness and fine aromas of traditional Bavarian noble hops, making it a perfect before-meal aperitif.



We also have a rotating selection of seasonal and local brews that change monthly. Ask your server for details.

Fruit Dumplings

**This Versatile Dessert Can Also Serve as a Delicious,
Summery Main Course**



Central Europe might be renowned for its drinks, but many of its traditional foods remain unjustifiably under-appreciated outside of their home region. In recent years, however, one recipe from the heart of the Old World has started to gather a small buzz in the U.S., thanks in part to hungry travelers who first tasted it in Prague, Vienna or Salzburg, then tried to recreate the dish when they returned home. Often served as a dessert but equally serviceable as a light main course, fruit dumplings — known as *ovocné knedlíky* in Czech, and *obstknödel* or *fruchtknödel* in German — have been showing up on American food blogs and cooking shows in recent years. Why? Because they're absolutely delicious.

The downside: the fanciest versions of this recipe — with the sweet fruit stuffed inside the dumpling batter — can also be quite difficult for first-timers to make. Consider this recipe like a fruit dumpling cheat sheet: in the simplified but still highly traditional version below, creamy quark dumplings are topped, but not stuffed, with chopped fruit. The result is simple, quick and yet extremely flavorful, letting the sweet summer fruits sing at full volume, underscored by a rich, creamy dough. Of course, if you're feeling brave, you can try to stuff the fruit inside the dumplings. (Fair warning: the rich dumpling dough can be very sticky indeed.)

This version is particularly good with strawberries, but in fact just about any kind of very ripe fresh fruit will work beautifully, especially the alternative toppings that are most common in the recipe's homeland: plums, peaches, blueberries and raspberries. The smaller berries can be used whole, while strawberries and larger fruits work well when they're halved or cut in a thick dice.

At Bierocracy, we're obviously all about beer — but even we have to admit that strawberry dumplings pair particularly well with wine, especially a chilled sauvignon blanc or a dry, Chablis-style chardonnay.

Strawberry Dumplings

Serves four

Ingredients

- 18 ounces fresh, well-ripened strawberries or other seasonal fruit (cherries, apricots, blueberries or plums)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- 18 ounces creamy *quark* or *tvaroh* (substitute: fromage frais)
- 5 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour (ideally Czech *polohrubá mouka*, medium-ground wheat flour)
- 4 Czech *houska* breadrolls (substitute: 8 ounces of French baguette or plain white sandwich bread), cut into half-inch cubes
- 14 ounces sour cream
- Powdered sugar for topping

1. Clean and wash the strawberries (or other fruit). Remove stems and caps. Cut in half, if small, or chop into half-inch chunks if large. Toss with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and let sit, stirring occasionally.
2. Mix the quark, tvaroh or fromage frais with the eggs. Add the flour and bread cubes and stir until well-mixed. Let the dough rest for 5 minutes.
3. With a small scoop of dough, form dumplings just slightly larger than golf balls. (This amount of dough should make 25–30 dumplings.)
4. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add dumplings and simmer for about 10 minutes, at which point the dumplings should float buoyantly. Drain dumplings and plate in four equal portions.
5. Top dumplings with sour cream or quark and strawberries, dust with powdered sugar or toasted breadcrumbs, and serve. For an even fancier version, you can also pour on a bit of melted butter or strawberry reduction.

In No Other Flower

Hops Give Beer Life

— and Noble Hops Are Beer's Crowning Glory

By Stan Hieronymus

Since their first appearance almost six million years ago, hops have grown into hundreds of distinct varieties, from wild hops stretching and climbing through dark forests to carefully developed agricultural products. Today, their most famous use is in brewing, where they give beer its bitterness and pleasant, earthy aromas. But for centuries, only a handful of hops have been revered for much more than just a pleasant scent — instead, these special hops are celebrated for a “fine” or “noble” aroma. More recently, they’ve simply been labeled “noble hops.” The list of these hops includes only four types, all of which are thought to be native to the traditional brewing heartland of Central Europe: Saaz hops, from the Czech Republic, and Spalt, Tettang and Hallertau Mittelfrüh hops from Germany.

So how good are noble hops? In 1877, one writer described Germany’s Spalt as “the Chateau Lafitte, the Clos de Vougent, and the Johannisberg, as it were, of hops.” Today, many aficionados think that some of the other noble hops are even better.

With hundreds of cultivated strains around the world, and thousands of others found in the wild, it’s a bit startling to learn that three of the noble hops — Spalt, Saaz and Tettang — are so genetically similar that they appear to be the offspring of a single mother plant. But subtle differences in soil, day length, temperatures, amount of rainfall and terrain create a distinct terroir for each, resulting in contrasting qualities for brewing.

“Seven hundred and fifty years ago, somebody decided this was a great hop,” says John Henning, a research plant geneticist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, speaking about a time close to when the fourteenth-century Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV made exporting hop cuttings from Bohemian plants — the predecessor of today’s Saaz hops — punishable by death.

Although hops have been growing since their first appearance way back in the Miocene Epoch, humans have only been brewing with them for about a thousand years. In the historic hop-growing regions of Germany and the Czech Republic, modern hop farmers erect massive, 23-foot trellises for their plants, and by harvest time the hop fields appear to be rolling green forests. The flowers of these plants develop intense compounds which provide the bitterness characteristic to beer, as well as the earthy, floral and spicy aromas and flavors that make each hop variety unique.

To distinguish between their various products, the German hop dealers Barth & Sohn commissioned two beer sommeliers and a perfumist to observe and describe the differences. These professional aroma experts rubbed the tender hop cones between their palms and recorded what they smelled, then added them to a cold infusion to collect a second round of scents. They found:

“Spicy, woody, such as tarragon, lavender, cedarwood, and smoked bacon.” (Saaz)

“Woody aromas... reminiscent of tonka beans and barrique, with slightly sweet notes of ripe bananas.” (Spalt)

“Woody aromas and cream-caramel components, such as gingerbread and almonds, predominate, combined with fruity blueberry notes.” (Tettngang)

Though brewers and beer fans celebrate “noble” hops, hop scientists usually prefer to talk about “landrace” varieties, meaning hops that evolved naturally over centuries, rather than the hops that have

been specifically manipulated through breeding. Other landrace varieties include Hersbrucker from Germany, Strisselspalt from France, and England's Fuggle and Golding hops. All landrace hops developed from the first hop plants that migrated out of Mongolia more than a million years ago. They are genetically distinct from the varieties that then migrated to the Americas some 500,000 years later. Those American hops include flavor compounds that often result in bolder, sometimes pungent, aromas — like grapefruit, mango, lychee, black currant and “catty” — all of which were considered undesirable by beer lovers only a generation ago, and certainly not “noble.”

The word noble means something else to Boston Beer Company founder Jim Koch, who makes an annual pilgrimage to Europe to select the hops for his Samuel Adams beers. When asked to describe the region's renowned noble hops, Koch gets excited, speaking too fast to form complete sentences.

“Elegant, almost symphonically complex,” he says. “The aromatics, clean bitterness. Floral, spice, citrus. Aromas you don't get in any other hop. In fact, in no flower.”

Stan Hieronymus is the author of “Brew Like a Monk” and “For the Love of Hops.” He lives in St. Louis.



Photo Essay



Photographer: Marian Beneš — Location: U Zlatého tygra, Prague



22 *Photographer: Marek Chatrný — Location: U Medvídků, Prague*



Photographer: Marian Beneš — Location: Lokál Dlouhá, Prague



Photographer: Marian Beneš — Location: U Zlatého tygra, Prague



Photographer: Dave Yoder — Location: Schlenkerla, Bamberg



24 *Photographer: Dave Yoder — Location: Ohne Bedenken, Leipzig*



Photographer: Dave Yoder — Location: Schlenkerla, Bamberg



Photographer: Dave Yoder — Location: Pöffgen, Cologne

Head Games

Once a European Secret, Special Pours Create Different Beers

— All From the Same Tap

By Evan Rail

When it comes to beer variety, the historic taprooms of Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria might seem to be extremely limited: unlike the 30- or 40-tap craft beer bars that are now commonplace in the U.S., many of the best beer halls in Europe offer only one or two brews on draft.

But really, it's not only about what's on tap — it's also about how you tap it. While a beer list in the brewing heartland of Central Europe might only have one or two choices, insiders know that they can often specify any number of special pours — different ways of tapping and serving the same beer. With a special pour, a simple glass of pilsner can turn into something completely unexpected.

Think that's an exaggeration? You've probably never ordered a *mlíko*, or milk, a glass of 100% beer foam that is one of the many special pours in the Czech Republic, the home of the city of Plzeň (known as Pilsen) and its celebrated brew. Composed of dense, highly liquid suds, a full glass of *mlíko* will turn into about $\frac{2}{3}$ beer if left alone for a few minutes. Far from being just a party trick, fans of the pour say that the extra surface area of the all-foam beer exposes more of the liquid to oxygen, resulting in different flavors. It also ends up with less carbon dioxide, making it easier to gulp down on a hot day.

That's the exact opposite of what happens with a *čochtan* — pronounced roughly as “CHOCK-tawn” — a special pour from the Czech Republic that takes its name from a famous *vodník*, or water spirit.



Two glasses of mlíko and a classic lager pour in Prague.

Just like a mythical (and magical) water creature, a *čochtan* is poured completely wet, with no foam at all. As such, this special pour results in slightly higher carbonation and a fuller, richer taste.

In the great German brewing regions of Bavaria and Franconia, a regular customer — known as a *stammgast* — might order a special pour called a *schnitt* (also sometimes called a *spruz*). Often, this is only available as the customer's very last beer, just before saying goodbye, and it should contain a 50-50 mix of beer and foam. (In a traditional beer hall, a *schnitt* also lets you know how the staff feel about you. If you're a favored guest, you'll end up with most of a full beer.)

While the Czechs also call a 50-50 mix of beer and foam a *schnitt*, which they spell *šnyt*, the expression means something else entirely in Austria. Instead of a half-and-half mix of beer and foam, an Austrian *schnitt* is a 50-50 mix of a golden pilsner and a dark lager. (In the Czech Republic, the same light-and-dark pour is called *řezané*. Don't even

bother trying to pronounce that one correctly — the Guinness Book lists the Czech Ř as the most difficult sound in the world.)

Even a classic pour can be altered just slightly to suit your preferences. In many pubs, a regular beer is poured in two stages, allowing the foam to settle a bit before the glass is topped off. Instead, you can ask for your beer to be tapped in a single pour — some connoisseurs swear that this results in fresher flavors — or in two or more stages, in case you want a bigger head. And if you're obsessed with suds, in some Czech pubs you can order a pour with *tvrdá pěna*, or hard foam, which is tapped in three or more stages to build up a dense, white crown.

Most of these pours are never seen in the U.S., meaning they're literally foreign concepts to most beer lovers here. But you don't have to travel all the way to the historic beer-making regions of Central Europe in order to taste them. If you want to try one out, ask your server and we'll bring over a special pour of lager just for you.



A glass of řezané topped with hard foam.

image by Marek Chatrný

The Bierocracy Occasional

No.1

Editor: Evan Rail

Designer: Jakub Konupka

Printed by: Tisk Horák

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Made in the Czech Republic

No. 1

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