

Beerscapes Newsletter

Summer 2024
Issue #10



Summer Greetings!

Welcome to everyone who signed up in the past weeks and months! And welcome to all of you who attended my “Brewing Beer in Your Kitchen” event at OSU’s Botanic Garden, and to folks who stopped by the second annual “Art of Tasting Beer” at the Modella Gallery in Stillwater.

(Apologies to those of you who are getting this email twice. I mixed up my Newsletter and Blog Post list, and only realized that after the fact. Twice the fun! Forward it along to a friend.)

It’s been a busy time since my last newsletter. **Germany Spring 2024** is in the books. (See the **Field Notes** segment below.) And I have a few **articles** and a **podcast** to share with you as well.

Before I went to Germany, I sat down with Scott Hartbeck of the [Rails, Ales & Old Towns](#) podcast to talk about the history of the beer garden and swap beer

garden stories. You can find the podcast on [Scott's website](#), or wherever you get your podcasts. Scott's podcasts cover a range of topics centered on rail travel and are well worth checking out!

Springtime also saw two **articles** come out in quick succession in *Zymurgy*.

- “[Finding Your Place in the Shade](#)” explores beer garden customs, lists over a dozen of my favourite leafy oases, and includes a recipe for Kellerbier. (Thanks to Scott Burgess of Bierkeller Columbia in South Carolina for sharing brewing tips.)
- “[Beer Hiking in Bavaria: A Taste of Place](#)” details three hikes in three different regions of Bavaria. It also includes a recipe for the brewers in the crowd, this time for Landbier. (Cheers to the good folks at Brauerei Reh in Lohndorf along the 13 Brewery Trail in Franconian Tuscany.)

My occasional segment, **Lager Lanes and Ale Trails**, is a counterpoint to all the German programming. This one's on Oklahoma, where I spend about half of every year.

As always, pour yourself your favourite season-appropriate libation and enjoy the newsletter.

Cheers, santé, and prost!

Franz

P.S. If you've ever wondered how you can support my writing and all that goes into it, I've found a way you can do just that via a service called **Ko-fi**. Click [here](#), which will take you straight to my [Ko-fi page](#). A huge thanks to those of you who have already bought me a virtual drink or two! I know times are tough economically, and I'm truly humbled by your support. And a huge thanks in advance to any of you who toss a few pennies in the tip jar now or in the future!



Field Notes: Germany, Spring 2024

Six weeks, countless cities and towns, even more breweries, a few beer hikes, and hundreds of beers. Here's a schematic itinerary of places and festivals I visited.

***Allgäu:** The towns in this picturesque region of southwestern Bavaria are only a few hours from Munich. Excellent beer hiking, too (Oberstdorf, Kloster Irsee).

***Munich:** Never a dull moment. I took in the **Mai Dult** festival, and hit up

most of Munich's craft beer establishments.

***Heidelberg:** “Coming back here is like seeing an old friend again.” That’s what I wrote in my notebook when I stepped out of the S-Bahn train station in Heidelberg’s old town. It was my first visit since winter 1999 (!).

***Franconia:** The saddle-shaped Walberla shrouded in pagan legends has long fascinated me. This May I finally got to visit the **Walberla Fest**, which showcases Franconian beer. I also took in the **Bergkirchweih** beer fest in Erlangen, one of Germany’s top fests not named Oktoberfest. Beyond that, I hiked the **Gößweinstein-Oberaisfeld** loop. There’s a phenomenal pilgrimage basilica in Gößweinstein, and a super tasty Dunkel at Heldbräu in Oberaisfeld.



***Northern Germany:** I went in search of breweries, taprooms, and bottle shops I hadn't yet visited in **Berlin** and **Hamburg** (**Beyond Beer** is an excellent bottle shop!), visited **Lübeck**, and spent a few days on the Baltic in **Stralsund**. Lübeck is a stunning medieval town famous for its gate and its brick architecture. If you're a fan of craft beer, **Sudden Death** is about as good as it gets. Stralsund is home to **Störtebeker**, a holdover from the Cold War that has blossomed into a national powerhouse. The highlight of my Berlin trip was an evening with **Ulrike Genz** of **Schneeeule** sampling her wonderful Berliner Weisse beers while talking about everything from life in East Berlin to contemporary German politics.

***Harz region:** Even if Central Germany isn't a “beer pilgrimage”

destination, some of its towns are intimately bound up with German brewing history. **Goslar** is the [birthplace of Gose](#), and **Einbeck**, a charming town lined with half-timbered houses, is the main character in the [origin story of Bock beer](#).

Stay tuned for much, much more to come about these places!

Lager Lanes and Ale Trails

Oklahoma. Should you ever find yourself in this state of big skies and vast prairies, here's a short list of breweries to whet your appetite.

Big Friendly (OKC). Big Friendly started life as a repurposed school bus that took its brewing show on the road to local beer fests. Brothers Joe and Will Quinlin eventually found themselves a permanent home in a district of OKC with Scandinavian flair. They've been turning heads ever since. And not only in Oklahoma. Big Friendly has received Brewery of the Year honours at the Great American Beer Festival the past two years running.

Thanks to Will's modified decoction method, Big Friendly's Central European beers display all the hallmark richness of the best German and Czech beers. Take, for example, their various iterations of Leichtbier (German light lager, worlds apart from American lite beer). You'd be hard-pressed to find a lager anywhere that packs that much flavour into a mere 3.5% ABV. The malt puts you in the mind of a Helles, while the hops provide just enough aroma and bitterness to make you pay attention. And it doesn't thin out on the palate like so many otherwise tasty Leichtbiers.

It's not just the German and Czech styles that shine. Big Friendly's limited-edition saisons stand out from the crowd, and their fruit beers are among the best this side of New Glarus. If you're a hop head, Big Friendly brews a wide range of APAs and IPAs as well.



***Social Capital** in Oklahoma City (pictured above). Excellent spot to sample a wide range of Oklahoma beers and breweries.*

BierKraft (McAlester). William Shawn Scott (aka “Scotty”) whips up some fine German-style beers, including a Hefeweizen that’s among the best in the southern plains. If that’s not enough to convince you, his tasty Altbier topped Düsseldorf’s entries in 2022’s European Beer Star competition. (For readers unfamiliar with Altbier, Düsseldorf is the historical home of the style.) But it’s BierKraft’s Grätzer / Grodziskie that makes me want to get into my car on this hot day and drive all the way to McAlester. It’s the kind of beer that stays with you. The story about how Scotty smuggled the yeast out of Poland is the stuff of spy novels.

Heirloom Rustic Ales (Tulsa). Less rustic these days than they were when they started out in the before times, and more lager-like. The Pontoon German Pilsner (4.8%) is a refreshing thirst quencher with all the roundness of a southern German Pils, and the Florida Stories Mexican Lager (4.6%) is a beer I could drink all the live-long humid day here in Oklahoma. You’ll still find echoes of Heirloom’s farmhouse days with beers finished with sumac, and beers inspired by tepache.

Stonecloud (OKC and Stillwater). Stonecloud Stillwater is my locale. And the folks who run the place are awesome. Stonecloud’s beers run the gamut from lager through IPA to pastry stout, with seasonals like Trust Your Butcher to keep things interesting. TYB uses malt smoked by a popular local BBQ joint for a nice local touch. Stonecloud also pumps out some excellent mixed ferm/barrel-aged beers at a time when these beers are becoming

increasingly difficult to find.

Oklahoma's IPAs: If you're a fan of all things IPA, these three breweries are for you. **COOP Aleworks**, one of Oklahoma's craft beer OGs, has woven its F5 IPA into the fabric of its brand. Fans of old-school West Coast IPA won't be disappointed. **Roughtail** came on the scene in Oklahoma during the height of the IBU wars, but deftly transitioned toward the hazy end of things with their wildly popular Everything Rhymes with Orange. Indigenously owned **Skydance** is the relative new kid on the block. Jake Keyes made a quick name for himself with IPAs that manage to be intense and balanced at the same time. Their flagship Fancy Dance IPA is mighty fine.

In Case You Missed It

There's no better way to earn your beer while getting up close and personal with the culture of a region than hitting the trail. This sampling of beer hikes takes you to four different regions.



Franconia's Original Beer Hiking Trail

The Brewery Trail takes you to four breweries in Aufsess and its surrounding hamlets. With a population of 1500 lucky souls and four breweries, Aufsess boasts the highest number of breweries per capita anywhere in the world.

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Rothaus: Beer Hiking in the Black Forest

A scenic beer hike past a pristine lake and through pastoral farmland, brooding forests, and the hamlet where Rothaus once sourced its brewing water. Leave after the noontime brewery tour and be back in time for dinner.

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Among Giants: Beer Hiking in Saxon Switzerland

In the hamlet of Ostrau I got my first glimpse of the jagged rock formations rising up like a fata morgana at the end of a plateau, magnificent even from afar. Before long I was among giants, beholding views that inspired Caspar David Friedrich's paintings.

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Breweries and Beer Hikes in Murnau

Home to two breweries, Murnau is an ideal place for beer wandering. The hike around the fascinating Murnauer Moos marshland is worth the trip alone. And the shorter Drachenstich loop makes for a nice afternoon walk, even if you don't see any dragons.

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More From A Tempest in a Tankard:

- [Where There's Smoke, There's Beer: Bamberg and Its Breweries»](#)
- [Vienna Lager: Ten Beers to Try in Austria's Capital»](#)
- [Off the Beaten Path Near Munich»](#)
- [Regensburg, Eastern Bavaria's Beer Hub»](#)
- [Augsburg, Historic Beer Town on Munich's Doorstep](#)
- [Prague: A Jewel in the Crown of Beer Culture»](#)



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