

Nuremberg's Beer Tradition

The history of Nuremberg is inseparably linked with the history of beer. Whether light, dark or a true “rotbier” – there’s something here for every taste.

The Home of Rotbier

On April 23, 1516, a new law for the Duchy of Bavaria was proclaimed in Ingolstadt. It contains the text which is the basis of the Bavarian beer purity law. According to this regulation, brewers are only allowed to use malt, hops and water. Precursors of this law were brewery regulations which were passed by city councils, guilds or territorial rulers. In Nuremberg, one can find such a decree in a 14th century (1302 – 1310) book of statutes of the City Council. As an answer to famine, it requires brewers to only use barley and no other grain. As written in the document: “Man schol auch kein ander chorn preuwen denn gersten allein, weder haber noch chorn noch dinkel noch waitze” (One should brew no other corn than barley alone, neither oats nor corn nor spelt nor wheat).

The citizens of Nuremberg like to label their city the “home of rotbier”, although one does not agree if it truly was someone in Nuremberg who brewed the first red beer (Belgium is also a contender). What is certain is that the original Nuremberg red beer was already created according to its own brewing rules in the Early Middle Ages: This special type of beer is bottom fermented, brewed at low temperatures with yeast gathering at the bottom of the kettle. In 1530, the top-fermented “white beer” followed. In addition to the municipal wheat beer brewery, in Nuremberg in 1597 there were 35 red and 11 white beer breweries. That means there were more than 40 breweries in the city at the end of the 14th century – for just under 30,000 inhabitants. Beer consumption at that time was an incredible 200 liters per person annually. The reason was one avoided drinking polluted ground water.

Today, Nuremberg is known not for the amount or size of the breweries which remain, but for their quality. Some of the best known are the Tucher Traditional Brewery, Schanzenbräu, the Altstadtthof Brewery and the Zeltner Brewery.

Since its founding in 1984 as the first organic brewery in Germany, beer is still brewed in the **Altstadtthof Brewery** according to ancient brewing rights: In copper kettles and wooden fermenting barrels at a historic location at the foot of Nuremberg's Imperial Castle. Pure ingredients of organic standard are the most important basis for the carefree enjoyment of this beer. Here, you can taste original Nuremberg Rotbier, and, in addition to (multiple-) award-winning schnapps distilled from beer, Reinhard Engel has recently started to distill a single malt whisky.

<https://hausbrauerei-altstadthof.de/>

For almost 350 years, the **Tucher Traditional Brewery** has lived from Nuremberg craft brewing and Franconian brewing art. The Tucher Brewery at Schillerplatz, built in 1899, was carefully restored in 2018 and serves as the production place of the original Tucher Nuremberg Rotbier. Tucher also brews under the brand names Grüner, Zirndorfer, Humbser and Lederer. The “Two-Cities Brewery” built on the border between Nuremberg and Fürth offers a look behind the scenes during a brewery tour and welcomes guests with the largest “Reinheitsgebot” (Beer Purity Law) in the world, spelled out in golden aluminum letters. The text on the wall of the malt tower measures 227 square meters.

The history of **Schanzenbräu** began in a courtyard in the Bärenschanze Quarter in 2004. The brewer here showed his skills in that he built his brew house from scratch. Since 2007, these fine creations are produced with professional equipment and, since 2016, in a custom brewery in nearby Nuremberg-Höfen. They are available in stores, but also in the brewery’s own pub in Gostenhof.

In 1836, the **Zeltner** family brewed its first beer. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was one of the last large breweries in Nuremberg which remained in the hands of the original family. In 2014, the name Zeltner experienced an upswing through the reintroduction of the “Zeltner Vollbieres hell”.

Beer Tradition in Underground Nuremberg

The historic rock cut cellars, which were carved up to three stories deep into the sandstone of Nuremberg’s castle hill, are closely tied to this beer tradition. The soft sandstone under the castle was the ideal place to form deep vaulted cellars. The rock cut cellars were first mentioned in a document in 1380. Today, as then, they serve as a cool storage place for fine specialties made of hops and malt: According to a regulation of the city council, anyone who wanted to brew beer and sell it had to have his own beer cellar to ferment and store it.

With more than 20,000 square meters of cellar space, the historical rock cut cellars are the largest contiguous cellar labyrinth in the south of Germany. They can be visited with a tour daily.

Other Tours About Beer:

“Red Beer in Deep Cellars”

“Red Beer and Blue Sausages – A Culinary Tour”

“About Beer Inspectors and Brewery Stars”

Tours can be booked at: <https://tourismus.nuernberg.de/stadtfuehrung/>

A big celebration of beer takes place at the Franconian Beer Festival, where 40 local breweries present their brews.

Nuremberg and Franconia – In the Land of 1,000 Beers

It's not just Nuremberg that has a strong tie to beer, but also Franconia. In the region, there is the highest density of breweries in the world. In Upper Franconia alone there are almost 200 breweries. Pilsner, dark beer, smoked beer and unfiltered "Zwickel" are only four of the many beers which Franconia has to offer. The Brewery Guide from nordbayern.de helps you to discover the full range of Nuremberg and Franconian beers:

<http://www.nordbayern.de/essen-trinken/brauerei-guide>

It's best to enjoy a fresh Franconian beer in one of the many brewery restaurants, beer gardens, beer cellars or at a festival. Here, one can experience Franconian hospitality firsthand.

Specialists in quality are the "Landbierparadiese" (Country Beer Paradise): A beverage specialist with three traditional-style restaurants. The beers served here come only from Franconia. This is also true at the Franconian Beer Festival, where 40 local breweries present their brews in the castle moat.

Craft Beer

Since the craft beer movement in the US took off, the beer scene in Nuremberg has also changed. Many small craft breweries have established themselves in Nuremberg and brew creative and innovative beers. These can be sampled and purchased in various pubs and restaurants, such as the Bierothek.