

BRAUEREI SPEZIAL: A PHOTO ESSAY

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In May 2013 the Brewery History Society visited Bamberg. One of the many highlights of the trip was a tour around one of the two rauchbier (smoked beer) breweries in the city, Brauerei Spezial. Our guide was Christian Merz, owner and brewer, whose family have run the brewery and its accompanying inn for four generations.

Brauerei Spezial is located in Gärtnerstadt, one of the three old districts of Bamberg, on Obere Königstrasse. The King's Road was one stretch of a major European trade route which came to prominence during the Middle Ages, home to numerous inns and breweries. Brauerei Spezial was founded in 1536 by Lindhard Grosskopf. It has passed through a number of hands, notably Niklas Delscher, who appears to have introduced the name Spezial in the mid-1600s, and Georg Ott, who established a bierkeller on the Oberer Stephanberg, a hill overlooking the city, for the cellaring of the beer. The Spezial Keller still exists although the brewery stopped using the caves under the hill in the early 1960s when a modern refrigeration system was introduced at the brewery. In 1898 the Merz family gained control and run it to this day.

The brewery is at the back of the inn, separated from it by a small courtyard which acts as a beer garden, and is a mixture of old and new equipment. The mash tun and

copper were installed in the 1960s and the four large primary fermentation tanks are controlled by a computerised system, a product of Caspar Schultz, the well-known brewery manufacturer also located in Bamberg. There are other, smaller tanks used for the secondary fermentation or lagering, a process carried out for a minimum of four weeks.

What sets Brauerei Spezial apart from most other breweries in Bamberg, or anywhere else for that matter, is that they smoke their own malt. The only other in Bamberg to do is Brauerei Heller, which brews Schlenkerla Rauchbier. The malted barley is entirely organic, coming from Bavaria, and is kilned using beech wood logs. The modern bottling plant is housed in the former stables.

Most of what the brewery produces is consumed locally, predominantly in the pub and Spezial-Keller. Five different beers are made: Lager (4.7%), the brewery's flagship rauchbier; Märzen (5.3%); Weissbier (5.0) which is top fermented; Ungespundetes (4.9%) which contains no smoked malt and is less carbonated; and Bock (7%).

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