

History of The Original Golden Beer – Pilsner Urquell

Origins of Beer

- Beer is as old as civilization itself. The oldest records of brewing are about 6,000 years old and refer to the Sumerians.
- The Babylon King Hammurabi established daily beer rations based on social standing.
- The Chinese brewed beer 5,000 years ago called “Kui.”
- Barley for brewing was so important to early Romans that they honored the grain on their coins.
- But beer was always dark, cloudy, and brown – until 1842, when beer was changed forever.

The Golden Beer Revolution

In 1842, Josef Groll discovered the original technique for brewing golden lager and brewed the world’s first golden beer – Pilsner Urquell. The golden pilsner was born in the cradle of brewing civilization – Pilsen, Bohemia. The unique climate and the world’s best ingredients led to a breakthrough and the start of the golden beer revolution.

The golden beer became the beer of kings and aristocrats. They would drink the pilsner out of clear glasses as a status symbol. The new beer was so spectacular it inspired the creation of the pilsner glass.

Pilsner Urquell in the United States

Pilsner Urquell was the first beer exported to the United States in 1871. By the turn of the century, Pilsner Urquell was the No. 1 imported beer in the United States prior to prohibition. With the start of Prohibition in America in 1920, however, Pilsner Urquell’s reign ceased. During the dark days of prohibition, drinking was pushed to the backrooms and speakeasies; exportation of Pilsner Urquell stopped and didn’t regain momentum until years later.

Back in Europe

Pilsner Urquell endured through two world wars, but the communist takeover stopped exportation for nearly 40 years. In the 1960s, Pilsner Urquell was a part of the cultural awakening in Prague. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 brought down the communist dictatorship and opened the first golden beer back up to the rest of the world. In 1990, playwright Vaclav Havel became the first democratically elected president of Czechoslovakia. In 1996, Havel met Bill Clinton in a pub to talk politics over a Pilsner Urquell.

Other Beer Milestones

- Miller Brewing Company was founded in 1855 by German-born Frederick Miller when he purchased the small Plank-Road Brewery.
- In 1864, Gereard Adrian Heineken purchased a brewery in Amsterdam.
- The Beck’s brewery was formed under the name Kaiserbrauerei Beck & May in 1873 by Lüder Rutenberg, Heinrich Beck, and Thomas May.
- In 1876 Budweiser was introduced.
- Brothers William M. Foster and Ralph R. Foster set up the Fosters Brewing Company; the first Fosters was brewed in 1888.

Pilsner Urquell Today

Pilsner Urquell is the original golden beer. A recently-convened professional panel of sensory experts at the prestigious Beverage Testing Institute gave Pilsner Urquell a score of 93 points in 2007, the highest rating ever given to a pilsner style lager. This rating places Pilsner Urquell at the “exceptional” level, atop some of the most well known import lager brands and confirms that Pilsner Urquell leads the category in speaking to the evolving, sophisticated beer consumer. Today, nearly 90 percent of the world’s beer is a variation of the original golden beer, making pilsner the most popular beer style in the world and further establishing Pilsner Urquell as a true original. Simply, it’s how beer is meant to taste.