



### German Grown

Presented by Ben Coffelt, CSS, CSW  
April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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### Our Goals for German Grown

- Brief History of Germany
- The History of Distillation in Germany
- Understanding the Major Categories of German Spirits
- The German Presence in the US Market
- The Future for German Spirits

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### Germany Today



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### How did we get Germany from Deutschland?

- German/Germany derives from the Latin *Germania*, which is what the Romans called the area we know as Germany today
- *Deutsch* evolved from Old High German word meaning "of the people"
- *Land* simply means *land* or *country*
- Put them together: Deutschland

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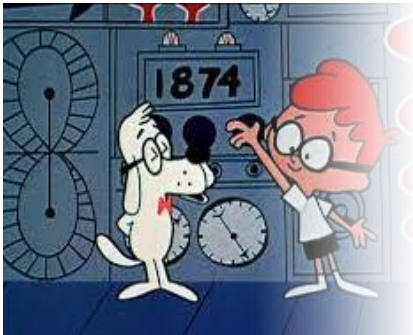
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Setting the Wayback Machine to Germany – 300 BCE

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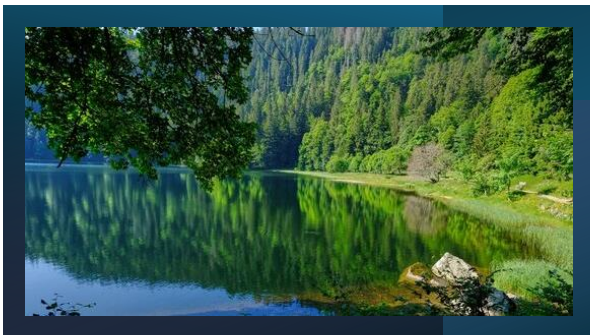
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### Pre-Roman Germany (Pre-200 BCE)

- Subsistence tribal existence
  - Small scale farming
  - Hunting/Gathering
  - Limited Trade
- Vast diversity of traditions and languages
- Hierarchies based on kinship
- Religion based on on natural phenomena and a pantheon of gods
  - Similar to the Aesir/Norse gods

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### Rome and Germany (200 BCE – 200 CE)

- Rome begins encountering Germanic tribes in the second century BCE
  - Small skirmishes
- As Rome needs to expand, Julius Caesar leads successful military campaigns into Germania
- Rome establishes settlements and provinces throughout Germania
  - Brings roads, bridges, trade, and diplomatic relations with tribes

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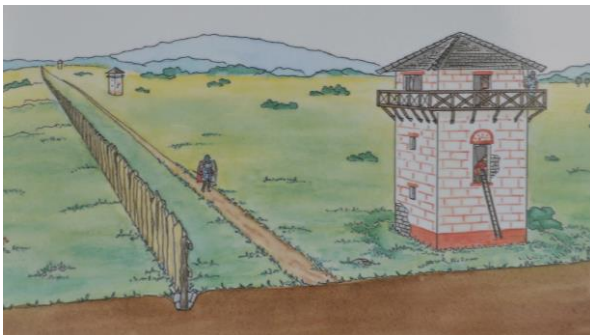
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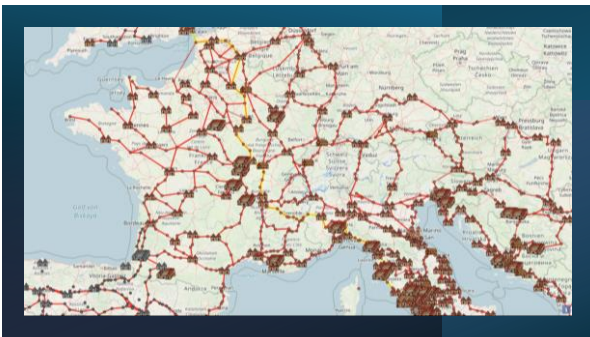
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### The Fall of Rome (200 CE – 500 CE)

- Germanic tribes begin fighting and invading Rome
  - Vandals and Goths
- Rome is sacked in 410 CE and 455 CE
- Rome's empire further weakens due to political and economic factors
- Many regions begin to operate autonomously
- Germanic tribes begin to settle further into Rome's territory

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### Dark/Middle Ages (500-1500 CE)

- Most of Western Europe ruled by the Franks
  - Merovingian Dynasty established by Clovis 1
- Franks expand control over Germany into Central Europe
  - Carolingian Dynasty led by King Charlemagne
- Christianization of Germany
- Holy Roman Empire is founded 962 CE
- Black Death destabilizes
- Monastic Brewing

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## Reformation and Renaissance

- Martin Luther begins the Protestant Reformation 1517 CE
  - Religious wars
- Simultaneously, the Renaissance in Germany led to advancements in astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, and science
- Key scientists/thinkers include: Johannes Guttenberg, Johannes Kepler, Albrecht Durer, and Georg Agricola.

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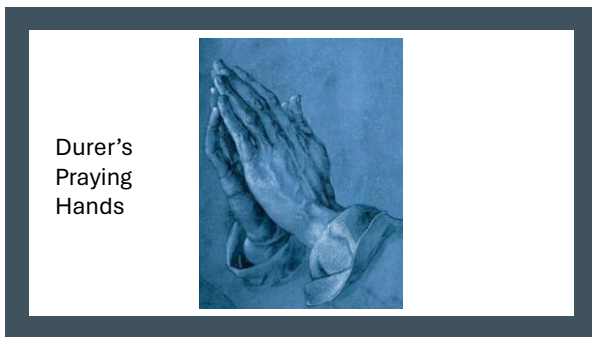
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Durer's Praying Hands

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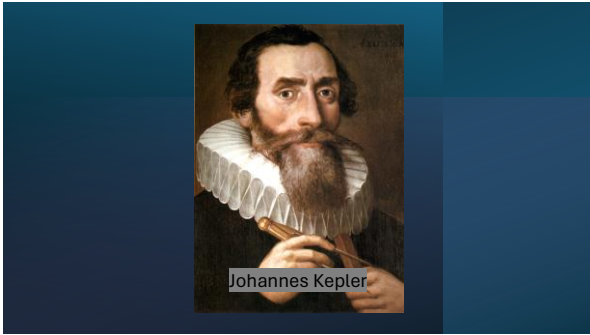
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### German Distillation

- During the Renaissance, there's vast exchange across Europe of scientific ideas and practices – including distillation
- Cities like Nuremberg and Augsburg were home to chemists and alchemists working with distillation
- Originally used for perfumes and medicines in the Islamic world, German scientists begin to experiment with fruit, grain, beer, etc.
- These efforts led by Swiss-German Paracelsus, Hieronymus Brunschweig, and Oswald Croll

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"All things are poison and nothing is without poison; only the dose makes a thing not a poison."



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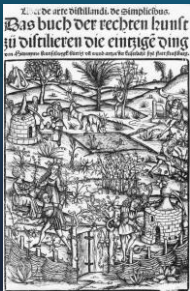
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"Liber de arte distillandi de simplicibus"

"Book on the art of distillation out of simple ingredients"

By Hieronymus Brunschweig



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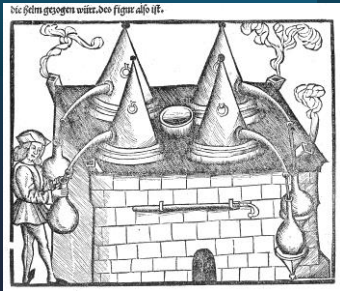
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### Alcoholic Distillation Spreads

- With the publication of books the spread of distillation techniques and equipment spreads
- Local regions adapt the principles to their native ingredients – such as grain, botanicals, herbs and fruit
- Monasteries increase distillation as well
- Guilds begin to form, which professionalizes the class of distillers through the renaissance and into the Age of Enlightenment
- Commercial distilleries begin to open
- *Reinheitsgebot* influences spirits production as well

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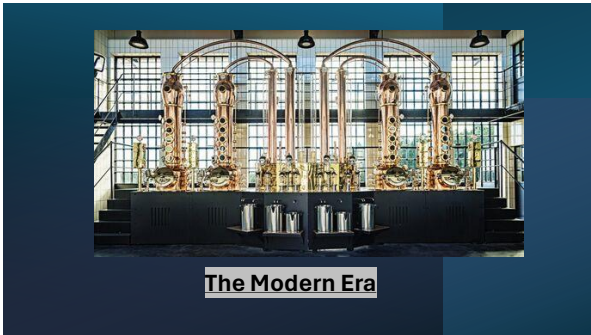
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**The Modern Era**

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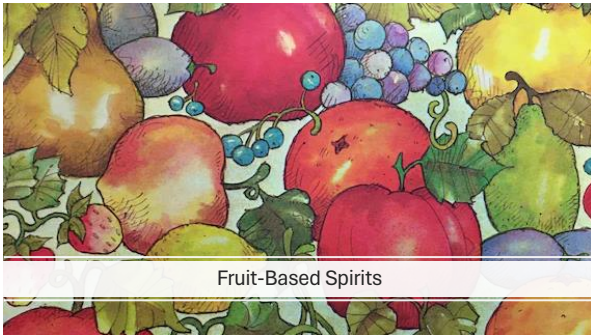
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**Fruit-Based Spirits**

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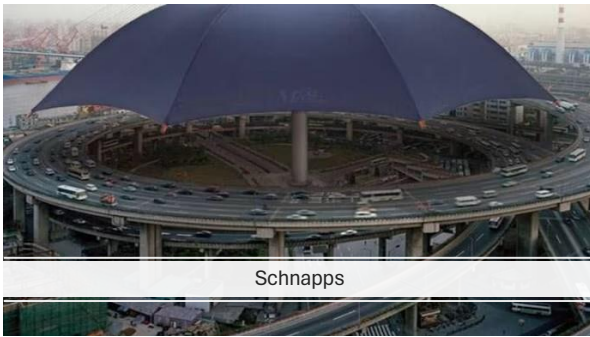
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### Schnapps

- Directly translates to "strong liquor"
  - Author Rosie Schaap likens it to eau-de-vie
- Two main styles:
  - *Brand* – fermentation of fresh fruit which is then distilled
  - *Geist* – fruits are macerated and added to neutral alcohol, then the mix is redistilled
- Can be aged or unaged
- Copper Pot, Column, or Blend Distillation
- Some schnapps are made from grain
- Schnapps has become a catch-all term in America for overly sweetened liqueurs

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### Kirschwasser (or Kirsch)

- Schnapps, specifically produced from cherries
  - Originally morello cherries, native to the south of Germany
  - Cherries are not required to be grown in Germany, but they must be of "high quality"
- Cherry must be fermented for 8-20 days
- Typically made with Copper Pot Still, mix of still today
- Traditionally sold in two forms – standard (unaged) and reserve (rested in stainless steel for 3-4 years)
- With special years, some distilleries bottle a *Jahrgangskirsch*, a vintage specific version
- EU sets the minimum ABV at 37.5% - most fall between 40%-50%

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### Modern Kirsch Trends

- Region specific Kirsch (typically not legally protected/enforced)
  - Schwarzwaldler Kirsch, specifically produced from cherries grown in the Black Forest
  - Franconian Kirsch, produced in northern Bavaria
  - Hesse Kirsch, produced in central Germany
- Single variety Kirsch
  - Schwarze Knorpelkirsche (Black Heart Cherry)
  - Gewürzkirsche (Spice Cherry)
  - Süßkirsche (Sweet Cherry)
- Cocktail Ingredient
- Key Producers: Schladerer, Hubertus Vallender, and Echter Nordhauser

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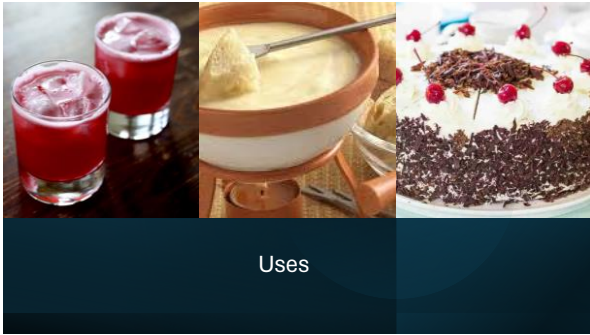
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### Himbeergeist

- Literally “Raspberry Spirit” is a type of schnapps made from raspberries infusing fruit brandy with macerated raspberries
  - Follows the *Geist* production style
  - Raspberries do not naturally possess enough sugar for fermentation
  - Base of apple/pear/grape brandy is typically used
- Some region specific labels on the market
- Alcohol content similar to Kirsch – most between 40%-50% ABV
- Top producers include: Schladerer, Hubertus Vallender, and Emil Scheibel Schwarzwald-Brennerei
- Still a mostly niche product in the US market, gaining some popularity as a cocktail component

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Herbal and Botanical

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### Steinhäger

- Juniper based spirit, technically falls under schnapps
  - Similar to gin in profile, and often marketed as a gin, **but it is not gin**
- Traditional Steinhäger is made by fermenting juniper berries and then distilling them
  - That resulting product is then mixed with grain spirit and more juniper berries
- Minimum ABV 37.5%
- GI protection under the EU – must be made in Steinhagen
- Typically unaged
- Some producers add botanicals, but typically most flavor is solely from juniper
- Not readily available in the USA, only two producers remain in Germany

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### Examples



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### Underberg

- Digestif Bitter
  - Representative of a German category called Kräutertikör (herbal liqueur)
  - Akin to Italian *Amaros*
- Proprietary mix of herbs with a grain spirit base
- Aged in Slovenian barrels
- ABV 44%
- Iconically served in small, paper wrapped bottles
- Flavor similar to Fernet
- Widely available in the US and has a dedicated following
  - Huge popularity boom in the last 10-15 years
  - In the US it is classified as a food product akin to vanilla extract

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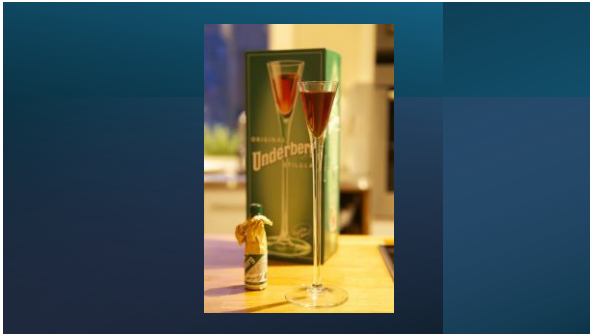
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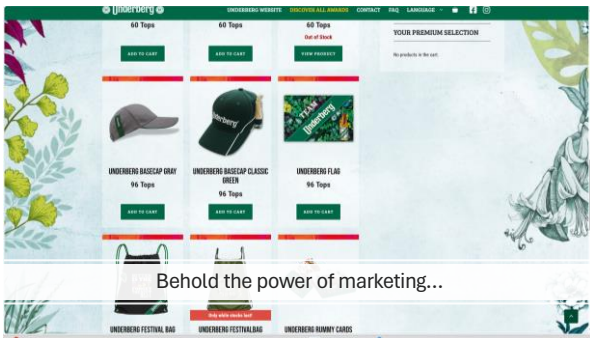
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## Jägermeister

- Meaning "Master of the Hunt" Jäger is an herbal digestif liqueur created in the city of Wolfenbüttel by Curt Mast
- Another style of Kräuterlikör
- Move over Colonel Sanders – Jäger contains a secret blend of 56 herbs and spices, including ginger, anise, cinnamon, and citrus
- Neutral grain spirit base
- Contains added sugar – is significantly sweeter than Underberg
- ABV 35%
- Early history and success linked to Herman Göring and the rise of the Nazi Party
  - From most accounts, Mast remained politically distanced but still benefited commercially from his connections to Göring. He was essentially pardoned by the English during the occupation following WWII

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Curt Mast

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### It's a Jäger in the USA

- Possibly the single greatest marketing success in the spirits industry
  - Went from limited consumption by older Germans, to young people/college/party beverage
- Importation rights acquired by businessman Sidney Frank in 1974
- After discovering some organic popularity, Frank and his company specifically marketed to college students in the 1980s
- Rumors swirled it contained valium, quaaludes, or other drugs
  - It does not
- Became a staple of partying
- Victim of their own success and marketing?
  - Now typically identified as an unserious drink

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The Infamous Jäger Bomb

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### The Future

- There's definite room for growth in America for kirsch and himbiergeist
  - These continue to pop up in cocktails throughout major cities
- Underberg might be at peak sales
- Jägermeister remains linked in the consumers mind to partying, but the company is pivoting and having some success with pivoting to craft cocktails
- Steinhäger will likely remain a mostly regionally consumed spirit with limited export outside of Germany
- Modern German craft gins, such as Monkey 47, are growing in popularity as the category increases in demand

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Any questions?

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### Additional Reading and Sources

(available via email)

- **The Oxford Companion to Spirits & Cocktails** – edited by David Wondirch with Noah Rothbaum
- **The 2024 Certified Specialist of Spirits (CSS) Study Guide** – written by Jane Nickles, CSE, CWE
- **“Ancient Germanic Culture: From Fjords to Forests”** – by Greg Beyer
- **“A Shot of Redemption” in Garden and Gun** – by Wayne Curtis
- **“Beyond Bitter” in VinePair** – by Maggie Hennessy
- **“Steinhäger” in The Gin is In** – by Aaron Knoll

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Danke schön und auf wiedersehen!



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