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## Reinheitsgebot—Tradition or Straitjacket?

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Early in any beer enthusiast's education, he or she stumbles across the word "Reinheitsgebot," a German mouthful also known as the Bavarian Purity Law. Instituted in 1516, it was said to be the earliest piece of legislation regulating food quality. In particular, the law required that beer be made from only malted barley, hops and water (yeast, the essential fourth ingredient, was only discovered and added to the list later).

Although the Reinheitsgebot is no longer German law, German brewing and German beer culture as a whole has not strayed from its requirements, leading many German beer drinkers to regard any beverages that deviate as "not beer."

The Reinheitsgebot has protected German drinkers from certain undesirable adulterants, and serves as a minimum guarantee of quality. It also rules out ingredients, such as spices, sugars or fruit, that are in common use in other traditional brewing cultures, and yet others that have been the source of innovation and consumer excitement.

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