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Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer

By Maureen Ogle



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Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer By Maureen Ogle

Ambitious Brew, the first-ever history of American beer, tells an epic story of American ingenuity and the beverage that became a national standard. Not always America's drink of choice, beer finally took its top spot in the nation's glasses when a wave of German immigrants arrived in the mid-nineteenth century and settled in to re-create the beloved biergartens they had left behind. Fifty years later, the American-style lager beer they invented was the nation's most popular beverage—and brewing was the nation's fifth-largest industry, ruled over by titans Frederick Pabst and Adolphus Busch. Anti-German sentiments aroused by World War I fed the flames of the temperance movement and brought on Prohibition. After its repeal, brewers replaced flavor with innovations such as flashy marketing and lite beer, setting the stage for the generation of microbrewers whose ambitions would reshape the brew once again. Grab a glass and a stool as Maureen Ogle pours out the surprising story behind your favorite pint.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Conventional wisdom has it that giant breweries, driven by corporate greed, have flooded the U.S. with inferior-tasting swill, and the only beer worth drinking is from scattered boutique microbrewers. Nonsense, says Ogle: companies like Miller and Anheuser-Busch are actually near-perfect embodiments of the American dream (in which "liberty nurtured ambition, and ambition fostered success")—and if their beers became noticeably blander 50 years ago, it's because consumers wanted it that way. Ogle (*All the Modern Conveniences*) looks back at the early years of brewers like Phillip Best, Frederick Pabst and Adolphus Busch as they rose to success making European-style beers for fellow immigrants, converting plenty of native palates along the way. Such men, she claims, should be heralded as captains of industry like Gilded Age icon J.P. Morgan. This material is strong, as is Ogle's analysis of the slow but steady rise of the Prohibition movement, but her narrative loses momentum as she tries to encompass the post-WWII era and add the most successful microbrewers to her list of heroes. Her exuberant musings on the American spirit become distracting, but there's more than enough drama in the family sagas to keep even the soberest of readers turning the pages. (Oct.)

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Review

PRAISE FOR *AMBITIOUS BREW*

"A fascinating and well-documented social history that sheds fresh light on the bubbly sociable beverage."--*Chicago Tribune*

"From lager-making German immigrants to today's microbrew-meisters, a sudsy, briskly told survey of American beer. **B+**."--*Entertainment Weekly*

From the Back Cover

Beer's history is a tale of gamblers and entrepreneurial visionaries, of ambition and passion. It is the tale of Frederick Pabst, a sea captain who entered the beer business when he married a brewer's daughter and, forty years later, was at the helm of the world's largest brewery - and of Adolphus Busch, his greatest rival. Of Ken Grossman, a California bicycle repairman who built a brewery, Sierra Nevada, with his own two hands. Of Howard Hyde Russell and Wayne Wheeler, who established the organization that produced Prohibition. Of Carl Conrad, who imagined an American version of a Bohemian beer, one he called Budweiser, and Otto Lademan, the St. Louis brewer who tried to steal it from him. Of the Busch, Yuengling, and Leinenkugel families, who have kept their family businesses alive from one generation to the next, in one of the most competitive and volatile of industries. It is a truly American tale . . .

"Maureen Ogle brings a historian's discipline and a breezy, accessible writing style to a fine addition to the canon of beer literature. This is a must-read for beer geeks and neophytes alike.â€• --Ken Wells, author of *Travels with Barley*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Todd James:

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Brandy Anderson:

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