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VLB BERLIN

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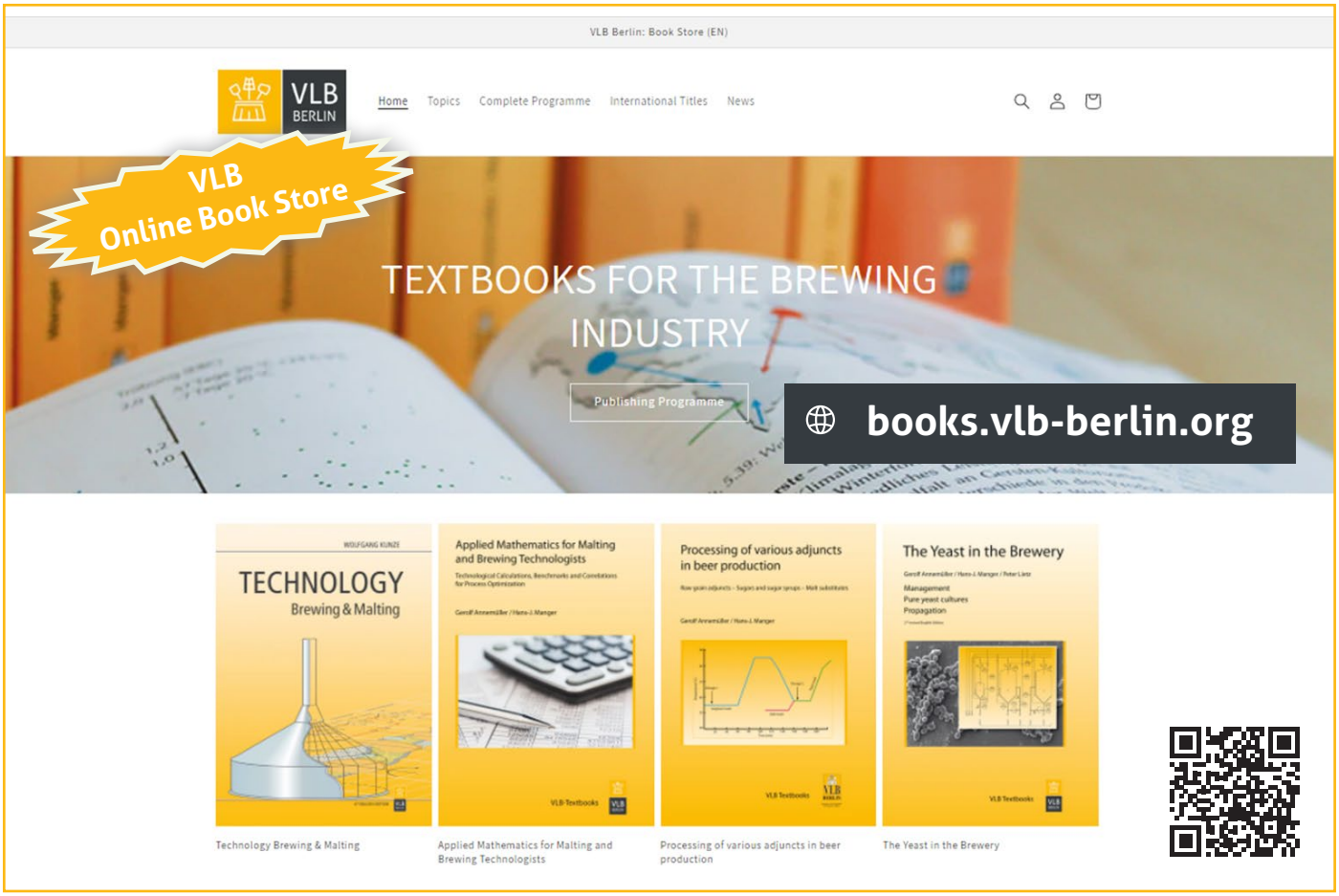
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Thanks to our sponsors, VLB's Testing Laboratory for Packaging now has a high-precision system for measuring glass bottles, while VLB's Pilot Brewery has put a new dealcoholization plant into operation.



Centenary: 100 years ago, a dedicated unit addressing issues related to water and wastewater was established for the first time within VLB's range of services



The training and education of brewing professionals has been one of the VLB Berlin's core missions since its founding in 1883. Initially focused on German-speaking countries, the first VLB Certified Brewmaster Course started in 2006

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VLB General Meeting 2026

VLB Administrative Board Re-elected for Another Four Years

The regular General Meeting of VLB Berlin took place on October 12, 2026 as part of the 110th VLB October Convention in Berlin. On this occasion, the Administrative Board was re-elected as scheduled for a four-year term.

(oh) New members of the board are Hüseyin Ercan Tekgümüs (Anadolu Efes Beer Group) and Peter Peschmann (C. & A. Veltins Brewery). Ulrich Rust (Gerolsteiner) was re-elected as president, Dr. Stefan Kreisz (ERDINGER Weißbräu) as vice president, and Jan Steffes (Gerolsteiner) as treasurer.

An overview of the newly elected VLB Administrative Board:

- ❑ Jens Hoffmann, Warsteiner Brauerei Haus Cramer KG
- ❑ Michael Jakob, Carlsberg Supply Company AG, Ziegelbrücke/Switzerland
- ❑ Wolfgang Janssen, Radeberger Gruppe KG, Frankfurt am Main
- ❑ Stefan Kreisz, Privatbrauerei ERDINGER Weißbräu Werner Brombach GmbH (Vice President)
- ❑ Peter Peschmann, Brauerei C.&A. Veltins GmbH & Co. KG (new)
- ❑ Ulrich Rust, Gerolsteiner Brunnen GmbH & Co. KG (President)
- ❑ Michael Seip, Flensburger Brauerei Emil Petersen GmbH & Co. KG
- ❑ Jan Steffes, Gerolsteiner Brunnen GmbH & Co. KG (Treasurer)
- ❑ Hüseyin Ercan Tekgümüs, Anadolu Efes Beer Group, Istanbul, Turkey (new)

Dr. Stefan Lustig, who had served on the Administrative Board since 2010, has stepped down. Ulrich Rust thanked him on behalf of the entire Administrative Board for his many years of volunteer service.
The Administrative Board is one of the three central governing bodies of VLB Berlin. It makes decisions on fundamental matters concerning the association and guides its strategic development. Its members serve in an honorary capacity.

We congratulate all elected members and look forward to continuing our collaboration!

Photo: ew



from left: Dr. Björn Ch. Klotzbücher (VLB), Dr. Stefan Kreisz (Erdinger Weißbräu), Hüseyin Ercan Tekgümüs (EFES), Peter Peschmann (Veltins), Wolfgang Janssen (Radeberger Gruppe), Michael Seip (Flensburger Brauerei), Michael Jakob (Carlsberg Supply Company), Gerhard Andreas Schreiber (VLB) and Ulrich Rust. Jan Steffes and Jens Hoffmann were unable to attend in person

New Bottle Measuring System Expands VLB's Packaging Testing Capabilities

The VLB Testing Laboratory for Packaging has expanded its services with a DGM-C (Dimensioning Gauging Machine) from British manufacturer Pro-Sight. The high-precision optical system measures glass bottles and bottle mouths without contact.

The system complements the laboratory's existing equipment and enables testing and development projects with beverage manufacturers, bottle producers and plant engineers. The DGM-C uses high-resolution optics to automatically measure bottle geometry in 360° mode. Parameters include height, diameter, ovality, verticality and neck geometry, as well as the dimensions and contours of bottle mouths. The system also records surface characteristics known as "sink & bulge". The non-contact process delivers precise, reproducible results in a short time.

"With the new measurement system, we can quickly, reliably, and comprehensively capture the geometric characteristics of bottles and mouths," says Florian Heukäufer, head of VLB's Packaging Testing Center. The new technology supports not only quality control but also research, development and optimization projects across the value chain of reusable and single-use packaging.

Reliable dimensional data is increasingly important for modern filling, capping and labeling lines, which place high demands on packaging accuracy. New bottle designs, resource efficiency requirements and the development of returnable systems further increase the need for precise measurements. Returnable bottles, in particular, may be handled by different bottlers on their respective lines and may be reused up to 50 times over decades.

The testing services are aimed at glass packaging manufacturers, breweries, mineral water and soft drink producers, and other companies in the beverage industry. Applications include incoming goods inspections, comparisons of bottle batches, complaint investigations, development work and evaluations of bottles after mechanical stress during the returnable cycle. The results provide an objective basis for assessing dimensional accuracy and identifying potential quality issues.

The investment was made possible by funding allocated pursuant to a resolution of the German Bundestag (grant number 49-IZ-250017). Combining the new measurement system with its experience in packaging testing and consulting, VLB is strengthening its role as an independent research partner for packaging development, quality assurance and process optimization. Companies can contact VLB's experts to discuss suitable testing strategies.



Florian Heukäufer, head of VLB's Testing Laboratory for Packaging, with the new DGM Compact

Contact: packaging@vlb-berlin.org

New Dealcoholization Plant in Operation at VLB's Pilot Brewery

The market for alcohol-free beer continues to grow. With a new membrane dealcoholization system from Bucher denwel, VLB Berlin is expanding its capabilities in product and process development as well as education and training.

(oh) The new De-Alconox M pilot system enables gentle dealcoholization of beer using membrane technology. In its current configuration, the system can reduce the alcohol content of 4–5 hL of beer from approximately 5% ABV to below 0.5% ABV in around eight hours. Integrated online measurement technology from Endress+Hauser monitors alcohol and extract content and supports fully automated operation.

The system offers a wide range of applications. In addition to product development using VLB's own beers or on behalf of customers, it will also be used for training purposes. Aspiring brewmasters can gain hands-on experience with dealcoholization technology as part of their practical education.

Further applications lie in research and development. As the system can be operated with different membrane types, it allows a variety of process-related questions to be investigated. These include the effects of dealcoholization on beer flavor profiles, particularly in hop-forward beer styles, as well as studies on energy and water consumption during the process.

The system was delivered in late September and presented to industry professionals on October 13 during the VLB October Convention 2026 in Berlin. VLB's first alcohol-free Amber Lager was also presented at the event and received very positive feedback.

Contact: zeuschner@vlb-berlin.org

"Kickoff" with the first beer from the new VLB dealcoholization plant on October 13, 2026, in Berlin. From left: Benjamin Röttel (Bucher denwel), Philipp Zeuschner and Björn Klotzbücher (both VLB), Marc Eckert (Bucher denwel) and Julia Rosenheim (Endress+Hauser)



100 Years of Water Expertise at VLB Berlin

Compared to the age of some deep groundwater sources – which can stretch back several millennia—100 years is a short time. By human standards, however, this period is worth looking back on: One hundred years ago, a dedicated unit addressing issues related to water and wastewater was established for the first time within VLB's range of services.





Photos: VLB Berlin (2) / ew (1)

The "VLB Water Pioneers": Dr. Gustav Bode (1870–1947, l.) and Dr. Kurt Vogel (1899–1976, r.) laid the foundations for what would later become the Water Technology Department and today's Department of Water Quality, Management, and Technology

The fundamentals of water analysis and the importance of brewing water were already closely associated with Wilhelm Windisch at the beginning of the 20th century and later with Paul Kolbach. But it was not until 1926, at the initiative of Prof. Friedrich Hayduck, that a Water Technology Laboratory was established within what was then VLB's Analytical Laboratory. Under the direction of Dr. Gustav Bode, the laboratory specialized in in-depth water and wastewater analyses. The first approaches to treating brewery wastewater can also be traced back to Bode.

However, it was not until the late 1930s that this evolved into the organizationally independent VLB Department for Water and Wastewater Issues in the Brewing Industry. Dr. Kurt Vogel took over as director, leading the new department through the war years and the early postwar period.

Mobile water analysis 50 years ago



Vogel expanded the scope of the Water Engineering Department to include the field of alcohol-free soft drinks. The technical school of the Association of the German Soft Drink Industry, established by Vogel at that time, was overseen by his successor, Dr. Gunther Schumann, from 1969 well into the 1980s. Schumann's work was also strongly influenced by issues related to water management and, in particular, wastewater treatment using mixing and equalization tanks, such as those still found in many German breweries today.

The activities of that time in the field of alcohol-free soft drinks continue to have an impact today: The current Department of Water Quality, Management, and Technology, headed by Dr. Alfons Ahrens, is part of the VLB Research Institute for Biotechnology and Water. It continues to be responsible for teaching alcohol-free beverage technology in the Brewing and Beverage Technology program at the Technical University of Berlin. In addition, it conducts tests and evaluations as part of the annual quality competition for mineral, spring, and table water organized by the German Agricultural Society (DLG).

In 2006, the department's range of services was expanded to include accreditation as an official drinking water testing laboratory in accordance with the Drinking Water Regulation. In addition to the quality of drinking water, brewing water, and process water, water availability and raw water quality are increasingly becoming the focus of its work in light of advancing climate change.

Water—A Topic for the Future

Even 100 years after the founding of the first Water Technology Laboratory, the topic of water has lost none of its significance for the VLB. Today's Department of Water Quality, Management, and Technology looks back on a long history of water analysis, consulting, and research. This gives the VLB a well-established technical foundation to address future challenges related to water as a resource through research and development and to provide impetus for the brewing and beverage industries.

Dr. Alfons Ahrens

Successful Debut of the VLB Draft Beer Conference in Bergamo

Approximately 90 experts from the European brewing industry gathered in Bergamo, Italy, from August 31 to September 2, 2026, for the 1st VLB Draft Beer Conference – Cleaning, Filling & Tapping. This new international event focused on technological, hygienic, and quality-related challenges surrounding Keg filling.



(oh) The technical presentations covered the entire process chain, from keg cleaning through filling to dispensing quality. Particular emphasis was placed on process monitoring, hygienic design, traceability, safety, and the handling of alcohol-free beers. Presentations by breweries, equipment manufacturers, and industry experts highlighted both current operational practices and new technological approaches. The growing importance of alcohol-free and 0.0% products was reflected in several presentations. These included the Radeberger Group's many years of experience with filling alcohol-free beer into kegs, as well as concepts for hygienically flexible filling.

Other presentations addressed high-speed keg lines, iron deposits in beer, alternative dispensing concepts, transponder-based traceability, advanced hygiene solutions, single-use kegs, and automation. The discussions showed that reliable draft beer quality depends on consistent process control extending beyond the filling line—including keg logistics, cleaning procedures, and dispensing technology at the point of sale.

The technical program also highlighted solutions for increasingly sophisticated product portfolios. Stefan Schuhriemen of KHS, a Gold Sponsor of the conference, presented the hygienic and flexible filling of 0.0% beer and beer-based mixed drinks. Referring to the KHS Innokeg Contikeg, he highlighted scalable capacity, recipe-controlled processes, precise filling technology, high availability, and cybersecurity. "It was a pleasure for us to present the latest developments in draft beer technology, keg filling, and dispensing in Bergamo," said Stefan Schuhriemen after the conference.

Keg Filling in Practice

Three guided tours provided a strong practical focus. At Comac in Bergamo, participants visited a newly constructed high-performance keg production line shortly before its factory acceptance test. The high degree of automation and the integrated control technology—including a laser scanner for checking keg suitability prior to further processing—generated particular interest. In the run-up to the event, Daniele Gotti, Managing Director of Co.Mac srl, highlighted the company's commitment as a Platinum Sponsor: "We are very pleased to participate in this event as a Platinum Sponsor and warmly welcome the participants to our facilities."

On Tuesday afternoon, Heineken Italy, represented by Claudio Caldini, Manager of Quality & Technology for the South Europe Hub, and his team, opened the doors of its brewery in Comun Nuovo to the delegates. The tour included the brewhouse, filtration area, and, of course, the filling area featuring the modern keg filling line with a throughput of 600 units per hour. The facility uses a modern conveyor system designed for higher throughput than conventional designs. The visit concluded with a reception at the brewery.

The conference concluded on Wednesday with a visit to PolyKeg in Grumello del Monte. Participants gained insights into the production of single-use kegs, from components and bags to finished keg production and storage. Automation, quality control, and traceability were central themes throughout the tour. Sergio Sonzogni, CEO and founder of PolyKeg and a Gold Sponsor of the event, summarized: "It was a pleasure for us to open our doors, share our expertise, and spend time with professionals from across the keg beverage industry."

Positive Outcome

The lively discussions underscored the importance of keg technology as a highly specialized yet vital sector for the brewing and beverage industries. The open exchange between brewery experts, suppliers, and industry specialists contributed significantly to the positive atmosphere—even among competing manufacturers. VLB Event Coordinator Martin Dubrowsky and VLB Managing Director Dr. Björn Ch. Klotzbücher expressed their delight at the conference's successful debut: "We can certainly imagine continuing this format of a compact conference on a specific topic within the brewing and beverage industry in the future," said Klotzbücher.


Photo: VLB Berlin

Around 90 experts gathered at the VLB conference in Bergamo to exchange knowledge and experience on keg filling.

EBC Congress Rotterdam: Brewing Science in the Face of Current Challenges

Approximately 500 experts from the European and international brewing industry gathered in Rotterdam from September 6 to 9, 2026, for the 40th Congress of the European Brewery Convention (EBC). At the Postillion WTC Conference Center, Julia Leferman, Secretary General of Brewers of Europe, EBC President Paul Lefebvre, and EBC Executive Officer John Brauer welcomed the participants during the opening session.



Photos: oh

The VLB team on site: Ben Palmer, Laura Knoke, Florian Schrickel, Dr. Christian Schubert, Alexandra Musat, Dr. Martin Hageböck, and Dulcie Thomson (from left).

(oh) Since its founding in 1947, the EBC has pursued the goal of promoting scientific and technical exchange within the brewing industry across corporate and national borders. The fact that this approach remains relevant nearly eight decades later was emphasized in Rotterdam: Julia Leferman pointed to the challenging market situation. Political and regulatory issues should not be viewed in isolation from technical and scientific challenges. Rather, holistic solutions are needed. EBC President Paul Lefebvre advocated for responsible, moderate alcohol consumption. He cited regaining consumer trust in beer (in light of discussions about alcohol consumption), maximum product safety, and the effects of climate change on the supply of agricultural raw materials as other key issues.

The scientific program was correspondingly broad in scope. The presentations ranged from the supply and quality of raw materials—barley, malt, and hops—to process and fermentation technology, and on to quality assurance and sustainability. In this way, the congress once again reflected the wide range of current issues in brewing science.

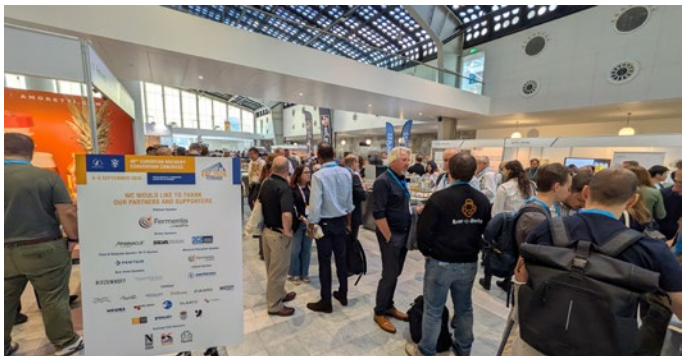
EBC Congress Once Again a Stand-Alone Event

After the three previous editions of the EBC Congress had been held jointly with the "Brewers Forum" of Brewers of Europe since 2019, this year's congress took place once again as a stand-alone event. Although this resulted in fewer participants and exhibitors, it did not diminish the positive overall impression. Another noticeable change compared to the 2024 EBC Congress in Lille concerned the poster presentations. Following criticism of the previous format, the scientific posters in Rotterdam were once again displayed in the traditional "analog" manner and remained accessible throughout the entire congress. The exhibition was supplemented by two "Rapid Fire Poster Sessions." In these sessions, presenters had four minutes each to introduce the topic and key findings of their project. The compact, lively format was very well received by the expert audience.

VLB Well Represented

VLB Berlin was represented at the 40th EBC Congress with two scientific presentations, seven poster presentations, and a booth in the trade exhibition, showcasing a broad spectrum of current research. Dr. Nils Rettberg from the VLB Research Institute for Raw Materials and Beverage Analysis (FIRGA) presented research on modern winter barley varieties grown in Germany during the "Barley & Cereal Breeding and Agronomy" session. Titled "Evaluating the Malting Characteristics and Brewing Quality of Contemporary Winter Barley Varieties Grown in Germany," the presentation focused on the malting characteristics and brewing quality of winter barley.





View of the trade exhibition, with the VLB booth on the left.



Florian Schrickel, also from the Research Institute for Raw Materials and Beverage Analysis, gave a second presentation in the "Downstream Processing & Packaging" session. His presentation, "Some Do Not Like It Hot: Non-Thermal Inactivation Technologies for NAB – A Proof of Concept," addressed non-thermal inactivation methods for alcohol-free beers.

The poster program also demonstrated the breadth of topics covered by VLB research. Laura Knoke presented work on the targeted and non-targeted analysis of hop bittering compounds using UPLC-Q-ToF. Dulcie Thomson presented a UPLC-Q-ToF method for quantifying brewing-relevant polyphenols in wort and beer. Ben Palmer investigated thiol disulfides as a potential indicator of aging processes in cold-hopped beers. Dr. Christian Schubert focused on the use of koji enzymes in modern beverage technology.

Three additional posters came from the VLB Research Institute for Biotechnology and Water. Alexandra Musat examined the mechanisms and effects of premature yeast flocculation and the use of LUMiSizer®-STEP technology as an analytical tool. Gayatri Mehta investigated the influence of water composition and tea infusion on the production and quality of kombucha during fermentation with a defined co-culture. Another poster by Marie Ludszuweit outlined findings on the chemical, microbiological, and sensory properties of kombucha.

The Department of Brewing and Beverage Technology at the Technical University of Berlin, headed by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Philip Wietstock, was also represented in Rotterdam. The department participated in the conference with a presentation and scientific poster presentations.

In addition, the VLB had a booth at the trade exhibition, where it provided information about its research, services, and continuing education activities. In addition to the scientific program, the congress thus offered an opportunity for direct exchange with international colleagues and partners. The next EBC Congress is scheduled to take place in 2028. The location and date have not yet been announced.



EBC President Paul Lefebvre at the official opening of the congress.

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ASBC & CIBD Meeting 2026

VLB in International Exchange – From Corvallis via Seattle to Berlin

International conferences not only provide opportunities to learn about the latest research but also facilitate personal exchange between institutions and industry experts. Around the joint meeting of the American Society of Brewing Chemists (ASBC) and the Chartered Institute of Brewers and Distillers (CIBD) in August 2026, several opportunities arose to strengthen existing contacts between the VLB Berlin and the international brewing and beverage community.

One stop was the Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis, followed by the ASBC/CIBD Meeting in Seattle. A few weeks later, the exchange continued when Thomas Shellhammer visited the VLB in Berlin.

Insights into Research at Oregon State University (OSU)

Ahead of the ASBC/CIBD Meeting, Christian Schubert (VLB Berlin) visited the OSU, which conducts research in fermentation science as well as brewing and extensive hop research. Graduate Research Assistant and Ph.D. Candidate Cade Jobe from Thomas Shellhammer's research group gave him a tour of the campus and its research facilities. Shellhammer serves as the Nor'Wester Professor of Fermentation Science at OSU.

A particular focus of the visit was the research brewery. In addition to the brewing equipment itself, the tour included the fermentation and storage facilities as well as the infrastructure for filling and further storage of the beverages produced there. This setup allows researchers at OSU to investigate brewing-focused questions along the process chain under defined conditions.

The visit also provided an opportunity to compare research approaches and conditions at OSU and VLB and to exchange ideas on current topics in brewing and beverage research.

ASBC and CIBD Meet in Seattle

From August 17 to 19, 2026, around 250 professionals from academia, brewing, distilling, and the beverage industry gathered in Seattle for the joint ASBC/CIBD Meeting. Under the theme "Global Brewing and Distilling Innovation: Shaping the Future Together," the Brewery Convention of Japan (BCOJ) was also involved as an additional partner organization. Around 80 attendees came from outside the United States, and approximately 130 participated in the meeting for the first time.

The program covered current topics in raw materials, yeast, hops, malt, and fermentation research, as well as analytical and technological developments. In her keynote, Birgitte Skadhauge, Vice President of the Carlsberg Research Laboratory and Adjunct Professor at the University of Copenhagen, highlighted the connections between the barley genome, breeding, malting, and subsequent processing. With regard to climate change, she emphasized the growing importance of climate- and stress-tolerant barley and hop varieties for securing future raw material supplies.

Another major topic through the whole meeting was the develop-



Photos: VLB Berlin

Catching up in Seattle: Dr. Björn Klotzbücher (VLB), Dr. Brian Gibson (Technological University Dublin), Natalia Svedlund (TU Berlin) and Dr. Christian Schubert (VLB)



Visiting Oregon State University: Graduate Research Assistant and PhD candidate Cade Jobe gave Dr. Christian Schubert (VLB) a tour of the pilot brewery.

ment of non-alcoholic and low-alcohol beverages. In addition to traditional non-alcoholic beers, the focus included alternative fermented beverages, new microorganisms, and other product concepts.

The first conference day concluded with a happy hour in memory of Prof. Graham G. Stewart, who passed away in 2026. Professor Charles W. Bamforth honored Stewart's scientific contributions while also sharing personal memories from their time together.



Market Changes and New Technologies

On the second day, the challenges facing the international brewing and beverage industry moved more strongly into focus. During the CIBD panel "Issues and Opportunities in the Brewing Industry," Charles W. Bamforth of the University of California, Davis; Thomas H. Shellhammer of Oregon State University; and Scott Ungermann of First Key Consulting discussed current developments and challenges within the industry.

Katherine Smart (ASBC), Jaideep Chandrasekharan (CIBD), and Takashi Suda (BCOJ) also provided different perspectives on innovation, global market conditions, and changing consumer habits. The Japanese example additionally illustrated the influence that taxation and regulatory frameworks can have on the development of new beverages.

Emma Walker, Johnnie Walker Master Blender, brought the perspective of the spirits industry to her keynote. Using the Johnnie Walker brand and the current "Johnnie Walker Vault" series as examples, she demonstrated how tradition and new product ideas can be successfully combined.

Further sessions covered various topics including authenticity testing of alcoholic beverages, non-alcoholic and low-alcohol products, as well as new approaches to fermentation management and analytical process characterization.

Stability, Sustainability, and Targeted Yeast Design

The third day included topics such as flavor and stability in beer and other beverages, grain and malt quality, new yeast strains, as well as sustainability and decarbonization in brewing and spirits production.

The closing keynote by Jay Keasling of the University of California, Berkeley, offered a perspective beyond traditional brewing research. Using the biotechnological production of pharmaceutical compounds as an example, he explained the possibilities of targeted yeast engineering. The connection to brewing quickly became clear: modifications to yeast metabolism can influence both fermentation characteristics and the formation of specific aroma compounds. Using Berkeley Yeast as an example, Keasling showed that such approaches are already being applied in the brewing industry. Around 30 conference posters complemented the scientific lecture program. The next ASBC Meeting will take place from August 14 to 16, 2027, at the Clearwater Beach Resort on Sand Key in Clearwater Beach, Florida.

The Exchange Continues in Berlin

The exchange continued: Around two weeks before the EBC Congress in Rotterdam, Thomas Shellhammer visited the VLB in Berlin. Christian Schubert toured Shellhammer through VLB's laboratories and facilities. In addition to the existing research, technical, and analytical infrastructure, they discussed current concepts for new buildings and future plans for the Berlin campus, which also includes VLB's facilities.

The visit thus completed the circle that had begun at Oregon State University: from gaining insights into the research environment in Corvallis, through the joint ASBC/CIBD Meeting in Seattle, to the return visit at the VLB in Berlin.

Direct exchange between research institutions is an important part of VLB's international collaboration. Research infrastructure and working practices can be understood much better through on-site visits than through publications or conference presentations alone. At the same time, these visits create new opportunities for scientific exchange and potential future joint activities in an international context. International exchange between academia and industry therefore remains an important part of VLB's work and helps to advance new developments through collaboration.

Dr. Christian Schubert

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▷ BREWING KNOWLEDGE

Check your Brewing Expertise!

1) What does it mean when a mash tests iodine-normal?

a) The mash still contains gelatinized starch
b) The iodine tincture turns red to blue
c) The starch has been broken down into maltose, glucose and iodine normal dextrins
d) The mash still contains dextrins with more than ten glucose residues
e) The amylases are completely inactivated

2) Which statement about wort clarification in the whirlpool is correct?

a) The wort is introduced axially from above to create rotation
b) The wort inlet velocity should not exceed 3–3.5 m/s
c) The whirlpool effect immediately causes the precipitation of even the finest particles
d) The holding time in the whirlpool is 60–90 minutes
e) The hot break settles in a cone shape at the outer edge of the vessel

3) Why are bittering hops generally added at the start of wort boiling? Because...

a) the α-acids isomerize completely and immediately during boiling
b) the necessary isomerization of the α-acids requires sufficient boiling time
c) aroma hops completely lose their bitter substances during boiling
d) the β-acids only dissolve at the start of boiling
e) otherwise the hops will burn in the whirlpool

4) What is the primary goal of kilning the malt?

a) To reduce the moisture content from over 40% to below 5% while largely preserving the enzyme activity developed during germination
b) To increase the moisture content to about 45% in order to accelerate germination
c) To completely remove the rootlets from the grain
d) To completely convert the starch in the malt into sugar
e) To increase the color of the malt to over 1000 EBC through roasting

5) What is referred to as a "breakthrough" during the kiln process?

a) The point in time when the layer of malt is completely dried out
b) The point where the line representing exhaust air humidity intersects with the line representing the temperature above the floor of the kiln, marking the end of the withering phase
c) A defect in the kiln where the entire contents spill into the lower floor and must be removed manually
d) The start of germination after steeping
e) The moment when the enzymes are completely inactivated due to the breakdown of protein chains

6) Which conditions favor melanoidin formation during the production of Munich malt?

a) Very rapid kilning at 80 °C to prevent coloring
b) Use of hulled barley and roasting at 180–220 °C in the roasting drum, as well as the addition of colorants and flavor substances
c) A low degree of steeping of about 35% and a short germination period
d) The promotion of all factors that favor melanoidin formation, e.g., protein-rich barley, high degree of steeping, intensive enzymatic activity, initial drying, and a kilning temperature of 105 °C
e) Drying at low temperatures to preserve high diastatic power

7) Which is correct regarding top-fermenting and bottom-fermenting yeasts?

a) Top-fermenting yeasts work at 4–12 °C, bottom-fermenting yeasts at 14–25 °C
b) Top-fermenting yeasts are added to the fermentation tank or fermenter from the top, while bottom-fermenting yeasts are added from the bottom
c) Top-fermenting yeasts mostly rise to the surface during fermentation, while bottom-fermenting yeasts settle at the bottom of the tank or vat toward the end
d) Bottom-fermenting yeasts generally do not flocculate
e) Bottom-fermenting yeasts perform fermentation exclusively at temperatures above 20 °C

8) What happens to α-acetolactate and the vicinal diketones (e.g., diacetyl) during fermentation?

a) They undergo complete breakdown during primary fermentation and are reformed during final fermentation
b) They increase significantly during the first few days of primary fermentation and undergo progressive breakdown during final fermentation
c) They remain constant through the entire process
d) They are produced exclusively during top fermentation
e) Their breakdown occurs only through cooling alone, not through yeast metabolism

9) Why is the apparent degree of attenuation (V_s) determined using a fermenter hydrometer only "apparently" correct? Because...

a) the hydrometer measures inaccurately at the low fermentation temperatures
b) the extract reading of the hydrometer is distorted by the alcohol formed, since ethanol has a lower density than water
c) the yeast continues to ferment during the measurement and changes the value
d) the extract content of the pitching wort is not known for the calculation
e) the carbon dioxide formed lifts the hydrometer

Answers

1. c) The iodine test is based on the fact that, at room temperature, an iodine solution produces a red-to-blue coloration when mixed with gelatinized starch and larger dextrins containing more than ten glucose residues; in contrast, sugars and smaller dextrins containing 4 to about 10 glucose residues do not cause any discoloration of the yellow-brown iodine tincture. If no discoloration occurs in the cooled mash sample, the mash is described as iodine normal—the breakdown of starch molecules to the iodine normal state is called saccharification. Saccharification is additionally checked at the end of wort boiling. A wort that still causes discoloration is "iodine-abnormal" (so-called "blue wort") and results in a beer with a paste-like haze.

2. b) The whirlpool is a stationary cylindrical vessel without internal components into which the wort is pumped tangentially, causing it to rotate. Centrifugal force raises the liquid level on the outside and lowers it in the center; in the deflection zone, the hot break settles in a cone-shaped layer in the center. It is important that the inflow velocity does not exceed 3.5 m/s, that the largest possible volumetric flow rate is introduced, and that no boiling trub is broken up. The whirlpool effect captures only particles above a certain size—fine particles are not subjected to precipitation by the "whirlpool effect" - the trub must first re-agglomerate. The settling time is 20–30 minutes.

3. b) As a general rule, bittering hops are always added first, since the isomerization of the α-acids takes the longest; furthermore, undesirable volatile compounds (e.g., myrcene) are partly driven off. The first addition therefore serves to impart bitterness — about 75% of the α-acids should be added in this first addition. The conversion of insoluble α-acids into soluble iso-α-acids proceeds relatively slowly during atmospheric boiling at 100 °C: After 10 minutes, 9% are isomerized; after 30 minutes, 25%; and after 60 minutes, only about 33%. The β-acids, on the other hand, do not dissolve and are not isomerized. Aroma hops are added at the end of the boil or even only in the whirlpool to preserve volatile flavor substances.

4. a) The germination process that precedes kilning is interrupted by initial drying and kilning. This is intended to halt further transformations in the grain and minimize unnecessary extract losses. In the process, the moisture content is reduced from over 40% to below 5%, thereby ensuring the malt's storage stability and shelf life. As the moisture content decreases, all vital functions in the malt—such as germination and dissolution — as well as all other enzymatic activities almost come to a stop. However, the enzyme potential that has been developed should be preserved as fully as possible. The rootlets are not removed until later, during malt cleaning.

5. b) During the kiln process, toward the end of the withering phase, the exhaust humidity line intersects with the temperature line above the floor; this point of intersection is called the "breakthrough." Breakthrough marks the end of the initial drying phase: At this point, the malt layer sags slightly when stepped on due to increasing dehydration. The initial drying phase is followed by heating to kiln-drying temperature and the actual kiln-drying process (3–5 hours).

6. d) In the production of Munich malt, all factors that promote melanoidin formation are encouraged: protein-rich barley, a high degree of steeping (44–47%), intensive enzymatic activity during germination, and, in the first half of the kilning process, an initial drying phase in which the moisture content is reduced to only 20% by closing the air vents, allowing the enzymes to continue forming additional breakdown products. The kilning temperature for Munich malt is 105 °C. The remaining options do not describe the production of Munich malt: rapid kilning at 80 °C characterizes light wheat malt; roasting at 180–220 °C characterizes roasted malt; and kilning at low temperatures characterizes diastase malt. And the addition of colorants and flavor substances is not necessary in malt production.

7. c) The terms "top-fermenting" and "bottom-fermenting" are derived from their characteristic behavior during fermentation: Top-fermenting yeasts predominantly rise to the surface during fermentation, while bottom-fermenting yeasts settle at the bottom of the tank or vat toward the end of fermentation. Fermentation temperatures also differ: Bottom-fermenting yeasts are used at 4–12 °C, while top-fermenting strains are used at 14–25 °C. Top-fermenting yeasts, on the other hand, usually do not flocculate. Flocculation behavior (dust and broken yeasts) is a characteristic of bottom-fermenting yeasts.

8. b) The precursors of vicinal diketones are acetohydroxy acids, particularly α-acetolactate. During the first few days of primary fermentation, α-acetolactate increases very sharply; during final fermentation, α-acetolactate and the vicinal diketones are progressively broken down. Any oxygen uptake—for example, during racking — can promote an increase in the diacetyl content in the young beer, which must then be reduced again by the fermenting yeast. In cold fermentation, the beer is cooled to storage temperature so slowly that the yeast can break down the diacetyl to below the flavor threshold value (0.1 mg/L).

9. b) The degree of attenuation determined with the fermenter hydrometer (V_S) is only apparently correct because the extract reading of the hydrometer (E_S) is distorted by the alcohol formed – ethanol has a lower density than water. Since the deviation increases proportionally with higher attenuation and E_S is easy to determine, breweries always calculate with the apparent degree of attenuation in practice. To determine the real degree of attenuation (V_w), the alcohol must be distilled off in the laboratory and the amount replaced by water; V_w is always lower than V_S, approximately $V_w \approx V_S \cdot 0.81$.



This test was generated by Wolfgang.
Contact:
wolfgang@vlb-berlin.org

Bangkok Brewing Conference 2026 Was a Great Success

MATTERS OF WHY

274 brewing experts from 36 countries in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas attended the ninth Bangkok Brewing Conference, which took place June 8–10, 2026, in Bangkok, Thailand. This year's technical excursion took participants to Lao Brewery in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The event was once again jointly organized by the Thailand Beer Industry Guild (TBIG) and VLB Berlin.

(BF) In its 9th edition, the conference focused on balancing knowledge transfer with professional exchange among participants, with a strong emphasis on the brewing industry in Southeast Asia. The new venue, Impact Challenger Hall in Bangkok, was selected to provide a seamless connection to ProPak Asia, which took place at the same exhibition center.

The conference opened on Monday with the first technical sessions. Under the theme "Matters of Why", experts from the brewing industry and academia presented and discussed approaches to meeting current and future challenges in the sector. The first conference day concluded with a scenic boat trip through Bangkok along the Chao Phraya River, followed by an exclusive dinner at the Royal Thai Navy Convention Center. The evening program was kindly supported by Platinum Sponsor Ziemann Holvrieka.

On Tuesday, the technical sessions continued with presentations addressing both established processes and new opportunities for optimization. Several contributions demonstrated that even processes long regarded as mature still offer significant potential for innovation, particularly when conventional approaches are reviewed from a fresh technical perspective.

The Bangkok Brewing Conference 2026 concluded on Wednesday with a technical excursion to Lao Brewery in Vientiane, Lao PDR. A group of 75 participants was warmly welcomed by Managing Director Henrik Juel Andersen and his team. In an informative presentation, the company shared insights into the development, opportunities, and specific challenges of the beer market in Laos. A tour of the brewing facility and a joint dinner completed the visit.

VLB Berlin would like to thank Lao Brewery for its exceptional hospitality, Boon Rawd Brewery, and all sponsoring companies for their valuable support in Bangkok. Special thanks also go to the entire team of the Thailand Beer Industry Guild for the excellent local organization.

The Bangkok Brewing Conference is a joint project of the Thailand Beer Industry Guild and VLB Berlin. First held in this constellation in 2009, the event has developed into an important meeting place for the brewing industry in Southeast Asia.

The next Bangkok Brewing Conference is planned for June 2028.

1) The VLB team with TBIG President Chonalda Manakul

2) The technical presentations attracted a large audience

3 + 4) Technical excursion: Visiting Lao Brewery, part of the Carlsberg Group, in neighboring Laos


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Photos: VLB Berlin

VLB Said Farewell to the Certified Brewmaster Course 2026

On June 26, 2026, 27 graduates received their certificates during a festive ceremony. VLB Managing Director Dr. Björn Ch. Klotzbücher praised the participants' achievements and thanked everyone involved for their great dedication and hard work.

(ew) The group was first treated to beer before the official celebrations began. Dr. Björn Ch. Klotzbücher, Managing Director of the VLB, opened the graduation ceremony with an address to the graduates, their friends and families. "You have completed this course with great dedication. The certificates you receive today are well deserved. You are now all part of our network. The doors of the VLB are always open to you. Because we all share one thing: we have the best job in the world." Burghard Meyer also addressed the group briefly, praising the participants' outstanding achievements and hard work. "The overall average grades were exceptionally good this year," said the course director.

The top student of the class was Albert Forges Gelabert (Damm, Spain). Ebru Akinci (Anadolu Efes, Turkey) came second, while Ana Carolina Zancan (Ambev Brasil) took third place. As every year, one graduate received a gift on behalf of the class. This time, Teepawhat Thangkitjirawanit (Boon Rawd Brewery, Thailand) was presented with a pewter tankard from the course director's personal collection. Meyer had decided to choose him following a remarkable brief conversation one evening at the Zunfthaus. Visibly moved, "Tipa" accepted his gift. The celebrations at the VLB and the party later at the Zunfthaus were lively and exuberant. There was a palpable sense of pride and relief, along with a touch of sadness that these six intensive months had come to an end. But, as every year, lasting friendships had been formed once again.



"Tipa" and Captain



Photos: ew

The Certified Brewmasters are proud and relieved after so many weeks of studying

VLB Certified Brewmaster Course – Graduates 2026 –

After six months of hard work, 27 graduates received their certificates on June 26, 2026. VLB Berlin congratulates all participants on their successful completion of the demanding Certified Brewmaster Course, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.


Akinci, Ebru
(Turkey)


Atimango, Carol
(Uganda)


Bahamonde Mujica,
Manuel A. (Venezuela)


Chen, Rujian
(China)


De Lima Soares, Gabriel
(Brazil)


Demirdelen, Çagri
(Turkey)


Eguma, Ryuun
(Japan)


Forges Gelabert, Albert
(Spain)


Guerin, Esan
(USA)


Güngörlü, Ibrahim B.
(Turkey)


Ham, Taehwan
(South Korea)


Kamiloglu, Erkan
(Turkey)

Photos: ew



Khassanov, Sukhrab (Kazakhstan)



Magalhães Sá Maia, Júlia (Brazil)

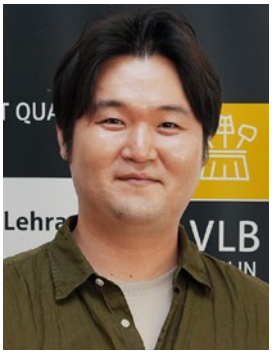

Mehendale, Partha Arvind (India)


Mgoja, Safari Karisa (Kenya)



Moya Rojas, Francisco Jose (Venezuela)


Mutiso, Dominic Maingi (Kenya)



Park, Kwang Jae (South Korea)



Ploypan, Anek (Thailand)


Satya, Soundera Rajan (India)



Şener, Derya (Turkey)


Thangkitjirawanit, Teepawhat (Thailand)


Thitiprasert, Karn (Thailand)


Villa, Kasper Eric Oscar (Finland)



Ye, Peihui (China)


Zancan, Ana Carolina (Brazil)

▷ ANNIVERSARY

2006–2026: 20 Years of VLB Certified Brewmaster Course – Review and Outlook

The training and continuing education of brewing professionals has been one of VLB Berlin's core missions since its founding in 1883. Initially focused on German-speaking countries, the first English-language training program was launched in 1999 and was further developed into the VLB Certified Brewmaster Course in 2006.

(oh) This year's VLB Certified Brewmaster Course concluded on June 26, 2026, with a ceremonial presentation of certificates to 27 graduates. The participants had completed six intensive months of classes, hands-on work, exams, and field trips. For the VLB, the graduation also marked an anniversary: the Certified Brewmaster Course has been offered in its current form for 20 years. During this time, approximately 700 successful graduates from nearly 80 countries have completed the program. The course has thus become an integral part of international brewer training at the VLB.

Fig. 1: Graduates 2015 with lecturers Burghard Meyer (1st from left) and Deniz Bilge

Fig. 2: Hard work in the hop garden (March 2020)

Fig. 3: What's better than an after-work beer in the brewery? (2009)

Fig. 4: At the farewell party in July 2022, on the right: course coordinator Heike Flohr, who retired shortly afterwards

A long tradition of training

Its roots go back much further. The training of brewers was already one of the VLB's core missions when it was founded in 1883. In 1888, the brewing school launched its first three-month summer course, followed in 1925 by the first master's course ("Brewing School"), culminating in an exam administered by the Berlin Chamber of Crafts. By 1998, a total of 70 brewmaster training programs had been conducted, producing approximately 1,300 graduates. In addition, there were an estimated 1,700 graduates from the brewing technology degree programs offered in cooperation with the Berlin Agricultural University (1903–1941) and, beginning in 1951, with the Technical University of Berlin. We should also mention the approximately 940 diploma brewing engineers who graduated from Humboldt University in East Berlin between 1950 and 2000.

Anniversary
VLB Certified Brewmaster Course
2006 – 2026

Toward the end of the 1990s, demand for the German-language master brewer training program declined steadily. At the same time, interest from the international brewing industry in practical, hands-on continuing education in brewing technology in Berlin grew. In response, the VLB switched to the English-language "E2 Course" in 1999. This course was led by Prof. Dr. Karl Wackerbauer. This laid an essential foundation for the further internationalization of the VLB's brewer training program.

In 2006, the program was reorganized and continued as the VLB Certified Brewmaster Course. The long-standing tradition of master brewer training in Berlin thus took on a consistently international orientation.

International growth and broad industry base

In its early years, the Certified


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Photos: VLB Berlin (7) / ew (6)

Brewmaster Course experienced dynamic growth. A key driver of this growth was the global expansion of the craft brewing scene. New breweries were emerging in many countries, leading to an increased demand for skilled professionals who could combine practical brewing experience with in-depth technical knowledge.

However, the CBC was never focused exclusively on the craft brewing scene. Large, internationally active brewery groups also regularly sent employees to Berlin. Companies such as Anadolu Efes, Ambev, Heineken, Diageo (Guinness), Kirin, Boon Rawd, and others have used – and continue to use – the VLB course to further train their next generation of brewing professionals. This has led to a participant structure that remains a distinctive feature of the program to this day: employees of large brewing companies learn alongside brewers from medium-sized businesses, regional companies, or small craft breweries.

It is precisely this mix that broadens the perspective in the classroom. Different production scales, technical requirements, and brewing cultures come into direct contact with one another. Technical discussions thus relate not only to a specific type of operation but to the very diverse demands of the international brewing industry.

In 2016, the Certified Brewmaster Course reached a peak with more than 50 participants. Brewers from all over the world were regularly represented in Berlin. Brazil, the U.S., Thailand, and Turkey were among the most important countries of origin for a long time, alongside numerous participants from Asia, Europe, Africa, and Australia.

Starting around 2018, growth in the international craft brewing scene leveled off. The previously very high demand for the CBC also declined during this phase. However, little changed in terms of the program's international focus and the diverse range of breweries represented by the participants.

Six months of intensive training

The basic concept of the Certified Brewmaster Course has remained largely unchanged over the past 20 years. The six-month full-time program provides comprehensive knowledge of brewing technology and related fields. This includes raw materials and maltings, brewhouse technology, fermentation and maturation, filtration and stabilization, filling and packaging, cleaning and disinfection, as well as quality assurance in theory and practice.

The program includes approximately 30 class sessions and practical work sessions each week. In addition, there are exercises in the pilot brewery, in the pilot malt house, and in VLB's training laboratories. The thematic modules are concluded with written and oral exams.

However, the goal is not merely to impart technical facts. Participants should understand the interrelationships throughout the entire production process, systematically analyze problems, and be able to justify technical decisions based on professional expertise.

Up-to-date knowledge from research and practice

While the basic concept has remained stable, the course content has been continuously refined. One advantage lies in the VLB's close integration with research and consulting. Many instructors are simultaneously involved in research projects or consulting assignments for breweries and supplier companies. As a result, new technological developments, current research findings, and practical issues from the field can be directly incorporated into the curriculum.

This ensures that the program remains up-to-date in terms of subject matter without having to constantly change its fundamental structure. Rather, the aim is to combine proven fundamentals with the current state of science and technology.

Another key component is practical work. This includes work in the VLB's technical facilities and laboratories, as well as the final field trip. After the exams, participants visit breweries, maltings, and supplier companies. The field trip provides insights into various production concepts and facilities, as well as the opportunity for direct interaction with industry experts.

The Carlsberg-ISC Brewmaster Academy demonstrates that the CBC concept is recognized even beyond the course itself. This in-house continuing education pro-

Fig. 5: Happy in the guild house (April 2008)

Fig. 6: During the COVID pandemic, the class had a particularly strong sense of unity (June 2020)

Fig. 7: Dress like a Bavarian seemed to be the motto for the farewell party in June 2026

Fig. 8: A legendary night at the guild house (January 2013)

Fig. 9: It's a wrap! After the instructions on how to wrap pallets (June 2024)





Fig. 10: Diving into spent grains in Düsseldorf (June 2009)

Fig. 11: Brewhouse lessons (June 2011)

Fig. 12: Women Power at the farewell party in July 2022

Fig. 13: The Captain always has the overview (April 2008)

gram was launched in 2025 jointly by Carlsberg and the VLB and is based in key elements on the proven concept of the Certified Brewmaster Course, supplemented by Carlsberg-specific learning content.

The COVID-19 Pandemic as a turning point

The COVID-19 years represented a significant departure from the established course model. When the pandemic reached Europe in the spring of 2020, the Certified Brewmaster Course was already underway in Berlin. Within a short time, instruction was switched to a hybrid model so that the training could continue despite the significant restrictions.

This hybrid system continued through 2023, allowing participants to complete parts of the program online. In the long run, however, the hybrid model did not prove to be an equivalent substitute for in-person instruction. Students participating online, in particular, experienced disadvantages in terms of learning outcomes. In addition, hands-on work, direct interaction with instructors, and collaborative learning within the group could only be replaced to a limited extent by digital means.

Since 2024, the Certified Brewmaster Course has therefore once again been conducted entirely as an in-person program in Berlin. The experiences from the pandemic have thus confirmed the importance of in-person collaboration and hands-on training within the CBC.

More than technical knowledge

Personal interaction plays a particularly important role in the Certified Brewmaster Course. Participants from a wide variety of brewing cultures spend six months together in Berlin. They collaborate on hands-on exercises and workshops, prepare for exams, and discuss technical issues related to their respective companies and home markets.

This brings together not only different nationalities but also a wide range of professional experiences. A brewer from an international corporation might work on the same topic with a colleague from a small independent brewery. For both parties, this provides insights into working methods and technical conditions that are often not available in their own corporate environments.

The VLB's team of lecturers has also become internationally diverse, bringing a variety of professional






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and cultural perspectives to the course. The connections formed within each cohort often lead to networks that extend far beyond the end of the course. Previous cohorts have reported that participants who were initially strangers became a close-knit group within just a few months.

Outlook: Continuity is Key

Even after 20 years, the Certified Brewmaster Course is not undergoing a fundamental overhaul. The successful course concept will continue. At the same time, the curriculum will continue to be adapted to new technological developments and changing requirements in the brewing industry.

The framework conditions for international beer production have changed several times since 2006. Requirements for quality, efficiency, resource consumption, process reliability, and product diversity have increased. At the same time, in-depth knowledge of raw materials, processes, and plant technology remains the foundation of professional beer production.

With the Class of 2026, the VLB has continued a development that began long before the introduction of the Certified Brewmaster Course. Today, the CBC combines the long tradition of Berlin's brewer training with the demands of the international brewing industry. The basic principle has proven itself over the past 20 years: in-depth technical formation, a close integration of science and practice, and intensive professional exchange among brewers from different countries and companies. The next VLB Certified Brewmaster Course begins in January 2027. We look forward to it!

CBC 2006 – 2026: Statistics

Total number of graduates (2006-2026):
703 (15 % female)

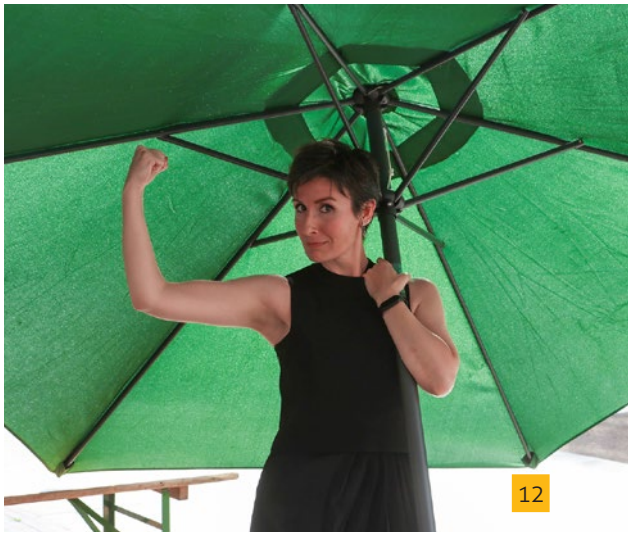
TOP 10 Breweries:
Anadolu Efes, Boon Rawd Brewery, Mahou-San Miguel, Ambev, Zhujiang Brewery, Grupo Petropolis, Cerveceria Polar, Beijing Yanjing Brewery, DAMM S.A., Sapporo

Top 10 Countries (out of 80):
Brazil, USA, Turkey, Thailand, Spain, China, Japan, Canada, Korea, Venezuela

Distribution by Continent:

Europe	29%
Asia	28%
South America	22%
North America	15%
Africa	5%
Australia/Oceania	1%


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20 years of VLB Certified Brewmaster Course: Alumni perspectives

For the anniversary of the VLB Certified Brewmaster Course, we asked six graduates three questions. Their answers provide a personal perspective on the lasting impact of the course.

❶ How did the course influence your professional development? ❷ What do you particularly remember from your time at VLB Berlin? ❸ What is your current job position?

Ross Turner – PureMalt, Scotland – Graduated 2013

"As a young professional working with raw materials in the brewing industry, gaining a strong understanding of malting and brewing science and technology provided an essential foundation for my career. Thirteen years later, the education and network I gained at VLB continue to open doors to new sales opportunities, technical partnerships, and talented colleagues well beyond Berlin.

I particularly remember the intensity of the learning and the complete immersion in VLB life. What stood out most was the extraordinary dedication of VLB staff and faculty to sharing their knowledge, advancing the craft of brewing while preserving its traditions.

Today, I lead PureMalt as Managing Director, a Scotland-based producer of brewing ingredients that add color and flavor to beers and alcohol-free beers."

Bryan Baxter – The Boston Beer Company, USA – Graduated 2015

"The Certified Brewmaster Course had a tremendous impact on my professional development. After nearly ten years of hands-on brewing experience, it helped me connect practical knowledge with the scientific principles behind brewing and gave me a deeper understanding of the 'why' behind the processes. This gave me the confidence and technical foundation to take on greater responsibilities.

I particularly remember the friendships I built with classmates from around the world and the strong sense of camaraderie during our time in Berlin.

After graduating, I joined The Boston Beer Company as a Brewing Supervisor. Since 2024, I have been a Senior Research Scientist and manage the research brewery in Boston, supporting brewing innovation and development."

Ryan Wibby – Wibby Brewing, Colorado, USA – Graduated 2011

"The Certified Brewmaster Course at VLB gave me the skills and knowledge I needed to further my career in large breweries and eventually open my own. The knowledge I gained in Berlin has helped me solve the challenges I have faced as a craft brewer.

What I remember most are the friendships I made with my classmates. I am still close to many of them, and whenever I have a question or want to discuss a brewing topic, I can call one of these friends.

Today, I am President and Brewmaster at Wibby Brewing, a craft lager brewery that opened in 2015. We have won several brewing awards, including the Great American Beer Festival (2023), a bronze medal at the World Beer Cup (2025), and the Grand Gold Frankfurt International Beer Trophy (2018)."

Hüseyin Ercan Tekgümüs – Anadolu Efes Group, Turkey – Graduated 2008

"The course strengthened my technical understanding of brewing science and gave me a comprehensive view of brewery operations, from raw materials and brewing technology to quality assurance and process optimization. Learning alongside professionals from different countries also broadened my international perspective. The knowledge and confidence I gained at VLB supported my progression into technical and operational leadership positions within Anadolu Efes Group.

I particularly remember the combination of academic excellence and practical brewing experience, the pilot brewery sessions, brewery visits, and the exchange within our international group. More than fifteen years later, I still value the professional network and strong brewing foundation I built at VLB.

Today, I lead product quality and the brewing function across Anadolu Efes operations."

Sarunyoo Songkram – Boon Rawd Brewery Co., Ltd., Thailand – Graduated 2008

"The VLB Certified Brewmaster Course gave me a solid foundation in brewing, laboratory work, and raw material evaluation. I still rely on that knowledge today.

What I remember most is the great time I had during the course and the friendships I made, several of which continue to this day. I also value the teaching of Dr. Folz, Dr. Pahl, Dr. Wenk, and Dr. Ahrens, as well as my apprenticeship in Bitburg with Dr. Kusche.

Today, I am Brewmaster of the Central Technical Team at the Boon Rawd head office, responsible for all Boon Rawd beer products across its breweries, including domestic and international partner breweries."

Safari Karisa Mgoja – Kenya Breweries Ltd. (EABL), Kenya – Graduated 2026

"The course strengthened my technical knowledge and practical understanding of brewing processes and principles from grain to glass, including sustainability, process management, and leadership skills across the value chain.

I particularly remember the excellent learning environment at VLB Berlin, the equal opportunities to succeed, the knowledgeable teachers, practical sessions and excursions, and the chance to learn together with brewing professionals from different parts of the world.

In my current role as a Shift Brewer, I can now work with greater confidence and face professional challenges more effectively. For me, being a VLB Berlin alumnus is something of real value."

▷ INTERVIEW

"It's not just about Making Beer – it's about Brew Quality and Building a Community"

Partha Mehendale from India and Esan Guerin from the USA joined this year's VLB Certified Brewmaster Course. In an interview with Michaela Knör (Axel Simon Library at VLB) they discuss the craft beer markets in their home countries, the knowledge they have gained and, most importantly, which favourite beer they would bring back to their breweries.

How did you first encounter beer and why did you decide to become a brewer?

Partha Mehendale: I think my own journey into the world of beer started with home brewing back in the year 2013. My brother was studying in the US at that time, and he used to home brew there with his friends. When he came back to India we started home brewing together. As we were getting better at it, we realised that this was something that we can do professionally. So, we decided to start a small craft brewery in India. But in general, the love for beer had been in our home before, as my dad used to drink it with my grandfather. In this sense it had been a social drink in our family for a long time.

Esan Guerin: Yes, similar for me. My dad loved beer. He drank Guinness, Heineken and CARIB, which is a Caribbean brand. Beers had always been in our house and I remember tasting it when I was young and I did not like it: too bitter and a flavour which I did not enjoy.
Later when I went to college, I studied Biology because I wanted to work in the medical field, but it turned out that this was not for me. During this time, my college offered a brewing technology course you would have had to pay tuition fees for. I was really interested, but I couldn't afford it. So I said I would leave it on the back burner for the time being, I became a home brewer around the same time as Partha in 2013 or 2014 and continued homebrewing while finishing college. Then I got a job and my plan was to save up money for this brewing technology course. I managed to attended that course just at the time when craft brewing in the States was having another upswing around 2015.

What did you know about craft breweries at that time?

EG: There had already been a craft brewing movement in the late 1980s and 1990s and again from the late 2000s onwards. I observed the latter while being a home brewer. Then I was doing an internship after my brewing technology course at Green Bench Brewing Co. – which was founded in 2013 in St. Petersburg, Florida, as the first craft brewery in town. Before the opening many obstacles had to be solved as at that time city ordinances did not allow a taproom and a brewery to operate on the same site.

PM: As I said, I got to know craft beer from my brother who studied in the US. In India, the first kind of craft brewery got established as far as I remember, in or around 2008 in the city of Pune in the state of Maharashtra. Craft beer as a product is extremely new in India up to now and people are still getting used to or only just becoming aware of its existence.

How would you describe the beer and craft beer market in India?

PM: In India, alcohol is subject to strict regulation at the state level and when it comes to alcoholic beverages, Indian people tend towards the harder stuff, like whiskeys, rums and other liquors. Beer is not the most consumed alcoholic beverage, and craft beer is not well known at all. Even today, there are only a few states which allow craft breweries to operate. The first one was Maharashtra followed by Karnataka (Western India) followed by a few states in the other parts of India. Besides that, there is a tax and regulation system which is very complicated and makes it difficult or nearly impossible to sell your beer to other states. Even selling in other regions of the same state is not easy. Taxes on alcohol are very high, and, in some states, the harder stuff is taxed less. Recently some states worked on a new tax system which at least taxes beer according to the alcohol content. In the end, all these regulations make our craft beer quite expensive which means that it is not accessible to everyone in India. Only people with disposable income will be able to afford to buy it. We must aim to sell it to



Photos: ew (2) / P. Mehendale (2) / Green Bench (2)

From left: Partha Mehendale, Michaela Knör, and Esan Guerin on June 26 at the farewell party of the VLB Certified Brewmaster Course 2026

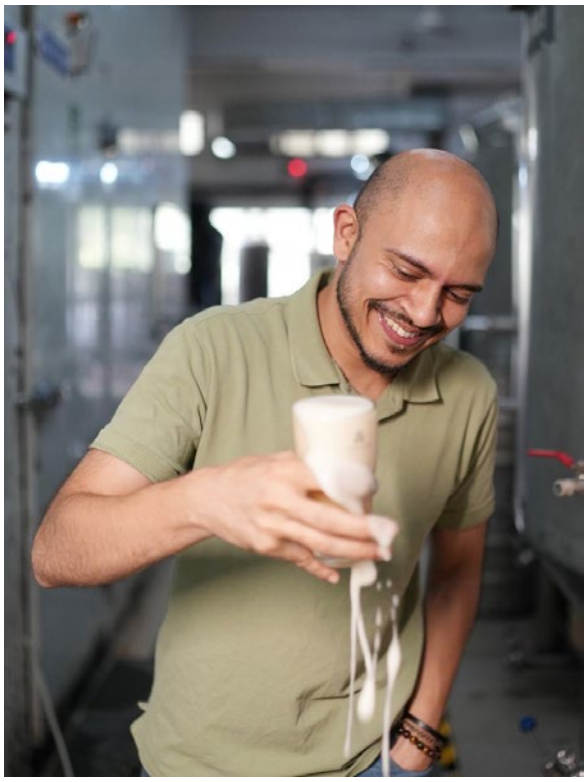
restaurants and bars with decent crowds. Now, there may be around 200 to 300 craft breweries in the whole country. Given the size of the country, it's not a big number.

And what about the US?

EG: There have been more craft breweries in the United States. I guess the number is quite close to 10,000 at its peak, but right now, it's a fluctuating number that continues to change. Now the question of surviving is much more connected to the product they're making, and besides that it also depends on having the right mission. For example, at the Green Bench Brewery the mission is to brew quality beer and build community. So, it's not just about making beer. It's about having people come together. So not everything is about drinking beer. But of course, it also does mean that we have to make good beers because without that people would not want to come to socialize. Community is a big part of the business, and you must be part of your community, especially as a craft brewery. Without that you won't make it.

PM: I think community is an important spirit for craft brewing also in India. We always keep in touch with each other and keep up with the other craft brewers. We all are trying to make people aware of craft beer with certain events. We are offering a 'Craft Beer Resolution' program promoting different styles and have 'Third Wheel Wednesdays' which is a taste 3 for the price of 2 event. This brings more customers to the restaurants.

Partha Mehendale is enjoying a freshly brewed beer



Which beers or beer styles are the most popular ones and who drinks the craft beers which you brew? Where do you sell your beer?

EG: In the States the most popular beer is still Light Lager, like Bud Light and for craft beer it is still IPA. I loved to drink and brew IPA when I became a home brewer. To brew a decent Lager was much harder in the warm climate of Florida and so I only started brewing it much later when I got into commercial brewing. But then I did dive deep into Lagers and was making a lot of Pilsner which I love, and Helles. At Green Bench we do all styles. Our flagship beer though is an IPA, but there is also our Postcard Pilsner, a Hefeweizen, a Festbier, coffee stout and many more.
Concerning our customers, I can only refer to the people who show up in our tap room. The customers I meet there are I guess middle-aged up to some of the older generation. Younger people are not drinking as much alcohol for whatever reason. The people who come seem to be quite well off.

PM: I guess it's similar for our customers. They are around the same age as my brother and me – we are both in our mid-30s. This age plus or minus some years is our target audience because I cannot really access the people who are much older. Mainly because I think as you get older your tastes and your preferences are sort of set, more or less. That is why the younger generation is probably more exposed. As an example, it was even difficult for me to convince my dad to shift from Kingfisher to the beer his own two sons are making. It took him quite a while to get used to our craft beer, but now he only drinks beer from our brewery.
In terms of price,my beers will of course, be more expensive than the ones of the big brands. You will have to pay around 50 to 70 % more for my beer. We brew IPAs, a Bohemian Pilsner, a Black Forest Stout, and a Basil Peppercorn Witbier, my brewery's signature style. We also brew customized styles for people who want certain flavours and ingredients.

EG: When it comes to retail prices, we could never compete with the cheap beer on the market. Compared to regularly priced beers of the big breweries we can probably charge almost the same price if it is sold in our region – the farther it travels the more expensive it gets. It still costs us more to get it to the market than it does for the big breweries. The best way to sell our beers in terms of costs and quality is to do it in our own tasting rooms, as we do not have distribution costs. We can be sure about quality, have it poured in the proper glassware and have a trained staff who can advise the customers who want to check out our 20 beers on tap there.

PM: I guess losing control of the product is a risk that all the breweries must take when they sell their beer not only in-house. I mean when we started selling to another city, we knew that the transport costs and everything was going to make the beer more expensive and that there is the danger of having quality losses.
So we just tried to organize it in the best way hoping that it's going well. But after seeing that this beer is performing well at that place, then more cities reached out to us to request for the same beer, which made it easier for us to sort out the costs. But of course, it's still a risk which you must take if you want to expand your market and get your brand in another place. My brewery managed to expand into the city of Bombay where we started with two places but now we are serving eight to ten places with our beers.

How is beer mainly packaged in your countries and in your breweries?

EG: I think the most common is to sell beer in cans. The big breweries also sell quite a lot in bottles as they can sell them almost at the same rate. But for us it would be



Esan Guerin and Partha Mehendale during this years' Certified Brewmasters Course

way more expensive to fill most of our beer in bottles. We have some beer in bottles but just specific styles like Stout. Most of our beer is packaged in kegs and cans. We did invest in our own canning line as we realized that without it, we can't guarantee the quality of our beers, if we want to sell it outside of our tasting room.

PM: I guess in India the most common package is the 650 mL bottle, which is also used for the strong beers with 8 % alcohol, followed by kegs and cans I would say. As we sell only to restaurants at the moment, we only do kegs and one-liter growlers, we will start using cans and bottles soon.

How do you manage the distribution of your beers?

EG: In the States we have the so-called three-tier-system, which is the mandatory system for alcoholic beverages. It means that production of beer (or other alcoholic beverages), distribution of it, and selling it has to be separate and owned by separate entities. We sell our beer to a distributor, and the distributor sells to the market. Nevertheless, we have a sales team which goes out to the market to raise interest and check the quality at places where you get it from tap. Distributors are regional, they are usually not operating statewide. So, we must deal with different distributors. As we want to pay attention to the quality of our beer, we want it to be transported cold, and we only make contracts with those who offer that.

PM: In India we can distribute the beer by ourselves but of course we also have the issue with distribution and securing quality. And the further the beer goes the more difficult this gets. We try to build up awareness for this not only with the distributors but also with the owners and staff of the restaurants to whom we sell our beer.

You both were already working in your breweries. Why did you enrol in the Certified Brewmaster Course at VLB?

PM: I started as a home brewer and nevertheless my brother and I took the adventure to open a commercial brewery. While establishing it we realized that we spent a lot of time learning about brewing on the internet. On the other hand, we had a lot of practical knowledge because we had done all the steps of brewing from a very basic line. At the beginning, for example, we could not easily buy malt in India, so we had to produce it for ourselves. I thought I needed training that combined solid practical work and theoretical knowledge. As I am in charge of a brewery it had to be a course in a reasonable timeframe. I did know one person who had graduated at VLB and talking to her strengthened my opinion that this course is covers the whole spectrum of brewing from grain to glass and it is a good mix of practical and theoretical work.

EG: When I started to work at Green Bench Brewing Co. I had done that brewing technology course at my former college. I did not know anything about commercial brewing before and during work I saw there is a lot more to know and I took another online course. Then I thought that I at least had the basics, but compared to our head brewer, the lead brewer and other brewers I felt I was behind and that I could not catch up by learning on the job and reading the Kunze book sitting in our brewery. So, I talked to my head brewer and after discussing the possibilities we came to the decision to apply for the VLB Certified Brewmaster Course, for which I got a scholarship.

Now after successfully finishing this course, did it fulfil your expectations? Especially, as this time most of your classmates came from big international breweries and not from craft breweries?

EG: It was interesting. At first, it is somewhat confusing that brewing in big industry is so different. I mean they brew a specific way every single time and they just do it that way. They don't experiment much. In my brewery I have a lot of that, new recipes and differ-

General Information

Yavasura Brewery was founded by Ameya und **Partha Mehendale** in 2013 in Pune, Maharashtra India. The name is the Sanskrit word for barley beer. With about 1.48 billion people, India is the most populous country in the world. Over 58 % of all Indians are under 35, which means that the population of India is much younger than that of other economic powers like China, the US or Europe. One-third of its population lives in big cities like Mumbai and Delhi, which are centers of consumption for premium and craft beer with increasing demand. The estimated growth rate for beer is around 8 %, for craft beer 24 %.

Esan Guerin works for Green Bench Brewing Company, which was founded in September 2013 by Nathan Stonecipher, Steven Duffy, and head brewer Khristopher (Khris) Johnson. The Name refers to the green benches, which were a tourist attraction in the city of St. Petersburg Florida from early to mid-1900s and at the same time enforced racial segregation as Black residents were legally prohibited from sitting on them. Co-owner Khris Johnson, being Florida's first black brewery owner, chose the name to get people to talk about the city's history and to transform the green bench into a symbol of inclusive community. The US has about 349 million inhabitants with around half of the population being younger than 40. About 83 % of the residents live in urban areas. The beer market is shrinking slightly. Beer production and imports went down by 5.7 %, while craft beer sales declined by 4 %. Nevertheless, the market share of small and independent brewers has increased slightly in the US.

ent grain and mash schedules. My classmates from the big breweries make 12 brews a day and are trying to do it exactly in the same time I do one brew all day. Then you also understand why and how they do this and get the knowledge behind that. Through them I discovered a whole different style of brewing and technology for brewing. In the lectures we went through it all: from small scale to large-scale brewing technology and brewing issues. In the end, I definitely got a lot more information than I was expecting.

PM: I did not even have the experience of visiting big commercial breweries before. I had done an internship in the U.S. but at a small brewery. Placed alongside with students from those big breweries it was difficult to comprehend in the beginning. They talked about not wasting a single milliliter, something I had never thought about. Then I realized that they were also interested in the way we run our small breweries. When starting my brewery, I had done brewing from tip to tail. To discuss that with classmates who have worked only in certain areas like packaging or quality control and gain further theoretical and practical background in the lectures and practical modules was just great.

What were the strangest or most unexpected things for you concerning beer and brewing in Germany?

PM: For me I would say beer culture. I think it is incredible. You have the Purity Law for beer which is cool and the way you create beer is fantastic. Somehow, it seems to me that what you have for beer, we have concerning special food in different regions. Düsseldorf with Altbier and Cologne with Kölsch – two cities so close together and still having these different styles, or Gose in Leipzig and Berliner Weisse in Berlin.



In the heart of the Green Bench Brewing Company in St. Petersburg, Florida





left: In the taproom of Yavasura Brewery in Pune (India); right: One of the flagship beers of Green Bench Brewing Company in St. Petersburg, Florida (US)

EG: I agree and beer and beer drinking is still – I know it is on the decline – bigger than in the States. Beer is still the common drink. Germany is smaller than Texas, but you guys have this many beer styles, regional styles, that's very cool. For example, in Munich Helles is the typical style, if you ask for a beer they give you a Helles, not a Pilsner. That was interesting for me as across the huge territory of the US most of the people drink the same style no matter where they are. When I arrived here in Germany one of my biggest surprises was to see all these bottles, beer in bottles. And then I learned that you have returnable bottles which we don't have in most of the US.

And if you look into the future: Will you change something back in your brewhouses?

PM: For me, I can say there are some things I will implement immediately in my brewery. In the course I gained a much better understanding of how to cope with some problems, and how I can save time, energy, and resources in general. Of course, I cannot afford a full-fledged laboratory, but I can do small tests and basic sampling. And I am planning investments soon.

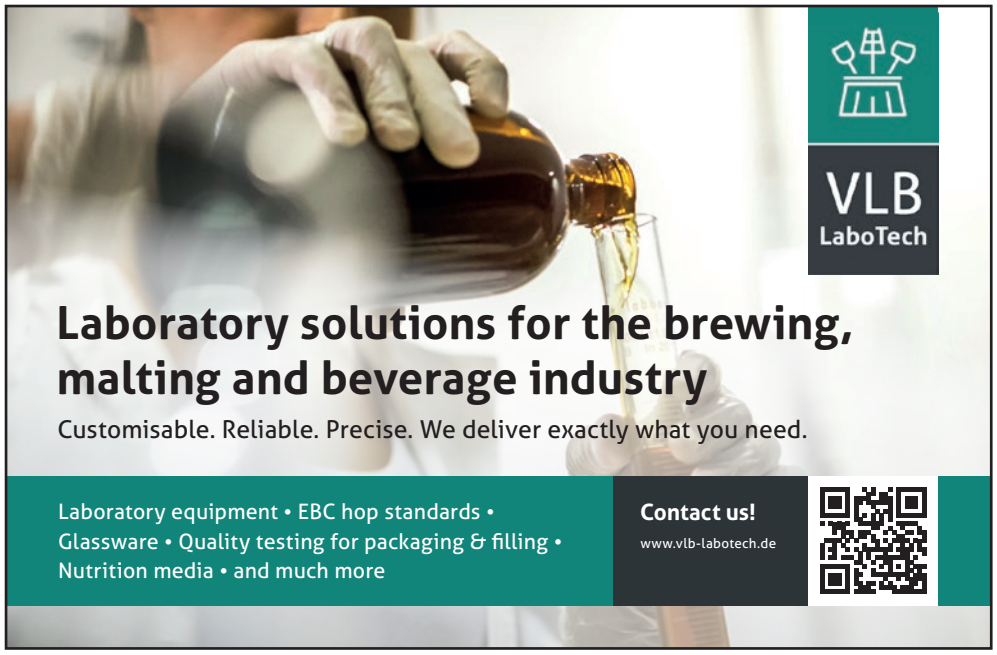
EG: There are some things in my mind. For example, our malt silos and the possibility of checking the malt modification, or our cooling system. Many of our things have already been optimized, but now, as I have a better knowledge as well, I will contribute more to the conversations when we are experimenting or discussing procedures.

PM: Yes, when we are back at our breweries and see the problems, we now have much more knowledge about what we can do to solve them or at least make it better.

Is there a beer which you take home with you?

EG: There is one beer which is completely different from what I had before. I brewed a Munich style Helles, I drank many different brands of Helles, but in Munich I had one which literally blew my mind. It was actually the best beer I ever had; a little bitterness, a nice malt flavour, and it was so drinkable! So for sure there will be some Augustiner Helles in my suitcase!

Michaela Knör



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VLB SCHEDULE 2026/2027

- **Workshop "Beverage Technology for Brewers" 2026**
  16 to 27 November 2026, Berlin
- **16th Ibero-American VLB Symposium**
  23 to 25 November 2026, Panama City, Panama
- **VLB Certified Brewmaster Course 2027**
  6 January to 25 June 2027, Berlin
- **111th International Brewing and Engineering Congress 2027**
  9 to 11 March 2027, Meschede, Germany
- **VLB Africa Brewing and Beverage Conference 2027**
  May 31 to 2 June 2027, Lagos/Nigeria
- **VLB Summer Party 2027**
  2 July 2027, Berlin
- **111th VLB October Convention 2027**
  October 2027, Berlin
- **Workshop "Beverage Technology for Brewers" 2027**
  15 to 26 November 2027, Berlin
- **17th Ibero-American VLB Symposium**
  November 2027, Venue to be announced

VLB will be exhibiting at upcoming international conventions and trade shows in 2027:

- **Brau Beviale 2027**
  9 to 11 November 2027, Nuremberg, Germany

Check

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for regular updates