

# ÖLVISHOLT BRUGGHÚS, ICELAND — A GOURMETTURNKEY PROJECT

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First beer introduced on the market: 'Skjálfti'; meaning 'Earthquake' in English

Three months ago, a new microbrewery saw the light of day on Iceland. Michael Knoth brings an account of the start-up of the brewery, where the elements of nature had some influence – the brewery had what you might call a rocking start in more than one sense of the word.

## EARTHQUAKE

On 29 May, a big earthquake hitting 6.1 on the Richter scale shocked the southern part of Iceland, including the newly started microbrewery, Ölvisholt Brugghús (Ölvisholt Brewhouse), which was supposed to be inaugurated the next day. Two of the owners and the master brewer were all standing in the brewhouse when the earthquake hit, and for the next 15 seconds, they could see how all the brewing equipment got shaken and how the full combi tanks were swaying heavily from side to side. When it was all over, a silence settled over the brewery and all three of them were quietly listening in order to hear if everything sounded okay.

## FROM IDEA TO SIGNED CONTRACT WITH GOURMETTURNKEY

Fourteen months earlier, Michael Knoth from GourmetBryggeriet (The GourmetBrewery) was contacted by Jon Gunnlaugsson, who had recently taken over his parents' farm from where he was running a small herbal business. Since the farm was no longer in use, he had been pondering what to do with it. Then friends suggested that he should turn his interest in beer into a microbrewery. He started contacting possible business partners and within a short period of time, two of his best friends, Bjarni Einarsson and Johann Steinarsson, joined him. Bjarni Einarsson, who ran a number of egg farms on Iceland and a sandwich factory, had expert knowledge on sales and distribution. Johann Steinarsson worked in shipping, which is a very vital business on Iceland since all import and export is through the harbour, and he could therefore take care of the shipping in of for instance malt and bottles from Europe and elsewhere.

The reason why Jon contacted GourmetBryggeriet was initially to get in touch with someone who had inside knowledge to the craft beer world and especially to the extensively evolving craft beer market in Denmark. It was not until Jon spoke with GourmetBryggeriet that he found out that GourmetBryggeriet also helped brewery entrepreneurs getting



*Buildings with potential – can this become a brewery?*

started; both with respect to being the devil's advocate and, finally, also helping them setting up a brewery. One month later, the CEO of GourmetBryggeriet, Tom Sand-Kristensen, and Turnkey Manager Michael Knoth took the flight to Keflavik Airport, where they were picked up by Johann Steinarsson, and drove one and a half hour east in order to get to the farm Ölvisholt.

The farm itself was quite isolated and placed on top of a small hill with a spectacular view, having mountains and volcanoes as its closest neighbours. The first impression was that it would be a hard job setting up a microbrewery in such a remote location, but after having spent some hours with the tough farmer, Jon Gunnlaugsson, everyone was convinced that it would be possible.

At the meeting, the future cooperation between the Ölvisholt management and GourmetBryggeriet was discussed, and a preliminary contract was drawn up before leaving. In June, 2007, the final contract was signed with an agreed installation start-up in November, giving them only four months to prepare the farm buildings for the future brewery equipment.

In short, GourmetTurnkey offers the following services during a project (other than equipment and installation which will be described in detail further below):

- Being the devil's advocate when the dream of starting a brewery is still a dream.
- Making sure the correct equipment for the individual projects is selected and installed.
- Project control from the point of taking over the finished production area until the first couple of brews have been produced.
- Assisting with respect to constructing the production area (drains, floor, walls, and ceiling).
- Assisting with correct information when in dialog with the authorities.
- Setting up a production control system, in order to comply with the food authorities (e.g. track and traceability).
- Training the future brewer at GourmetBryggeriet for approximately 6-8 weeks (depending on the persons).
- Testing all the equipment and assisting with the first couple of productions (teaching the brewer how to use the equipment).
- Assisting when developing the beer types.
- Assisting with purchase (quality, quantity, and prices).
- Assisting with marketing issues.
- Allowing bottling at GourmetBryggeriet if it is a restaurant brewery without a packaging line. →

## EQUIPMENT

The brewery that was to be installed would be composed of the following equipment:

Number	Equipment
1	2-kettle brewhouse, 17.5 hectolitres (mashing-in/lauter tun and wort kettle/whirlpool, plus hot water tank and cold water tank). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed by GourmetTurnkey and JTMBrew; manufactured by JTMBrew.</li> <li>• Steam jacket on both brewhouse kettles.</li> <li>• Wort heat exchanger.</li> <li>• Wort aeration equipment.</li> <li>• Hot water tank with steam jacket, 30 hectolitres.</li> <li>• Plastic cold water tank, 30 hectolitres.</li> <li>• Pumps for wort, hot, and cold water.</li> </ul>
6	2-brew combi tanks - 60 degree cone, net volume 35 hectolitres.
1	Bright Beer Tank (BBT) with a carbonation stone, net volume 35 hectolitres.
1	Electric control panel for temperature on all combi tanks and the Bright Beer Tank.
1	2-roller malt mill.
1	Ice water unit (capable of running minimum 100 per cent capacity expansion).
1	Compressed air generator.
2	Electric steam generators (steam for the brewhouse, hot water tank).*
1	CIP plant
1	Plate and frame filter (60 plates).
-	Plenty of hoses, t-pieces, sight glass, clamps, etc.
1	Mobile pump, frequency controlled.
1	Keg washer.
1	Manually operated keg filler (handle and hose model).
-	Laboratory equipment: Plato-meter, CO <sub>2</sub> -meter, glassware, and brewhouse tools.
1	Double pre evacuation, 12-head bottling line from Cimec including labeller (front and back).
1	Flash pasteuriser from GEA, 1500 litres/hour.
1	Electric steam generator (steam for the flash pasteuriser).*

\*) The reason for choosing electric steam generators is the very low cost of electricity on Iceland due to all the thermal energy available.

## INSTALLATION

Installation of the brewery started on 8 November, 2007, when the first 40 foot container arrived from Denmark. Shortly hereafter, the combi tanks and Bright Beer Tank from Slovakia arrived and the brewhouse was ready for testing around 4 December. The first official brew was coming through the brewhouse on 20 December. →



*Transporting the brewhouse from a 40 foot container into the building.*



*Small matrix of butterfly valves next to the wort kettle/whirlpool.*

The installation of the packaging line started in mid-January, 2008, when Iceland experienced the coldest winter in 75 years. A typical morning began at minus 20 degrees, and since the packaging room could not be heated yet, the installation took place in thick clothing, gloves, and knitted hats; with icicles hanging from the equipment.

Only two minor problems occurred during the testing of the equipment: an electric motor, supplying caps to the cap feed, was changed and the arm holding the rakes in the lauter tun was changed for a bigger one, in order to be more robust.

## INAUGURATION

### – INTRODUCING THE ‘EARTHQUAKE’

Coming back to the beginning of this article and the earthquake hitting the day before inauguration, no alarming sounds were heard after the tremor, and a more in-depth inspection was carried out, but no damages were being reported. The brewery had withstood the ‘BIG ONE’; due to occur every 100 years! The only interesting side effect the earthquake had on the beer was that an already ended and cooled down fermentation suddenly started bobbling again, which it continued to do for another couple of days. The next day at the inauguration, everyone was, of course, talking about the big earthquake, and the fact that the three owners must be in contact with the Nordic gods, since they were able to pull off such a marketing stunt the day before opening the brewery and introducing their first beer named ‘Skjálfti’, or ‘Earthquake’ in English!

It will be interesting to see if Iceland’s biggest volcano, Hekla, being very present and visible just 20 kilometres east of the brewery, will erupt when Ölvisholt Brugghús next beer, which is named Hekla, will be introduced later this year.

## IMPORT AND EXPORT

Due to the connection established between GourmetBryggeriet and Ölvisholt Brugghús, an import/export trade will start up in the fall of 2008, where GourmetBryggeriet will export some of its products to Iceland, which will be sold and distributed by Ölvisholt Brugghús and vice versa. So in a few months, the first Icelandic craft beers will be introduced on the Danish market.

## GOURMETTURNKEY

The GourmetTurnkey business of GourmetBryggeriet has also been involved in the start-up of Vilcon Bryghus (Vilcon Brewery) in Slagelse and Bryghuset Vendia (The Vendia Brewery) in Hjørring; both of them being restaurant breweries. The latter started up in October, 2007, and has already received a number of superb restaurant reviews from various newspapers and magazines in Denmark. So, if the reader is passing through Hjørring, it is highly recommended to pay the brewery a visit. GourmetTurnkey has another two brewery restaurant projects in the pipeline, with likely installation start-ups around the beginning of and in the spring of 2009.

As a last remark, it should be mentioned that the writer of this article did not feel the earthquake at all even though he was not far from the epicentre when it hit. Conclusion: the water in the Blue Lagoon is a good shock absorber... ☺



*More than a year ago, two friends suggested Jon Gunnlaugsson to start up a microbrewery on the farm Ölvisholt. Today, the former milk producer is fermenting beer in the old barn.*