

VØRTER BEER

Vørter beer (wort beer) is a non-alcoholic, unfermented drink produced through the carbonation and sterilisation of wort made from malt, hops and water. It is thus, per definition, not a beer and should not be labelled beer, but was given a dispensation to this in the Norwegian Beer Act of 1912 regarding production and taxation of beer. The reason for this is found in the history of Vørter beer.

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HISTORY

At the beginning of the 20th century, the management of Schou's Brewery in Oslo had learned that a non-alcoholic beer had been produced abroad. They found this interesting and charged brewmaster Lauritz Braaten with creating such a beer. The beer of that time was dark, and he came up with a dark, aromatic, slightly hoppy, unfermented drink. It was a brewery product based on wort and, therefore, it seemed natural to call it 'Vørter beer'. In order to have the exclusive rights to the beverage, the brewery took out a patent in brewmaster Braaten's name. In May 1903, Vørter beer was launched and received a very positive welcome.

At a time when the quality of the drinking water usually was poor and nutrition was inadequate in some communities, Vørter beer played an important role. Since it was non-alcoholic, it could also be given to children, the sick and convalescent. In the course of three months, over 400 Norwegian doctors had given their written recommendation of the new beverage and a brochure was published about it as guidance for the public.

The non-alcoholic beer attracted attention, not least within the camp of prohibition. Already on 2 May, *The Norwegian Goodtemplar* wrote: 'Non-alcoholic Vørter beer is this week's great news for the temperance movement. It is Schou's Brewery who has solved the major problem we have been discussing for so long: to have a good, nutritious, tasty

and absolutely non-alcoholic drink. To think that Schou's Brewery was to do the temperance movement such a favour!' The paper *Arbeideren* (The Worker) expressed the same opinion on 26 May. The paper reported that the product →



had already gained a footing in almost all temperance coffee shops, and added, 'We recommend Vørter beer to the working communities who do not serve alcoholic beverages at their gatherings and parties.'

Vørter beer was launched many years before there was any law on the production and sale of beer. Since the product was well-established in the market and was greatly supported by the temperance movement, the product got a dispensation to be categorised as beer when the law came.

The enthusiasm for Vørter beer remained so high among the temperance movement that, on their initiative, the Ministry of Social Affairs made sure the patent holder, brewmaster Lauritz Braaten, was awarded the King's Order of Merit in gold in 1915.

Extract from an announcement in 1903: 'We have succeeded in producing a Beer which wholly is a Sustenance and contributes to maintaining and increasing the Health and Well-Being of healthy and frail People alike, Convalescents and those who suffer from Nervousness, Neurasthenia, Neuralgia, Arthritis, chronic Rheumatism, Kidney Disease, Heart Disease, Gastritis, Anaemia and Lung Disease. Moreover, it is particularly suited for total Abstainers, Sportsmen, Women and Children.' Despite this advertising, it was among this last group that the majority of Vørter beer consumers were found.

Nutrition councils, nursing advice and established women writers often mentioned Vørter beer as a useful supplement for 'filling up the breast'.

'Mummy is best – with Vørter beer in the breast,' Tande-P once said.

For many years, Vørter beer was a popular sports drink and was, as such, an established drink at every skiing event and after all sports activities in general. Later on, more modern energy drinks took over this segment.

Factually speaking, Vørter beer is a soft drink based on natural raw materials which restores the fluid balance and provides easily absorbable 'fuels' for the body. In addition, it contains small amounts of various vitamins and salts, as shown in the nutrition information on the opposite page.

When the patent expired, all the Norwegian breweries started producing Vørter beer (Source: *Mindeskript til Hundreaarsjubileet 1921*, by Nils Vogt. From Shou's Brewery).

VØRTER BEER AND THE OLYMPIC RINGS

Frydenlund's Brewery registered the Olympic rings for its product lines early on. In 1938, the brewery's Vørter beer got a new label with the five Olympic rings.

Many years later, the Norwegian Olympic Committee requested that the brewery deleted the record, as the committee increasingly realised the commercial value attached to the Olympic rings.

The brewery met the request of the Olympic Committee and deleted the registration of all other products besides Vørter beer, which was linked to sports. Since 1968, the Norwegian Olympic Committee has had the exclusive rights to the Olympic symbol in Norway on all products, except Frydenlund's Vørter beer. Later, Frydenlund's Brewery merged with Ringnes Brewery and, today, it is the label of Ringnes' Vørter beer that displays the five Olympic rings (Source: *Innblikk*, issue 4, 1987).

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Vørter beer is brewed with an original gravity of approximately 9.5% Plato (Source: *BIF- rapport*, no. 22, by A.D. Haukeli).

Energy		38 Cal/100g
Total Dry Matter		9.1-9.5 g/100g
Carbohydrates		8.2-8.6 g/100g
Fructose	0.1-0.2 g/100g	
Glucose	0.8-1.0 g/100g	
Sucrose	0.25-0.35 g/100g	
Maltose	4.0-4.5 g/100g	
Maltotriose	1.2-1.6 g/100g	
Total Protein		400 mg/100g
Proteins	70-100 mg/100g	
Polypeptides	70-100 mg/100g	
Peptides	40-70 mg/100g	
Amino acids	100-130 mg/100g	
Nucleic acid derivatives	20-40 mg/100g	

Thiamine		0.04 mg/100g
Riboflavin		0.04 mg/100g
Pyridoxine		0.06 mg/100g
Biotin		0.001 mg/100g
Niacin		1.0 mg/100g
Pantothenic acid		0.1 mg/100g
Folic acid		0.01 mg/100g
Inositol		10 mg/100g
Potassium		35 mg/100g
Sodium		1 mg/100g
Calcium		2 mg/100g
Magnesium		10 mg/100g
Silicium		5 mg/100g
Bitterness		8-16 EBU
pH		4.8
CO₂, % w/w		0.45

SALES

Vørter beer used to be a significant product, but sales have dropped radically. While the beer accounted for 13 per cent of Norway's total beer sales in 1950, it accounts for approximately 0.6 per cent today.

VØRTER BEER 106 YEARS

It is now 106 years since Vørter beer was first launched,

and it continues to be sold without significant changes in the recipe.

As stated at its 75th anniversary, and still applying:

'There still is something good in this world which is not unhealthy, amoral or fattening. It is not even particularly taxed' (Source: *Innblick*, issue 3, 1987). ¹