



FREE BEER IS GOOD BEER!

 NIELS KIENS, CHAIRMAN, 'DET FRI ØL' ('THE FREE BEER'), INDEPENDENT DANISH BREWERS' ASSOCIATION, NK@KONGEBRYG.DK

In the editorial, I very brazenly declared that the overall 'state of affairs' in the Danish world of beer and brewing is good. It was not specified there, but I could have added that this, on an overall basis, also goes for the relationship between brewers and breweries in general, as I believe this to be the case. But, even in Paradise all is not well, and a significant group of smaller breweries have, over time, become so dissatisfied with the conditions for competition on the Danish beer market – specifically the way, in their view, the big companies limit competition by keeping small, independent breweries out of festivals, bars and restaurants. Thus, we at the SBR found it essential to let these brewers – in the shape of their association called 'The Free Beer' – tell us who they are and express their views in this Denmark theme issue of the SBR. Happily, the chairman, Niels Kiens from the brewery 'Kongebryg', obliged and sent us the following.

With their manifesto about free and fair competition, the breweries in the brewers' association 'The Free Beer' go to battle in a market which is increasingly controlled according to the rules set by the big breweries.

'The Free Beer', founded June 1st, 2018, is first and foremost the new interest organisation for the small and independent breweries, but all breweries that can approve and adapt the association's manifesto are welcome in the association.

The association 'The Free Beer' fights for free and fair access to the market for beer and is founded on the following manifesto:

1. As a brewer, you must strive to ensure that the information provided to the consumer about any beer will be honest, accurate and comprehensive. This comprises raw materials, place of production, place of packaging, name of the beer, name of the brewery and description of the flavour profile.
2. As a brewer, you are independent of other breweries, and you are honest and clear about the ownership conditions of your brewery.
3. As a brewer, you work for diversity and innovation within the business.
4. As a brewer, you love good beer and strive for the proliferation of the good beer. Thus, you support free and fair access to the market alongside other brewers. Exclusivity contracts with bars, restaurants, festivals, etc. should thus not exist.
5. As a brewer, sponsorships of and marketing contributions to events, venues, bars, restaurants, etc. may not imply demands of excluding products from other breweries.
6. As a brewer, you put your name/signature on the labels of bottles and kegs as a guarantee that the beer is brewed according to the principles of 'The Free Beer'.
7. As a brewer, you strive to share knowledge, experience and inspiration with your colleagues.
8. As a brewer, you are obliged to maintain and develop the language of beer, making this as nuanced as possible.

Without 'The Free Beer', there is a risk that the Danish beer revolution will stagnate. The small breweries originally revolted at the start of the beer revolution 20 years ago, giving the Danes a multitude of new, good beers, and it is still the small breweries that drive the development forward. But the market is under



**MEMBERS OF
'THE FREE BEER'**
BENZOBREW
BIRKERØD BRYGHUS
BRANDBYGEGAARD
BRYGHUSET MØN
BRYGHUSET RØDE PORT
DTU BRYGHUS
FREDERICIA BREWPUB
FREDERIKSBERG BRYGHUS
HERSLEV BRYGHUS
HYLDALS BRYGHUS
JACOBI CRAFT BREW

KONGBRYG
LUNDUMSKOV BRYGHUS
LØKKEN BRYGHUS
NØRREBRO BRYGHUS
MUSICON MIKROBRYGGERI
SPYBREW
STORMGÅRDEN HÅNDBRYG
SYNDIKATET
VESTSLESVIGSK BRYGHUS
VIBORG BRYGHUS
VRÅ BRYGHUS
ØLLUMINATI
ØLVÆRKET

THE BOARD OF 'THE FREE BEER'

CHAIRMAN: NIELS KIENS, KONGBRYG
VICE-CHAIRMAN: JENS LYNGE LARSEN, SPYBREW
TREASURER: HANS LAUTRUP NØRGAARD, VESTSLESVIGSK BRYGHUS
BOARD MEMBER: TORE JØRGENSEN, HERSLEV BRYGHUS
BOARD MEMBER: MIKKEL AMMITZBØLL, ØLVÆRKET

pressure like never before during the beer revolution. The big breweries have discovered that there's money in craft beer, a phenomenon the big brewers now, supported by millions of kroner for marketing, have taken over from the small breweries.

It is possible that the 1825 new Danish beers last year and the more than 200 Danish breweries paint a picture of a healthy market, but that is a rosy picture. Many Danish breweries are very small, and they fight an unfair battle for entry onto the market. The big breweries are slowly but surely tightening the grip on the market with exclusivity contracts, marketing contributions and other tricks.

The big breweries invent sub-brands that are copies of the small breweries. They copy flavour, beer styles and marketing so that consumers have difficulties telling the difference between these and the real deal from the small, independent breweries. The big breweries also engage tightly with the supermarkets. The supply on the shelves is not a true picture of a market with variation and quality. It is fake. All the beers come from very few breweries and importers. The consumers are cheated and the development of Danish beer is hindered.

In the on-trade segment (bars, restaurants, music venues, etc.), we unfortunately see the same development. Nine out of ten times it is the small, independent breweries that lose the battle. They quite simply do not have the marketing budgets needed

and, in general, they lack the economic and organisational muscle to win that battle.

The small, independent breweries do, however, have an important weapon: they can get together, stick together and fight together! This is what the currently circa 25 member breweries of 'The Free Beer' are doing, using the association's logo on bottles, cans and in their general marketing. This makes it clear to the consumers what they are drinking.

We see the same development in many countries. The small and independent breweries join together and fight using a common logo. We see this, for example, in the USA, England and Italy. The many European associations are in the process of forming an Independent Brewers of Europe.

With the logo for 'The Free Beer', we wish to change the current situation, fighting for the cause of the small, independent breweries. In, for example, the USA, England and Italy, the independent breweries have successfully launched a logo for independents. There's lots of life in the movement among the small breweries, both nationally and internationally. The objective of 'The Free Beer' is to reach 50 member breweries within the next 2 years. In England, SIBA (The Society of Independent British Brewers) currently has around 800 members, and the number of Italian breweries in Unionbirrai is over 425. The movement has just started, because nothing suggests that the market, by itself, will loosen up and give more room for free and fair competition.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Niels Kiens started his working career as an engineer at the Rexam/Ardagh glassworks in Holmegaard from 2005 until 2012, when Niels started his professional brewing career at Gavnø Slotsbryggeri for about a year, followed by a similar stint as a brewer at Bryggeriet Føniks. In 2013 Niels established his own brewery, Kongebryg, where he since has served as Head Brewer and owner.