

We at Mahrs Bräu are sad.

Over the past years we've developed a strong relationship with Stone Brewing through various collaborations. Moreover I have developed a close personal relationship with the "Beer Jesus" Greg Koch himself.

We're very sad that Greg and Stone are leaving Mariendorf. Greg accomplished something crazy – an unbelievable feat which took a lot of courage and unyielding optimism. He and I, we both live what we do. We are visionaries. The lives of visionaries are never easy.

Beer is a very emotional thing for both brewers and for beer fans. It's not easy to get a foothold in Germany where many beer fans are bound to the tradition of a 500 year old Purity Law (Reinheitsgebot) and often favor the beers they think of as "theirs". The German beer market is very solidified and most prefer to drink "their own" local styles. Greg knew this when he came here. Nevertheless, he wanted to bring his American-style craft beers and the "Stone Brewing spirit" to a new audience. And even though he knew that Mariendorf wasn't in the center of town, that the next bus station wasn't exactly around-the-corner, that the Germans preferred regional beer – even though he knew all of that he still invested 25 Million in the space that he believed was the perfect venue from which to realize his vision for Europe. It's almost impossible to imagine something like this in Franconia. Most people here are incredibly devoted to "their brewery from home." But we were sure that Berlin was "the market" where Greg Koch – the Californian beer super star - could make it happen. Unfortunately not. We believe Greg when he says it was made far more difficult in part by complicated building codes and German bureaucracy. I understand Greg's decision and support him. It's exhausting to try to swim upstream and at a certain point it's time to take stock and adjust your strategy. It takes an incredible amount of energy and sometimes it's easy to wonder if it's all worth it. We need to do much more to engage beer drinkers and to get them on board with new concepts and new tastes. Beer sales are down and setting up a successful brewery is a huge undertaking. There are many challenges you have to (want to) overcome to make it work.

Mahrs Bräu is now even more steadfast in their belief that visionaries like Greg Koch should have our full support. All of us have to keep thinking outside of the box. We must stay on the ball. That's the way it is for all of us. It's very exciting to watch craft beer markets grow in other countries. This inspirational growth is one of the many reasons Mahrs Bräu works to collaborate with brewers from all over the world to bring extraordinary beers and new sensory adventures to our hometown of Bamberg.

We need visionary brewers like Greg Koch and we are very thankful that there are (still) leading figures and professionals around in our community. What Greg has accomplished within the last 25 years has really inspired us. We really appreciate what he did here. Greg can be very proud about what he has done and is doing - no matter if it's in a huge facility in Mariendorf or at an intimate Stone Tap Room in Prenzlauer Berg. He is my friend.

Stephan Michel