

THE OEPFELCHAMMER

The «Oepfelhammer» has been in the Himstedt-Baur family's hands for over 60 years already. Karin Henner-Himstedt, the current manager of the Oepfelhammer, followed in her mother's footsteps, after having completed her education at a hotel management school. The restaurant's oldest part, the «Öli» (the letter «ö» is pronounced like «i» in «sir») is



Zurich's oldest wine tavern and has remained unchanged since it opened in 1801, with two exceptions: originally, the Öli was lit by oil lamps; and the windows had to be exchanged to shield the neighbors on louder evenings. The building itself was built in 1357, and first appears under the name «Zum Judenhut» in records from 1410. The name «Oepfelhammer» (apple chamber) derives from its former use as a fruit store for a monastery. From the early 17th up to the 19th century, the building also served as a bakery, known especially for the local onion-tarts.

The wooden serving trays for these tarts were used by students to slide down the staircase. The name «Öli» derives from the German word for oil, since the expression "oiling the voice" is used for the warming up of one's vocal chords.

THE TAVERN ÖLI

The Öli (Oeli) was the favourite tavern of Gottfried Keller (1819-1890), Zurich's most famous poet and writer, and the canton's first official secretary who lived right across the street. After his death, Professor Julius Stiefel started to lecture his students about German literature and the characteristics of Zurich's wines, and claimed to know everything about the local wines of the past 50 years. This is also the time, around which the «beam challenge» (Balkenprobe) was initiated. Whoever wanted to be part of the local student association had to pass this test. Boris, the Öli's waiter, has refrained from ever attempting to climb across the two beams, claiming that it is not part of his contract. The tavern still attracts both regulars and tourists from all over the world, who enjoy the laid-back atmosphere within the respect of the tavern's rich traditions. Many locals, and an increasing number of young people, enjoy the great food and service. The Öli itself can seat up to 50 people, and there is additional space in the other rooms of the restaurant.



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translated by Stephan Tetter

Further information: www.oepfelhammer.ch

www.neugässli.ch --> Öli

This sheet can be purchased for 5.- CHF

Rules of conduct at the wine tavern Oeli

The Oepfelhammer is a restaurant where socializing, reveling and singing are encouraged, thriving on traditions that have developed over the course of more than 200 years and handed down from generation to generation.

Please make sure you do your part to ensure that these traditions are maintained by observing the following rules:

Take off your hat and coat upon entering – after all, the Oepfelhammer is a place to linger! Women over 60, men over 80 and people in traditional dress may keep their headwear on.

Greet those already present – no-one is a stranger here!

Before you sit down, find out whether the seat is taken. There's always room for polite people!

Sit properly at the table; only louts put their feet on seats!

Smooching is frowned upon in the Oepfelhammer. Kisses to toast and greet others are obviously excluded from this rule.

Should you propose to drink something other than water, grape juice, wine or port after 6:00 pm, you can do so outside the wine tavern.

Good singers are always very welcome; guitars are available. The following types of songs may be sung: student songs, hiking songs, songs about home and the like. Schmaltzy songs and drinking songs are not suitable nor is hand clapping as an accompaniment!

Anyone not singing along should remain silent or at least speak very softly. If a singer asks for silence for a solo effort, absolute quiet should be a matter of course.

Singing for commercial gain is not acceptable. Exception: the Salvation Army!

There is no clapping in the Oepfelhammer. Approval is shown by knocking on the table. Applause may also be expressed in half-litre measures.

Anyone wanting to take the beam test should arrive in good time. They should inform regulars of their intention so that people can move to the side. Kicks to the head or elsewhere are unpleasant...

If you have to go out, whether just for a short while or actually leaving, and you're jammed against the wall, don't disturb the whole row. Climb over the table instead. Tables and guests are strong enough!

The landlord, staff and regulars help ensure that these rules are compiled with! Take their instructions to heart.

The Oepfelhammer team

THE BEAM CHALLENGE

1. One starts by climbing the first beam, the one closer to the windows. This is the biggest hurdle of the beam challenge. Women are allowed to start from the bench.
2. You climb from the first to the second beam head first.
3. At the second beam the upper body is bent down by 90°.
4. Now a full glass of white wine, offered by the Oepfelhammer, has to be emptied in one sip, without spilling.
5. After coming back down, one is allowed to carve his/her name into the wood.
6. Every person is allowed three attempts per evening.

RECORDS

The oldest successful contestant was 67 years old at the time.

A blind man has once climbed around the two beams in a figure-of-eight for 88 times within 88 minutes.

