

Traditional Boost

Traditional beer brewing has become very popular in these past weeks and people have been using it to make money.

On 1 July 2020, when the country moved to Level 3 of the lockdown, the ban on alcohol was lifted and alcohol products were back on the market. Alcohol was initially taken off the market due to its potentially harmful effects on people, and the need to contain the Coronavirus. So, when the product was brought back we could clearly see a decrease in precautionary measures being taken by many. Alcohol has the ability to affect one's behaviour and one's capacity to think clearly. Hence, when people started consuming alcohol again there was a noticeable surge in crime, car accidents and reckless behaviour and due to these factors the ban was reinstated.

The brewing of traditional beer has been part of South African cultures for many years and it seems that it has gained prominence in the past couple of weeks. Due to the lack of alcoholic products on the market, consumers have gone back to their roots and have started drinking traditional beer. These include beverages like umqombothi, ginger beer, pineapple beer and gin made from the fermentation of fruit. In many communities people who have the recipes and know how to make these beers have started making and selling traditional beer.

Anna* a resident of the Mandela Square informal settlement in Kliptown has been one of the people who has been selling traditional beer. "I saw that people were starting to make ginger (beer) and selling it so I decided to do the same. I have been making these beers for years for family functions but I never thought of selling it. I am surprised at how many people are buying. This money helps a lot," said Anna.

Regardless of the ban, alcohol is still being sold through back door channels at hefty prices and because of this, the new traditional beer market has grown substantially. Irrespective of lockdown regulations, social gatherings seem to still not be a thing of the past, and these beverages are drunk at many of these gatherings.

A litre of traditional beer goes for the low price of R10 compared to alcohol which is sold between R35 to R800, depending on the brand. The demand for traditional beer is growing steadily every day as more people are gaining interest. The business of traditional beer has also become an income generator and there is no stop in sight for it.

This article was submitted on 11 August 2020. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.