



# KALIK BEER - A NATIONAL TREASURE

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From the days of *honey mead*, called the Mother of Beer centuries ago, every individual beer has its own history. Out in California, Golden Pacific Brewing in partnership with half a dozen retired Oakland Raiders put out a craft beer called what else? Legends Lager. Up in Canada, where beer stores often stock two hundred brands, the serious beer drinker can start with a Red Rocket Ale, ride a Kicking Horse Lager to Snowy Peak Pilsner, catch a Golden Honey Zephyr Ale, then finish with a Dead Man's Lite.

In my view, however, after years of savoring the suds, the best of the best has the oddest name-Kalik. Like all beers, Kalik has "history." Maybe just as important--to me anyway--is that Kalik and I have a shared history.

Kalik is no specialty beer gurgling out of a micro brewer's basement vat. The Kalik brewery in the Bahamas has an annual brewing capacity of 1.7 million cases, and we're talking 24's. More than 50% of the Bahamas' market share is Kalik. There's enough of a message in these facts alone to suggest popping a tab may be worth something to your taste.

But, of course, as always, there's a catch. As with any other national treasure, the owner country is selfishly possessive. To have a Kalik, you have to go to the Bahamas. Kalik, you see, is the reflection of a culture, the island culture of the Bahamas, unique in the world even if - as is the case with Kalik, Heineken owns a piece of the action.

The only way Kalik gets out of the islands is in tourists' luggage. I, for one, faced with duty-free "everything" alcohol-wise at prices so low tax men have coronaries when they see them, always load up on the Kalik for my permissible limit when, sadly, my brief stay is at an end. Forget, for example, that Bacardi Rum is made in the Bahamas. Forget 75% or more off the price of everything else, including imported single malt Scotches. Kalik is what it's about.

Enough Kalik has found its way abroad to have won three consecutive Monde Selection Gold Medals from the International Institute for Beer Quality Selections. That's certainly reason to raise a mug.

But, however good the beer, ambience makes it better. Kalik is available anywhere in the Bahamas where beer is sold.

You're laying waste to your AmEx card on a \$300 dinner at Graycliff's. Still, here you can wash down the caviar and prime rib with a couple of Kaliks while scanning neighboring tables for famous faces-movie stars, the guy who sold you your car, your wife (or husband, as the case may be). Drop into the casino at Atlantis on Paradise Island, sip a Kalik while you punch up the slots, enjoying the best percentage payout in the international gambling world.

Mellowness is what characterizes this beer above all else and indeed, mellowness is what characterizes the Bahamas. Everything is laid back but nothing is comatose. Kalik is an all-day beer. It smoothes the sharp edges and banks the curves but it doesn't stop you from getting where you want to go or doing what you want to do.

The Bahamas is a semi-tropical area. Kalik is a light-ish beer; a few won't make you sluggish and one'll quench your thirst faster than a Gatorade.

Bahamian laws around consumption are reasonable. You can walk down the street, sit on the curb, ride in a cab or public transit and drink your beer. One at a time, in a brown paper bag. The stores are helpful; they'll sell you singles, open one on the spot at your request, and put it in a bag for you.

But everyone knows the Caribbean and the Gulf are hotbeds of throbbing beats, fomenting passions, and erupting pleasures. So they are, and Kalik has found its place in that milieu by its very name. "Kalik" is the sound made by cowbells, a key instrument used by the bands in the Bahamas annual Junkanoo Festival held during the Christmas and New Year's season. This is Mardi Gras without muggings. This is Spring Break without having to return to classes. Junkanoo is nearly 200 years old, and those cowbells have been there since the beginning.

What's great about cowbells? Anyone can play them. What's great about Kalik? Anyone can drink it. You don't have to go to Atlantis or the local Club Med to enjoy it. A couple of years ago, I was shooting some pool with a Bahamian friend in a cavernous pool hall in Fox Hill, way off the beaten tourist track in Nassau. Raised a finger and got a Kalik quick as a wink. Probably the pool hall stocked other brands, dust covered, shoved in a cupboard somewhere, but it was a given, that to raise a finger was to ask for a Kalik.

It remains, however, that few countries have a national beer; fewer countries protect it like a national treasure; and only the Bahamas has a beer of such quality that it's worth the effort.

*(Internet Source: [http://www.bahamasgateway.com/kalik\\_beer.htm](http://www.bahamasgateway.com/kalik_beer.htm))*