



Kingdom Breweries Ltd's new brewmaster, Peter Haupenthal, says the company plans to produce a number of different beers to go on sale this year.

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Wednesday, 17 March 2010 15:01 Ellie Dyer

German brewer Peter Haupenthal arrives in Cambodia as Kingdom prepares to make its mark

CREATING the perfect tippel to capture Cambodia's consumer beer market is a new test for Peter Haupenthal, a German brewmaster flown in to Cambodia by Kingdom Breweries Ltd (KBL).

Born in small-town Germany, Haupenthal has a long career creating new brews in the most unlikely places around the world, from Canada to the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific, Nigeria and South America.

Following his arrival in Phnom Penh last month, the newcomer is hoping to create the recipe for success for a new pilsner from KBL.

The lager, set to have a clouded leopard as its logo, will be the first product for KBL. Production will begin at its US\$4 million factory on the banks of the Tonle Sap river later this year.

Haupenthal said he hopes his lager will differentiate itself from typical tropical brews.

“In most hot climates, you will not normally see flavourful beers,” he said Tuesday in his office before a tour of the brewery, which will house 21 fermentation tanks once construction is completed.

“Instead you see high carbon dioxide content, because that is the drink’s most refreshing part.”

Haupenthal wants a darker beer, one with more hops. However, balancing the mix of malt, hops, and rice is a delicate process.

In Europe, specialist beer institutions are employed to create recipes. At Kingdom, the new brew is in Haupenthal’s hands.

He plans to craft three batches for a seven- to 10-day taste test scheduled for June.

Following the tests, he will tweak the recipe for mass production, balancing malt, which can get expensive at \$1,000 per tonne, with other ingredients.

“If people decide they like a beer without rice, then we will make it,” he said.

In the future, Haupenthal, who once developed a hibiscus beer in Canada, wants to diversify for Oktober Fest and beyond.

“We will make a mango beer, there is no question about it,” Haupenthal said. “It is the food of this country.”

The importance of taste in the market place has also been emphasised by Koh Tai Hong, the general manager of Cambodia Brewery Ltd (CBL), which makes Anchor, Gold Crown, Tiger and ABC stout.

In an interview with the Post earlier this year, he predicted sales growth for Cambodia in 2010, following a 10 percent decline for CBL in 2009, adding: "I don't want to talk about fighting or competition. The point is to produce the best quality beer and then let the customer decide."

In five years time, Hauptenthal said, Kingdom hopes to be producing 40,000 hectolitres of beer a year.

The company, in which Leopard Capital has a 55.5 percent stake and a \$2 million investment, is not aiming to challenge the likes of Angkor and Tiger.

Instead, KBL said it plans to create its niche with boutique beers.

Space to expand

If neighbouring countries' booms in drinks sales are indicators, the country has room for more drinkers – Cambodia is expected to consumer more beer as the economy develops.

In 2007 Cambodia consumed just 11.8 litres of beer per head, less than Vietnam's average 18.8 litres, Laos' 19.6 litres and Thailand's 31.9 litres, according to the International Centre for Alcohol Policies.

Kingdom CEO Peter Brongers said the company's market identity will help make the most of any potential growth, celebrating "what makes this country beautiful and different".