

STRONG!



Next round: Aqua Monaco

How is it possible to conquer a young, hip and unpredictable audience with something as seemingly simple as water? And doing good at the same time? Aqua Monaco has the answer.



Amalia Mazzarello – a young boxer from Argentina, with tons of ambition but little money, wanted to advance her boxing career in Munich. She endorses Aqua Monaco for a year.



Photo: Stéfanos Notopoulos

The three musketeers: Timo Thurner, Florian Breimesser and Robert Graenitz (from left) joined forces to launch Munich's most local mineral water. The talents from their previous professional lives complement their joint business perfectly – Thurner is a trained graphic designer, Breimesser a lawyer and Graenitz a restaurateur.

A basement in a pastel-colored old building in the trendy Haidhausen district of Munich. Whitewashed brick walls, a handful of desks at which ten young employees sit, bent over their laptops. Light bouncing off a bar covered entirely in black ceramic tiles, its reflection revealing a row of stylish bar stools made from natural wood. The walls feature a few long shelves displaying rows of bottles, complemented by cocktail books and lifestyle magazines from Mixology to Monocle. The home of Aqua Monaco.

Aqua Monaco is a beverage company, and you might think that says it all. Far from it. Because the team behind the brand shows personality and attitude in everything they do. It starts with the recipes developed in-house and goes on to their diverse social, cultural and ecological commitments. The result: Aqua Monaco has not only multiple award-winning products but also huge credibility in the market. The company is currently celebrating its tenth birthday and is considered the most successful local start-up in its segment.

Aqua Monaco has its roots firmly in Munich, the idea conceived in a beer garden by three friends. On a mild evening in the summer of 2008, Timo Thurner, Florian Breimesser and Robert Graenitz contemplated over a cold beer under a chestnut tree why Munich didn't have its own mineral

water. After all, beer is brewed everywhere here. The three couldn't come up with a reason. "Breweries, coffee shops and delicatessen – there was all of that in Munich," says Timo Thurner, a trained graphic designer. On the wall behind his desk on the shelf, there is a selection of organic lemonades. "Why not water?" Over another beer, a decision was made: "We are going to create Munich's very own mineral water brand. As simple as that." Timo Thurner grins.

The plan was hatched – but progress was very, very slow. Finding water turned out to be much more difficult than anticipated. A few months passed, in which the graphic designer Thurner, the restaurateur Graenitz, and the lawyer Breimesser continued to pursue their day jobs until finally, a solution emerged: A local brewery sourced their liquid raw material from an ancient reservoir – glacier water from the last ice age, hidden under a gravel plain at a depth of 150 meters. And: the brewery would allow them to tap into it. An agreement was reached on the joint use of the well – which was mineral water certified – and the ball started rolling.

The trio quickly agreed on the name: Aqua Monaco. Easy to pronounce and international: Aqua, Latin, combined with the Italian name for Munich, which some consider the northernmost city of Italy. Thurner developed a logo: a white swan – a symbol of purity and loyalty – on a blue



Photos: Thonet



Good taste is not only evident in the drinks. The design of their headquarters in the Haidhausen district of Munich is a testimony to their flair and quality aspirations. The chairs and bar stools are the result of a cooperation with Thonet, the iconic furniture brand.

background. “The swan not only seemed appropriate to us because it is emblematic, it’s also a part of the Bavarian history as the swan is featured in the name of places such as Schwangau and Neuschwanstein, but it is less common than the lion.”

Today the swans in the Haidhausen basement no longer only swim in blue waters; the logo appears in all the colors of the rainbow on a number of small bottles. “From water came more,” explains Timo Thurner. The numerous long drinks consumed by the three friends inspired another idea. In 2013, two years after the company was founded, the trio launched their first mixer range: a bitter lemon, a ginger ale, and a tonic based on their own recipes. They also launched the Golden Monaco ‘Extra Dry’ tonic, developed with Klaus St. Rainer, owner of the Golden Bar. The Golden Monaco tonic uses less sugar, but scores with a juniper note and cardamom. “We were the first to bring a Dry Tonic Water onto the market and it was enthusiastically received: by consumers, professional mixologists, but also by the competition.”

Apparently, beverage giants kept a watchful eye on the rising stars from Munich because even when the three launched their own Coke as a mixer, the idea was quickly copied. “It’s true, Schweppes & Co. are on our heels, but we still have the lead,” explains Thurner. “Our creations are a result of passion and the freedom to experiment, and it shows. It’s what

sets us apart from our competition. It is rather unusual for founders to develop their own recipes,” says Thurner, not without pride. A quinine-free organic herbal tonic, a sign of changing consumer behavior, but also a sign of their own journey, the desire to find purpose, was the next step. Other sustainable products, an organic mixer line and a range of organic sodas followed. “It became important for us to operate sustainably and produce on a climate-neutral promise,” says Thurner.

Schweppes & Co. are hot on our heels, but we still have a lead

And as the brand celebrates ‘local’ as a concept, the entrepreneurs increasingly linked their activities with social and cultural commitments. With their ‘Good Monaco’ initiative, the friends regularly find opportunities to do good. Not just on their own doorstep, but always involving people. In addition to fighting poverty, Aqua Monaco promotes the local music scene providing money and space to support people. In 2020, for example, the company sponsored a young boxer from Argentina who had a lot of ambition but little money and wanted to advance her boxing career in Munich. She officially represented the brand for a year. “Amalia Mazzarello fits to our brand, even if we have so far been more involved in the arts rather than sports. It was a colorful and bold partnership that couldn’t be pigeonholed.”



The Golden Monaco 'Extra Dry' Tonic Water, which the trio developed together with Klaus St. Rainer from the Golden Bar in Munich, has won multiple awards. The trade magazine Mixology even confirmed that the founders had created a "new category" with the mixer.

The fact that the three founders approach their charitable work intuitively rather than strategically, makes their philanthropic work so authentic, personal and likeable. Attributes that can't be bought, as we know. When we're back behind the black-tiled bar at head office, experimenting, marrying matcha and guarana with ginger, cucumber, apple and mint, we do it as we always did: in small groups, with friends, refining until we are happy with the result.

We create products in small groups with friends and perfect them until everyone is happy with the result.

Market research? Large-scale product testing? "That's not us," laughs Thurner. "Our products remain unique and won't be polished to death."

Current initiatives are called 'Save Our Local Gastro' and 'Support Your Münchner Drinks'. Both intended to help all those who have a bloody nose from fighting the virus. Because nobody in the Munich bar scene should get knocked down, that's top priority at Aqua Monaco right now.



Four classics for your house bar

MONACO IN THE MIX

There is always a good reason for a good drink.
For example:

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BLACK MOJITO

Aqua Monaco Organic Cola

4 cl white rum

1 cl fresh lime juice

Ice cubes

Mint

Raspberries

Take a tumbler or highball glass with plenty of ice cubes. Pour the rum and lime juice over. Fill the glass with Aqua Monaco Organic Cola. Garnish the drink with fresh mint and a few raspberries.

MEZCAL LEMON

Aqua Monaco Organic Lemon Tonic

4 cl Mezcal

Ice cubes

Lime wedge

Chili salt

Take a tumbler or highball glass with plenty of ice cubes. Pour the mezcal over and fill the glass with Aqua Monaco Organic Lemon Tonic. Garnish the drink with a wedge of lime. Run the lime wedge around the rim of the glass and sprinkle with chili salt to taste.



MUNICH MULE

Aqua Monaco Organic Ginger Beer

4 cl gin

Ice cubes

Cucumber stick

Lime wedge

Take a copper mule or long drink glass with plenty of ice cubes. Pour the gin over and fill the glass with Aqua Monaco Organic Ginger Beer. Garnish the drink with a cucumber stick and a lime wedge.



JAPANESE MULE

Aqua Monaco Organic Ginger Beer

6 cl sake

Ice cubes

Prickly coriander (alternatively cucumber stick)

A quarter of a lime

Take a copper mule or long drink glass with plenty of ice cubes. Pour the sake over and fill the glass with Aqua Monaco Organic Ginger Beer. Garnish the drink with a few leaves of coriander (or a cucumber stick) and a quarter of a lime.

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