

# Drinking Age

By Karen Zhang

青少年过度饮酒会引发许多问题，因此国际上有了“法定饮酒年龄”一说。各国的法定饮酒年龄各有不同，在大多数国家，18岁或21岁以上的青年已经可以端起酒杯了。但有趣的是，一些国家和地区对饮酒的年龄并非那么“在意”，有些地方就没有规定法定饮酒年龄。在美国，当你满心欢喜地迎来自己18岁生日时，你会发现自己还有3年时间才能达到法定的饮酒年龄。在这三年里，小伙子们可以结婚，可以生小孩，可以参加投票，但就是不能在庆祝胜利时喝上一杯香槟。在加拿大南部的魁北、克马尼托巴湖地区，法定的饮酒年龄为18岁。其余加拿大地区的饮酒年龄为19岁。英国孩子16岁时，就可以自行购买酒，在就餐时饮用。生活在意大利无疑是最幸福的，在意大利没有任何关于饮酒年龄的限制，并且有着全球最高的葡萄酒产量。

Recently, I wanted to order a beer at a restaurant, but I was asked to show my ID. I must be looking younger than my actual age for it to even raise questions by the waitress about selling me an alcoholic beverage.

The legal drinking age in most American states is 21. Selling liquor to minors<sup>[未成年人]</sup> who are under 21 is strictly prohibited. So, if you have a baby face and you're over 21, you'd better bring an ID with you when you buy an alcoholic beverage. You're very likely to be asked for ID if your appearance raises a red flag to the sellers.

Another time when I was newly arrived in America, I was with an older friend at a supermarket. We were about to buy some beer for a party. But a cashier asked for my ID. I was taken aback. Never had it occurred to me to bring my passport to a store.

"I'm just new to this country," I explained. "I don't have my passport with me."

"I have my driver's license," my friend said as he was pulling out his ID from his wallet.

## Karen in America

"No," the cashier said, "I want to see hers. I know you have no problem in checking out the beer. But I'm not sure about her." She looked at me and asked, "How old are you?"

"26." I was shocked by the blunt<sup>[直率的]</sup> question. Isn't it considered taboo in Western culture to ask a woman's age?

"I'm sorry," the cashier said, "It's the company's policy that we should check young people's IDs when they're buying beer. Without ID proof, I can't sell this beer to you."

"But he is buying the beer, not me," I argued.

"No," the cashier countered. "Since you're in the same party, I'll still need to check your ID. A rule is a rule."

Just when I was about to refute<sup>[反驳]</sup>, my friend said, "All right, take out the beer. I'll get it another time."

We didn't get the beer until a few days later when my friend shopped by himself. I now understand why there are many late teen Westerners on a drinking binge<sup>[狂欢]</sup> in China and why many young Americans would like to party in Canada where the legal drinking age is 18 or 19. This is actually an American rendition<sup>[翻译]</sup> of a Chinese saying—every policy has a counter-strategy. [🔗](#)

