



Your Own Private Oktoberfest

Join Oktoberfest celebrations in Kennett Square, King of Prussia and Lancaster this month or create your own beer fest at home.

Ralph Fleming

You may not know that Oktoberfest dates back to 1810 and was originally a celebration to mark the marriage of Prince Ludwig of Bavaria to Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen and that it's still celebrated in Munich as the largest people's fair in the world.

Even if you don't care that this year's 180th Oktoberfest will likely see over six million liters of beer disappear during the 16-day celebration in Germany, let's just take a moment to consider a bit of beer history.

In the early 1800s before refrigeration, it was nearly impossible to brew beer in the summer—considering the hot weather and risk of bacterial infections. Beer's brewing season ended with the coming of spring and began again in the fall. Most beers were brewed in March (*Märzen*) and kept in cold storage over the spring and summer months and brought out for the annual Oktoberfest in the fall. *Märzenbier* (March beer) traditionally is full-bodied, rich, toasty, typically dark copper in color with a medium alcohol content.

While Oktoberfest is a beer drinkers' heaven, you don't have to travel all the way to Germany to experience the fun. Find a local

Oktoberfest to join the hoopla, good times and delicious beer (see the sidebar for details) or grab some great season-appropriate brews and have your own private Oktoberfest in your backyard.

Oh, and don't forget the lederhosen, oompah music and proper beer stein to add to the ambiance.

Your Oktoberfest Six-Pack

Here are six great Oktoberfest-Märzens to help get your party rolling. These beers pair well with all styles of German cuisine from bratwurst and sauerkraut to donuts and pastries. And this is a great time to enjoy their distinctive flavors.

Aecht Schlenkerla Rauchbier Märzen

from Bamberg, Germany

A Rauchbier is a German-style beer that dates back to the 1500s from the town of Bamberg. "Rauch" is the German word for smoke, and these smoked beers get their flavor by taking the green malts and drying them over an open fire of beech wood. They're dark in color and similar to the Oktoberfest style.

As you pour this unique beer into your glass, the smell of smoked beech wood rises almost immediately. With dark brown color and tan head, the beer offers the taste of smoky goodness as it hits the palate, but surprisingly is not overpowering. It's beautifully crafted and balanced. You can generally taste more of the malts than smoke.

This beer is not for everyone, but it's an old German-style of beer that's definitely worth trying at least once in your beer adventures. So why not try it for your own Oktoberfest?

Ayinger Oktoberfest-Märzen

from Aying, Germany

This traditional Oktoberfest-Märzen is dark amber in color, with a mild haziness and a thick tan head. With its malty aroma, the beer has a little hint of sweetness in its scent. The Ayinger Oktoberfest-Märzen has an almost toffee-like flavor that's very enjoyable for drinking.

This beer is not around for very long, so get your hands on it while you can!

Paulaner Oktoberfest-Märzen

from Munich, Germany

Paulaner Oktoberfest pours a very light shade of amber with a small, white head. You'll notice the smells of sweet caramel and breadly maltiness as you sip. This beer reminds me of the cool, crisp fall months and complements the season beautifully.

As you go for a swig of this brew, which tops out at 6 percent ABV (alcohol by volume), you'll notice that the aromas and flavors are both along the sweet and malty lines. There's a pleasant, mild hop bitterness to it as well. Overall, Paulaner Oktoberfest is medium-bodied and goes down smooth

and easy, just like a classic German fest-Märzen should.

Hacker - Pschorr Oktoberfest-Märzen

from Munich, Germany

This seasonal offering from Hacker-Pschorr is another classic example of a traditional, well-done Oktoberfest-Märzen. Perfect for a cool, fall evening around the fire, this beer pours with a golden, reddish-brown color. Its thin, small white head dissipates quickly.

Once again staying true to the style, the malty scent of lager yeast rises up out of your glass—or super cool-looking beer stein if you're lucky enough to have one—and hits the nose. The familiar malty flavor is present in this beer as well. This fall masterpiece has a wonderful, medium body with superb drinkability, in classic Märzen style.

Spaten Oktoberfest

from Munich, Germany

Spaten Oktoberfest is a world-class beer that's the epitome of a true fest-Märzen style. This amber-shaded brew has a wonderful carbonation and an almost cloud-like, fluffy, off-white head. Spaten Oktoberfest is nothing but pure malt pleasure!

The rich, sweet, malt aroma and flavor hit you almost immediately. With its medium body, this classic brew starts off sweet and finishes with a light, refreshing crispness. This year-round offering was brewed for sheer drinkability. Try it for yourself—you won't be disappointed.

Samuel Adams

from Boston, MA

Samuel Adams Oktoberfest is a great

example of a wonderful American-made version of this style. This fall seasonal beer pours with an autumn copper color and a tannish head. The common aromas of toasted malts, mils hops and sweet caramel are present as you drink this medium-bodied brew.

Well balanced, with just a little bit of sweetness, Samuel Adams Oktoberfest is a great beer to try first if you're not familiar with Märzen style beers, with a bit less alcohol (5.3 percent ABV). It's reasonably priced and easy to find in the fall. ♦

Ralph Fleming is beer manager at The Beer Shoppe, which won an award for Best To-Go Beer Selection. Owner Peter Vitale offers hundreds of craft, imported, microbrew and domestic beers. 44 Greenfield Ave., Ardmore. 484-416-3594; ArdmoreBeerShoppe.com.

Through October 20 Friday-Sunday

Lancaster Brewing Company Oktoberfest. Enjoy German food and Lancaster Brewing Oktoberfest Beer, 302 N Plum St., Lancaster. Fri.-Sat, 11:30 a.m. to 2 a.m.; Sun, to midnight. 717-391-6258; Lancaster-Brewing.com.

October 3, 5

King of Prussia Beerfest Royale. Oct. 3, "Donnerstag: Happy Hour," restaurants create exciting dishes to pair with craft brews; live music and cigar bar; 5:30 to 9, \$55-\$65. Oct. 5, Beerfest offers 50+ craft and international brewers, local restaurant and authentic German beer vendors. The Plaza at King of Prussia Mall, parking lot by Mall Blvd., King of Prussia. Sat., 12 to 3:30 and 6 to 9:30. \$45-\$55. KOPBeerFest.com.

October 5

16th Annual Kennett Brewfest. Sip national craft beers from 90+ regional breweries accompanied by great food and music. 600 S. Broad St., Kennett Square. 2 to 6 p.m. \$45; advance purchase only. Designated driver, \$15. Benefits Historic Kennett Square. 610-444-8188; KennettBrewfest.com.

