

Oktoberfest

- ~ Origin: In Munich to commemorate the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig (later King Ludwig I) and Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810.
- ~ Following the wedding: After the vows, a public celebration was held in a meadow outside Munich's Sendlinger Tor gate. The party lasted five days and the consensus was everyone had a good time.
- ~ First Anniversary: When it came time to celebrate the royal couple's first anniversary, an encore seemed natural and the royal family sprang for another party.
- ~ Date Change: Munich eventually assumed responsibility for the festival, but Bavaria's daunting autumn weather changed its opening day.
 - o In 1872, after repeated dousing with the cold rain and early snow, officials moved celebration back into September in search of more pleasant weather.
 - o Today, Oktoberfest begins on the second-to-last Saturday in September, runs 16 days, and ends on the first Sunday in October.
- ~ Events:
 - o A great horse race on October 17, 1810
 - o A parade took place for the first time in 1835
 - o 8,000 people-mostly from Bavaria-in traditional costumes walk from Maximilian Street, through the center of Munich, to the Oktoberfest, led by the Munchner Kindl (Munich Child, depicted in Munich's Coat of Arms)
 - o In 1881, booths selling bratwursts opened
 - o Games of skittles, large dance floors, and trees for climbing in the beer booths
- ~ In 1913, the Braurosl was founded, which was the largest Oktoberfest beer tent of all time, with room for about 12,000 guests.
- ~ From 1914 to 1918, WWI prevented celebration of Oktoberfest
- ~ In 1919 and 1920, Munich celebrated only "Autumn Fest"
- ~ From 1946 to 1948, after WWII, Munich once again celebrated only the "Autumn Fest"
- ~ By 1960, the Oktoberfest had turned into an enormous world-famous festival-the Largest Volksfest (people's fair) in the World
- ~ Though the horse races ended in 1960, an agricultural show is still held every three years.
- ~ Marzen, the Traditional Beer: named for March (Marz)
 - o Before refrigeration, brewing during summer's high temperatures and yeast-filled air led to uncontrolled fermentations and spoiled beer: brewing was forbidden by the authorities.
 - o Summer beers were brewed in March or April and laid down in barrels inside ice-filled caves to be drawn upon during the warmer months to come.
 - o Summering in the caves, the beers rested, composed themselves and mellowed until they were called upon in August (lagering-yeast works at cooler temperatures for clearer, brighter beer).
 - o In 1871 Munich brewer Josef Sedlmayer tried brewing a lighter, copper-colored beer based on a style that his son Gabriel had learned in Vienna, only heartier for the Oktoberfest.

- The hot summer in 1872 provided the decisive push. One banquet hall host, Michael Shottenhamel, was afraid to replace his supply with un-lagered winter beers, but his friend Josef revealed that he had a supply of new, copper-colored Marzen Beer.
 - ~ Cancellations:
 - 1813 First cancellation due to war against Napoleon
 - 1854 Cholera epidemic
 - 1866 Bavaria fought alongside Austria in a war against Prussia (now Northern Germany and parts of Poland)
 - 1873 another cholera epidemic
 - 1914-1918 World War I
 - 1919-1920 Recovery from war, a small “autumn festival” with two percent beer held
 - 1923-1924 Hyperinflation strikes Germany, no-one could afford it
 - 1939-1945 World War II
 - 1946-1948 Recovery from the war, autumn festivals held
 - ~ Oktoberfirsts
 - 1818 A merry-go-round and two wings are set up
 - 1819 The city of Munich assumes responsibility for the festival
 - 1820 Formal beer booths appear
 - 1823 Locals complain about foreign visitors, “the most strange sort of people”
 - 1826 Fireworks cap the festivities
 - 1850 The 60’ bronze Bavaria statue is unveiled
 - 1872 Classic copper-colored Oktoberfest beer is introduced; opening day moves to September
 - 1880 Brewers introduced electric lights and stoneware mugs with their logos
 - The Nazis use it for propaganda with the slogan “Proud Town, Merry Country;” they plan to destroy the Bavaria statue to make room for a conference hall. Their schemes, however, are interrupted later by the Allies
 - 1949 Oktoberfest returns
 - Cincinnati, Ohio claims to hold the “largest authentic Oktoberfest” in the U.S. (about 500,000 people).
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“With the long harvest season over, fall planting completed, and produce sold or stored, the villagers gathered to celebrate their bounty in an exuberant festival, the Kerb. This event signaled the end of the field season as the people prepared for the long Russian winter. Isolated on the steppe, the Volga German villages become quiet and self-sufficient until the next spring.”

“About this time of the year, after the slaughtering, the Volga Germans’ harvest festival, the KERB, took place. The dates varied from village to village, thus encouraging reciprocal visiting. It’s origin, which lay somewhere in Germany’s past, had been a church festival, the Kirchenweihe. In later times it lost most of all of its ecclesiastical connotations and became an occasion when the colonist youth could let off steam after a rigorous six months and more of strenuous field work. The pastors disapproved of the way it came to be celebrated and some thundered against it from the pulpit, for it degenerated into an event whose more attractive aspects for the young people often had to be carried on clandestinely. Somehow,

nevertheless, the celebrants found a way and a place to hold their forbidden dancing and to do their drinking. In villages where the Brotherhood was not so strong the authorities tolerated a reasonable degree of jollification, which lasted up to three days. Occasionally the young men got into fights, perhaps out of intercommunity rivalry or over challenged attentions to young women; occasionally these altercations led to serious injury”.

“Late fall and winter were the times when most weddings took place; a few occurred between seedling and haying, but none during Lent. The KERB festivals on occasion brought about developments that added couples hastily to the matrimonial candidates.”

“On 1 October we, along with the Evangelical Christian Community, celebrated the Harvest Festival...In bygone days Norkans combined the Harvest Fest with their “Kerb”-for each village it was a joyful folk festival. The market stalls on the well-field were full of goods and a bustling market was going on in this otherwise quiet place. The houses of the village were neatly cleaned inside and out in preparation for Kerbfest, the housewives prepared special baked goods for these days and also other appetizing foods which they shared with guests who had come from afar. The youths also sought opportunities to have some fun but such opportunities were not always “fromm” (pious...better said as “not always good clean fun”.)

Since then everything has change. The market stalls are no longer there. When, with the Revolution, private trading was ended, trade was no longer possible there. The boards (from the stalls) were being hammered loose and taken away, some to be used for coffins. Finally it was directed that all should be torn down and the boards used to repair the schoolyard fences. The emergency caused other festive aspects of the Kerbfest to disappear also-yes, and they were not always clear about when to celebrate. Thus part of the populace has for years celebrated a quiet Kerbfest according to the old style date and the others according to the new style date. Against all that this year’s Harvest Fest was nevertheless still one that all could take pleasure in, even if the harvest of commodities on average was only a moderate one”.

Erntedankfest (German Thanksgiving)

- ~ Mainly a rural celebration, with religious significance
- ~ Starkly different from the big traditional family celebrations in the US- not even a national holiday in Germany
- ~ Close resemblance with the Canadian way of celebrating the harvest festival.
- ~ An all-day celebration, held in late September
 - o After church service, fest begins at 10:00 a.m.
 - o Around 2:00p.m. a Thanksgiving procession is held, concluding with the presenting of a harvest crown, known as Erntekrone
 - o Music, dance and food, inside and outside the church, take place at 3:00 p.m.
 - o A 6:00 p.m. evening service is followed by a lantern and torch parade-ceremonies and celebrations end around 7:00 p.m.

- ~ Over the past few decades, German Thanksgiving has borrowed from the American Thanksgiving.
 - Turkey had become quite a popular dish, which is now widely available in Germany and also the other German-speaking countries of Europe
 - Turkey has gradually replaced the traditional goose on special occasions in Germany.
 - Despite leanings towards the American way of celebrating Thanksgiving, in Germany, it is not a big day of family feasting and get togethers that are symbolic of Thanksgiving in US