

## ROLL OUT THE BARREL: MÄRZEN AND OKTOBERFEST BEER PAST AND PRESENT

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Late August in North America is a time of beaches and barbecues, a time when people flock to the great outdoors before the school year begins and the weather turns cool. It's also the time when the beers of autumn begin showing up at bottle shops across the continent. And it's a time of no small amount of confusion attending the annual arrival of Oktoberfest beers.

It's a common refrain across the internet and social media when these German-style beers of autumn hit North American shelves: How is an Oktoberfest beer different from a Märzen, if at all? Aren't Märzen and Oktoberfest beer the same thing? No. And yes. The difference between a Märzen and an Oktoberfest beer depends on where you are and when. Anyone familiar with the history of porter, stout, or IPA won't be surprised to learn that Märzen and Oktoberfest beer, too, have undergone shifts not only in taste but in meaning over the years.

In Germany today, autumn beer means the golden Oktoberfestbier served at Munich's Oktoberfest, along with the occasional Märzen among the Festbiers in towns throughout Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. In North America, autumn beers conjure up images of pretzels, lederhosen, beer tents, and oompah bands. And amber-hued Märzen.

Why, though, are Oktoberfest and Märzen so inextricably linked in the minds of North American beer drinkers, despite the fact that Märzen has not been sold on the Theresienwiese (Oktoberfest meadow) since 1990?

Part of the answer has to do with how we've come to understand Oktoberfest beer in North America, especially during the closing decades of the late twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first. If one of my aims is to trace the history of beer at Munich's Oktoberfest, my primary emphasis is on the reception history of Oktoberfest beer in North America. In this sense — and because of Märzen's close association with Oktoberfest in North America —

what follows is an account both of a decidedly capacious style (Märzen) and the kind of beer we drink at Oktoberfest past and present.

The style and kind of beer served at Oktoberfest over the centuries makes for a particularly interesting case, not least because of the confusion in North America surrounding what constitutes Oktoberfest beer. No matter how many beer writers have attempted over the past decade to make sense of what Oktoberfest beer was and is, the confusion that invariably arises every year is now a snowball of confusion. In this regard, my exploration of the origins of Oktoberfest beer and its reception history in North America is also an intervention in a growing contemporary literature surrounding Oktoberfest beer that, though well meaning, doesn't always arrive at clarity.

In short, styles change. A careful reading of their histories sheds light on how those dynamics of change affect the reception of a given style or kind of beer at a particular time and in a particular place. Attending to these histories also helps us disentangle common (mis)conceptions about Märzen and Oktoberfest beer and account for why North American beer drinkers continue to associate Märzen with Oktoberfest.

### ***Part I. A rose by any other name: a brief history of Oktoberfest beer***

Before I outline the history of Oktoberfest beer, it's worth noting that the terms 'Oktoberfestbier,' 'Märzen,' and 'Festbier' are signifiers that have been filled with different content over the decades and centuries.

Historically, Oktoberfest beer was just that: the name applied to a festival beer (Festbier) served on the Oktoberfest *Wiesen* (meadow) in Munich. Nowadays, the term 'Oktoberfest-Bier' is a protected term that only the 'Munich



Figure 1. Philip Kester, *Münchener Oktoberfest: Zwei Biermänner Beim Rollen von Fässern* (The Munich Oktoberfest: Two Men Rolling Out Barrels), 1935. The “M” on the barrelhead of these casks signifies that the beer is a Märzen beer. Credit: Münchner Stadtmuseum, Sammlung Fotografie, Archiv Kester.

Big 6’ breweries can use.<sup>1</sup> Early on, Oktoberfestbier was *Braunbier*, or ‘*Sommerbier*’ – essentially a bottom-fermented ‘March beer’ (Märzen) brewed to a higher gravity during the spring so it would last the summer into fall. Starting in the 1870s it was an amber-red Märzen brewed in the Vienna style popular at the time. By the 1990s it was a golden-hued beer now variously called Oktoberfestbier, Festbier, or Wieserbier.

Festbiers these days are meant to be ‘festive’ – more intense in flavour, but eminently drinkable, often brewed in the spirit of a Märzen. Brewers in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg still craft Festbiers for local parish fairs, harvest festivals, and even for the Advent season – and, obviously, for the mother of all Bavarian beer festivals, the Oktoberfest. These beers run the gamut from gold through amber and mahogany to bronze and brown.

As for Märzen? As a category, it’s a shape-shifter – less a style than an echo of a historical approach to brewing (more malt, more hops, higher alcohol, longer lagering). When it comes to Oktoberfest, the term has meant everything from the Braunbier mentioned above to the Märzen that dominated the Oktoberfest *Wiesen* for a century starting in 1872. Beyond the spatial and temporal confines of Oktoberfest, twenty-first-century versions in Germany are malt-inflected beers of a deep amber cast that occupy the ground between a contemporary Vienna Lager and a Munich Dunkel. Some, like the Märzen of Kloster Weissenhohe in Franconia, are the epitome of richness. Others, like the Oktoberfest-Märzen of Paulaner brewed only for the North American market, are leaner but still malty. Still others, such as the Märzen of Rothaus, are honey-gold, reminiscent of a contemporary Festbier. As I mentioned above, a shape-shifter: less a style per se than a reflection of historical brewing practices.



Figure 2. Peter Hess, *Das Pferderennen auf dem Münchner Oktoberfest* (The Horse Race at the Munich Oktoberfest), 1810. The first Oktoberfest in 1810 was a horse race on the Theresienwiese (Therese's meadow) in honour of the royal wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig and Princess Therese. Credit: Münchner Stadtmuseum, Sammlung Graphik / Gemälde.

### The changing fortunes of Oktoberfest beer

Oktoberfest began life as a horse race in October 1810. The mood was festive, and the event capping the celebration of Crown Prince Ludwig's marriage to Therese Charlotte Louise von Sachsen-Hildburghausen was a resounding success. Plans were soon laid to repeat the event annually on what became known as the Theresienwiese (Therese's meadow) named in honour of Crown Prince Ludwig's bride.

If the horse race was the main attraction early on, the merriment soon spread out along the margins of the track. Looking back to 1814, the German poet Achim von Arnim noted that thirsty travellers could already find ample *Bretterbuden* (simply appointed wooden stalls) where Munich's tavern keepers slung beer in tin-lidded tankards.<sup>2</sup>

Within the space of the next ninety years, Oktoberfest transformed itself from a spectacular Bavarian folk festival into a

spectacular festival that celebrated beer. Breweries began erecting massive tents to accommodate the annual crush of revellers, transforming the physical appearance of the Theresienwiese and shaping our contemporary imagination of Oktoberfest in the process. Between the turn of the twentieth century and 2019, beer consumption rose from 1.2 million litres to 7.3 million litres.<sup>3</sup>

What were all those revellers drinking?

During the first several decades of the Oktoberfest, breweries brought whatever they had on hand, usually some sort of forerunner of today's Munich Dunkel.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1871, Bavaria's lagers were, for the most part, relatively dark. That year, Franziskaner-Leist's Joseph Sedlmayr (brother of Gabriel Jr. of Spaten) brewed an experimental batch of beer based on the Vienna Lager first brewed by his brother's friend and colleague Anton Dreher in 1841. The response was so encouraging that he brewed the recipe in the spring



Figure 3. *Oktoberfest-Programm und Zeitung*, 1895. Thomasbräu's Winzerer Fährndl 'beer castle' advertising both its Märzen and its Pilsner. Credit: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

of 1872, branding it a Märzen when he released it on the *Wiesen* that fall.<sup>5</sup> And with that, Sedlmayr breathed new life into an old concept that hadn't entirely faded away in Bavaria. This amber beer was a shade or two lighter than the darker *Sommerbier* typically available on the *Wiesen*, and that much easier to drink in quantity. Märzen soon conquered the festival.

But Märzen wasn't the only beer served at Oktoberfest. Extant Oktoberfest programs spanning the 1880s to the 1930s reveal that other offerings, some from as far away as Budweis and Vienna, appeared regularly at the festival.<sup>6</sup>

Thomasbräu, for example, served a Pilsner alongside its Märzen when it opened its *Bierburg* (beer castle) on the *Wiesen* in 1895. Wheat beer from Schneider & Sohn graced the *Wiesen* that same year as well.<sup>7</sup> In 1910, Wagnerbräu even served a Kirta-Bier, a dark lager brewed for the local parish fair in a district of south-eastern Munich, alongside their lighter Märzen. During the Oktoberfest's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1935 (held two years after the Nazis seized power), the main beer tents tapped a variety of other beers to complement their Märzen offerings. These included a Hellquell

Export from Löwenbräu, an Urtyp Hell from Thomasbräu, and an Edelstoff Hell from Augustiner.<sup>8</sup>

This brief sampling of beers across the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries makes clear that despite Märzen's dominance through the postwar period, plenty of non-Märzen beer was served on the *Wiesen* before the Second World War. Significantly, this diversity suggests that Munich's beer drinkers were already primed for lighter-hued beers.

### Augustiner and the significance of 1953

The reign of amber Märzen would prove to be temporary. In 1953, an even lighter-hued Festbier – Augustiner's Wiesen-Edelstoff brewed specially for Oktoberfest – entered the festival ring. Over the next few decades, all the major breweries followed Augustiner's lead and began serving this eminently quaffable golden Wiesenbier alongside their amber-hued Märzen. Wiesenbier displaced Märzen entirely by 1990, becoming simply Oktoberfestbier along the way.

This shift is hardly surprising in retrospect. Munich's workaday beers began to turn gold in the 1890s,<sup>10</sup> and Helles Lager had largely displaced Dunkel as the Munich drinker's beer of choice by the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> Changing tastes provided fertile ground for golden Festbier to blossom on the Wiesen. Augustiner's Wiesen-Edelstoff resonated with the tastes of the times but was still sufficiently 'fest-like' to be a game changer. To begin with, it was more potent than a standard pale lager. It also wasn't lean and bitter like a Pils, nor was it a Heller Bock that could put revelers to sleep after a *Maß* (litre) or two. Instead, as Michael Jackson suggests – or rather laments – the beer caught on because it was, essentially, a Märzen with a lighter countenance:

Although many brewers continue to produce a truly distinctive Märzenbier in the tradition established by Sedlmayr, there has also been much bowing to the supposed public demand for paler beers. [...] Although the traditional Märzenbier is still emphatically available at the Munich Oktoberfest, there has been an increasing consumption of less interesting pale beers *in this style* (emphasis mine).<sup>12</sup>

Did Augustiner aim to change the trajectory of beer on the *Wiesen*? We can't say for sure, any more than we can say that brewers of the first hazy IPAs sought to topple West Coast IPA from its pedestal. What we can say with confidence is that 1953 represents a turning point. Even if the transition to golden Festbier was gradual, 1953 is a significant signpost along the road to the eventual eclipse of amber Märzen by golden Festbier.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, there were golden beers on the Wiesen before 1953. But none of them augured a new style in the way that Augustiner's Wiesen-Edelstoff did. Like Joseph Sedlmayr's amber Märzen of 1872, it inspired imitations. Unlike Sedlmayr's Märzen, it eventually became the sole beer on the Wiesen.

## ***Part II. Märzen and Oktoberfest in North America: why the confusion?***

How, then, did Märzen become so closely bound up with Munich's Oktoberfest in the minds of North American brewers and beer enthusiasts? And why is it that the association between Märzen and Oktoberfest persists on this side of the pond, to the point that it occasions confusion every year when Oktoberfest beers begin hitting the shelves? Beer writers and beer organizations are part of the answer, as are North American beer drinkers themselves.

### **A time for beer: North Americans in Germany in the postwar period**

Before we consider the role of Michael Jackson, the BJCP (Beer Judge Certification Program), or latter-day beer writ-

ers, the buck starts with 'we the drinkers.' Arguably, the persistent association between Oktoberfest and Märzen has its roots in the early decades of the postwar period. Canadian and American forces were stationed in West Germany as part of NATO, and North American beer enthusiasts were beginning to travel in greater numbers as well. Any of these people who visited Oktoberfest in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s would have brought home memories of amber-hued Märzen, which was still common into the 1980s.

An informal poll I conducted on social media and among my homebrewer friends aged fifty or older bears this out. The sample size is not large and the survey conducted casually, but casting a broader net would likely yield similar results. Those who visited between 1970 and 1982 reported drinking only amber Märzen. That's not to say that golden Festbier wasn't yet available, just that amber Märzen was still prevalent. By 1983 and 1984, respondents note that Märzen was still available alongside golden Festbier, but that you had to ask for it specifically. (Otherwise, you'd be served a golden Festbier.) Images published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from the 1950s through the 1990s lend visual support to the substance of these reminiscences.<sup>14</sup>

In what amounts to oral transmission of historical memory, we might assume that these North American travellers and military personnel – especially the beer enthusiasts among them – would have talked about their experiences drinking this amber Oktoberfest beer with other beer enthusiasts in the U.S. and Canada, or even with their children. Some of these children would grow up to become beer enthusiasts and homebrewers themselves, or perhaps even professional brewers. And any pioneering craft brewer who visited the Oktoberfest during the 1970s and 1980s would have seen plenty of amber Märzen on the *Wiesen*, even if Märzen was already on its way out. So, too, would the most influential beer writer of the late twentieth century.

### **The Michael Jackson factor**

Michael Jackson forges a close link between Oktoberfest and Märzen in his 1977 *World Guide to Beer*.<sup>15</sup> Anyone with an interest in beer and brewing would have read this classic almost religiously, including those who'd become craft brewers, beer writers, and framers of the BJCP style guidelines.<sup>16</sup> Despite what some current commentators might suggest,<sup>17</sup> Jackson was in no way wrong in forging this link, given the prevalence of amber Märzen on the *Wiesen* at the time. And, as we saw above, it's not as if he was blind to the inroads that golden-hued Festbier had made on the *Wiesen*.<sup>18</sup>

But the association between amber Märzen and Oktoberfest stuck – perhaps on account of some interesting images of beer labels that Jackson included in the ‘Märzenbier’ section of his *New World Guide to Beer* (1988). Three of the four labels contain the word Märzen: Löwenbräu Märzen, Löwenbräu Oktoberfestbier, Paulaner Wies’n-Märzen, and Paulaner Münchener Märzen.<sup>19</sup> The Paulaner labels in particular stand out. Both Paulaner beers are labeled Märzen, but the Wies’n-Märzen bears the following text in a triangle at the upper right-hand corner: ‘Original Münchener Oktoberfestbier.’ More research is needed, but we’re left with a tantalizing hint that Paulaner’s Wies’n-Märzen might have been one of those golden Oktoberfest beers that Jackson feared was taking over the *Wiesen*.<sup>20</sup>

### The BJCP as style bible

If Michael Jackson has played a significant role in how general beer enthusiasts understand beer, the BJCP, which was founded in 1985, has had an outsized influence on how North American pro brewers and homebrewers come to know about beer styles. It’s not unreasonable to assume that at least some people responsible for the BJCP style guidelines had seen and tasted amber Märzen at Oktoberfest in the years preceding their involvement with the BJCP, or had read Jackson. Hence the close category association between Oktoberfest and Märzen through the 2008 edition of the style guidelines. The earlier style guidelines were less than clear about the differences between the German beers of autumn. For starters, the ‘Oktoberfest/Märzen’ style was housed under the category ‘German Amber Lager’ (1997) and ‘European Amber Lager’ (2004, 2008). To be fair, the style descriptions note that the colour ranges from dark gold to deep orange/red. The guidelines also acknowledge that ‘domestic [German] versions tend to be golden’ (2004, 2008). Even still, all three iterations essentially describe the aroma and flavour profile of an amber Märzen.

It wasn’t until the BJCP released their 2015 style guidelines that they introduced distinctions between the amber Märzen historically served on the Oktoberfest *Wiesen* (and which still predominates in North America) and the golden beer that eventually eclipsed it in the early 1990s. The 2015 guidelines label this beer simply ‘Festbier,’ since the term Oktoberfest-Bier is trademarked.

### Contemporary beer writing: setting the record straight?

Michael Jackson and the BJCP certainly aren’t the sole source of North American misunderstandings surrounding what Oktoberfest beer is today.<sup>21</sup> Contemporary beer writers

sometimes perpetuate misconceptions about Märzen and Oktoberfest beer in North America as well. Certain canards still make the rounds, like the notion that Paulaner was the progenitor of Oktoberfestbier – during the 1970s at that.<sup>22</sup>

Recently, a small but growing chorus of writers has sought to disentangle these knotted threads that constitute our knowledge of Märzen and Oktoberfest beer.<sup>23</sup> Yet even the most conscientious critics of beer legends occasionally tip the balance of critique too far, calling everything into question without sufficiently distinguishing fact from fiction. A case in point from a recent reappraisal of our understanding of Oktoberfest beer: The history of Märzen is more than a good story, as one otherwise insightful beer writer framed the history of Oktoberfest beer.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the history of Märzen – mentioned explicitly at least as early as the ‘*Reinheitsgebot*’ (‘Purity Law’) of 1516 – is tightly interwoven with the evolution of bottom-fermented beer.<sup>25</sup> And the prohibition of summer brewing (*Sommersudverbot*) was not just part of this story but actual policy first promulgated by Duke Wilhelm IV in 1539 as a belated response to the Baker-Brewer Dispute over yeast.<sup>26</sup> Enshrined in the 1553 revision of the Bavarian law code, the summer brewing prohibition limited brewing to the months between 29 September (the Feast of St. Michael) and 23 April (the Feast of St. George). It held sway right down to the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> This meant that brewing large quantities of Märzen in the spring to last through early fall was the order of the day for at least the first half-century of Oktoberfest.

On a general level, how contemporary North American beer writers have approached the history of Märzen and Oktoberfest beer sheds light on how some beer styles get ‘lost in translation,’ or how misunderstandings (not necessarily myths or legends per se) are spun around certain facets of beer history. Confronted with such a tangled thicket of information that has come down to us over the past several decades, it’s no surprise that beer writers inadvertently get some of the story wrong. By addressing this aspect of Oktoberfest’s reception history in North America, I don’t mean to single out particular beer writers. Rather, I’m attempting to counter a general tendency among otherwise well-intentioned contemporary beer writers to conflate history with a kind of ‘myth busting.’ The key here is modesty in the face of opaque pasts – on the part of the writer, to be sure – but also magnanimity toward those who have made a concerted effort to get the story as straight as possible.

### Part III. Oktoberfest and Märzen at the crossroads

Now that we’ve explored why Oktoberfest and Märzen are so closely associated in North America, and now that we



Figure 4. The Augustiner Festzelt (festival tent) at the Oktoberfest. Each year, millions of visitors from around the world flock to Munich to drink millions of litres of beer. Amber Märzen used to be the dominant beer on the Oktoberfest meadow, replaced in recent decades by golden Festbier. Credit: Franz D. Hofer.

have a sense of what animates the confusion attending the annual arrival of Oktoberfest beers, it's time to revisit a question posed at the outset: Aren't Märzen and Oktoberfest beer one and the same thing? We're now in a better position to see why the answer is a qualified 'yes' and 'no.' Märzen and Oktoberfest beer have meant different things in different places across time. Inherently fluid (pardon the pun), styles resist being pinned down. This underscores the need for humility when we try to make sense of beer styles and categories. There's a good chance that what we understand as Märzen today will be something different in 20 years – perhaps even a lager double dry-hopped with New World hops.

Beyond that, it's not impossible for a beer style to simultaneously mean different things in different places. Märzen today is a case in point, as I noted at the outset. And while one could argue that the slightly sweet North American Märzen generally represents a misunderstanding of the

German versions,<sup>28</sup> the Märzen brewed in North America is merely another iteration of the style. To be sure, it's a few steps removed from well-attenuated German versions brewed to be drunk in quantity, but it's an iteration of the style in much the same way that porters, pilsners, and IPAs cross borders and cultures.

I've spent a fair amount of time here tracing the history of Oktoberfest beer and outlining a history of its reception in North America. But in light of what I've just recounted about Märzen's contemporary visages, perhaps I should reframe my questions about the confusion surrounding what Oktoberfest beer 'is,' and emphasize instead how styles and kinds of beer are dynamic entities. What is Oktoberfest beer in Munich? Since the 1990s, it's Festbier, and Festbier only – but that could change. Here in North America, Oktoberfest is closely associated with amber Märzen. Indeed, as Florian Kuplent of Urban Chestnut relates, he brews an amber

Märzen for Oktoberfest not only because he likes the style, but because it's what his American audience expects.<sup>29</sup> Still, some brewers in North America (like Chuckanut in Washington State and Kansas City Bier Company) have begun embracing the current beer of Munich's Oktoberfest with their golden-hued Festbiers. All the better, I say. It's entirely possible to hold two or more ideas at once in our heads about what Oktoberfest beer can be. After all, we do this all the time – and every month it seems – with IPA in North America.

## References

1. Deutsches Patent- und Markenamt, DE 1040818 and EM 220772. Available at [https://www.dpma.de/dpma/wir\\_ueber\\_uns/geschichte/70jahrepatentamtinmuenchen/teil3/muenchener\\_bier/index.html](https://www.dpma.de/dpma/wir_ueber_uns/geschichte/70jahrepatentamtinmuenchen/teil3/muenchener_bier/index.html). The so-called 'Big 6' include Augustiner, Hacker-Pschorr, Hofbräu, Löwenbräu, Paulaner, and Spaten. Breweries near Munich (such as Weihenstephan and Ayinger) and breweries that once had a brewery in Munich (Schneider Weisse) still brew a beer for the Oktoberfest season, but they can't label it as "Oktoberfest Bier." Weihenstephan labels its beer simply as a Festbier, Schneider Weisse calls its beer a Festweisse, and Ayinger dubs its seasonal offering sold primarily abroad an Oktober Fest-Märzen (that is, a festive Märzen for October, with Oktoberfest implied).
2. This anecdote is recounted in Dornbusch, H.D. (1997) *Prost! The Story of German Beer*. Boulder: Brewers Publications, p.49.
3. See 'Oktoberfestbier,' (2016) in Eymold, U. (ed.) *Bier.Macht.München: München 500 Jahre Reinheitsgebot in Bayern*. Munich: Süddeutsche Zeitung, p.324, for the early numbers. See Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/561032/poured-amount-beer-oktoberfest-munich/>) for numbers between 1980 and 2022. 2019 is the last representative year before the pandemic.
4. 'Oktoberfestbier,' in Eymold, U. (ed.) op. cit, p.324.
5. Recounted in Jackson, M. (1996) 'The Birth of Lager: Brewed in March, Matured until September,' *All About Beer*. Jeffrey M. Pilcher (forthcoming on the world history of lager) casts doubt on Jackson's assertions, noting (via Wolfgang Behringer) that Gabriel Sedlmayr had already brewed a Bavarian lager using English pale ale malt in 1835, which he dubbed Märzenbier (March beer). The amber colour recalled the strong beers that were brewed in the spring and stored in cellars for consumption through the summer and into early fall. Sedlmayr reserved the recipe as a seasonal specialty. Pilcher's sources include Siebel, J.E. (1901) *One Hundred Years of Brewing*. Chicago: H.S. Rich & Co., pp.61-62, and also Behringer, W. (1997) *Die Spaten-Brauerei*. Munich: Piper, pp.166-67. If we were to follow Pilcher, we might speculate that the Märzen Joseph Sedlmayr released on the Wiesen in 1872 was an amalgam and interpretation both of Dreher's Vienna Lager and Gabriel Sedlmayr's earlier Märzen.
6. Special thanks to Andreas Krenmair for turning my attention to these programs housed on the Bavarikon website.
7. The *Oktoberfest Programm und Zeitung* from 1895 contains the ad for Thomasbräu-Pilsener and Thomasbräu-Märzenbier ("Größte Neuheit der Festwiese. Burg zum Winzerer Fähdnl") on p.4. The same program lists the ad for Waizenbier (sic) on p.11. See <https://www.bavarikon.de/object/bav:BSB-MDZ-00000BSB00048892?lang=de>.
8. Schneider, R. (1935) *Münchener Oktoberfest Zeitung*, 16. Jahrgang, Jubiläums-Ausgabe, September. This list makes clear that golden-hued, non-Märzen beer was served on the Wiesen before 1953. For the program, see <https://www.bavarikon.de/object/bav:BSB-MDZ-00000BSB00049105?lang=de>.
9. From the Augustiner Bräu website (<https://www.augustinerbraeu.de/oktoberfest/historie.html>, accessed September 2021): 'We served our Wiesen Edelstoff for the first time in 1953. This new, lighter-colored Festbier was so popular that it gradually displaced the Märzenbier that had been common until then' (translation mine). According to Oktoberfest programs from the late 1920s and early 1930s, Augustiner served an 'Edelstoff Hell' on the *Wiesen*. But this beer was probably closer to their contemporary Edelstoff (a helles Exportbier of 5.6% ABV) than their current Oktoberfestbier, which weighs in at 6.3% ABV. In the absence of evidence concerning the strength of Augustiner's pre-war Edelstoff Hell, I base this assumption on Augustiner's pronouncement that their Wiesen Edelstoff, served 'for the first time in 1953,' presumably constituted a departure from their pre-war Edelstoff Hell. See also Eymold, U. (ed.) op. cit., pp.324-329.
10. Jackson, M. (1996) op. cit.; See also Eymold, U. (ed.) op. cit.
11. Pilcher, J.M. (forthcoming) *Hopped Up: How Travel, Trade, and Taste Made Beer a Global Commodity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also Eymold, U. (ed.) op. cit.
12. Jackson, M. (1988) *The New World Guide to Beer*. Philadelphia: Running Press, p.47.
13. See for example Eymold, U. (ed.) op. cit.
14. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Timeline Images (<https://timelineimages.sueddeutsche.de/bilder-entdecken>). Enter "Oktoberfest" or "Wiesen" in the "Was?" search field but leave the "Wann?" field blank. Narrowing the search to "60er Jahre" or "90er Jahre" from the options below the search field gives a sense of how beer colours changed on the Wiesen over the first several decades of the postwar period.
15. Jackson, M. (1977) *The World Guide to Beer*. New York: Ballantine Books, pp.46-51.
16. Other beer writers who published books in the 1990s draw a close connection between Märzen and Oktoberfest. George and Laurie Fix, for example, link these two beer styles together via their 'Viennese character' (p.2), often conjoining these beers simply as 'Märzen/Oktoberfest' (pp.1, 8, 9, and passim). See Fix, G. and L. (1991) *Vienna, Märzen, Oktoberfest*. Boulder: Brewers Publications. Larry Hawthorne does the same. See Hawthorne, L. (2015) *Beer Drinkers' Guide to Munich*. 7th ed. Buchanan, NY: Freizeit first published in 1991, p.222. Daniels, R. (1996) *Designing*



*Great Beers: The Ultimate Guide to Brewing Classic Beer Styles.* Boulder: Brewers Publications, equates Märzen and Oktoberfest in the first two paragraphs of his chapter on amber lagers: ‘The use of three words [Vienna, Märzen, and Oktoberfest] in describing [these styles] is a bit wasteful, especially since we generally regard this group as consisting of only two styles. [...] The second style may be referred to as either Märzen or Oktoberfest, and both terms are frequently used together,’ p.321. It’s worth noting, first of all, that Daniels leans on George and Laurie Fix as the source for his own description of the style(s) and explanation of their brewing process. (See especially pp.331-336.) Second, it’s fair to assume that these authors were collectively working under the assumption that Märzen and Oktoberfest were synonymous, either because they had read Jackson, M. (1977) op. cit, or had visited the Oktoberfest at some point during the 1970s or 1980s during a time when amber Märzen was still prevalent on the Wiesen. That said, these books — which are all still in print and read by homebrewers and beer travelers — continue to shape North American (mis)conceptions of Märzen and Oktoberfest beers.

17. Joe Stange, for example, implies that Jackson got it wrong. See Stange, J. (2021) ‘Oktoberfestbier: Brewing the World’s Most Famous Party Lager,’ *Craft Beer and Brewing*. September.

18. Jackson, M. (1988) op. cit. By (1996) op. cit., Jackson had all but given up the fight: ‘Marzenbier remained the principal style of beer at the Oktoberfest until the last couple of decades. In recent years it has been largely replaced by malt-accented beers of a similar strength [...] but a bronze or golden color’ (emphasis mine). It’s not a stretch to assume that fewer people read these later sentiments than those who had read Jackson’s linking of Märzen and Oktoberfest in his much more widely read and distributed coffee table work of 1977.

19. Jackson, M. (1988) op. cit., p.50, date of images unknown. 1980s?

20. These images — especially of the Paulaner label bearing the claim ‘Original Münchener Oktoberfestbier’ — may also be at the root of the oft-repeated (and mistaken) claim that Paulaner was the originator of the Oktoberfest/Festbier style. See below for more on this.

21. It’s worth noting briefly here that uncertainty in North America about what Oktoberfest beer is in Munich has also been sustained by the Bavarian breweries themselves, some of whom export Märzen to our shores labeled with some variation of ‘Oktoberfest Märzen.’ In fact, some of these beers, like Paulaner’s Oktoberfest Märzen, are brewed exclusively for the North American market. In this sense, Paulaner, Spaten, and other breweries are merely confirming North American expectations of what an Oktoberfest beer is.

22. Strong, G. (2016) ‘The Modern Beer of Oktoberfest,’ *Brew Your Own*. January-February; Guest, C. (2016) ‘Oktoberfest vs. Märzen,’ *Beer Connoisseur*. September; Carr, N. (2016) ‘Festbier: The Modern Day Oktoberfest Beer,’ *Keperator*. 30 September; and ‘Festbier/Wiesnbier,’ style description on *BeerAdvocate* (<https://www.beeradvocate.com/beer/styles/235/>, last accessed March 2023). For what it’s worth, the furthest Paulaner goes in claiming the mantle of originality is their mention that they, along with the other ‘Munich Big 6’ breweries, brew ‘original Oktoberfestbier.’ See this page of the Paulaner website, which contains a link to a video about the style with Paulaner Braumeister Christian Dahnke: <https://www.paulaner.de/produkte/bierspezialitaeten/oktoberfestbier/>. English description here: <https://www.paulaner.com/our-products/oktoberfest-bier/> (accessed July 2022). It’s worth noting that Paulaner claims to have brewed a bottom-fermented beer since 1818 (a claim we have no reason to dispute), not *this particular* golden Festbier.

23. Carpenter, D. (2016) ‘The Real Oktoberfest Beer,’ *Craft Beer and Brewing*. 25 October; Stange, J. (2021) op. cit.

24. See the otherwise insightful Stange. J. (2021) op. cit.

25. The text of the 1516 Landesverordnung (state ordinance) containing the *Reinheitsgebot* (Beer Purity Law) is cited in Hackel-Stehr, K. (1987) ‘Das Brauwesen in Bayern: vom 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert, insbesondere die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Reinheitsgebotes (1516),’ Ph.D. diss. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, pp.224-225.

26. See *ibid.*, and also Assél, A. and Huber, C. (2009) *München und das Bier: Auf großer Biertour durch 850 Jahre Braugeschichte*. München: Volk Verlag, on the Baker-Brewer Dispute over yeast, along with its effect on the 1539 and 1553 ducal prohibitions of summer brewing between the Feast of St. George (23 April) and the Feast of St. Michael (29 September).

27. Dates for the end of the Sommersudverbot vary. Assél and Huber cite 1860, while Michael Nadler cites 1865 as the date in his online contribution, ‘Brauereien (19. Jahrhundert),’ to the Historisches Lexikon Bayerns. See [https://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Brauereien\\_\(19.\\_Jahrhundert\)](https://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Brauereien_(19._Jahrhundert)).

28. Joe Stange’s critique of North American Märzen — usually rich in crystal malt, typically under-attenuated, occasionally cloying, or sometimes fairly high in alcohol — is on point. See Stange, J. (2021) op. cit.

29. Florian Kuplent, video call (2 February 2022). Kuplent is the Bavarian owner and head brewer at Urban Chestnut in St. Louis.