



# Oktoberfest Equals Beer

BY MICHAEL KUDERKA

Two beer styles that seem to have retained their limited seasonal availability but continue to have strong seasonal followings every fall are Oktoberfest beers and Pumpkin Ales.

## Oktoberfest in Your Store

There is no event in the world more synonymous with beer and beer consumption than Germany's Oktoberfest. This year marks the 200th anniversary since the Munich Oktoberfest began. To celebrate, a couple of extra days are planned, Oktoberfest will go from September 17 to October 4. The event attracts about six million visitors each year, which is a tribute to the festival's mood and music, as well as its beer.

Although replicating the event in your store isn't a realistic goal, providing smatterings of the Oktoberfest celebration, while increasing your selection of Vienna-style lagers, Märzen beers, Fest beers, and Oktoberfest beers can have you capitalizing on the Oktoberfest feeling.

## The Top "Must Have" Oktoberfest beers:

- Hacker-Pschorr Oktoberfest- Märzen
- Ayinger Oktoberfest- Märzen
- Spaten Oktoberfest- Ur-Märzen
- Paulane Oktoberfest- Märzen
- Penn Märzen
- Ramstein Oktoberfest
- Bell's Oktoberfest Beer
- Brooklyn Oktoberfest
- Great Lakes Oktoberfest
- Sam Adams Oktoberfest
- Victory Festbier
- Avery The Kaiser Imperial Oktoberfest
- Erdinger Oktoberfest Weissbier
- Left Hand Oktoberfest- Märzen
- Lakefront Oktoberfest
- Berkshire Oktoberfest Lager
- Newport Storm Regenschauer Oktoberfest
- Sprecher Oktoberfest
- Schlafly Oktoberfest
- Heavy Seas Prosit!

The original Oktoberfest actually occurred in mid-October of 1810 to celebrate the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig and Prin-

cess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen. More recently the bulk of the celebration was shifted into September to take advantage of warmer weather conditions. So, you can run an Oktoberfest promotion deep into October and still be confident that you are historically keeping with tradition.

## What about those Pumpkin Ales?

Pumpkin Ales also have a long history, although not as celebrated as Oktoberfest beers. Pumpkin Ale recipes date back to Colonial times when pumpkin was used as a unique natural ingredient to with which to brew. Considered a vegetable beer style, brewers have brought a wide range of creativity to this type of beer.

## The Top "Must Have" Pumpkin Ales:

- Southern Tier's Pumpking Ale
- Dogfish Head Punk'in Ale
- Weyerbacher Imperial Pumpkin Ale
- Cape Ann's Fisherman Pumpkin Stout
- Brooklyn Brewery's Post Road Pumpkin Ale
- Harvest Moon Pumpkin Ale
- New Holland Ichabod Ale
- Schlafly Pumpkin Ale
- Elysian Night Owl
- Bristol Brewing Venetucci Pumpkin Ale
- Smuttynose Pumpkin Ale
- Saranac's Pumpkin Ale
- O'Fallon Pumpkin Beer
- Cottonwood Pumpkin Ale (Carolina Beer Company)
- Trailhead Pumpkin
- Arcadia Jaw-Jacker Ale
- Shipyard's Pumpkin Head Ale
- Buffalo Bills Pumpkin

## Making seasonal styles work for your store

**Tastings:** With the wide variety of Oktoberfest beers and Pumpkin ales, offering a "tasting event" would be a great in-store initiative that would be appealing to many of your customers. Events like this move a lot of beer because each of your customers will have a different favorite or favorites that they will want to bring home. There is also a terrific opportunity to offer mix and match case discounts for these brands and increase your sales volume.

**Glassware:** If you cannot offer beer tastings in your state, let your customers do their tastings at home. Create baskets or boxes with

Oktoberfest mugs and a selection of Oktoberfest beer, or combine English pint glasses and Pumpkin ales so your customers can bring their own Oktoberfest or Pumpkin Fests home.

**Out-of-the Box: Beer Tasting to the Extreme**

This month's Out-of-the-Box tip comes from John MacDonald, General Manager at Depot Liquors in North Beverly, Massachusetts. John's store is committed to an expanding specialty beer selection. They are not currently rated on BeerAdvocate.com.

In store beer tastings can be very successful events that work to showcase your store's beer selection. However, Depot Liquors doesn't just hold a beer tastings; they hold a blow out beer tasting event.

"When I started at Depot Liquors a month ago," John explains "the ownership was considering expanding the store's craft beer selection." However management wanted to make sure that increasing the selection of craft beer was the right business move to make before committing to the increased inventory. To gauge local consumer interest, Depot Liquors focused on hosting a craft beer tasting.

"To get people to attend," said John, "we gave away a \$700 mountain bike and we let our customers know about the tasting and the bike by using e-mail and social-networking sites." After sending out approximately 1,000 e-mails, Depot Liquors was able to draw in over 400 customers, many of whom weren't even big craft beer fans prior to the event.

But this went far beyond your typical tasting. Depot Liquors had 25 different microbreweries providing samples; they gave away a "summer rock" CD with the store's logo, as well as three white water rafting trips, Boston Red Sox Adirondack chairs, and a local butcher served steak tips. Dare I forget the hand-rolled cigars? Now that is way out-of-the-box!

"The day was a huge success," John recalls, "we sold out of nearly all of our craft beers and with the success of the tasting and the rapidly expanding craft beer market, we decided to double our craft beer inventory. We now have an entire aisle just for craft beers".

The beer tasting proved that craft beers have an incredible demand and that blow-out events such as beer tastings are a great way to ensure success.

**Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?**

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that

go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your "out-of-the-box" thinking with our fellow Beverage Journal readers.

E-mail me at [mkuderka@mcbasset.com](mailto:mkuderka@mcbasset.com) with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The 3rd Edition of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*.

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**Sell The Best of Beer**

**How will Style Trends™ Customized Shelf Talkers Transform Your Store? Ask our customers...**

The self talkers are great. My customers love the info on them. It has helped our customers find the beers they want to try and it has helped us all get better at selling and recommending beer.  
- Holiday Spirits, CT

Style Trends is great! I subscribed for the year so I never have to go without these great tools!  
- Westport Whiskey & Wine, KY

The shelf talkers are working out great. Beers that weren't moving before, are moving now because customers see a description of the color, the flavor and food pairings. The program helps out a lot.  
- Joe Canals, NJ

Style Trends has made our store a great place to buy beer and it noticeably increased our beer sales in just a few months.  
- Liquor Outlet Wine Cellars, NJ

Adding these shelf talkers helps educate our customers to make informed buying decisions and helps us sell more product. It's just a great program. Easy to use and they look good on the shelves.  
- Bert's Better Beers, NH

We were recently recognized as "The Best Place to Buy Beer in Tulsa, OK" and I am sure the information provided by these shelf talkers helped!  
- Midtown Liquors, OK

We have 20 stores throughout Indiana and Style Trends has given our customers great beer information and given our stores a clean, professional look and feel in all of our locations.  
- 21st Amendment Wine & Spirits, IN



At \$10 a month there is no more affordable way for a store to promote beer.  
- Michael Kuderka, MC Basset, LLC



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