

Oktoberfest Equals Beer

A beer trend that we keep an eye on is “seasonal brands”. Currently these brands are very hot, but more and more seasonal beers are becoming less and less “seasonal”. With the year-round availability of ingredients, and the popularity of certain beer styles, it isn’t uncommon to have a new Barley Wine released in June or a Double Wit hit the market in December.

Two beer styles that seem to have retained their limited seasonal availability but continue to have a 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. The sixteen-day Munich festival, which in 2009 runs from September 19th through October 4th, attracts over six million people each year, which is 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 throughout September and October, can have you capitalizing on the Oktoberfest feeling that comes with the increasingly crisp fall air.

The original Oktoberfest actually occurred in mid-October of 1810 to celebrate the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig (later King Ludwig I) and Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen (namesake of the Theresienwiese festival grounds where the Munich celebration is held today). 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.

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.

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 Network* readers.

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasst.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*.

© 2009 MC Basset LLC

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 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