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Munich Opens Its 191st Oktoberfest With Beer From Only Six Breweries

The festival runs through Oct. 4 at Theresienwiese, where one-liter mugs sell for €12 to €15.

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Munich’s Oktoberfest is underway again, bringing millions of visitors to the Bavarian capital for a celebration that is as much about local brewing rules and regional food as it is about beer.

The 191st edition of the festival opened on Saturday and is scheduled to run through Oct. 4 at Theresienwiese, a 42-hectare fairground in the Ludwigsvorstadt-Isarvorstadt district. Although its name suggests an October event, Oktoberfest begins each year in the second half of September and ends on the first Sunday in October.

The festival remains one of Germany's best-known annual events and one of Munich's largest gatherings. Vast beer tents, amusement rides and food stands fill the site, which is set up to receive heavy crowds over more than two weeks. Some tents can hold between 3,000 and 10,000 people, and long lines are common, especially during peak hours.

Oktoberfest traces its origins to a royal wedding more than two centuries ago. On Oct. 12, 1810, Crown Prince Ludwig, who later became King Ludwig I of Bavaria, married Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen. Residents of Munich were invited to join the public festivities, which took place outside the city gates. The celebration drew such a strong response that it was repeated the following year, laying the foundation for what became the annual Oktoberfest. In Germany, the event is often called the Wiesn, a reference to Theresienwiese.

Despite its global image as a broad beer festival, Oktoberfest is tightly linked to Munich's brewing tradition and follows strict rules on what can be served. Only beer from Munich breweries is allowed, and those breweries must observe the Reinheitsgebot, the German beer purity law. Under that standard, the permitted ingredients are limited to hops, barley or wheat, and water.

Only six breweries meet the requirements to serve beer at the festival: Augustiner, Hacker-Pschorr, Hofbräu München, Löwenbräu, Paulaner and Spaten. Their presence is a defining part of the event, and the exclusivity helps preserve Oktoberfest's connection to Munich rather than turning it into a general beer fair open to producers from across Germany or abroad.

Among the beers associated with the festival is Märzenbier, a lager traditionally brewed in March and matured until the start of Oktoberfest in September. It is one of the styles closely linked to the event's history and brewing calendar. The beer served at Oktoberfest is also known for being poured in the large one-liter mugs called Maß,

which have become one of the most recognizable symbols of the festival.

This year, a liter of beer is priced between €12 and €15, according to the source material. For visitors, that cost is part of a broader festival experience that combines beer with food, music and Bavarian customs. Traditional dishes sold at the site include wurst and Leberkäse, a Bavarian meat loaf that is widely eaten in the region.

The festival’s scale is part of its draw, but it also shapes the experience on the ground. Entry into the large tents can require patience because of the crowds, and seating is often difficult to find without planning ahead. While many visitors come for the beer, the event also functions as a showcase for Munich’s local identity, with regional recipes, local breweries and long-standing customs at the center of the celebration.

That local focus helps explain why the beer served at Oktoberfest is more regulated than many visitors expect. The event is not simply a venue for large-volume drinking. It is built around a specific brewing heritage tied to the city and to Bavarian law. The six approved breweries are not just vendors at the festival; they are part of the structure that defines what Oktoberfest is.

The timing of the event also reflects practical changes made over the years. Holding most of the festival in late September generally offers milder weather than waiting until later in October, even though the traditional name remained. That has done little to weaken the historical identity of the event, which still points back to the royal marriage that first brought Munich residents together in 1810.

For many attendees, the appeal lies in that mix of history, regulation and spectacle. The fairground setting, the giant tents, the one-liter mugs and the familiar Munich brewery names all feed into a festival that has grown far beyond its original purpose while still maintaining clear local rules. Visitors arriving at Theresienwiese this week will find a celebration known around the world, but one that remains firmly anchored in the city where it began.