

October Fest

by Bonnie MacFarlane

Beer, beer, beer! Be happy and drink beer! This is how many German people would describe the October fest which is held for 16 days in Germany and ending the first Sunday in October. One German lady described it as much merriment, much eating and drinking, and much overindulgence.

Judging from the many beer halls and beer tents throughout Germany, it must be quite the celebration. I can still remember the raucous crowd in the beer halls and the brunhildas lining up many beer mugs along their upper and lower arms as they rushed to serve their thirsty and demanding customers. They had on their German costumes and it amazed me how they could maneuver thru the huge crowds. I also remember getting very angry at my first Irish husband who became very drunk with the beer drinking chased by schnapps.

According to history, Prince Ludwig of Bavaria, later King Ludwig, started October fest to celebrate his marriage to Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. Back then he organized a horse race in Munich and drew a crowd of 40,000 guests. It was held along with the state agricultural show.

In the summer of 1973, I visited one of King Ludwig's castles: the Linderhof in Bavaria. He was called the "mad" King who led an overindulgent lifestyle. He was especially fond of swans and peacocks and I remember all the gilded gold rooms with mirrors and chandeliers. His huge bedroom was a royal blue with a gorgeous view of a waterfall. The dining room table could be set and rose up from the kitchen. We took a swan boat trip in his grotto that was specially designed for Wagner's concerts. However, his concerts were never played as the acoustics were poor. The gardens and fountains were lovely and the décor was Rococo in style. I will never forget that castle.

Today, the horse race has been done away with and the agricultural celebration is only every three years. The festival draws a crowd of 6.4 + million and many of the giant breweries can house 5,000 people. In 1997, October festers consumed over 5 and ½ million liters of beer, and 45,000 liters of wine. The festival is still held on the original site, Theresienwiese or "Theresa's fields" in front of Munich's city gates.

I went to one October fest in Denver. It was too hot with lots of beer drinkers. I felt like I was back in college at a frat party. Our October fest is on October 5th. See you there, to drink beer?