

[Back to article](#)

pressdemocrat.com

Oktoberfest: A month of festive beer parties

By *DAN TAYLOR*
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Published: Thursday, October 1, 2009 at 3:00 a.m.

As fall fog rolls in, the beer barrels roll out. Soon, everybody and his cousin from the old country is throwing an Oktoberfest party.

If you love a good brew, this is your time to live it up. Choose from at least a half dozen October beer festivals, ranging from small to huge, starting this weekend and continuing through the end of the month.

One of the biggest is the Sonoma County Museum's Big Oktoberfest Bash, resurrected last year after a seven-year hiatus. Staged in a parking lot near the museum last year, the party is moving to a bigger venue this month: the Veterans Memorial Building in Santa Rosa.

"This year it's bigger and better. We have more breweries and more food," said Sarah-Jane Andrew, development associate at Sonoma County Museum and organizer of the event.

While many of this month's Oktoberfests will stick with the traditional food and music — bratwurst and polka — Andrew is going with indie rock bands and brick oven pizza, just to shake things up a little.

The Oktoberfest party is one of two annual fundraisers sponsored by the museum.

"We have a gala in the spring, and that is the higher-end affair," Andrew said. "We decided to add a beer tasting to have an event in the lower-priced range, to reach out to the community."

So instead of wine, an auction and a \$125 ticket price, this month's party offers beer, a raffle and admission prices ranging from \$30 to \$40.

Those who associate a cold beer with a hot summer day may be momentarily baffled by the pairing of fall weather and mugs of beer.

The reason is rooted in the history of brewing, said Ron Lindenbusch of Lagunitas Brewing Company, one of six North Bay breweries participating in the Sonoma County Museum



Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat

Lagunitas Brewing Company "Beer Weasel" Ron Lindenbusch says in Europe, autumn's Oktoberfest began because that was when the first brews were out after the heat of the summer.

event.

"In the old days in Europe, before the advent of refrigeration, there were certain times when you could brew," Lindenbucsh explained.

"So in the summertime, when it was too hot for yeast to ferment, and the wintertime when it was too cold for yeast to ferment, there would be these down periods," he added.

So that left spring and fall for beer production, and beer lovers reveled while they could.

"Oktoberfest was in the fall when the fresh beer was available: the first brews of the fall season after the heat of the summer. They'd have these big festivals," Lindenbucsh noted.

"They couldn't store enough spring beer to get all the way through summer. So by October, they were ready for some beer," he said.

Modern beer drinkers may not have the same deprivation as incentive, but any time is a good time to party for a good cause.

You can reach Staff Writer Dan Taylor at 521-5243 or dan.taylor@pressdemocrat.com. See his ARTS blog at <http://arts.blogs.pressdemocrat.com>.

Copyright © 2009 PressDemocrat.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.