

OKTOBERFEST CANCELLED - BEER FESTIVAL TO COME BACK IN 2021



The largest public festival in the world, the Munich Oktoberfest, will not take place this year because of the Corona pandemic. This was announced last week by Lord Mayor Dieter Reiter in a joint press conference with Bavarian Prime Minister Markus Söder.

According to Munich City Hall, this is the 25th time in its more than 200-year history that the legendary "Oktoberfest" will not take place. "This is, of course, very sad news for all Oktoberfest-fans, in Munich, in Bavaria and all over the world," said Reiter. **"But the risk that people could get infected with the virus at the October festival with its approximately six million guests is simply too high."**

"By the end of September," said the Lord Mayor, "we will hopefully have overcome the health crisis to a large extent. It would be all the more irresponsible to risk a new wave of proliferation. This would also be to the detriment of our globally renowned festival."

The news does not only affect the visitors, but of course, all those who work at the Oktoberfest and who expect a fixed income every year - starting with the waiters and waitresses and continuing through all the stall operators and showmen to the festival hosts. This is also a bitter loss for the entire tourism industry, the gastronomy outside the Oktoberfest, the hotels, the taxi business and many others who are already going through difficult times.

"Personally, I will, of course, miss the opening this year as well," said Reiter. "Tapping into the city is one of the most beautiful official duties in the appointment calendar of Munich's Lord Mayor. I am all the more pleased, and we can all look forward to the next year."

Clemens Baumgärtner, the speaker for employment and economy responsible for the Oktoberfest, explained: "As the person in charge of the event, I of course fully support the decision. The highest prerequisite must be that the largest public festival in the world must not pose a health risk to the guests. As things stand today, this cannot be guaranteed this year."

For the feeders of the Oktoberfest, from the festival host to the carousel operator to the pretzel saleswoman, this is "a heavy blow", said Baumgärtner. Due to the lengthy preliminary planning and awarding procedures, the Oktoberfest could neither be postponed nor be held in a different format. "Organizing an emergency festival would cause lasting damage to the Oktoberfest brand," he said. "The total artwork of the Oktoberfest will either exist in its entirety - or not at all".

The Oktoberfest would have taken place this year for the 187th time in its 210-year history. According to the information from Munich City Hall, 25 Oktoberfests have not taken place since 1810, mainly because of wars. But also because of the inflation in the years 1923 and 1924 or because of the cholera epidemics in the years 1854 and 1875. After the two world wars, in each case substitute celebrations had been organized in a smaller framework.

The Munich Oktoberfest is, so to say, the world market leader among the popular festivals. According to estimates by the festival management, 6.3 million guests came to the festival in each of the last two years and drank a good 7.8 million liters of beer. The economic value of the Oktoberfest

in 2018 was an impressive 1.23 billion euros, according to calculations by the Department of Labor and Economics. This figure includes the economic effects of the revenue generated at the festival site as well as revenues that benefit Munich's tourism industry.

"According to the calculations, the approximately 6.3 million festival visitors over 16 days spent a total of around 442 million euros - an average of 70.22 euros per person - directly at the Oktoberfest venue," the city administration explained today. "The visitors from outside the city left another 285 million euros in the city for food, shopping, taxi rides or the use of public transport. According to the report, the guests from outside the city spent another 505 million euros on overnight stays alone. With 70 percent of the guests staying overnight in commercial accommodation, such as hotels, guesthouses, or youth hostels.

More than 500 businesses operate at the Oktoberfest every year: from marquees to chicken and sausage fryers, carousel businesses and show booths to pretzel, almond, or souvenir stands. During the "Oktoberfest season", according to the state capital, around 13,000 jobs are created. 8000 employees are employed on a permanent basis and another 5000 people are employed as temporary workers.

The Oktoberfest shapes the image of Munich and contributes a large part to the worldwide fame of the city. **The advertising value of the Oktoberfest for Munich is not measurable, but the reputation that Munich enjoys nationally and internationally as a result of the Oktoberfest is reflected in the number of visitors.** Not least thanks to this unique public festival, Munich is one of the leading tourist metropolises in Germany.

More than 2000 Oktoberfest events in the Munich style are said to be held all over the world. The largest of these take place in Blumenau (Brazil) and Kitchener (Canada), each with around one million visitors, followed by Frankenmuth (Michigan, USA) with around 350,000 visitors. In China, there are also superlative Oktoberfest oriented "beer festivals", for instance in Beijing, Dalian and Qingdao.

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