

6. AMBER MALTY EUROPEAN LAGER

This category groups amber-colored, German-origin, bottom-fermented lagerbiers that have a malty balance and are vollbier to starkbier in strength.

6A. Märzen

Overall Impression: An amber, malty German lager with a clean, rich, toasty, bready malt flavor, restrained bitterness, and a well-attenuated finish. The overall malt impression is soft, elegant, and complex, with a rich malty aftertaste that is never cloying or heavy.

Aroma: Moderate malty aroma, typically rich, bready, somewhat toasty, with light bread crust notes. Clean lager fermentation character. Very low floral, herbal, or spicy hop aroma optional. Caramel-sweet, biscuity-dry, or roasted malt aromas are inappropriate. Very light alcohol might be detected, but should never be sharp. Clean, elegant malt richness should be the primary aroma.

Appearance: Amber-orange to deep reddish-copper color; should not be golden. Bright clarity, with persistent, off-white foam stand.

Flavor: Moderate to high rich malt flavor often initially suggests sweetness, but the finish is moderately-dry to dry. Distinctive and complex maltiness often includes a bready, toasty aspect. Hop bitterness is moderate, and the floral, herbal, or spicy hop flavor is low to none. Hops provide sufficient balance that the malty palate and finish do not seem sweet. The aftertaste is malty, with the same elegant, rich malt flavors lingering. Noticeable sweet caramel, dry biscuit, or roasted flavors are inappropriate. Clean fermentation profile.

Mouthfeel: Medium body, with a smooth, creamy texture that often suggests a fuller mouthfeel. Medium carbonation. Fully attenuated, without a sweet or cloying impression. May be slightly warming, but the strength should be relatively hidden.

Comments: Modern domestic German Oktoberfest versions are golden – see the Festbier style for this version. Export German versions (to the United States, at least) are typically orange-amber in color, have a distinctive toasty malt character, and are often labeled *Oktoberfest*. Many craft versions of Oktoberfest are based on this style. Historic versions of the beer tended to be darker, towards the brown color range, but there have been many ‘shades’ of Märzen (when the name is used as a strength); this style description specifically refers to the stronger amber lager version. The modern Festbier can be thought of as a lighter-bodied, pale Märzen by these terms.

History: As the name suggests, brewed as a stronger “March beer” in March and lagered in cold caves over the summer. Modern versions trace back to the lager developed by Spaten in 1841, contemporaneous to the development of Vienna lager. However, the Märzen name is much older than 1841 – the early ones were dark brown, and the name implied a strength band (14 °P) rather than a style. The amber lager style served at Oktoberfest from 1872 until 1990 when the golden Festbier was adopted as the standard festival beer.

Characteristic Ingredients: Grist varies, although traditional German versions emphasized Munich malt. The notion of elegance is derived from the finest quality ingredients, particularly the base malts. A decoction mash is traditional, and enhances the rich malt profile.

Style Comparison: Not as strong and rich as a Dunkles Bock. More malt depth and richness than a Festbier, with a heavier body and slightly less hops. Less hoppy but equally malty as a Czech Amber Lager, but with a different malt profile.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.054 – 1.060 IBUs: 18 – 24 FG: 1.010 – 1.014 SRM: 8 – 17 ABV: 5.6 – 6.3%

Commercial Examples: Hacker-Pschorr Oktoberfest Märzen, Hofmark Märzen, Paulaner Oktoberfest, Saalfelder Ur-Saalfelder, Weltenburger Kloster Anno 1050

Tags: standard-strength, amber-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, amber-lager-family, malty

6B. Rauchbier

Overall Impression: A beechwood-smoked, malty, amber German lager. The expected Märzen profile of toasty-rich malt, restrained bitterness, clean fermentation, and a relatively dry finish is enhanced by a noticeable to intense smoke character.

Aroma: Blend of smoke and malt, varying in balance and intensity. The beechwood smoke character can range from subtle to fairly strong, and can seem smoky, woody, or baconlike. The malt character can be low to moderate, and be somewhat rich, toasty, or malty-sweet. The malt and smoke components are often inversely proportional (i.e., when smoke increases, malt decreases, and vice versa). Low floral or spicy hop aroma optional. Clean fermentation profile.

Appearance: Very clear, with a large, creamy, rich, tan- to cream-colored head. Deep amber to coppery-brown in color, often a little darker than the underlying Märzen style.

Flavor: Generally follows the aroma profile, with a blend of smoke and malt in varying balance and intensity, yet always mutually supportive. Märzen-like qualities should be evident, particularly a malty, toasty richness, but the beechwood smoke flavor can be low to high. The palate can be somewhat malty, rich, and sweet, yet the finish tends to be medium-dry to dry with the smoke character sometimes enhancing the dryness of the finish. The aftertaste can reflect both malt richness and smoke flavors, with a balanced presentation desirable. Moderate, balanced, hop bitterness. Can have up to a moderate hop flavor with spicy, floral, or herbal notes. Clean lager fermentation character. The quality and character of the smoke is important; it should be cleanly smoky. At higher levels, the smoke can take on a ham- or bacon-like character, which is acceptable as long as it doesn't veer into the greasy range. Harsh, bitter, burnt, acrid, charred, rubbery, sulfury, or creosote-like smoky-phenolic flavors are inappropriate.

Mouthfeel: Medium body. Medium to medium-high carbonation. Smooth lager character. Significant astringent, phenolic harshness is inappropriate.

Comments: Literally *smoke beer* in German. The smoke character and intensity varies by maltster and brewery, so allow for variation in the style when judging – not all examples are highly smoked. Many other traditional German styles are smoked; those should be entered in the 32A Classic Style Smoked Beer style. This style is only for the more common Märzen-based beer.

History: A historical specialty of the city of Bamberg, in the Franconian region of Bavaria in Germany. While smoked beers certainly were made long ago, the origins of this specific style are unclear but must have been developed after Märzen was created.

Characteristic Ingredients: Märzen-type grist, with the addition of a sizeable quantity of German Rauchmalz (beechwood-smoked Vienna-type malt). Some breweries smoke their own malt. German lager yeast. Traditional German or Czech hops.

Style Comparison: Like a Märzen with but with a balanced, sweet, smoky aroma and flavor and a somewhat darker color.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.050 – 1.057 IBUs: 20 – 30 FG: 1.012 – 1.016 SRM: 12 – 22 ABV: 4.8 – 6%

Commercial Examples: Cervejaria Bamberg Rauchbier, Göller Rauchbier, Rittmayer Rauchbier, Schlenkerla Rauchbier Märzen, Spezial Rauchbier Märzen

Tags: standard-strength, amber-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, amber-lager-family, malty, smoke

6C. Dunkles Bock

Overall Impression: A strong, dark, malty German lager beer that emphasizes the malty-rich and somewhat toasty qualities of continental malts without being sweet in the finish.

Aroma: Medium to medium-high rich bready-malty aroma, often with moderate amounts of rich Maillard products or toasty overtones. Virtually no hop aroma. Some alcohol may be noticeable. Clean lager character, although a slight dark fruit character is allowable.

Appearance: Light copper to brown color, often with attractive garnet highlights. Good clarity despite the dark color. Large, creamy, persistent, off-white head.

Flavor: Medium to medium-high complex, rich maltiness is dominated by toasty-rich Maillard products. Some dark caramel notes may be present. Hop bitterness is generally only high enough to support the malt flavors, allowing a bit of malty sweetness to linger into the finish. Well-attenuated, not cloying. Clean fermentation profile, although the malt can provide a slight dark fruit character. No hop flavor. No roasted, burnt, or dry biscuity character.

Mouthfeel: Medium to medium-full bodied. Moderate to moderately low carbonation. Some alcohol warmth may be found, but should never be hot. Smooth, without harshness or astringency.

Comments: Decoction mashing plays an important part of flavor development, as it enhances the caramel and Maillard flavor aspects of the malt.

History: Originated in the Northern German city of Einbeck, which was a brewing center and popular exporter in the days of the Hanseatic League (14th to 17th century). Recreated in Munich starting in the 17th century. “Bock” translates to “Ram” in German, which is why the animal is often used in logos and advertisements.

Characteristic Ingredients: Munich and Vienna malts, rarely a tiny bit of dark roasted malts for color adjustment, never any non-malt adjuncts. Continental European hop varieties are used. Clean German lager yeast.

Style Comparison: Darker, with a richer malty flavor and less apparent bitterness than a Helles Bock. Less alcohol and malty richness than a Doppelbock. Stronger malt flavors and higher alcohol than a Märzen. Richer, less attenuated, and less hoppy than a Czech Amber Lager.

Vital Statistics: OG: 1.064 – 1.072 IBUs: 20 – 27 FG: 1.013 – 1.019 SRM: 14 – 22 ABV: 6.3 – 7.2%

Commercial Examples: Aass Bock, Einbecker Ur-Bock Dunkel, Kneitinger Bock, Lindeboom Bock, Schell's Bock, Penn Brewery St. Nikolaus Bock

Tags: high-strength, amber-color, bottom-fermented, lagered, central-europe, traditional-style, bock-family, malty