

Dark Lagers

The two basic types of beers are ales and lagers. Ales are fermented at warmer temperatures with yeast that thrives at those temperatures and that do most of their work at the top of the fermentation tank, hence the term "top fermenting" is used when discussing ales. Lagers, on the other hand, utilize yeast that work at cooler temperatures and do most of their fermenting near the bottom of the tank, hence the term "bottom fermenting" is applied to lagers.

The origins of modern lagers date to Austria (Vienna) in the early nineteenth century. Anton Dreher is credited with brewing the very first lager in 1836. Prior to that time, all beers being brewed were ales, but Dreher was able to isolate a strain of yeast that fermented at lower, lager temperatures and created a beer that was brewed entirely with that yeast. His creation eventually became the Vienna Lager.

German brewers quickly adopted Dreher's creation and brewed Vienna lagers in Bavaria for years, though very few Vienna lagers can be found in Europe today. In the late nineteenth century, German brewers started brewing the Marzen, or Oktoberfest style of beer which quickly became more popular than the Vienna Lager. German brewers also created a dark, rich lager known as the Munich Dunkel which is still popular in Bavaria and through many parts of the world today.

Food Pairings

Dark Lagers are wonderful beers to drink on cool, Fall days. Their malty richness and pleasant, sweet flavors also tend to pair well with a variety of foods. Most of them are also strong enough in flavor to stand up to spicy dishes, barbecue and other flavorful foods.



Munich Dunkel

Darker than the Oktoberfest beers but also from Munich are the **Munich Dunkel** beers. In German, the word "dunkel" simply means dark. **Munich Dunkels** are typically dark brown beers that are heavy on malt flavors (sweet), in part because of the moderately carbonate water in the Munich area.

Dark as they are, Munich Dunkels are not as dark nor as strong as another dark lager from Munich, the **Doppelbock**. Otherwise, they are certainly far darker than their cousin, the Munich Helles lager. In German, Helles means pale and they are discussed further in our article on **Pale Lagers**.