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Taste Drink by Caitlin Quinn

A New Brew for Oktober

Narragansett Beer delivers with Fest Lager

As some of you may know, I have a cornucopia of reasons for loving fall. It's pretty. I don't sweat the moment I leave my door. Butternut squash works in nearly every dish. And I get to run around for one evening in an obscure character costume that no one ever gets. Another love of mine, though not season specific, is a good ole' booze-induced Von Trapp singing session. After a few drinks, those hills are alive, right? Rare, though, is the opportunity to meld these loves in an appropriate (relative to my weird world) manner. Yet, that is the thankful situation I find myself in this special month.

Friends, break out your lederhosen, goat hair-trimmed hats, sauerkraut and spit-roasted meats, because a new brew is in town: Narragansett Fest, an Oktoberfest-style lager from the folks at 'Gansett. Available throughout the fall season, Fest hits the mark.

For starters, this German-style maezen beer is packaged in bright, fall-loving, pumpkin-colored tallboy cans. Pictured on the front is a proud King Gambrinus, the Patron Saint of Beer. Fest is the company's first canned craft beer offering, and in true 'Gansett form, there's not a taste of tin to be found.

Fest pours a nearly perfect, traditional amber color, but with hues of coppery red instead of gold (characteristic of many American Oktoberfest beers). Typically, this style calls for pronounced malt flavors, complemented by German noble hops with a clean, dry finish. Check, check, near check. Fest combines Pilsner, Vienna, and Light and Dark Munich malts for a rich flavor that hits the palette first. Northern Brewer and just spicy enough Tettnanger hops balance Fest out, and make for a nice

aroma. Only in that last split second does it finish a hair more bitter than the brew's standard guidelines call for. Fellow lager lovers, whether you tilt toward slightly bitter or not, Fest delivers a medium-bodied beer you'll enjoy.

We have award-winning Brew Master Sean Larkin to thank for Fest's recipe, which is brewed for the most part in Connecticut and New York. Larkin's other delicious craft styles can be sampled at Trinity Brewhouse in Providence.

The origins of maezen style beer can be traced to before the 16th century in Bavaria. Hot, summer, bacteria-inducing weather made brewing possible only during the fall and winter months. The last brew was in March (Märzen), after which, the beer was stored in the coldest place available: caves. Chilled for 10 to 12 weeks with ice blocks from nearby ponds, the lager was ready for early fall – just in time for Oktoberfest, the 16 day festival ending the first Sunday in October. Originally planned as a one-time celebration of royal marriage in 1810, the festival's success and popularity convinced Bavarian party planners to expand to an annual extravaganza with beer, food and games in heavy abundance.

Closer to home, Narragansett Beer gives a nod to its own heritage with Fest. The brand's first brewery was founded by a group of eight German immigrants in Cranston, and it hosted annual Oktoberfest blowouts through the 1970s.

Fest is available in package stores mostly everywhere; you can't miss that orange six-pack. It's also available on tap at restaurants and bars, including the Watchemoket in East Providence, with more to come. Happy fall. www.narragansettbeer.com




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