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Maifest Chicago 2013: Beer, Family and Fun with German culture





Maifest Chicago 2013: Beer, Family and Fun with German culture

All ages can find German entertainment and culture in Lincoln Square even when it isn't October. Maifest Chicago 2013 celebrated its 13th anniversary of family, friends and the German celebration of spring.

Maifest Chicago was from May 30 through June 2 and featured German beer, food, music, dancing and, of course, lederhosen. Admission was free and people could buy drinks and food through \$1 tickets. Besides beer and food, there were also carnival games and German merchandise.

The weekend seemed like a beer festival that weaved in German bands, performers and dancers nicely. Starting out with the crowning of the next May queen and a keg tap, Maifest shows it can combine tradition with fun.

Every ten minutes when a band was performing someone on stage would yell, "Raise your glasses!" and the crowd in the giant tent would all hold up their plastic pints in response.



There were two sizes to choose from, a small pint and a large pint for the more adventurous; the large glass looked like it could contain at least two beers. The buyer could also choose from imported, München, and domestic, Pabst Blue Ribbon.

The food was also advocating the German culture with a sign that had the German word for the item and how it would translate in the U.S.. For example, the Leberkaese Dinner, was a Bavarian meatloaf sandwich with potatoes and sauerkraut. The meatloaf was cut almost like a steak and had a spicy kick. Another popular item was the Thueringer Sandwich, or the bratwurst. It was tangy and went well with beer.

The first few days had more of a younger crowd, mid 20's early 30's, though on Sunday there were more families. On Sunday there was a German/American ethnic program with traditional dance and song mixed with some modern entertainment.

The Jesse White Tumblers jumped to great heights with modern basketball jams and the American Aide Society of German Descendant's Jugendgruppe, teenage group, did the traditional May pole dance.

The May pole was erected in Lincoln Square 15 years ago from Germany, Matt Lodge, Vice president of Maifest Chicago said.

Lodge said Lincoln Square is a german concentrated population and Maifest celebrates spring and the planting of crops. He also said numbers were down this year at around 30,000 people attending because of the rain and colder weather.

Joe Matuschka, President of Maifest, said the first two years the festival was the weekend before Memorial Day but less people attended because of the holiday. He said the event now is the last weekend in May and has been more successful.

Lodge said there are 50 different German clubs in Chicago helping with the event including Dank Haus, the American Aid Society of German Descendants, the Donauschwaben Youth Group, and the German American Policy.

Mark Hoppe of Dank Haus said his group has been a part of Maifest for 10 years. They are the ones running the bar, working the kitchen and grilling the succulent food.

The men wearing the white coats and feathered hats and the woman wearing the tiara at Maifest are part of German organizations as well. One of the men is the carnival prince while the woman is the princess.

It is an honor to wear these outfits and they distinguish us, Elfriede Hugel, the carnival princess said.

The carnival German royalty attend a variety of German events in Milwaukee and Chicago.

Despite less numbers this year, there still was quite a crowd. On some days people would have to talk in other's ears in order to speak to anyone, while on others it was a dull roar and easy to talk.

Many of the people attending were from the area or nearby, like Lakeview and Andersonville, or

heard of the event by word of mouth.

Everyone seemed in good spirits partly because of the beer, but mostly because of the way everything mixed together.

One of the spectators said, "It feels like an outdoor festival, sans carny, Not your typical festival in Chicago."

See more photos from Maifest on Now You Know Events' Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NowYouKnowEvents>. Photos taken by NYK Interns *Taylor Westfall* and *Becky Neems*.



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