Oktoberfest originated in the Bavarian region of Germany with the marriage of Crown Prince Ludwig, later King Ludwig I, to Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. The seventeen day celebration is the largest beer and folk-fest (fair) in the world, and runs from late September to the first weekend in October. Every year more than six million foreign visitors attend Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany.

Modeled after the Bavarian celebration many other cities worldwide hold similar fests, featuring traditional German food such as roast chicken, roast pork, grilled ham hock grilled fish on a stick, sausages, pretzels, potato dumplings, red cabbage, cheese noodles and sauerkraut. Thousands of liters of beer are also served each year by young women in traditional costumes. The fest in Munich ends with a horse race in the Theresienwiese (Theresa’s meadow) the expansive fairground outside the city.

However, the annual race predates Oktoberfest. Originally run during the fifteen hundreds, the race in which thirty horses ran a 11200 foot long racetrack, concluded with a concert given by a student choir, followed by the rewarding of a gold medal to the winning horse. It took place beneath Mt Sendlinger, now known as Theresienhohe. The mountain was used as a 40,000 person grandstand, topped by the king’s tent, where wine and beer tastings were enjoyed.

A performance preceding the race featured a parade of children dressed in regional costumes from the nine Bavarian townships.

In more recent times an agricultural show and carnival rides have been added to the festivities.

So, hoist your stein and “Prost”, Y’all.