



**March 2011**

**Edelstoff**

**Augustiner-Bräu, Munich, Germany**

**5.7% ABV    \$3.50/12oz**

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Munich is one of the world's truly great brewing cities, full of brewing tradition and great local beers. This is for several reasons: it is the political and economic hub of a state rich in agriculture – Bavaria, it is near cool alpine caves, and it has plentiful and unique brewing water. Bavaria has been one of Europe's most important farming regions for centuries. In addition to its vast fields of barley and wheat, several species of hops are native to Bavaria. Since Munich was the Bavarian political and economic capital, the city was awash in commodities and crops, as well as the money to build breweries and the people to consume the beer.

Munich has long been famous for the crispness and the quality of its beer. The beer is crisp, in part, because of lager yeast. During the warm summer months, Munich brewers would keep their beers cool and age them in caves in nearby foothills of the Alps. Over the course of a few centuries, through brewer-influenced and natural selection, lager yeast developed. At those low temperatures, lager yeast spends its time fermenting and consuming the sweet sugars, rather than producing the fruity and spicy flavors that warmer-fermenting ale yeast does. This left Bavarian beers drier- and crisper-tasting than other beers. Also, Munich beer was great because of its source water. The water in the aquifers underneath Munich is “hard” water that's full of calcium carbonate – great for brewing dark beers (London and Dublin have similar water).

Up until the mid-1800s, one of the most sought after beers was the “Münchner” beer – a crisp, dark, nutty lager. Then in the 1840s, through some real-life yeast espionage, some of the German lager yeast was spirited away into the city of Plzen, in what is now the Czech Republic. The Czechs used it to ferment and create the Pilsner style of beer. We all know how that ended – the pilsner and its derivatives are now the most popular beer in the world. Within a decade, Munich's great brewing heritage was suddenly for naught as Bohemian pilsner eroded sales of Münchner. Munich brewers' response was to brew a light-colored, light-bodied beer with soft hop flavors and brewed with Munich's carbonic water, in contrast to the sharply hoppy pilsners. Thus, by the 1870s, Munich became known for both its Münchner dunkles (dark) and Münchner helles (light). Since then, helles has been much loved as a slightly less assertive alternative to pilsner.

The Augustiner brewery, one of six large breweries in Munich today, brews a helles, but offers a slightly fuller version in its Edelstoff (which translates to “gold stuff”). Edelstoff has the light color, light body, and crispness of a helles, but with a slightly softer finish that showcases the rich, bready Bavarian malts. It's a great example of what's so appealing about German beer – it's bready, clean, delicate, and elegant. At 5.7% ABV with a soft finish, it's right in the middle of the German lager spectrum between their bone-dry pilsners and sweet, toffeeish bocks. Edelstoff is a brilliant gold color, and makes you thirsty just looking at it. Pour it cold – 35-40 degrees – into a large glass that will accommodate a billowy, rocky head. The head will trap all the clean aromas of the pale malts, the Bavarian noble hops, and that famous, soft Munich water. The beer is crisp yet malty; clean without being lifeless. The lager yeast gets out of the way so that the other ingredients shine, coming together in a beer that's bready, herbal, and slightly peppery.

Enjoy Edelstoff with breads, herbs, and salty cheeses. Its crispness can cut through a bit of fat, like pork fat or fried foods. It'd be great with gruyere and smoked almonds, a chorizo torta with cotilla cheese, or ma po tofu, but this beer is really at home with German dishes. It's got grilled pork chops, schnitzel, beet salad, potato soup, salty pretzels, and mustard written all over it.



**XXX**

**Midnight Sun Brewing Co., Anchorage, Alaska**

**8.5% ABV \$13.00/22oz**

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To understand this very New World beer's unique combination of flavors, it's worth taking a look at how it evolved from pale ale over the past few centuries. Near the end of the eighteenth century, pale ale was a very popular beer in England. For the thirsty English colonists in India, though, the climate was too hot to brew beer, and beer imported from England usually spoiled while tossing about on a ship for five months at hot equatorial latitudes. In the late 1700s, however, a brewer in London began brewing a pale ale that had more hops and more alcohol – both natural preservatives. Production of this beer increased across England, and it was an especially lucrative export to colonists in India, where it arrived in much better, tastier shape than the regular pale ales. For this reason, it became known as India Pale Ale, or IPA for short.

Fast-forward two hundred years to the nascent craft brewing renaissance. Inspired by English ales but unable to procure English brewing ingredients, craft brewers experimented with American malts, hops, and yeast. The American pale ales and India pale ales tasted bolder, with bready, toasty malts and citrusy, piney hops shining among neutral, attenuative yeasts. These beers had little in common with their Old World inspirations, and even less in common with the bland beers most Americans knew. The popularity of American craft beer has skyrocketed over the past 35 years, with the American-style IPA its standard-bearer.

In the mid-1990s, the first Imperial IPAs were brewed, borrowing the term from the Russian Imperial Stout. (In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, the Russian aristocracy encouraged English brewers to brew and sell them stouts that had twice the strength of a regular stout.) In the mid-1990s, this idea of doubling or imperializing the IPA treated American IPA fans (affectionately known as “hop heads”) to IPAs that were 8% and 9% ABV, supremely malty and bitter at the same time, with citrusy, piney, and tropical notes from the American hops. More recently, the idea of using dark malts in an IPA has become common. The resulting beer is toasty and slightly chocolatey from a gentle dose of dark malts, but the bright American hops still shine through.

Midnight Sun's XXX was one of the first commercially available Black Double American-style India Pale Ales. If you think the style's name is a mouthful, just wait till you try the beer. It's bold and full-bodied, a seamless and cutting-edge combination of dehusked black malt (barley husk can turn acrid and astringent when roasted) and citrusy American hops. An intense but smooth beer, it's a great expression of beer evolution, American terroir, and pioneering attitude from a high-quality and highly-creative craft brewery on the frontier.

This is a great beer for the rule “smell before you drink” (which is also based on “drink from a glass, not from the bottle”). Pour the beer, leaving room for you to bury your nose in your glass to take a deep whiff. There's a complex bouquet of grapefruit, orange, pine forest, and flowers (honeysuckle? rose?). All of this is coming from the American hops, and it's a bit of a surprise coming from such a dark beer. These flavors come through on the palate, too, plus a strong hop bitterness that's balanced by a chewy maltiness, subtle roastiness, and slightly bourbon-y, alcoholic finish. Enjoy XXX in a tulip glass or a wine glass – anything that will focus the bouquet and elevate it above your hand to appreciate its espresso hue – at around 45-55 degrees. The cooler it is, the leaner and more bitter it will be; warmer it is, the fruitier it will taste and the more alcohol heat you'll get. For pairing XXX with food, go with bold, rich, herby, and/or spicy foods. This beer has enough flavor and body to railroad most dishes, but if you pair it with a bleu cheese burger charred from the grill, goat tacos with smoky-spicy chipotle salsa, or chocolate-covered candied orange peel, you'll be mightily rewarded.