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FEATURED

Masskrugstemmen set for restaurant

By Jordan Gass-Poore New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung
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Masskrugstemmen contest participants attempt to be the one who can hold a mug of beer the longest on July 12, 2012, at Friesenhaus Restaurant and Bakery.

LAURA MCKENZIE | New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung

NEW BRAUNFELS — In anticipation of Friesenhaus' annual masskrugstemmen contest, which begins round one at 7 p.m. Thursday, co-owner Günter Dirks recalled some memorable moments from the past five years it has been held in the local German restaurant.

A local farmer, described by Dirks as “tall and skinny with thin arms,” steadily held out a five-pound mug filled with beer. He was one of two left standing in a former masskrugstemmen (pronounced mass-goo-stev-in) contest at Friesenhaus.

Masskrugstemmen, a Bavarian sport for both men and women, translates loosely into the “lifting of a liter mug of beer.” Contestants must hold the “masskrug,” or mug, at arm’s length and parallel to the floor for as long as possible.

Dirks said the other contestant was a man with an athletic build and, unlike the farmer, the mug he held shook.

“He was big in the arms and big in the chest,” Dirks said. “He couldn’t understand why he couldn’t hold it anymore.”

Time passed until the farmer eventually won, making him eligible to compete in the restaurant’s finals, which is scheduled to take place this year on Aug. 15.

Winners from each round compete in the regional finals for a chance to win a trip for two to represent Friesenhaus at the annual National Masskrugstemmen Championship sponsored by Hofbräu USA on Sept. 21 in New York City.

Representatives also will participate in a float ride down Fifth Avenue during the 56th Annual German-American Steuben Parade preceding the national championship.

“We’re looking for someone who can win NYC,” said Dirks, who judges the local masskrugstemmen contest. “We should represent Texas bigger, stronger, better.”

New Braunfels resident Robert “Bobby” Voges placed ninth out of 13 contestants at last year’s national championship, holding his mug out for four minutes, 47 seconds and two milliseconds.

Cody Banes of Sugar Land set a contest record last year with 11 minutes, 24 seconds and seven milliseconds, winning a trip for two to Munich for three nights.

Dirks said the masskrugstemmen contest record at Friesenhaus is 10 minutes and 50 seconds, achieved during the 2010 finals.

With the \$20 entry fee, all masskrugstemmen contestants at Friesenhaus can keep the one-liter Hofbräu mug they use and drink the beer inside once the contest, which lasts about five to eight minutes, is complete.

“We don’t usually sell the Hofbräu mugs,” Dirks said. “When we do they’re usually \$25, and that’s without the beer.”

He said contest participants who are eliminated from one round for various reasons, like spilling the contents of their mug on the floor, can compete again in subsequent rounds.

“There was one woman, she spilled all the beer because she couldn’t hold it,” he said. “There was also a man who started shaking (his mug) for three minutes and spilled beer.”

Friesenhaus is one of 15 restaurants in the nation that serves Hofbräu beer on tap to host the masskrugstemmen contest.

Masskrugstemmen may hail from Germany, where it is most commonly played in festivals and beer halls, but Dirks said there is no official contest for the game in his home country.

In 2005, Dirks said he and his family moved from Friesland, Germany, a district off the coast of the North Sea, to New Braunfels after being both personally and financially affected by the events of Sept. 11.

He and his wife opened Friesenhaus a year later, having previously run a German-based travel agency together.

Much of the food and beverages is reminiscent of popular fare in Friesland, where Dirks said locals drink more tea than beer because of the chilly coastal weather.

If you go

The beer mug-holding contest is at 7 p.m. Thursday at Friesenhaus, 148 S Castell Ave., New Braunfels.