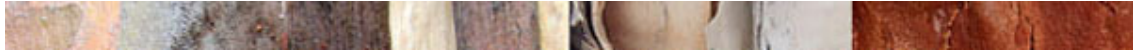


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Oxford Word of the Month – August: schmiddy

noun: a medium-sized measure of beer; the glass containing this.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

In a recently published comic encyclopedia of Australia, a section on beer provides an unflattering comment on the schmiddy: 'If you are served schmiddys, the best approach is to leave immediately and find a less pretentious venue.' (D. Knight, *Strayapedia*, 2017)

The schmiddy is a medium-sized measure of beer of around 350 millilitres, but there is evidence for a range between 320 ml and 350 ml. The word is a portmanteau of two much older Australian terms for beer sizes – the *schooner* and the *middy*. *Schooner* dates back to the late 19th century and can refer to a range of beer sizes, but most commonly it refers to a large beer of some 425 ml. *Middy* is found from the mid 20th century and usually refers to a beer of around 285 ml. As with *schooner* and *middy*, schmiddy can refer to both the measure of beer and the glass containing it.

The pronunciation of schmiddy (SHMID-ee) is interesting, because the initial 'sh' sound in schmiddy differs from the initial 'sk' sound of *schooner* (SKOON-uh). Although logic suggests we pronounce schmiddy as 'SKMID-ee', the 'skm' sound does not come easily to an English speaker. We are more familiar with the 'shm' sound in words like *schmick* and *schmaltz*, and schmiddy follows this pattern.

As our opening quotation, and the following example, suggests, the association of the schmiddy with pretentiousness is quite common in the evidence:

Purchasing beer was traditionally a simple task, and this made me happy. For decades Sydney beer has only ever been available in two sizes – the middy and the schooner. More simply put, you could get a big glass or you could get a little glass. Too easy. And then some publican somewhere in Sydney's CBD or trendy inner-east invented the 'schmiddy'. Overnight, my world transformed. (Sydney Morning Herald, 7 July 2005)

All the earliest evidence for schmiddy from the late 1990s is associated with its introduction in the Sydney region, and is usually critical of the newfangled beer size: 'All ... readers should send any bar owners who charge schooner prices for

these “schmiddy” glasses a message — and boycott them.’ (Sydney Daily Telegraph, 7 February 1998)

Many of the early references to *schmiddy* are from Sydney newspapers. This is not surprising as there are different names for different beer sizes right across the states and territories. For example, while you may hear the term *middy* in Sydney, the same-sized beer might be called a *handle* in Darwin and a *pot* in Melbourne. There has been, and continues to be, much heated debate about the names and sizes of beers served in Australia.

From the many references to *schmiddy* found online it appears that this beer size is here to stay. But we have yet to see people have anything positive to say about it:

So concerned was this reporter about their unholy ascent in Sydney that every time I was cruelly stranded in a *schmiddy*-serving establishment I would take great care to ask specifically for a *schooner* of ale ... The *schmiddy*, bastard lovechild of these two fine pieces of glassware, only gets you drunk enough to be angry you're drinking a *schmiddy*. (Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, 24 March 2005)

Schmiddy will be considered for inclusion in the next edition of *The Australian National Dictionary*.

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