

German Cuisine

The cuisine of Germany is made up of many different local or regional cuisines, as is typical for somewhat larger countries. Germany itself is part of a larger cultural region, Central Europe, sharing many traditions with neighbouring countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic. Southern regions, like Bavaria and Swabia, share dishes with Austrian and parts of Swiss cuisine.

The Michelin Guide of 2015 awarded 11 restaurants in Germany three stars, the highest designation, while 38 more received two stars and 233 one star. As of November 2017, Germany had the fourth-highest number of Michelin three-star restaurants in the world, after Japan, France, and the United States.

Hot Foods

A long tradition of sausage-making exists in Germany, more than 1,500 different types of sausage (German: *Wurst*) are made. Among the most popular and most common are *Bratwurst*, usually made of ground pork and spices, and the *Wiener*, which may be pork or beef and is smoked and fully cooked in a water bath.

Structure of meals

Breakfast (*Frühstück*) commonly consists of bread, toast, or bread rolls with butter or margarine, cold cuts, cheeses, jam, honey and eggs (typically hard boiled). It is very common to eat hearty toppings at breakfast, including deli meats like ham, salted meats, salami and meat-based spreads such as *Leberwurst* (liver sausage).

Traditionally the main meal of the day has been lunch (*Mittagessen*), eaten around noon. Dinner (*Abendessen* or *Abendbrot*) was always a smaller meal, often consisting only of a variety of breads, meat or sausages, cheese and some kind of vegetables, similar to breakfast, or possibly sandwiches. Smaller meals added during the day bear names such as *Vesper* (in the south), *Brotzeit* (bread time, also in the south), *Kaffee und Kuchen* (literally “coffee and cake”), or *Kaffeetrinken*. It is a very German custom and comparable with the English Five-o’clock-Tea. It takes place between lunch and dinner, often on Sundays with the entire family.

Side dishes

Noodles, made from wheat flour and egg, are usually thicker than the Italian flat pasta. Especially in the southwestern part of the country, the predominant variety of noodles are *Spätzle*, made with a large number of eggs, and *Maultaschen*, traditionally stuffed noodles reminiscent of ravioli.

Besides noodles, potatoes are common. Potatoes entered the German cuisine in the late 17th century, and were almost ubiquitous in the 19th century and since. They most often are boiled (in salt water, *Salzkartoffeln*) but mashed (*Kartoffelpuree* or

Kartoffelbrei) and pan-roasted (*Bratkartoffeln*) are also traditional. French fries, called *Pommes frites* (spoken as “Pom fritz”) or regionally as *Fritten* in German, are a common style of fried potatoes.

Also common are dumplings (including *Kloße* as the term in the north or *Knödel* as the term in the south) and in southern Germany potato noodles, including *Schupfnudeln*, which are similar to Italian *gnocchi*.

Spices and condiments

With the exception of mustard for sausages, German dishes are rarely hot and spicy, the most popular herbs are traditionally parsley, thyme, laurel, chives, black pepper (used in small amounts), juniper berries, nutmeg, and caraway. Cardamom, anise seed, and cinnamon are often used in sweet cakes or beverages associated with Christmas time, and sometimes in the preparation of sausages, but are otherwise rare in German meals. Other herbs and spices, such as basil, sage, oregano, and hot chili peppers, have become popular since the early 1980s. Fresh dill is very common in a green salad or fish fillet.

Mustard (*Senf*) is a very common accompaniment to sausages and can vary in strength, the most common version being *Mittelscharf* (medium hot), which is somewhere between traditional English and French mustards in strength. Düsseldorf, similar to French’s Deli Mustard with a taste that is very different from Dijon, and the surrounding area are known for its particularly spicy mustard, which is used both as a table condiment and in local dishes such as *Senfrostbraten* (pot roast with mustard). In the southern parts of the country, a sweet variety of mustard is made which is almost exclusively served with the Bavarian speciality *Weißwurst*. German mustard is usually considerably less acidic than American varieties.

Horseradish is commonly used as a condiment either on its own served as a paste, enriched with cream (*Sahnemeerrettich*), or combined with mustard. In some regions of Germany, it is used with meats and sausages where mustard would otherwise be used. Its use in Germany has been documented to the 16th century, when it was used as medicine, and as a food, whereby its leaves were consumed as a vegetable.

Desserts

A wide variety of cakes, tarts and pastries are served throughout the country, most commonly made with fresh fruit. Apples, plums, strawberries, and cherries are used regularly in cakes. Cheesecake is also very popular, often made with quark. *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte* (Black Forest cake, made with cherries) is probably the most well-known example of a wide variety of typically German *tortes* filled with whipped or butter cream.

German doughnuts (which have no hole) are usually balls of yeast dough with jam or other fillings and are known as *Berliner*, *Pfannkuchen* (in Berlin and Eastern

Germany), *Kreppel* or *Krapfe*, depending on the region. *Eierkuchen* or *Pfannkuchen* are large and relatively thin pancakes, comparable to the French crepes. They are served covered with sugar, jam or syrup. Salty variants with cheese, ground meat or bacon exist as well as variants with apple slices baked in (called *Apfelpfannkuchen*, literally for apple pancakes), but they are usually considered to be main dishes rather than desserts. In some regions, *Eierkuchen* are filled and then wrapped; in others, they are cut into small pieces and arranged in a heap (called *Kaiserschmarrn*, often including raisins baked in). The word *Pfannkuchen* means pancake in most parts of Germany.

A popular dessert in northern Germany is *Rote Grütze*, red fruit pudding, which is made with black and red currants, raspberries and sometimes strawberries or cherries cooked in juice with corn starch as a thickener. It is traditionally served with cream, but also is served with vanilla sauce, milk or whipped cream. *Rhabarbergrütze* (rhubarb pudding) and *Grüne Grütze* (gooseberry fruit pudding) are variations of the *Rote Grütze*. A similar dish, *Obstkaltschale*, may also be found all around Germany.

Ice cream and sorbets are also very popular. Italian-run ice cream parlours were the first large wave of foreign-run eateries in Germany, which began around the mid 1850s, becoming widespread in the 1920s. *Spaghettieis*, which resembles spaghetti, tomato sauce, and ground cheese on a plate, is a popular ice cream dessert.

Holidays

A very common dish in German culture is *Würstchen mit Kartoffelsalat*, sausage (mostly *Wiener Würstchen*) with potato salad, which usually is served on Christmas Eve. On the Christmas days following Christmas Eve, roasted goose is a staple Christmas Day meal. It is sometimes replaced by European carp, particularly in the southern areas. The carp is cut into pieces, coated in breadcrumbs and fried in fat. Common side dishes are potato salad, cucumber salad or potatoes. The Advent season is often associated with sweet and spicy foods like *Weihnachts* or *Christollen* and *Lebkuchen*.

Bread

Bread (*Brot*) is a significant part of German cuisine, with the largest bread diversity in the world. Around 200 types of breads and 1,200 different types of pastries and rolls are produced in about 17,000 bakeries and another 10,000 in-shop bakeries.

Bread is served usually for breakfast (often replaced by bread rolls) and in the evening as (open) sandwiches, but rarely as a side dish for the main meal (popular, for example, with *Eintopf* or soup). The importance of bread in German cuisine is also illustrated by words such as *Abendbrot* (meaning supper, or literally evening bread) and *Brotzeit* (snack, literally bread time). In fact, one of the major complaints

of the German expatriates in many parts of the world is their inability to find acceptable local breads.

Regarding bread, German cuisine is more varied than that of either Eastern or Western Europe. Bread types range from white wheat bread (*Weißbrot*) to grey (*Graubrot*) to black (*Schwarzbrot*), actually dark brown rye bread. Some breads contain both wheat and rye flour and often also wholemeal and whole seeds such as linseed, sunflower seed, or pumpkin seed. Darker, rye-dominated breads, such as *Vollkornbrot* or *Schwarzbrot*, are typical of German cuisine. *Pumpernickel*, sweet-tasting bread created by long-time-steaming instead of regular baking, is internationally well known, although not representative of German black bread as a whole. Most German breads are made with sourdough. Whole grain is also preferred for high fibre. Germans use almost all available types of grain for their breads: wheat, rye, barley, spelt, oats, millet, corn and rice. Some breads are even made with potato starch flour.

Germany's most popular breads are rye-wheat (*Roggenmischbrot*), toast bread (*Toastbrot*), whole-grain (*Vollkornbrot*), wheat-rye (*Weizenmischbrot*), white bread (*Weißbrot*), multi-grain, usually wheat-rye-oats with sesame or linseed (*Mehrkornbrot*), rye (*Roggenbrot*), sunflower seeds in dark rye bread (*Sonnenblumenkernbrot*), pumpkin seeds in dark rye bread (*Kürbiskernbrot*) and roasted onions in light wheat-rye bread (*Zwiebelbrot*).

International influences

Elements of international cuisine (apart from influences from neighbouring countries) are a relatively recent phenomenon in German cuisine, compared with other West European states. Colonial goods shops spread only in the 19th and 20th centuries and brought luxury goods like cocoa, coconuts, rare exotic spices, coffee and (non-herbal) tea to a wider audience.

The first wave of foreigners coming to Germany specifically to sell their food specialties were ice cream makers from northern Italy, who started to arrive in noticeable numbers during the later 1920s. With the post-World War II contacts with Allied occupation troops, and especially with the influx of more and more foreign workers that began during the second half of the 1950s, many foreign dishes have been adopted into German cuisine – Italian dishes, such as spaghetti and pizza, have become staples of the German diet. In 2008, there were around 9,000 pizzerias and 7,000 Italian restaurants in Germany. The pizza is Germany's favourite fast food.

Turkish immigrants have introduced Turkish foods to Germany, notably *döner kebab*. In November 2017, it was estimated that 1,500 *döner kebab* shops were present in Berlin. Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek and Balkan restaurants are also widespread in Germany.

Before 1990, the cuisine from Eastern Germany (1949-1990) was influenced by Russian, Polish, Bulgarian and other countries of the Communist bloc. East Germans travelled abroad to these countries on holiday, and soldiers coming to East Germany from these countries brought their dishes them. A typical dish that came to the East German kitchen this way is *Soljanka*.

Indian, Vietnamese, Thai, and other Asian cuisines are rapidly gaining in popularity since the early 2000s. Until the late 1990s many of the more expensive restaurants served mostly French inspired dishes for decades. Since the end of the 1990s, they have been shifting to a more refined form of German cuisine.

Food industry

Germany is the third largest agricultural producer in the European Union and the third largest agricultural exporter in the world. In 2013, German food exports were worth around 66 billion Euros. Several food products are internationally known brands – Gummy bears, Liqueur, Mini pretzels, Chocolate and Lübecker Marzipan.