

## DRINKING CUSTOMS

## THE WHERE / WHAT / WHEN OF DRINKING IN GERMANY



Drinking in Germany isn't exclusive to festivals. With less of a taboo put on drinking in public, drinking isn't restricted to restaurants or homes. Rather, Germans will be seen enjoying some wine at a park, or cracking open a few Jaeger bombs on a picnic. The American institution of Happy Hour also exists in Germany, but it isn't as widespread or as attached to the workplace.

As far as buying alcohol, German alcohol distribution laws don't vary by region or state. Alcohol, be it beer, wine, or liquor, can be bought at grocery stores, bodegas, at small kiosks outside of train stations. You can even buy a beer at McDonald's!

## From Ratskeller to Snack Bar

The variety of eating and drinking places in Germany is enormous. In the smaller towns the best places to eat are usually the hotels. **Gasthöfe**, **Gasthäuser**, **Gaststuben** and **Gastwirtschaften** are (or include) restaurants.

The more pretentious German restaurants have gone through an astonishing development in the last ten years. With growing prosperity and availability of first-class ingredients, a rather sophisticated gourmet cuisine has come into being. Some top German restaurants come close to the best in French cooking now, and of course their prices are top-notch to match.

**Weinstuben** (wine parlors) often do not serve complete lunches and dinners, but they can provide you with substantial snacks with your wine.

**Bräus** (restaurants often featuring a special brand of beer) and **Bierkeller** (beer cellars) usually have plenty of food on hand as well as beer.

**Cafés** (not to be mistaken for American coffee-houses) sometimes offer hot dishes, too. At any rate, they can produce enough incidental food to satisfy any reasonable person. **Konditoreien** are pastry shops.

A **Ratskeller** is the basement of the city hall (Rathaus). The city fathers once repaired to a Ratskeller table to tip a few and take a meal. Many a Ratskeller has disappeared. Wherever a small-town Ratskeller survives, the beer and fillet steaks are likely to be better than anywhere else in town.

Moreover, there is now a large variety of foreign restaurants — Chinese, Greek, Italian places, steak houses, pizzerias, and what have you.

A **Selbstbedienungs-Restaurant** is similar to the American self-service cafeteria.

**Lokal** and **Kneipe** are colloquial words for pubs or bars.

A **Schnellimbiss**, **Schnellgaststätte** or **Imbissstube** is a snack bar. At a Schnellimbiss you will be able to get a couple of sausages with bread and mustard (**Würstchen mit Brot und Senf**) and a soft drink or beer for a reasonable price. You usually eat standing at a counter or a small round table.

The Bratwurst is fat, white and spicy, the Currywurst is similar but served with a curry catsup; Bockwurst is longer and red, something like a thicker American hot dog. The Frankfurter is thinner and usually sold in pairs. — At an Imbiss sausages are eaten using the fingers, often with the help of a small cardboard slip. You don't get a bun, though often a slice of bread or a small roll is served with your sausage.

Sandwiches are usually open-face, with no bread on top (an exception are those on a roll). Most common are Schinkenbrot (ham on bread) and Käsebrot (cheese on bread).

Other fast-food places also sell pizza and US-style hamburgers and hot dogs as well as the universal grilled chicken (**Brathähnchen**).