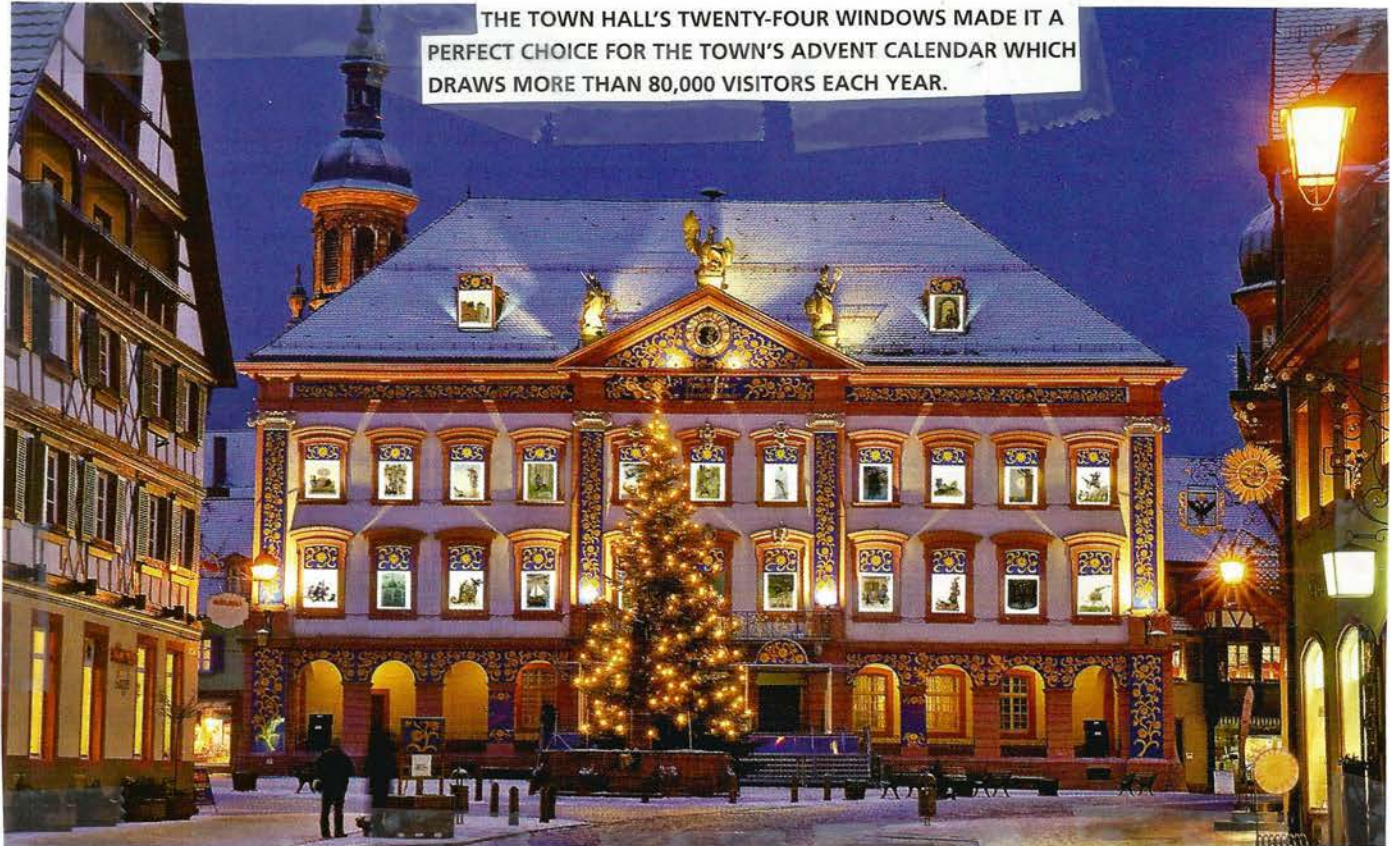


“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

**ADVENTSSITTEN / ADVENT CUSTOMS**  
**ADVENTSKALENDER / ADVENT CALENDAR**  
 calendar: der Kalender, die Kalender

**GENGENBACHS RATHAUS ADVENTSKALENDER**



Past calendars have featured artwork by children, but also work by world-famous artists, such as illustrations of German folk songs by Tomi Ungerer, and paintings by the late Belarussian-French Jewish artist, Marc Chagall. Across the street from the *Rathaus*, at the Museum Haus Löwenberg, the original works of art from the calendar are on exhibit, for those who would like a closer look.

Starting at 5:00 p.m. every weekday evening, and at 3:00 p.m. on weekends, a different regional music group performs on a stage in front of the *Rathaus*. The suspense builds as spectators gather to listen, drink hot cinnamon and clove-spiced *Glihwein* and eat *Bratwürste* from the Christmas market stands as they await the unveiling of the day's new calendar image. Precisely at 5:45 p.m. the main event, “the ritual,” begins. A narrator tells a new episode in a tale spun around the theme of that year's calendar as music plays and a children's group, directed by a professional choreographer, dances. The episode climaxes with the introduction of the calendar's new image of the day, and the corresponding window is opened at 6:00 p.m. Afterwards, instrumental and singing groups continue the

entertainment. Black Forest native Edith Distl moved to Gengenbach to open a clothing shop just off the main square one year ago. “Gengenbach used to be a town without character,” she says. “Because of the Advent calendar, it now has culture and style. Customers come into my shop from the square with their faces beaming. That really does you good.”

Thanks to the Advent calendar, Gengenbach's Christmas market is now one of the most popular in the Black Forest. The town center, built largely in the baroque period after several fires during the Thirty Years' War destroyed the medieval fortified town, is entirely protected as a historical monument and is a stunning backdrop for more than fifty wooden and pine-bough-covered market stalls. The stalls and the windows of the old houses all around are illuminated only indirectly with soft white lights. There is no other street lighting. This market is “*klein aber fein*” (small but fine) and the atmosphere especially cozy, everyone says. They also agree that you will not find kitsch for sale here.

Two-thirds of the stalls offer non-food products. You