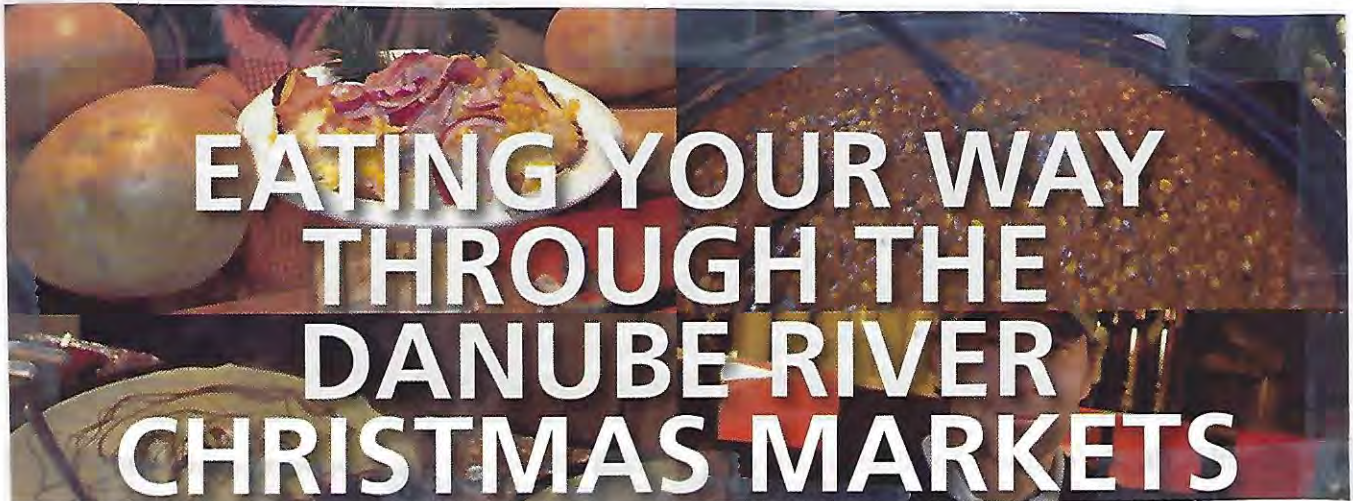


“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

WEIHNACHTSMÄRKTE—CHRISTMAS MARKETS

market: der Markt, die Märkte

Christmas market: der Weihnachtsmarkt, die Weihnachtsmärkte



POTATOES, ONIONS, CORN, CHEESE, BITS OF HAM AND OTHER HEARTY COMPONENTS MAKE UP THIS DISH OFFERED AT A MARKET VENDOR.

If I learned anything about the numerous, colorful Christkindlmarkts along the Danube River in Austria and Germany, it's that the foods are a powerful draw—a very powerful draw.

Eating your way through the once-a-year market extravaganzas that pop up at the beginning of the Advent season seems to be the most popular activity at these month-long food fests.

Thousands of people jam large and small village plazas like Passau, Linz, Regensburg—and even tiny Melk, Austria—to imbibe in the alcohol-laced hot Glühwein, chomp down a plate of piping hot potato pancakes, or envelope a calorie-laden cream puff to top off the evening.

At most markets, fully 50% or more of the vendors feature some sort of food or drink. The market mantra is if it's sweet, if it's hot, or if it's fried, it will attract a large crowd of hungry customers, and the beverages served are just as beguiling.

By the river in downtown Nuremberg, and not far from the famous 160-stall Nuremberger Market, the largest punch bowl in the world helps satisfy the thirst of thousands of young adults who camp out for hours to socialize and quench their thirst. The copper punch bowl, as large as a car,

symbolizes the extent to which market visitors are enthralled by what goes in their stomachs.

The top-selling beverage is hot spiced mulled wine (Glühwein). Dating back to 500 B.C. when spices and herbs were added to wine for health reasons, this beverage is an adult-pleaser. Using dry red wine as a base, it's mixed with spices such as cloves, anise, orange, cinnamon, and sugar or honey. It's always heated but never boiled.

Beverage stands also offer Christmas punch consisting of tea, red wine, rum, fresh lemon and orange juice, and spices. You can also ask for it without the rum.

In medieval Regensburg, you can load up on “Original Regenburger Pumpkin Soup” if it's cold outside, or you can purchase chocolate tools — hammers, saws, screwdrivers, calipers, locks and even water faucets—that look like the real thing, but are incredibly edible chocolates.

If you have a sweet tooth for marzipan, the Christmas markets along the Danube are your friend. Sugary marzipan can be purchased in the form of marzipan candy bars, small animals or imitation fruits and vegetables, or even in the shape of a large loaf of bread, called Marzipanbrot.

There's also the Schneeball, a pastry



CHEESE IN LARGE BLOCKS IS AVAILABLE IF YOU WANT TO TAKE SOME HOME; THIS VENDOR IS OFFERING CHEESE AT THE THURN AND TAXIS PALACE CHRISTMAS MARKET IN REGENSBURG.