

## WAS ESSEN DIE DEUTSCHEN?

In Germany, the regional differences in the gastronomy are as numerous and varied as the dialects. While professional and amateur chefs embrace these distinctions, they also share a love of fresh and wholesome ingredients. As a result, neighborhood butcher shops and bakeries continue to flourish and organic food products are increasingly commonplace. In addition to traditional favorites, a cosmopolitan fare that reflects the country's vibrant immigrant population as well as the Germans' strong interest in other cultures has become popular in recent years.

### Food in the Fatherland:

#### *Beyond the Wurst*

Those *Crazy* Germans!

German food is more than just sausages and potatoes, although they do occupy a high rung on the German food chain. Still, German food or *Essen*, doesn't get the respect it deserves. Everyone knows and loves Italian food with its rich marinara sauces, hearty pasta dishes and succulent fish while culinary snobs everywhere point to French cuisine as the pinnacle of taste bud delight. German food, however, with its reputation for hearty meat and potato dishes, commands little of the same respect. That perception, while having some truth to it, sells the German food story a little too short. Contemporary German food is more varied than it was fifty, or even ten, years ago, and is influenced by many regional and international tastes.

Certainly, we associate schnitzel and sauerbraten with Germany, but how about *Maultaschen*—meat and spinach-filled ravioli, (known as or “mouth pockets”) or various forms of potato casserole. Frankfurters and Bratwurst are surely German, but what about the dozens of other kind of Wurst or sausages, such as Bierwurst, Thüringer and Nürnberger or even *Weisswurst*. Because these are more complex sausages to produce, we often don't see them in our home country, but they are everywhere in Germany. *Wurst* is not just served with sauerkraut, Germans also have *Wurstsalat* or sausage salad. In its translated form, it doesn't sound so appealing, but it is a tasty green salad that is not really a sausage salad at all. Rather, it is topped with strips of light cold cuts.

Soups abound, ranging from asparagus soup to cheese and potato soup, as well as very brothy, boullion soup. Butchers (look for signs for *Metzgerei*) regularly carry venison, duck and even hare for variety, while open-air markets for fresh fruit and vegetables are found in every city and town. Fondness for all things fresh means that the average German still ventures to town markets on Saturday mornings to pick up the weekly supply of Obst and Gemüse (fruits and vegetables). Despite the loosening of shopping hour restrictions, most Germans, particularly *Hausfrauen* (housewives), are still programmed to do their shopping on Saturday mornings, when you'll find shopping districts and markets busiest. If you are on a tight budget, or just want to grab some fresh fruit for the road, these markets are your best bet for getting the best stuff for your travels. An effort at speaking a little German might also yield an additional plum or two.

Perhaps surprisingly, Germans are large consumers of vegetables of all types, reflecting a healthy eating orientation. Chicken and turkey, as well