

## WAS ESSEN DIE DEUTSCHEN?

as ham and beef products, are regular items on the German table, while pasta dishes, such as *Spätzle* and spaghetti, are common as well. Often, *Spätzle* is served with marinara sauce instead of the traditional butter and cheese topping. The aforementioned foods are very much the common thought when German food comes to mind. What doesn't come to mind are the seafood dishes prepared with fish from the North and Baltic Seas, as well as Lake Constance (*Bodensee*). *Matjesfilet* or

herring fillets are very popular. Nor do people consider the regional specialties that are often influenced by the neighboring countries. For example, in the southwest, where Germany shares a border with the erstwhile French province of Alsace, or *Elsass* in German, *Zwiebelkuchen* or "onion cake" is a popular dish. Resembling a pizza, *Zwiebelkuchen* has a dough base to which onions are added. Various spices and options, such as meats,

cheeses and vegetables can be added as "toppings", and the *Kuchen* is baked to make the dough crispy. Add a little salt and voilà, you have a light, yet tasty little meal. In some instances, a touch of alcohol is added, and the *Zwiebelkuchen* is ignited and served as *Flammkuchen*, or "flaming cake". Given the large numbers of foreigners in Germany, particularly Turkish, quick meals of lamb meat, either in a Gyro form or Kebab, can be had in nearly every town.

Although French bread may get more play in Hollywood movies, it is the Germans who are really the bread connoisseurs. Germans consume bread with practically every meal: *Frühstuck*, *Mittagsessen* and *Abendessen*. In fact, Germans even use the word *Abendbrot*, or evening bread, to refer to dinner in many households! Germans have a much greater variety of breads than their European neighbors do. You've got wheat breads, black breads, rye breads, mixed nut breads and farmers' breads, to name just a few. Germans almost have an addiction to bread, and without their daily fix of the doughy stuff, all is not right with the world. They are so obsessed with bread that there is actually a Bread Museum. The *Deutsches Brotmuseum* is located in the city of Ulm in southern Germany, and could be a quick stop off, if you are there visiting the world's tallest church.

Although traditional German food is still rooted in meat and potato products, German cuisine is much more varied today, with influences from across Europe as well as Asia and America. Not all dishes have rich, heavy sauces, although many do; but many have light sauces or generous use of spices. As Germany has become more international, its food has started to reflect that, as well, with items like Hawaiian pizza, Middle Eastern delights and Asian delicacies showing up on menus around the country. Be sure to try some unusual dishes if you have the chance, but if you happen to be like me, and thoroughly enjoy traditional German food, go with what you like, but don't sell German cuisine short. *Mahlzeit* and *Guten Appetit!*