

MORE THAN A CORNER STORE: SPÄTIS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL IN A CHANGING BERLIN

own quirky character - Pamuk Shop in Moabit, which stocks everything from novelty pencil holders to hookah pipes, to the "Käptn Späti, which drifts on a boat on Berlin's Spree, or main river.

"My customers love it," Tobias Laukemper, owner of the Käptn Späti, told The Local. "They are very surprised when I approach them from the water side.. they laugh and smile at me."



AHOI ! Das erste wirklich warme Wochenende und du fragst dich, wo ist der Spät in diesem Jahr ? Ich kann euch versichern - er kommt bald , der Späti- alles ist in Vorbereitung um bald zu starten! ► Summer, save the date *

To most Berliners, Spätis are so commonplace that once you've lived here a while, you stop noticing they're even there. This, however, is what makes them so important. With one on nearly every street, spätis represent Berlin's spirit arguably more than any statues, museums or churches. And today, they're at risk of disappearing due to stricter regulations about opening hours and quickly rising rents.

It may seem excessive to gush over what are, in effect, small local shops. But many others share my enthusiasm. There have been [odes](#) and [cultural guides](#) written about spätis, large [campaigns](#) fought over them, and, as of this year, urban art [exhibited](#) inside them.

Their [history](#) goes way back too, appearing first in 1859 as "Kiosks" in Berlin around the same time that bottled mineral water became available to the public. At that time, tap water was unsafe to drink, and as the populace turned to liquor and beer to replace it, levels of alcoholism grew.