

MAHLZEITEN: MITTAGESSEN

meal: die Mahlzeit, die Mahlzeiten
lunch: das Mittagessen, die Mittagessen

Das Mittagessen

Shops close, schools finish work for the day, and the family comes home for the most important meal of the day, *das Mittagessen*. It is invariably a hot meal, and more often than not consists of three courses. Soups are typically clear rather than creamy, and often contain

noodles, egg, meat balls (*Fleischklöße*) or dumplings (*Knödeln*).

The main dish will almost certainly be meat or fish with potatoes and green vegetables. But it no longer seems foreign to a German to have *Makkaroni* or *Spaghetti* for a change. Such dishes are now part of the normal selection, as they are in this country. Another 'import', *Gulasch* (a casserole spiced with paprika, of Hungarian origin) has become established as part of the German repertoire. Other foreign foods have been introduced to Germany by *Gastarbeiter* — the Italians, Greeks, Turks and Yugoslavs who swell Germany's work force.

German women are still proud of their cooking, and almost certainly take more time over it than many British women; but the onward march of the frozen fish finger (*Fischstäbchen*) has now reached German tables, and other convenience foods are following in its path.

A dessert (*Nachtisch*) is not always provided at the *Mittagessen*, but when there is one, it is often something cold, such as *Kompott*, a dish of stewed fruit, or *Pudding* (*blancmange*). Not many Germans like water with their meals, and beer or wine are more common accompaniments to the mid-day meal.

For a family-type eating place with traditional decor, often serving regional dishes, look for signs with *Gasthaus*, *Gasthof*, *Gaststätte* (especially in a station or department store), *Ratskeller* or . . . *stube*. Some restaurant names start with *zum* or *zur* (here meaning 'at the sign of')

but sometimes *zum*, *zur* and *zu den* just point you in the right direction.

LUNCH (MITTAGESSEN): 12–2 P.M. This can hardly be called lunch, for it is the main meal of the day for most Germans, and they eat heavily at that time. In fact, the daily menu is frequently called the *MITTAGSKARTE* (mid-day list), instead of *TAGESKARTE* (daily list). It happens that at night they can be out of certain items which appeared on the daily menu, and sometimes they have an *ABENDKARTE* (evening list), which is much more restricted in offerings than what is found on the noon list.

Middy Meal

The big meal is eaten at noon. In the villages, the shops close for two hours so that the workers can go home to eat the major meal when the kids get home from school.

The main (hot) meal of the day is *Mittagessen* or *Mittagstisch*, served from noon till about 2.30 pm. In the evening most people have just bread, cheese and cold meats, but the larger restaurants are open for an evening meal (*Abendessen*, *Abendstisch*) from about 6.30 pm till around 9.30 pm.



Mittagessen in Deutschland: Schweinebraten mit Rotkohl und Knödeln, aber viele Leute essen auch Steaks und Salat.