

WAS ESSEN DIE DEUTSCHEN?

sausage: die Wurst, die Würste
small, thin sausage: das Würstchen, die Würstchen

BEST OF THE WURST WHAT'S THE "WURST" THAT COULD HAPPEN?

often added to tint the mixture red, and blood is a common ingredient in very dark sausages. Some sausages are solid in color, others speckled with chunks of white fat, whole black peppercorns, green pistachios, or other color-contrasting ingredients. And modern German butchers have even begun making sausages containing pineapple, kiwi, aloe vera, maraschino cherries, edible blossoms, honey, and wild garlic leaves, in a possibly misguided attempt to tickle the taste buds of today's gourmets.

After the butcher's choice of ingredients is well combined, the meat mixture is stuffed into the casings that give the sausage its shape: fat or thin, short as a thumb or long as a meter, cylindrical or spherical, straight, curved, or tied into a loop. Sometimes the sausages are joined into pairs, coiled like a snake, or even woven into braids. Originally the casings came from animals—sheep's or pigs' intestines, stomachs, bladders—but many industrially made sausages now use synthetic casings made from other materials, including plastic.

Depending on the type of sausage, the meat can be either raw or cooked before being stuffed into the casing. However, many sausages are often processed further before being sold: pickled in brine; air-dried; steamed or scalded with water, broth, or beer; hot- or cold-smoked over juniper, beechwood, hickory, or pine cones (for preservation and to add flavor); or some combination of these techniques. Sausages sold completely raw must, of course, be well cooked before eating, whereas some others (especially cured hard sausages) can be eaten as is. However, many sausages that have been cured or cooked by the butcher are cooked again before serving—simmered, grilled, griddled, or fried—to finish cooking the meat or just to reheat it. Different kinds of sausages are eaten hot or cold, whole or sliced, with or without their skins, or cut open and spread on bread.

German sausages are classified in several ways. Those named for their ingredients include *Blutwurst* (blood sausage), *Leberwurst* (liver), *Milzwurst* (spleen), *Zungenwurst* (tongue), *Zwiebelwurst* (onion), *Kartoffelwurst* (potato), *Schinkenwurst* (ham). Another category is method of preparation: *Rohwurst* (raw), *Kochwurst* (cooked), *Dampfwurst* (steamed), *Brühwurst* (simmered), *Rostwurst* (grilled).

Every region of Germany has its own sausage specialties, from *Pinkelwurst* in North Germany to *Andudel* in the Rhineland, from *Mecklenburger Gänseleberwurst* (goose liver sausage) to *Lyonerwurst* from the Saarland. Some are named for the specific town where they've been made for centuries: *Frankfurter Würstchen*, *Regensburger Knackwurst*, *Hamburger Mettwurst*, *Berliner Riesenbratwurst*, and the famous meter-long *Sulzfelder Bratwurst* from the Franconian village of Sulzfeld. Sometimes even the garnish determines the name, as in Germany's iconic *Currywurst*, topped with a spicy tomato-based sauce and a sprinkling of curry powder.



Top: The medieval sausage kitchen at Regensburg's historic *Wurstküche*, at one end of the twelfth-century stone bridge spanning the Danube River. **Above:** Grilled Nuremberg sausages with their typical accompaniment of potato salad and seasoned sauerkraut (Goldene Posthorn restaurant).