

There Is No Such Thing as German Food



Whenever someone asks me as a native German about typical German culinary specialties to try on a tour, I respond: What region in Germany do you travel to? There is no such thing as German food in general. Just take the “typical German” potato salad – although it is a fairly young produce in Germany, basically every region created its own characteristic recipe reflecting the traditional local cuisine.

Germany has a wonderful diversity of landscapes and microclimates determining local culture, tradition, agriculture and cuisine. The northern part is renowned for its fresh seafood from the North Sea and the Baltic Sea as well as for the rich existence of freshwater fish from lakes and rivers. The state of Brandenburg is called “land of lakes” with good reason. Smoked eel, bass and zander are just a few examples of these delicacies best enjoyed at a lake-side picnic just with freshly baked bread and a light salad. The only thing even better than “just” tasting the smoked fish is to watch and to be part of preparing the meal.

A little bit further south, the sandy soils of Lower Saxony and Brandenburg are perfect for the cultivation of asparagus. Here another important Slow Food aspect comes into play: season. Asparagus stands as a symbol for spring in Germany. Fresh outdoor asparagus is only available from late April until mid June. I remember that we always watched out for the first asparagus at the farmer’s markets after a long winter. Every year in May we met with friends to enjoy the taste of spring together at hours-long asparagus dinners at someone’s place.

If you travel further south to the Rhineland-Palatinate in the west or to Saxony in the East, the deeper valleys of the rivers Rhine and Elbe change the character of the landscape and vineyards appear at the hillsides. Again, different grapes grow in different regions and local vintners share their secrets of winemaking – or at least a few of them.



Mountains and forests determine the unique agriculture of Bavaria. The Alp Mountain slopes with the natural meadows provide the perfect source for the rich non-silage alpine milk. You can actually taste the fresh grass, flowers and herbs the cows feed on every day. At small family-run dairy farms you can hike the Alps where the cows run free, try your luck in milking and participate in cheese-making.

I could go and on about all these local culinary specialties – the bread, the beer, the pastries, venison, fruits and so on. My personal advice: travel, watch, learn, taste and enjoy the food where it is originated – experience the harmony of land, people and food.



Slow Tour® is a new project run by the non-profit organization Slow Food Germany. Escorted by local guides, small groups of like-minded guests are taken on exciting journeys to discover the culture, history, countryside and the characteristic cuisine of one particular region. True to the motto of the membership-based Slow Food movement “good, clean and fair”, it is all about high-quality tasteful food as well as about sustainable production and processing.

Instead of a just a glimpse, Slow Tour guests take the time to cook, bake and prepare regional seasonal dishes themselves – and to enjoy the authentic taste together with local hosts. And when you will be asked what was the “German food” like on your trip, you have much more to tell than just “very good” – and I have no doubt that you will come back to explore another piece of the culinary mosaic of Germany.

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