

Sharing our passion for German Fayre



One of the strongest ties to our time overseas is, surprisingly, not a place in the U.K. at all. It's Lübeck, a small city in northwest Germany that we visited five times while living in England, and it's a destination that we'll find our way back to some day -- at least I hope we can. There are certainly places in the U.K. that we'd like to visit again as well; Edinburgh, Oxford, London and many others. But none of these is a stronger draw for us, really, than Lübeck.

It would take pages to tell you why that is and I won't do that here. But I will say that among the many great Lübeck memories for us is the food -- oh, the wonderful food. Lübeck is not a huge tourist draw, so a visit there will give you a flavor of classic German lifestyle, including some great home-style restaurants. Two are an absolute must if you do visit there: Paulaner's and Alt Nürnberg.



As I've written elsewhere, I've had about six of the top 10 meals in my life in Germany and several were at these two wonderful restaurants. The breakfasts at The Hotel Kaiserhof are also quite good, and this is one of the nicer, mid-priced places to stay in Lübeck. It's at the edge of the city centre (zentrum) but within easy walking distance to and from everything you'd want to see and do in Lübeck. I highly recommend the Kaiserhof if you visit this great little city.

Kitchen adventures



So when Carol and I moved back to the states in late 2003, we planned to keep our overseas adventures alive by learning how to cook some German dishes, especially spätzle, the German noodle that we both like so much. As it turned out, it took us more than four years to get round to taking a shot at an authentic German dinner here at home.

It was really the cookbook that Carol got from The Burghoff, the famous Chicago restaurant that closed in 2006, that finally inspired us in February 2008. Rahm Schnitzel and Creamed

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Written by Dan Martino

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Spinach were among the recipes in that book, so on Saturday the 9th, we rolled up our sleeves and dove into this incredible new world for us. The schnitzel had an elaborate sauce which I set out to make, along with the pork preparation, while Carol tackled the spinach dish. We both worked on the spätzle and though getting the timing right on all these things was certainly a big challenge, in the end, I'd say the meal was really quite marvelous.



A new family tradition

It wasn't surprising, then, that we wanted to share these new culinary experiences with our friends and family. We invited Carol's sister Chris and husband Lyell to dinner later that year and duplicated our recipes as best we could from that first dinner.

Lyell had been stationed in Giebelstadt, Germany while in the service and had developed a taste for German cuisine, so we thought he and Chris would be perfect first-time guests for these dinners and that they would provide some useful feedback. Fortunately, it was all positive feedback and I'd have to say that I completely agree with their assessment of the entire dinner.



So that's how we began the new family tradition of German dinners, an homage to my German roots as well as Carol's, similar to the Grandpa Martino Memorial (Italian) Dinners we'd been celebrating for nearly 10 years at that point (see "*Uncorking Memories*", this section).

We had our first "official" version on Thanksgiving 2008, a noontime dinner at our home with my sister Sandra and her husband Tom. And as with those Italian feasts, we toasted our German ancestry with wine and enjoyed traditional German foods, music and decorations. It's unlikely that these get-togethers will achieve the emotional level that the Grandpa Martino Dinners do, simply because our German grandparents were second generation Americans and therefore did not share with us the foods and customs as my Grandpa Martino did for our family.



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Still, we will continue to develop this new tradition, keeping our German ancestors in our living memories. I suspect they'd be quite pleased about that.

Where to stay in Lübeck

The Hotel Kaiserhof, a five-minute walk from the city centre, is situated across from the Elbe-Lübeck

canal and the ancient city wall. The hotel offers cozy accommodations and a friendly staff. If you go, be sure to check out the hotel's gourmet restaurant, "Louis XIV," which has excellent cuisine and fine wines.

For more information, click

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