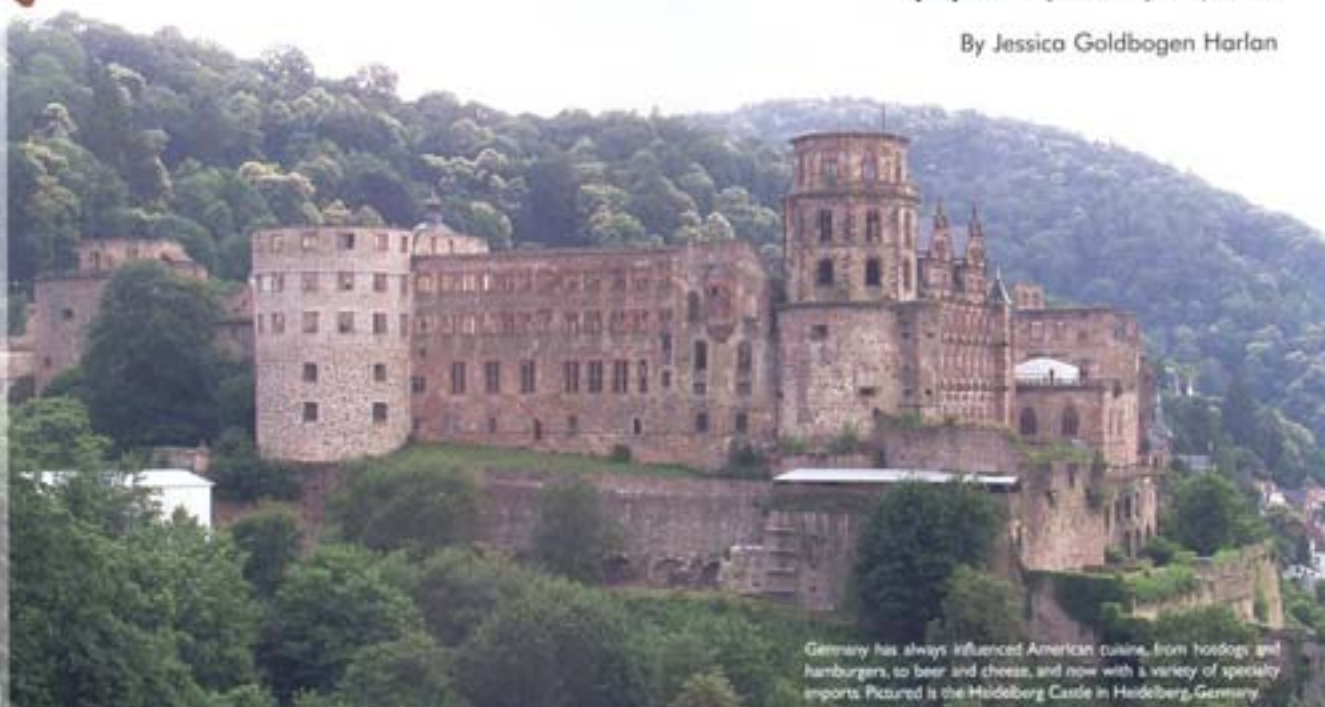


Germany

Deutch treats from cheese to chocolates have become popular specialty imports.

By Jessica Goldbogen Harlan



Germany has always influenced American cuisine, from hotdogs and hamburgers, to beer and cheese, and now with a variety of specialty imports. Pictured is the Heidelberg Castle in Heidelberg, Germany.

World of Flavor:

Sausages and heavy potatoes (washed down with a beer, naturally) are guilty pleasures that spring to mind at the mention of German cuisine. But there is so much more to the country's culinary culture than these traditional foods.

"There's been a rejuvenation of German cuisine in the United States that comes from the fact that the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants are looking back to their roots and discovering that the items coming in now are very different from what they thought they were. They're organic, healthy and wholesome," says Armin von Friedeburg, managing director of the CMA, the German Agricultural Marketing Board.

The CMA (703/739-8900 or www.germanfoods.org) has been working to educate retailers and consumers about the new face of German cuisine.

"It's worthwhile to take another look at German products," says von Friedeburg. "Our tagline is 'The old world in a new light.' Lots of people were very surprised to see that the images of dark sauces, heavy meats and fatty foods are no longer really true. Germany has a very elaborate and delicious culinary culture."

As further proof of how cutting-edge German cuisine actually is, von Friedeburg points out that Germany has the most number of Michelin three-star restaurants of any country besides France. Another little-known fact is that Germany is the birthplace of organic food.

The CMA can serve as a resource for retailers to get information about products, as well as assistance with promotions and special in-store programs.

This year, the CMA has a regional focus on Texas and Florida, where it will participate in sampling events, retail promotions, advertising and other activities. Two of the local events that the CMA is tying activities into are Oktoberfest in Texas in October and the NASCAR race in Miami in November.

One of the most frequent questions that retailers ask von Friedeburg is

Hirtenkäse is an authentic German mountain cheese made with cow's milk from Alpine herds. It is a hard cheese with a tart and savory flavor profile that can also be grated. From **Fond O'Foods**, 201/848-0564; www.fondfoods.com or **Circle No. 218**



World of Flavor: Germany



Messino are soft cake squares filled with tangy orange filling that are partially dipped in dark chocolate. Hit Minis are new smaller versions of the popular sandwich cookies. From Bahlisen, 323/850-7093; www.bahlisen.com or Circle No. 220



about what products and categories they should include in their German section.

According to von Friedeburg, cookies and confections top the list of German food imported into the United States, followed by condiments like mustard, deli products like cheeses and hams, whole-grain breads, and sauerkrauts and pickles. The agency can also provide consumer research as to the demographic of shoppers in the area.

One popular source for cookies and sweets is German manufacturer Bahlisen (323/850-7093).

"Germany is known for a very light type of cookie," notes Erik Schmielewski, area manager for Bahlisen's U.S. operations. "European cookies are much more on the light side, and not as sweet as a U.S.-made cookie."

Fond O' Grains German Whole Grain Hazelnut Bread is made by a third-generation German baker using a slow, triple-leavening technique. The bread should be consumed within a few days of opening. From Fond O'Foods, 201/868-0564; www.fondofoods.com or Circle No. 219



A key item from Bahlisen is its Leibniz, a square butter cookie that is available plain or coated in chocolate. Made in Hanover, Germany, it's named after a famous genius in the town. In an effort to provide a more nutritious option, the company has just introduced a version of the Leibniz made with whole-wheat flour.

Bahlisen's Hit cookie, a round sandwich cookie with cocoa crème filling, is also popular among Americans. Schmielewski credits the cookie's popularity to the fact that it is a sandwich cookie, a familiar style to Americans. The company recently introduced Hit Minis, the same cookie in a bite-sized version.

Bahlisen also makes a cookie called Messino, which is a soft cake biscuit with orange filling and a dark chocolate coating, and a unique cookie called Afrika, which is a very thin, square wafer coated in dark chocolate.

Schmielewski says that Americans can easily identify with German food because it is so similar to American cuisine. After all, he points out, hamburgers and hot dogs, two mainstays of American culinary culture, have their roots in Germany.

"The immigrants who came from Germany mainly settled on the East Coast and in the Midwest," he says. "If you look at the basic dishes in the United States, a lot are based on German dishes. Taking that into consideration, German and American food are basically not that far apart. It's not like French and Italian food, which are totally different from American fare."

Carl Brandt Inc. (203/256-8133) is also known for its confections. Among the company's offerings are Hans Freitag cookies and wafers, Kuchenmeister tori cakes and liqueur cakes (as well as Christmas stollen) and Feodora all-natural chocolates. The company also imports Niederegger Marzipan from Lubeck, Germany's marzipan capital. New this year are Marzipan Sticks, long foil-wrapped sticks of marzipan that come in three flavors: Espresso, Bittersweet Chocolate and Walnut.

One of Carl Brandt's most popular product lines is its Mestemacher breads.

"A focus of ours is showing that healthy products and eating has been around in Germany forever," says Susanne Settineri, president of Carl Brandt Inc. The Mestemacher breads are whole-grain and all natural, with no preservatives or chemical additives. Made with biologically natural sourdough, the bread types include Pumpernickel, Whole Rye, Three Grain, Sunflower Seed, Whole Rye with Muesli and Fitness Bread.

Indeed, the dense, whole-

some breads that Germans have enjoyed for generations are now getting recognition among Americans who are looking for fiber-rich and whole-grain additions to their diet.

Fond O'Foods (201/868-0564), a new company to the U.S., has enjoyed this interest as it has gradually introduced its cheeses and breads to the American marketplace. The Fond O'Grains Whole Grain Sourdough Bread is made by a third-generation town baker in Germany, using a slow, triple-leavening technique. The slow leavening is believed to make the bread more easily digestible. Available in Classic Rye, Sunflower Seed and Hazelnut, the Fond O'Grains breads are baked in a tin and will stay fresh in any environment until they're opened, at which point they should be consumed within a few days, as with fresh bread.

"In Germany, the trend is to wholesome foods and it's going away from the sausages and beer and pickles that has happened for a long time," notes Birgit Bernhard, president of Fond O'Foods. "As people are traveling more to Germany, they're seeing that Germany has a much wider flavor profile. Germans believe in putting their heart into a well-made product, and making sure that what they ship is the best they can make."

Fond O'Foods also imports two types of cheeses, which have a similar colloquial story behind them as the breads. The cheeses are made in the southernmost region of Germany, bordering Italy. From the milk of cows raised on small farms in the mountains—most herds only have about 15 cows.

Hirtenkäse cheese is a hard cheese with a tart and savory flavor profile, good for grating



From Germany's marzipan capital, Lubeck, comes Niederegger Marzipan, which now is available in long foil-wrapped sticks that come in three flavors: Espresso, Classic Bittersweet Chocolate and Walnut. From Carl Brandt, 203/256-8133; www.carlbrandt.com or Circle No. 221

over salad or mixed with risotto or pasta. And Chiantino is semi-soft, with a rind that's washed with an Italian red wine as it matures. It has a silky texture and a slightly pungent aroma.

Stockmeyer of North America (973/628-7330) also offers German cheeses, including Camembert and Brie, as well as other savory goods, such as pickles, sauerkraut, proscutto and spaetzle. The latter, a noodle that is often served sautéed in butter or covered with cheese, is a popular German dish that is gaining interest among chefs and home cooks in the United States. Stockmeyer also markets preserves, mineral water, and cookies, including Lambertz, Stieffenhofer and

Gottens brands.

"We sell a lot of pfeffernuss and gingerbread cookies," says Barbara Holly, spokesperson for Stockmeyer. "Shortbread cookies also seem to be extremely popular."

Whether sweet or savory, the vast variety of German products available today are worth a second look for their high quality and, in many cases, wholesomeness. There's always room for Bratwurst, but don't your customers deserve to know about some of the other specialties coming from this rich and varied land? ☺



Zents Preserves are Germany's No. 1 preserve, and are made from 50-percent fresh fruit. The preserves come in attractive glass jars with paper coverings and are available in 10 delicious flavors. From Stockmeyer of North America. 973/628-7330 or Circle No. 222