

LEIPZIG: PLACE AT THE LIMES

BY LUCY GORDAN

Leipzig is connected to food by its very name. Beside a lime grove, at the fork of the Pleisse, Parthe, and White Elster rivers, Slav settlers, the Sorbs, who revered the lime-tree as sacred, founded the fishing village "Lipzk", meaning the "place at the limes",



Women in front of the Gohlis Palace with Leipziger Lerche, the city's traditional pastry

between the seventh and the ninth centuries. The first mention of the German fortress, *urbs Libzi*, with a nearby settlement of merchants and craftsmen, dates from 1015 and it was granted both market privileges and its Town Charter around 1165. Then in 1497 Emperor Maximilian I granted Leipzig The Imperial Market Privilege making "LE", (the locals' nickname), the oldest trade fair city in the world. Thanks to the *Leipziger Messe* (trade shows and fairs throughout the year), it continues to be a dynamic market town and trading center with strong gastronomical traditions to this very day. Annual trades fairs concern: Heating/Air-conditioning, Motorcycles, Fashion, Gardening,

Leisure Time, Handicrafts, Flowers, Gifts, Books, Car Components and Gas Stations, Orthopedics and Rehabilitation, Fashion, Computers, Clocks and Jewelry, Interior Decorating, Real Estate, Dentistry, Bakery, Electrical Engineering, Hobbies, Cultural Heritage and Conservation in Europe, Woodworking, and Tourism.

In addition, every year in April during the **Historical Easter Fair Spectacle** (April 16-21, 2003), held in historical costume in front of the Old City Hall, visitors can find out how trading was done in Leipzig centuries ago. There are historical stalls, traditional crafts and medieval recipes and music. In late September, again with musical programs, today's local gastronomic specialties and traditional handicrafts are sold during **Leipzig Market Days**.

For the past four years in mid-July Leipzig has become the beer capital of Germany. **The Fifth Leipzig Beer Market** will likewise take place mid-July 2003. Several kilometers of beer tables and stands turn a 20,000 square meter area in front of the 91 meter-high **Battle of Leipzig Monument**, (which commemorates the victory here of the combined Prussian, Austrian, and Russian armies over Napoleon in 1813), into a giant beer-garden with live spectacles on several stages. Beer fans can look forward to the presentation of more than 900 kinds of beer from 70 countries. It's also bliss for collectors of beer accessories. Entrance is free.

However, hands-down **Leipzig's** legendary **Christmas Market** (November 27-December 22, 2002) dating back to

1767 and offering unique culinary treats, as well as its "Fairy Tale Forest", is the most special market of all. Not to mention the world's largest free-standing **Advent Calendar** (857 square meters), where every afternoon since 1997 at 4:30 one of its windows opens and reveals a (sometimes living) surprise!

The Coffee Tradition

Black, hot, strong and sweet coffee and Leipzig are inseparable; Leipzigers are often called "Coffee Saxons" because of their proverbial love of coffee or "*Schälchen Heessen*", the local expression for a bowl of hot coffee. The first load of coffee beans arrived here in 1693, and a year later Adam Heinrich Schütze opened the Baroque **Haus Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum** ("House at the Arabic Coffee Tree"), off the narrow Barfussgässchen, at *Kleine Fleischergasse* 4 (Little Butcher Street), tel. 011-49-341- 9651321, It's Europe's oldest coffee shop after the Café Procope in Paris. Over the next three centuries the first two floors have been the haunt of the city's intellectual elite: Bach, who may have composed his "Coffee Cantata" here in 1734, literature professor Gottsched, Grieg, Goethe, poet E.T.A. Hoffmann, painter Max Klinger,

Lessing, Liszt, and Wagner. Schumann regularly met his circle of friends between 1828 and 1844 at a ground-floor corner table which you can reserve. Even revolutionaries like Robert Blum, Karl Liebknecht, and August Bebel established their "second living-room" here, and most recently, in 1990, Helmut Kohl and Lothar de Maizière discussed the chances of German unification over a coffee.



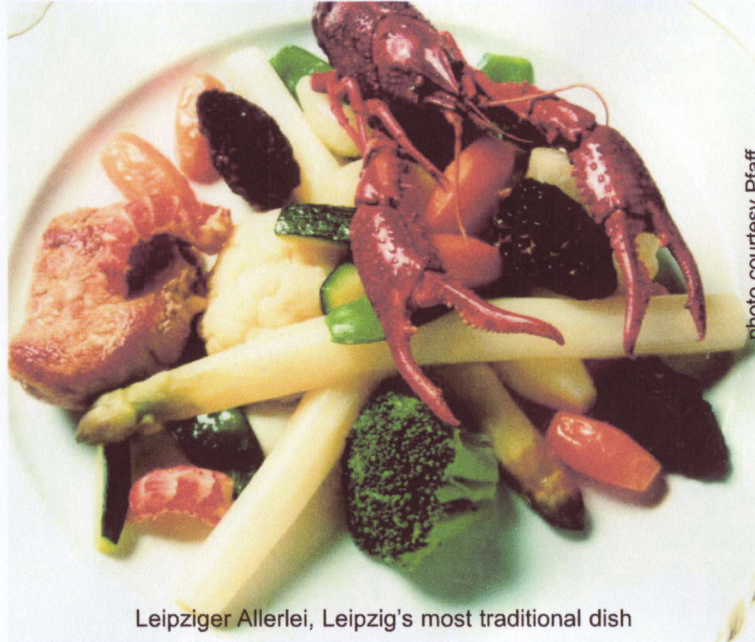
Bach Portrait, now in the Museum of City History.
Photo by LTS-Lange

On the top floors, a free 15-room museum, open daily from 11 AM-6 PM since 1998, traces the fascinating history of this bitter black bean as well as the development of coffee culture in Europe, particularly in Saxony. For example, the oldest of the 500 items on display are the first German Coffee House Rules enacted by Leipzig's city council on May 18, 1697.

If you would like to stroll through Leipzig's coffee history, you can book the two-and-a-half-hour coffee and café tour (in English) called, "*Ey, wie schmeckt der Coffee süsse...*" (O, how sweet the coffee tastes), at *Gästeführungen Leipzig und Umland e. V.*, tel. 011-49-341-7104-230, FAX 011-49-341-7104231. Cost: 8 euros (including coffee).

Other Leipzig Beverages

Leipzig is also renowned for the Gose, THE locally-brewed top-fermented beer originally from Goslar in the Harz Mountains and introduced to Leipzig by Prince Leopold I of Dessau in 1738. The only original Gose tavern still in



Leipziger Allerlei, Leipzig's most traditional dish

photo courtesy Pfaff

existence is the *Gosenschaenke Ohne Bedenken* ("Gose Tavern Without Worries"), founded in 1899 by the Cajeris family at Menckestrasse 5 in the suburb, Gohlis. If you find Gose too sour, you can add syrup, cherry liqueur or *Leipzig Allasch*, a sweet liqueur made from caraway seed.

Allasch, pronounced "alash", is the name of a small place near Riga in Latvia. In 1830 merchants brought the recipe from here to Saxony, where the digestif, became instantly popular. Today it is produced in Leipzig's oldest and only distillery, The Wilhelm Horn Company, founded in 1923,

and sold under the name of "*Echter Leipzig Allasch*" ("Real Leipzig Allasch"). Best served ice-cold and after a big meal, *Allasch*, if mixed with Gose, is called "*Regenschirm*", meaning "umbrella".

Leipzig Food Specialties

Although its history is unknown, Leipzig's best-known specialty is *Leipziger Allerlei* (a freshly-chopped vegetable broth, stew or side-dish with morels and crayfish), an excellent partner for chicken and other white meats. A synonym for Leipzig's cuisine, *Allerlei* means "a mixture of all kinds of things". As a rule it's found on the menu from March to August when fresh vegetables are in season. The colorful ingredients always include baby carrots, peas in the pod, kohlrabi, cauliflower, morels, and bread dumplings. The best *Allerlei* is served in June when asparagus and crayfish are added to the mixture. To mark the end of the *Allerlei* season there's a local saying: "Cherries are red, asparagus is dead."

Leipziger Lerche (Leipzig Lark — baked with eggs and herbs, or sauerkraut or bacon, spit-roasted or pan-fried with juniper berries and breadcrumbs) was a local delicacy during the autumn months — that is until 1876 when it was banned by the Saxon King. Nonetheless, it's still possible to enjoy a *Leipziger Lerche*, but, instead of a bird, this delicacy is a little short-crust cake, always made by hand, with nuts, almonds, and strawberry jam.

Leipzigers' preferred dessert is *Quarkkäulchen* (baked or deep-fried curd and potato pancakes served with sugar and apple sauce — [see accompanying recipe](#)). Other specialties for sweet-tooths include *Leipziger Rübchen* (doughnuts made of marzipan-filled plums rolled in pancake dough and coated with cinnamon sugar) and

Leipziger Bachpfeiffen (Bach pipes) created in 1999 by two young musicians, Mathias Müller and Johann-Georg Baumgärtel, as an homage to Bach. Available in Leipzig at St. Thomas Church shop and **Café Richter**, the oldest coffee retailer in town (since 1879), for 12.50 euros per beautiful blue and yellow box, or via email by first clicking on www.bachpfeiffen.de, these world's longest chocolates are filled with *gianduia crème* and covered with a fine coffee coating.

For Leipzig's Best Cuisine

In the Mädler Passage, an imitation of Milan's Galleria, the city's most beautiful shopping arcade, which dates to the turn of the century, is **Auerbachs Keller**. Founded in 1525 and one of Germany's great restaurants, it's a definite must. Goethe immortalized it in Part 1 of his *Faust*, which includes a scene set here — Mephistopheles and Faust carouse with students before they ride off on a huge barrel. A bronze group of characters from the play, sculpted in 1913, beckons you down the stone staircase to the restaurant.

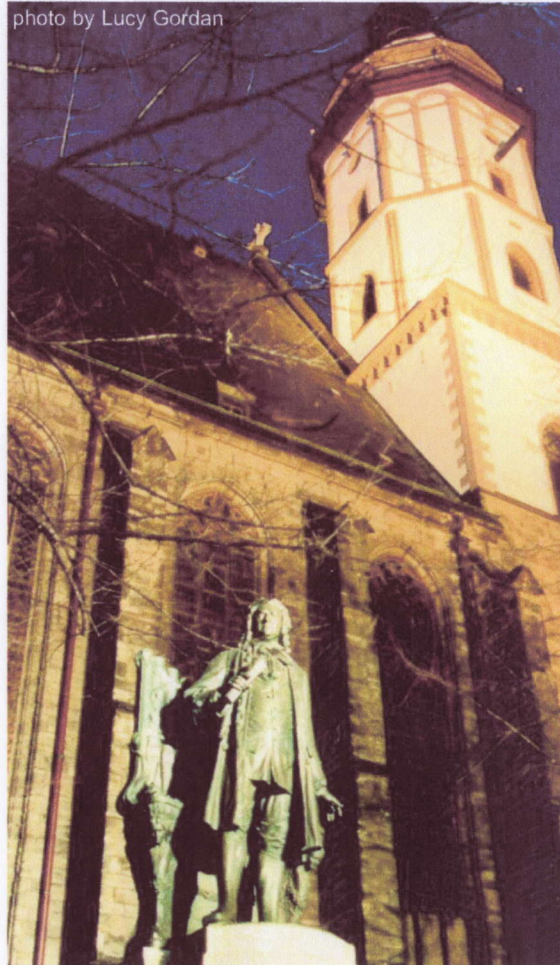
After a *Mephisto's Feuer* or "Mephisto's fire" at the **Mephisto Bar**, be sure to join the tour of the historic part of the restaurant called the *Fasskellerführung*. It visits the Luther and Goethe rooms (where the writer gleaned inspira-

tion in spite of his constant empty pockets, heavy gambling debts, and usual inebriated state), the *Fasskeller* or "Cask Cellar" and then, down some steep stairs, to the genuinely spooky and damp *Hexenküche* (witches' kitchen). Note the light-fixture carved from a single lime-tree trunk hanging in the *Fasskeller*. It features witches, Faust astride a wine cask and hooved Mephistopheles in hot pursuit. The

tour includes a "Wine Cask Ceremony" during which the master of the *Fasskeller* entertains his guests with legends about the *keller*, accounts of Goethe visits here and readings from *Faust*, a powerful *Verjüngungstruck* (rejuvenation drink, slugged down in one gulp after a witch's chant), buffet or fixed-menu dinner of Saxon dishes, often with Faustian names, and costs c. 54 euros. There's an extensive wine list. Mädler Passage, Grimmaische Strasse 2-4, tel. 011-49-341-216100. Reservations, jacket and tie are essential. AE, MC, V accepted. High-class gift shop for after-dinner browsing.

The "tunnel" at **Zill's Tunnel** refers to the barrel-ceiling, ground-floor rustic wood-panelled restaurant, where foaming glasses of excellent local beer have been served with a smile since 1785. The friendly staff will also help you decipher the Old Saxon descriptions of delicious traditional dishes. A regular guest here was Karl

photo by Lucy Gordan



Outside the south entrance of St. Thomas Church is a statue of Johann Sebastian Bach, who worked here as the choirmaster and whose tomb is in the choir of the church.

Friedrich Zöllner, who wrote one of Germany's most popular folk songs: *Das Wandern is des Müllers Lust*.

Upstairs there's a larger wine restaurant with an open fireplace; wine buffs will single out the rare Saxon wine from a Saale valley vineyard. In December, goose prepared in a variety of ways (including marinated in heavy brown sauce with wild berries, then oven-baked) is a staple. Another good choice is the roast venison in red wine. If you are really hungry, try Zill's *Grillpfane* (barbecue) with three servings of pork, poultry, and beef for less than 12.90 euros. Near the "Coffe Baum" at Barfussgässchen 9; tel. 011-49-341-9602078. Accepts AE, MC, and V. Also available two double-occupancy apartments: 67 euros and 72 euros per night.

For the best overlook of Leipzig cuisine don't miss the breakfast and lunch buffets (fixed-price: 8 euros) at the sprawling beamed and paneled Gasthaus, **Barthels Hof**. Goethe wrote of it: "Of particular appeal to me, however, were the so improbably structured buildings, which...appeared like castles or demi-cities." It's still a local favorite, but if you don't understand the menu, which relies heavily on German puns, ask one of the waitresses for help. Especially tasty is quirky House Specialty *Heubraten*, marinated boneless joint of lamb roasted on hay and served with apple beans and dumplings.

On April 28, 1715 a certain Herr Becker, the head of the church fathers' collegiate of Halle's Church of Our Lady invited Bach, St. Thomas Cantor Johann Kuthau and Christian Friedrich Rolle from Quedlinburg to examine his church's new organ. Of course, a banquet followed. The account books with its menu and its cost, long forgotten, were discovered in 1884 and since 1999 **Barthels Hof** has added the historical Organ Banquet to its menu:

1. *Eine gute Brühensuppe* — clear soup of pike with pieces of the same, celery root, nutmeg, and potatoes

2. *Büffellamote* — (boeuf à la mode) — medium-rare roast beef with pickled pumpkin on finely mashed peas, and bread

3. *Kellberbraten* — roast veal in the juice of preserved cherries, with warm asparagus, fresh butter and chopped potatoes.

4. *Spritzkuchen* — cruller filled with lemon cream

5. *Wohl praeparierten Caffee* — coffee and rusk bread

Hainstrasse 1; tel. 011-49-341-1413113; Accepts AE, DC, MC, and V.

Pub Mile Drallewatsch

Probably because of the large student population and numerous merchants passing through town, eating out inexpensively has always been a popular tradition here. The pub scene is called *Kneipenszene* and every evening since 1996 the small streets and alleys of the city center pulsate on the popular *Drallewatsch* or pub mile — Richard-Wagner-Platz, Burgplatz including Grosse and Kleine Fleischergasse, Mitthäikirchhof, Barfussgässen, Klostergasse, Thomaskirchhof and Burgstrasse. Strolling along the *Drallewatsch* — a Saxon slang word for "painting the town red" — is an absolute must to feel the city's pulse. To name just a few pubs, **Sacharow**, **100 Wasser**, **Bellinis**, **Zigarre**, **SPIZZ**, **Markt NEUN** (mother of all Leipzig pubs), and recently-restored **Thüringer Hof** (Leipzig's oldest, dating back to 1454, and Luther's favorite watering hole). By the way, like Las Vegas and New

Orleans, there's no official closing time in Leipzig!

If you want to learn more about the local gastronomy, book a guided two-hour *Drallewatsch* tour. On this "journey" through Leipzig's pubs, you get to know typical specialties like the *Leipziger Allasch*. This entertaining tour is also offered by Gästeführungen Leipzig und Umland e V., tel. 011-49-341-7104230, FAX 011-49-341-7104231, Cost: 8 euros (including *Allasch*).

Honky Tonk Pub Festival

For a one night blast, since 1994 every year one night in the third week of May and one night in the second week of November (November 9 in 2002; May 31 and November 8 in 2003; May 22 and November 6 in 2004; and May 28 and November 5 in 2005)

The Honky Tonk Pub

Festival, Europe's biggest pub festival, takes you on a musical and culinary journey through Leipzig's night of the nights. A joyful madhouse! More than 130 bands play in about 100 places — pubs, clubs, cafés, bars and city arcades. Whether jazz, blues, or folk — there's something for everybody's taste. A shuttle bus system connects the city center with the surrounding suburbs so that visitors (c.



Directly in front of Goethe's Monument is the portal to the Mädlar Passage, the most magnificent shopping arcade in Leipzig and one of the few which has survived complete. Photo credit: Studio 80.

40,000) can go on a global discovery tour. 8.50 euros includes transportation and entrance to all Honky Tonk venues.

Festivals

The Leipzigers work and play hard. In addition to those already mentioned with a gastronomic theme, with all their annual festivals there's no doubt they know how to celebrate: **Bach Festival** (May 23-June 1, 2003); **City Festival** (June 6-8, 2003, music program, 250,000 visitors); **Wave Gothic Festival** (mid-May, 2003, music, markets, cinema, theater, art); **International Balloon Fiesta** (July 23-27, 2003, one of Europe's biggest balloonist meetings); and **Classic Open** (August 7-17, 2003, dinner and drinks usually in Market Square while listening to opera performed live).

A bit surprisingly perhaps, autumn is the most festive season of the year: **Laughter Fair** (October 3-13th, 2002), Germany's biggest cabaret festival with companies from 10 different European countries; **Documentary and Animated Films** (October 15-20, 2002), very international and trendy; **Mendelssohn Festival Days** (October 3-31,



photo by Schmidt

Opposite St. Thomas Church is the Bose House, home of the Bach Archives and Bach Museum.

2002), highlight of the Gewandhaus concert season; and **euro-scenic Leipzig** (November 12-17, 2002), one of Europe's most important festivals of contemporary theater and dance.

Goethe wrote: "Leipzig is the place for me! 'Tis quite a little Paris; people there/Acquire a certain easy *finish d'air*." Bach, Schiller, Schumann, Greig, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and Wagner all agreed

with him, so why shouldn't you? Especially if you take advantage of the Leipzig Card with free travel on all public transportation and discounts on city bus tours and walks, museums, the avant-garde zoo, concerts and plays. One day: 5.90 euros (single person); three days: 11.50 (single person) and 19 group card. The one-day Leipzig Card for groups does not exist anymore.

Lufthansa flies from New York to Leipzig via Frankfurt/Main or Munich several times a day. My trip to Leipzig was courtesy of Lufthansa and the German National Tourist Organization in New York City. Special thanks also goes to Annett Morche of the Leipzig Tourist Service e V.

"Quarkkäulchen"

Curd pancakes, served with boiled potatoes and apple purée, is a typical Leipziger dessert.

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 lb mealy, boiled potatoes
1/2 lb. low fat curd cheese
1 egg
2 oz. flour,
a pinch of salt
2 oz. sugar

1/4 t. cinnamon
1/2 t. of vanilla extract
The grated rind of a lemon
7 oz. currants
7 oz. butter
Confectionary sugar for sprinkling

Preparation:

Cook potatoes on previous day, peel and grate. Stir curd, eggs, flour, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla extract into potatoes. Pour hot water over currants, soak, then drain, and work into dough. If the dough is still sticky, add remaining flour. Form portions with a spoon and bake these golden brown on all sides. Sprinkle with icing sugar, while still hot. Eat with apple purée.

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