



FRESH HERBS TO MAKE 'GREEN SAUCE' AT THE KLEINMARKTHALLE

# HEALTHY VERSUS HEARTY

Fresh, homegrown flavours and rich food traditions factor in to spring cuisine in Frankfurt

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY  
TARA NOLAN

**T**he sun is shining, the birds are singing and despite my jetlagged haze, I decide to walk back to my hotel from the Palmengarten, a botanical garden in Frankfurt. I take a look at my paper map and choose a route that soon leads me past a strawberry stand. I inhale the sweet scent of freshly picked berries. It won't be strawberry season at home for another month and a half, but here, May yields seasonal produce, like strawberries, fresh herbs and asparagus, much sooner.

Frankfurt is known as a financial hub (the European Central Bank is here) and is often merely a stopover en route somewhere else via its busy international airport. Much of the city's architecture is fairly new—historic buildings can't be found at every turn as they are in other European cities because much of Frankfurt had to be rebuilt after the Second World War. But what you will discover, and what surprised me, is a very green city—both in its green spaces and its dedication to sustainability. And if you're looking for some history, you'll be able to uncover bits of it by eating and drinking.

The next morning, I meet my local tour guide, Mikael Horstmann ([grandtourfrankfurt.de](http://grandtourfrankfurt.de)), at my hotel—the Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof ([en.steigenberger.com](http://en.steigenberger.com))—and we head out on foot. We stroll past Goethe Haus, where the famous German writer was born and which is now a museum celebrating the era of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This area with its shops, cafés and bakeries, is considered part of the Old Town that had to be rebuilt. We duck into a couple of bakeries selling traditional goodies, including marzipan ladybugs and frankfurter kranz, a ringed sponge cake covered with buttercream icing and nuts. Horstmann buys us a bag of bethmännchen—a type of marzipan pastry that also includes rosewater, flour and eggs—to munch on as we walk.

We head to the Zeil, a popular shopping promenade with retail chains and stop for tea at Ronnefeldt ([ronnefeldt.com](http://ronnefeldt.com)), a tea company that's been around since 1823. Next, we come across the Konstablerwache Farmers' Market that is open every Thursday and Saturday. It's unlike any market I've been to in that locals not only come to buy their fresh produce for the week, they also socialize, perhaps over a glass of beer or apple wine.



THE KONSTABLERWACHE FARMERS' MARKET



MARZIPAN TREATS



A FOOD TRUCK OWNER SERVING HANDKÄSE

I ask what Maibowle is—I'm starting to see the word in multiple places. Horstmann tells me it's May wine, a beverage served in the springtime that is flavoured by the sweet woodruff herb. Herbs figure into much of what I eat in Frankfurt. At Das Eis, I savour two of the most interesting flavours of gelato I've ever tried: pineapple and parsley, and raspberry with beetroot and ginger.

Then, in Kleinmarkthalle, I discover the ingredients of the ubiquitous green sauce that shows up on every menu I look at during my trip. This indoor market hall was the first to be built in Germany in 1879, but had to be rebuilt. Outside, a mosaic of a phoenix symbolizes the building coming out of the ashes after the war. Horstmann also points out the only wooden building to survive the war in the Old Town.

We head towards the Eiserner Stag (aka the Padlock Bridge) that crosses the river Main. Every other Saturday there is a flea market along the banks on this side. We walk towards the Brückenstraßenviertel neighbourhood and end up at Markt im Hof ([marktinhof.de](http://marktinhof.de)), which seems to be a hidden food truck party—I'm not certain I would have found it without my trusty



SAUERKRAUT AND DÖNER KEBAB

#### HORSTMANN'S RESTAURANT RECOS

I discover Horstmann is a real foodie who revels in the history of Frankfurt's food scene, but also loves the modern interpretations of traditional dishes that you'll discover in new restaurants. Here are three of his current favourites:

- Aber: [aber-frankfurt.de](http://aber-frankfurt.de)
- Höchster Genuss Schmiede: [hoechstergenusschmiede.de](http://hoechstergenusschmiede.de)
- Heimat: [heimat-frankfurt.com](http://heimat-frankfurt.com)



THE BREAD BASKET TRADITION AT DAHEIM IM LORSBACHER THAL

guide. I sample handkäse—one of Horstmann's favourites—a sour milk cheese topped with caraway seeds that is popular in this region of Germany. It's got that rank, stinky cheese flavour that's reminiscent of other varieties that is somehow both bad and good. And then I can't leave without tasting two types of sauerkraut that accompany a German interpretation of döner kebab meat that tastes like peameal

bacon. Frankfurt tries its best to avoid garbage and I'm impressed by the fact that at this party, beverages are served in glasses instead of to-go cups and all the containers and utensils are biodegradable.



At Apfelweinhandlung ([facebook.com/janusbecker](https://facebook.com/janusbecker)), I'm introduced to apfelwein or apple wine, another beverage that is greatly enjoyed in this area. Owner Janus Becker sells his own brand of wine (JB) here and others that he enjoys and selects from the region.

At dinner hour, I get to experience two restaurants famous for their apfelwein. At Proletariat Schreiber-Heyne ([apfelweinwirtschaft-proletariat.de](http://apfelweinwirtschaft-proletariat.de)), Horstmann says I have to sample a frankfurter with my hands, which are the utensils it was meant to be eaten

with. I dip it in mustard and enjoy it alongside a plate of handkäse and two other cheeses. My apfelwein comes in traditional glasses with a raised diamond pattern on the sides, which Horstmann explains was invented back in the day to maintain a good grip after eating greasy frankfurters.

Daheim im Lorsbacher Thal ([lorsbacher-thal.de](http://lorsbacher-thal.de)), our second destination, has been around since 1803. When it first opened, patrons would bring their own food here to eat while they drank the apfelwein. They could also soak up the alcohol with bread sold by a merchant that would come in with a basket—a quaint tradition that is carried on today. Nowadays, however, there is a full menu. Here I get to try the green sauce that is made up of a medley of minced herbs, as well as fresh asparagus (in Europe, white asparagus rules).

Frankfurt was a brief layover on my way to other parts of Germany, but I'm glad I had the opportunity to savour some of its traditions—both social and cultural—through food.