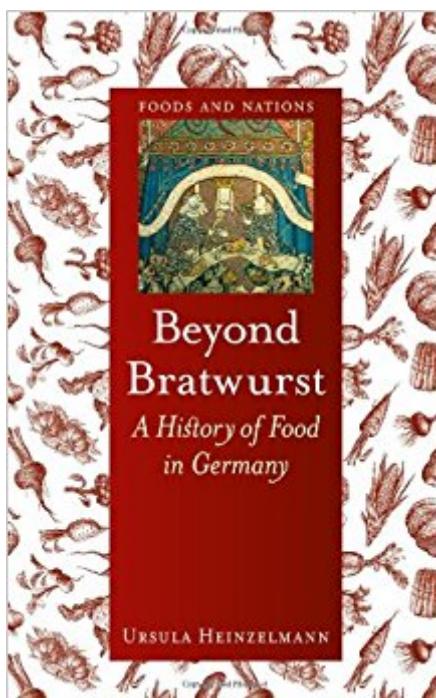


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# Beyond Bratwurst: A History Of Food In Germany (Foods And Nations)



## Synopsis

Thanks to Oktoberfest and the popularity of beer gardens, our thoughts on German food are usually relegated to beer, sausage, pretzels, and limburger cheese. But the inhabitants of modern-day Germany do not live exclusively on bratwurst. Defying popular perception of the meat and potatoes diet, Ursula Heinzelmann’s *Beyond Bratwurst* delves into the history of German cuisine and reveals the country’s long history of culinary innovation. Surveying the many traditions that make up German food today, Heinzelmann shows that regional variations of the country’s food have not only been marked by geographic and climatic differences between north and south, but also by Germany’s political, cultural, and socioeconomic history. She explores the nineteenth century’s back-to-the-land movement, which called for people to grow food on their own land for themselves and others, as well as the development of modern mass-market products, rationing and shortages under the Nazis, postwar hunger, and divisions between the East and West. Throughout, she illustrates how Germans have been receptive to influences from the countries around them and frequently reinvented their cuisine, developing a food culture with remarkable flexibility. Telling the story of beer, stollen, rye bread, lebkuchen, and other German favorites, the recipe-packed *Beyond Bratwurst* will find a place on the shelves of food historians, chefs, and *spätzle* lovers alike.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“There is more to German food than sausage, as Heinzelmann explains in her splendid history.” (Telegraph) “Beyond Bratwurst is an important contribution to the history of German food . . . An excellent book . . . beautifully printed on heavy paper with dozens of color and black-and-white illustrations as well as extensive footnotes and a very good bibliography. It is a thorough, well researched, and very readable work that is destined to become an important reference for historians. Highly recommended to anyone interested in Germany, culinary history, or social history in general.” (German Life Magazine)

Ursula Heinzelmann is a freelance food and wine writer and an independent scholar of food history based in Berlin. She is the author of several books, including *Food Culture in Germany*.

While I LOVE this book, as it is research material for an upcoming education program I am leading at a German Museum (in English). I am very disappointed that about 80% of the pictures do not show in the digital version and the boxes regarding locations for food experiences in Germany are often cut off... considering the relatively high cost of the book, I would like all the content to be included in the digital book.

A very interesting history of the region from a food perspective. Settle in your favorite chair for a lot of reading.

Was a gift for someone.

EXCELLENT

The book was interesting but much more academic than I had anticipated.

Reviewed by Sharon Hudgins, culinary historian, Food Columnist for GERMAN LIFE magazines (USA) Ursula Heinzelmann’s new book is an important contribution to the literature on the history of German food. In 345 pages of well-written text, she sets out to answer the question, “What is German about the way Germans eat, what they eat, and why,” by looking at the evolution of German food from ancient times to the present. Throughout this work of social history, she emphasizes that German foods and foodways have been strongly influenced by geography, climate, and culture, as well as Germans’ openness to changes, innovations, and foreign inputs, all of which

have shaped their cuisine over the centuries. The book is organized chronologically into twelve chapters, from the Neolithic era to the contemporary period after German reunification in 1990. Each chapter contains a wealth of information not only about specific foods (acquired from hunting, gathering, agriculture, animal husbandry, conquest, and trade), but also about cooking utensils and methods, and the social, political, economic, religious, and technological factors that influenced the ways Germans have eaten during different periods in their history. Some topics run throughout many chapters, such as the social role of women in food preparation; the effects of poverty and affluence, of war and hunger; and Germans' attitudes toward specific foods at particular points in time. The author also includes interesting descriptions of German cookbooks from the Middle Ages to the modern era. My only critique is that sometimes, especially in the early chapters, she assumes the reader has more knowledge of German history and economics than many non-German readers probably do. Occasionally I wanted her to expand a particular statement to explain it more thoroughly to readers less versed in the subject. But that's a minor quibble about an excellent book. Beyond Bratwurst is beautifully printed on heavy paper with dozens of color and black-and-white illustrations, as well as extensive footnotes and a very good bibliography. It is a thorough, well researched, and very readable work that is destined to become an important reference for historians in the future. Highly recommended to anyone interested in Germany, culinary history, or social history in general.

Having read another book on this series, I decided to read this one, and I'm glad I did. I have long had an interest in German history of any kind (possibly because most of my ancestry is German, off the boats long enough ago so that no identifiable German traditions remained in my family. This book is close to a must for anyone with such an interest. While centered on food, the background offers some historical context that is clear, objective and as good as or better than I have read in more formal historical analysis--particularly good on the later 1800s, the Nazi era and since, including cultural differences between the two Germanys before reunification. There is a great deal of information presented, so the reviewer who said note cards may be needed does have a point. The core idea is easily enough stated: there is no German equivalent of French cuisine, no dominant form or dish identifiable as German. In a sense Germany is a collection of regions and there is a great deal of current interest in regional German foods, dishes and cooking. Germany is open to influences from the outside (with a historic influence of French cuisine and more recent influence from the large number of migrant laborers coming after the war, Turkish, Greek, Italian and Balkan). There are some "boxes", asides on several restaurants and food venues, and some

interesting photos, although the book could use more of them. There are some maps, but in a form I did not find particularly useful. The chapters are chronological, although the neat chronology of chapter titles is perhaps necessarily less precise in the material. Heinzelmann has what some readers may see as digressions, about women's roles particularly as related to the family, and in her take, German housewives still have a way to go for full equality around the house. There's considerable discussion of early cookbooks and food writing, in German rather than Latin, apparently among the most popular kind of reading. Some of the authors were women and the early dates may surprise some readers. Heinzelmann notes regional differences in German based in some measure on environment (she doesn't use that term). For example, rye was grown in the north and east, wheat in the west and in the southwest a good deal of spelt. What could best grow in a region obviously impacted food choices. Other factors were the adoption of the potato (important from the 1700s on) and the utter catastrophe of the Thirty Years' War, which took a century for Germany to recover from. It's also useful to remember that the German speaking areas were for centuries broken into hundreds of political entities, so the importance of regionalism and localism seems evident. Among other things the book discusses is the close relationship between food and medicine in the Medieval era--the four humors, the four bodily fluids, and more in a complex philosophy, all of which was reflected in food writing at the time--although it is not clear how deeply this penetrated into the predominately rural areas. Chapter 6 will be of use to anyone interested in food writing, covering German food writing 1500 to 1648. It covers some interesting topics, such as Martin Luther's "table talks" with students and others at and after meals, ably assisted by his wife Katharine. They'd have eaten using fingers and a personal knife, forks being something close to the devil's work. There is some discussion of the evidence of food ways provided by records of a Munich hospital from 1552-1636. Chapter 7, "Coffee, Sugar and Potatoes" details the arrival of those in Germany and their impact, which was large. Chapter 8 is titled "Potatoes Without Salt, Soup Kitchens and Paupers 1815- 1871," which gets into some social and political history associated with the rise of industrialization and the exploitation of labor. Chapter 9 has an interesting discussion of the rise of mass-produced and mass-marketed consumer food products. Chapter 10 covers the 1914 to 1949 years, and may be the book's best-written section. The Nazi regime's complicated food policies are fascinating and rather repulsive (deliberate starvation of some groups, massive seizure of resources in occupied areas), and the importance of food as a weapon is made quite clear (note that the previous chapter covers food as a weapon as well, notably the British blockade deliberately aimed at starving Germans). This is a serious book about food in the German past and present. It is not a book of recipes and it is not a collection of essays such as a food writer

might have had published in food and cooking magazines. It's a serious and sometimes, slow, read.

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