GERMANY, AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND. These three nations represent the heartland of German-speaking Europe, although their present borders by no means demarcate the farthest geographical extent of German culture and its historical influence. Modern Germany came into existence in 1871 out of an amalgam of petty dukedoms and small kingdoms that traced their origins to the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages. Modern Austria was created in 1918 out of the German-speaking provinces of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Its borders have been stable since then. Switzerland's political independence began in 1291 with an uprising led by William Tell, but the long struggle was not complete until 1412, when peace was made with the House of Habsburg. The Habsburgs, who later created the Austrian empire, were originally Swiss, and the ruin of their castle can still be seen in Canton Aargau. While the political evolution of German-speaking Europe is complex, the culinary divisions are far more distinctly defined.

The largest division is based on religion. Northern and eastern Germany are mostly Protestant (Lutheran), while the South is Roman Catholic. Austria is predominantly Roman Catholic. Switzerland is Roman Catholic and Protestant Reformed (Calvinist). These religious differences have had a great influence on foodways and eating habits. In the Protestant areas of Germany, many older religious festivals were discarded. One of the most important changes, however, was the abolishment of fasting except during Lent. The Protestants also gave up the big Carnival processions and the feasting that accompanied them. The German Pietists in particular abjured drinking, gluttony, and carousing with dance. Thus, northern Germany's food habits became markedly different from those of the South. Differences in religion also affected the movement and acceptance of various new customs such as the Christmas tree, which slowly moved south into Bavaria and Austria during the nineteenth century.

While religion has created an overlying framework for the culinary culture of German-speaking Europe, geography has played a fundamental historical role. The Rhine River Valley, which begins at Lake Constance in Switzerland, has been a major cradle of culture for thousands of years. It was the homeland of the ancient Gauls, whose preference for pork and beer is still deeply embedded in German culture. The Rhine Valley became the most important military region of the Roman Empire, and for a short period of time, Trier, Germany, was the capital of the Empire. The vestiges of Roman culture, such as viticulture, sausage making, pretzels, gingerbread, even half-timbered architecture, have all come to represent core features of traditional culture in these three countries. The most significant geographic feature, however, is the Alps, rugged mountains that form a physical barrier between German-speaking Europe and the Mediterranean. The high mountain regions of Bavaria, Switzerland, and western Austria have evolved a cuisine that is quite distinct from that of the rest of German-speaking Europe. Its focal point is dairying, with milk products and cheese forming the major components.

While the geographic barriers are significant, it is also important to keep in mind that German-speaking Europe is not one monolithic culture. It is composed of many regional cultures and dialects. Alemannic-speaking southwest Germany, Alsace, and Switzerland are home to a very distinct food culture—and the richest agricultural regions—while the Plattdeutsch area of northern Germany, centered on the swampy lowlands bordering the North Sea and the Baltic, offers yet another culinary identity: tea drinking, fish cookery, beer, foods using oats or buckwheat, and very dark rye breads.

Since the 1970s, there has been a revival of interest in dialects and regional cookery and an impressive outpouring of cookbooks exploring local cuisines and food products. This has been a revival in the most literal sense because scholars in all three countries began studying regional foods and foodways in the 1840s; thus the accumulated food literature is extensive and a full century ahead of what has been undertaken in the United States. The *Wörter und Sachen* (Terms and Objects) movement of the early 1900s was particularly active in recording traditional foods and terminologies. Unfortunately, the National Socialist Party, which came to power in Germany in 1933, employed this research toward political ends. Since 1945, the words *ethnisch* ('ethnic') and *Volk* ('folk') in German have carried such a pejorative association with Nazi propaganda that their use is now generally avoided in serious scholarly writings about food.

There is also a sharp dichotomy between the culinary writings of scholarship and the culinary writing of popular cookbooks. Mass-market cookbooks have created the idea of a national German or Austrian cuisine, whereas food scholars have decried this as artificial and misleading, since there are only regional or highly localized cooking traditions, which do not represent the political boundaries of the country. These local traditions often overflow the borders into adjoining countries such as France, Slovakia, Slovenia, and even northern Italy.

Germany

The present Federal Republic of Germany came into being in 1945 out of the ashes of the Third Reich. It was assembled from the western German states then under Allied occupation, specifically the forces of the United States, Britain, and France. The eastern German states were occupied by the Soviet Union and became the German Democratic Republic. In 1989, with the fall of Communism, the eastern and western states were reunified. The former German states of Silesia, Pomerania, East and West Prussia, and the city state of Danzig (modern Gdansk) are now permanently incorporated into Poland. Since the ethnic Germans living in those areas were evicted in 1945, the culinary cultures of the German regions incorporated into Poland are a matter of history,

although considerable ethnographic material has been preserved from the pre-1945 era. Many traditional recipes from this region, such as *Königsberger Klopse* (Königsberg dumplings) still appear in many German cookbooks. Refugees from these regions have tried to keep their dialects and cooking styles alive through cooking clubs and similar organizations.

There are now thirteen states comprising modern Germany. They include, from north to south: Schleswig-Holstein, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Brandenburg, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen, Hessen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Baden-Württemberg, and Bayern (Bavaria). Each of these states is further subdivided into smaller regions,

The German Renaissance kitchen as depicted in Balthasar Staindl's *Ein künstlich vnd nützlichs Kochbuch* [An Artful and Useful Cookbook], first printed at Augsburg in 1544. COURTESY OF HANS WEISS. ROUGHWOOD COLLECTION.

some with very distinct local cuisines. For example, the wines and foods of Franconia in northern Bavaria are quite different from the rest of the state; the Pfalz, the southernmost area of Rheinland-Pfalz, is world famous for its wines, and locally well-known for its figs and chestnuts and its onion pies.

It is important to know these German states because popular cookbooks tend to treat regional cookery on a statewide basis—thus, there are Bavarian cookbooks, Saxon cookbooks, and so on. The most detailed cookbooks in terms of local cuisine, however, are the ones that focus on a particular valley or county (*Kreis*), such as Annelene von der Haar's *Das Kochbuch aus Ostfriesland* (The East Frisian cookbook), which deals with an area bordering on the Netherlands. The Frisians are the brunt of many German jokes about gluttony and thickheaded farmers, so this cookbook carries far more symbolism for the German reader than it would for outsiders. A unifying theme in most of the regional cookbooks written today is nostalgia for rural life in the village and a closer tie to nature, even to wild foods. In reality, preindustrial Germany was a harsh place for peasants, and recurring famine was commonplace.

Dietary patterns of preindustrial Germany. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, mass poverty and famine were integral parts of daily life in most of German-speaking Europe. The majority of the population subsisted on grains that were either eaten in the form of thick gruel cooked in milk or water or converted into flat cakes, coarse breads, a variety of small rolls, dumplings, noodles, and thick soups. (Baker's goods, such as *Lebkuchen*, *Gugelhupf*, *Strudel*, and Austrian *Nockerln*, were rarely made in the home and were eaten only on special occasions.) The grains were rich in carbohydrates and, when consumed in quantity, covered daily energy requirements. Fava beans, lentils, and peas helped to offset the shortage of protein in the grain-based diet. Analysis of the diet in poorhouses and hospices for which records survive has underscored anecdotal evidence of a widespread lack of many vital vitamins and minerals. Thus, various degrees of malnutrition were common in the countryside.

Meat, fish, and butter, as well as eggs, were reserved for special occasions. In general, it was much more common for peasants to sell these food products at market than to eat them themselves. As a result, urban dwellers consumed much more meat, fish, butter, and eggs than their rural cousins. Meat was held in such high esteem that it was viewed as a prerogative of only the well-off and persons of high social rank. It was also abundant only for short periods of time (such as in the fall) and remained expensive well into the nineteenth century. The high status of meat consumption became so ingrained in German culture that today, now that Germans have a high standard of living, meat in some form is usually consumed with every meal. This is nowhere more evident than in the flesh-rich pages of the late Hannelore Kohl's *Culinary Voyage through Germany* (1997), which is a fair representation of what middle-class Germans like to eat.

Most German historians today agree that, by 1800, many of the rural poor and a large portion of the urban working class expended 70 to 80 percent of their income on food, normally in the form of barter. This imbalance was exacerbated by the low consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables until the 1860s. The full value of these foods was not recognized by popular cookbook writers until the 1920s, when there was a large surge of interest in raw foods, fruitarian diets, vegetarianism, and spa cuisine. The German cinema shifted concepts of physical beauty by featuring women who were obviously thin, whereas in the past, a Rubenesque figure had been considered the desired norm. Many books like Sophie Sukup's 1927 *Iss Dich Schlank*! (Eat yourself thin!) proclaimed a new dietary regime based on raw and garden-fresh foods.

Until that time, most fruits and vegetables had been consumed in preserved form, which lowered the vitamin content. Cane sugar was well known to confectioners, and the rich used it in ample quantities, but it never played a role in the German working-class diet. Sugar did not enter that diet in a large way until the introduction of beet sugar. Most German sugar-based products today employ beet rather than cane sugar. Gram for gram, beet sugar is now so much cheaper than meat that it has replaced meat in the form of junk and snack foods.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, a large majority of the rural population in German-speaking Europe was self-sufficient in terms of supplying daily food needs. Most households oriented their menus according to what could be obtained in the nearest market, and these menus did not vary greatly through the course of the year. Regional customs and the season determined the rhythm of consumption, but by today's standards, this cooking would be considered monotonous, nutrient-deficient, hard to digest, even at times disgusting because of the heavy-handed use of lard and other animal fats. It is ironic that with the prosperity which Germany has enjoyed since World War II, culinary writers have painted a picture of the past that is much rosier than what actually occurred—a truism for most European peasant cookeries. Rich dishes that were only eaten on rare occasions are now treated like daily fare, and restaurants specializing in traditional cookery, especially establishments catering to tourists, provide menus that resemble old-time wedding banquets rather than typical meals. This is not to say that German Europe has not created a cuisine with many noteworthy dishes, yet it is true that these dishes have lost much of their original cultural context.

Germany's food revolution. German Europe's gradual transition to a modern diet began in piecemeal fashion. In parts of Prussia, in some of the more enlightened dukedoms and principalities, cottage and small-scale industries were encouraged during the late 1700s. This created a cash economy that allowed the workers more freedom to purchase luxury items like tea, coffee, and chocolate. Northern Germany's dynastic ties to the British crown opened northern ports to English colonial goods. It is not surprising then that port cities like Hamburg and Lübeck now fall within the German "tea belt," while southern cities like Munich are solidly within the confines of the *Kaffeeklatch*.

Tea drinking in the north also brought with it a new preference for white bread and butter as a side dish, and this culinary troika soon displaced the traditional gruels served at breakfast and during main meals. In the south, coffee drinking moved northward out of Austria, accompanied by a preference for sweet pastries eaten with the coffee. This trend also pushed aside traditional gruels, substituting in their stead such innovations as coffee soup (*Kaffeesuppe*), where bits of bread or cake were crumbled into the coffee so that it could be eaten with a dainty spoon.

The rise in white-bread consumption tied to coffee and tea revolutionized German milling practices and changed German agriculture. The growing bread demand caused a shift away from traditional grains like millet, buckwheat, barley, and oats in favor of rye and wheat. Oats underwent the largest decline in consumption even though they were often the grain of choice in many German-speaking regions for hundreds of years. They have continued as a crop largely for cattle fodder, although they are beginning to return as a health food. In spite of the large shift to bread, there were pockets in rural areas where the older gruel-based eating patterns persisted into the early twentieth century.

The second factor in the German food revolution was the coming of the potato. Potatoes had been known in Germany since the 1500s and were grown as curiosities in many botanical collections. Some of the earliest European depictions of the potato appeared in German herbals, yet the plant was largely despised even as cattle feed. Only after the devastating famines of 1770–1771 and 1816–1817 did the potato achieve widespread acceptance. This occurred in concert with efforts by several German