



Austria



Innsbruck 1964 1976

R E F L E C T I O N S O F C U L I N A R Y A R T



When the Olympic Games call the athletes of the world together, tables groan. Movement works up an appetite in everyone who is on the go at the Games - actively or passively - to a more or less sporting degree. The menus must be sufficiently varied and adequate so that athletes and their entourage do not lose flesh even when they (ought to) eat none. This applies to the Summer and Winter Games alike, as in Innsbruck, honoured twice by the Olympic Games, once to save the day when the city of Denver had pulled out.

All that remains from 1964 is a list indicating what breakfast and dinner consisted of and that there were four kitchens in the Olympic Village in which medical or a low-calorie diets could also be prepared to order. In the reports from 1976, on the other hand, many details exist, including about quantities, which indicate that the kitchen and the cellar were something of a battleground in terms of cooking and working. The statistics in bald figures for the more or less calorie-rich food are as follows: 299,212 meals were prepared, in which the main ingredients were 29,560 kg meat, 11,270 kg poultry, 14,366 kg fresh vegetables, 9,470 kg peeled potatoes, 4,565 kg chips, 8,744 kg rye bread, 189,084 rolls and 93,780 eggs. I shall refrain from taxing you with more figures. In any case, the quantities and the measurements with which hungry mouths were filled are impressive.

The Olympic Games are not only a sporting but a culinary showcase. Once the economic boom had really taken hold, the days when athletes ate from metal bowls or spooned gruel from a

by Joseph Metzger

field kitchen were only memories, to be smiled at like outdated anecdotes. The way to a man's heart, it is said, is through his stomach. This saying applied in 1964, when Innsbruck hosted the first truly televised Olympic Winter Games, welcoming crowned heads, presidents and politicians of all types and shapes, as well as the stars of the sports scene and the masses, who did anything but starve, as their plates were full to the brim.

After all, the Tyrol is a centre for tourism and understands how to entertain with ambience and fine cuisine. Many of the performers on the slopes who clambered onto the podium were also masters of the culinary art. Take Egon Zimmermann. The Olympic downhill champion could also have donned a chef's hat. On the Inn - the Patscherkofel to be precise - he gilded his skiing ability, with which you might almost say he was born. On the banks of the Seine, in Paris, the man from Arlberg had become so practised in the *haute école* of French gastronomy that he went on to turn his gold into money - as a hotelier in Lech. His hotel, the Kristberg, mainly frequented by the aristocracy, boasted one of the first discotheques (the Scotch Club).

He knew his trade, whichever it was. He had conquered the world of skiing, but as a hotelier to kings and countesses he

clung to his roots, especially in the hotel restaurant, which made lavish use of Alpine wood. The menu also blended the cosmopolitan with local specialities, for instance to make its cheese spätzle. As Egon himself has said: "We have so many good things here that we don't need to give guests the illusion they are in Italy or at the seashore!" If we do venture, then - quite unpolitically of course - we only go as far as South Tyrol! For instance with the Tyrolean wine soup or with *Dirtln*, a special type of "doughnut" made of pasta dough and usually baked with grey cheese and served with sauerkraut. *Dirtln* is not unlike *Zillertal Krapfen*, which are as much a part of the valley as the wandering musicians and the skiing aces, like Olympic champion Leonhard Stock, who incidentally is also a gourmet, as is his brother. Cuisine knows no narrow-minded bounds, especially when the roots are the same.

Many restaurants, whether rated with chefs hats, stars or whatever, come and go as trends change. On the other hand, others are so much a fixture that it is impossible to imagine a region without them. One such restaurant is the Wilde Mann in Lans, high above Innsbruck and overlooking the Inn valley, a lasting haven of fine cuisine which dates back to the 17th century. Originally a culinary creation of the Schöpf family (from 1937), after the wedding of the Schöpf daughter to a Mr Schatz, it became a "treasure chest", so to speak. It still was both in 1964 and in 1976 at the first and second editions of the Winter Games held in Innsbruck. Anyone who thinks he is someone and who swears by Tyrolean specialities dines there. The restaurant has a regulars' table and pine wood rooms (as well as one panelled in spruce) in which a cosy hospitality which is not





a cliché but a reality can be smelled and breathed: as elegant as necessary, as rustic as possible. Traditional suits and *dirndls* included. Not just on the guests. but on the staff too

The house has style, and this can be said of the interior as well as of the cuisine. The kitchen is famous for serving every type of food known from Brenner to Garmisch and from Arlberg to Kufstein - where there is a restaurant, the Auracher Löchl, that exudes the atmosphere of an old-fashioned cellar. One speciality is

Schlutzkrappen, stuffed pasta pillows served with melted butter and herbs which melt on the tongue. Then there is homemade ham, fresh from the owners' farm, which is served with potato "flakes". Game, such as roast chamois goat, is also on the menu during the hunting season. Everyone of consequence or great fame ate or held court there during the Games: Sylvia of Sweden (still Miss Sommerlatt when she was Olympic hostess), Ira von Fürstenberg, the Auerspergs and Czernins, General Montgomery, and Avery Brundage, the Olympic chief.

"Upstairs" was the place to be seen, while "downstairs", in other words in the town of Innsbruck itself not far from the legendary Golden Roof and the triumphal arch, the Tyrolean (athletes') circle ate at (or rather, lived and debated in) two favourite restaurants. One, the Bacchus-Stuben, had as its name suggests filled its cellar with the best wine and served flambéd specialities, peppered steak, fondue and Viennese boiled fillet of beef to soft music. Successful athletes, blustering industrialists such as Kneissl, the Kaiser of Tyrol, hard-working offi-

An Olympic Buffet.





cialists such as Olympics “General” Karl Heinz Klee, and feared editors such as Toni Thiel (of the *Tiroler Tages-Zeitung*) all made their way here and to the nearby Stiegl, a homey inn like the Sailer (which has nothing to do with Toni, the “Black Blitz from Kitz”), where the Austrian Skiing Association often held its meetings. In 1996, the Sailer celebrated its centenary.

But let us talk further about the Stiegl which during the days of the Olympics, as its owner Degg, the Golden Boy of the Zillertal, recalls, was open around the clock. “Often”, he says, “ice hockey players came in around midnight. They sometimes talked for such a long time that the bobsleigh teams arrived for breakfast before they left!” It was all very casual. Rough but good-natured. Both the cooking, which relied mainly upon plain fare, and the atmosphere, were far from light. One dish was Tyrolean *Gröstl*, made of fried chopped potatoes with chopped beef and ham, fried egg, a lot of pepper and hot or cold cabbage. A variation of this is black pudding *Gröstl* which is perhaps more filling - or fortifying. What would Tyrolean cuisine be without its dumplings! There are bacon dumplings and cheese dumplings, which originate from the Zillertal and are made of potato dough mixed with grey cheese, mountain cheese or goat’s cheese. Cabbage must of course not be forgotten. If it’s good enough for the farmer - you might say - it’s good enough for his guest too.

For those whose preference was to breathe air reminiscent of the age of chivalry and Maximilian - the one whose motto was: *Tu felix Austria nubes!* - the Ritterstube was situated ten kilometres

from Innsbruck in Hall, and there it was possible to dine like a king’s courtier. This is what it is like to live in a “promised land” like the Tyrol, with its long and turbulent history. Even the independence of its culinary history is somewhat dubious in the opinion of gourmets like Adi Werner, the chef at the Hospiz-Hotel, which is first mentioned in a document dating from 1386 and is located in St. Christoph am Arlberg, where Tyrol meets Vorarlberg and thus borders on Germany. “Tyrol”, he says, “was always a land of passage and travel. We just borrowed what we thought tasted good

from everyone else - even from the French!” - formerly occupiers. subsequently guests, and not only during the Olympics.

Kings such as Juan Carlos of Spain also belonged to the brotherhood at the Hospiz, and the moneyed aristocracy as well. The main thing that attracted them was the atmosphere. As Adi Werner explains: “Tyrolean gastronomy is divided into parts. It is a combination of ambience, service and traditional specialities.” Together these form the “other” (delicious) side of the medals.

TERLANER WEINSUPPE (Tyrolean wine soup)

serves 3 - 4

3 egg yolks, 1 litre cream, 1/4 litre white wine, salt, cinnamon, soup seasoning and cornstarch.

Beat the yolks together with the wine, salt, cinnamon and soup seasoning in the top part of a double-boiler.

Stir in the cream, slightly thickened with cornstarch.

If the soup is too creamy, add a little stock.

Serve with parmesan cheese and toasted cinnamon bread.

GRAMMELSCHMALZ (pork drippings with cracklings)

Saute pork belly fat and back until brown, and season with salt, garlic, pepper, caraway seed, parsley and marjoram.

TYROLEAN SCHLUTZKRAPFERLN

BASIC PASTA DOUGH.

Combine flour, water, eggs, oil, and a pinch of salt to form a dough, allow to rest, and roll thin. Cut out round pieces using the rim of a drinking glass, and place small amounts of filling in the middle of them. Fold the dough circles in half. There must be no flour on the dough, or the edges will not stick together. Finally, seal the edges with the tines of a fork so that the *Schlutzkrapferl* do not come open during cooking.

Drop the *Schlutzkrapferln* into boiling water and cook for 8 - 10 minutes. Pour with clarified butter and sprinkle with parmesan cheese and fresh chives.

FILLING

250 g sieved spinach

250 g cottage cheese

100 g ground meat (browned with a little onion)

Mix the ingredients together. Season with marjoram, salt and garlic if desired.