

Diverse enjoyment in all regions: a culinary journey through Saxony-Anhalt

From the Altmark region to the vineyards of Saale-Unstrut, between the Harz Mountains and Magdeburg, Saxony-Anhalt is also a wonderful place to explore culinary delights. Regional ingredients, creativity, and strong partnerships between producers and restaurants characterize the cuisine – sometimes traditional, sometimes surprisingly modern. Five establishments demonstrate the diverse tastes of enjoyment in Saxony-Anhalt."

The Best Game in Northern Germany"

In the north of Saxony-Anhalt, on the border with Lower Saxony, lies the idyllic Arendsee, one of the most popular holiday destinations in the Altmark region. On the eastern shore is the wellness and sports hotel "Haus am See" with the restaurant "Gustaf." It belongs to the Döpelheuer family; his son Christian grew up here and helped out as a young boy. Then he was drawn to the world of Michelin-starred gastronomy – from the "Maritim" training company in Magdeburg, he went to Austria's top chef Johanna Maier, then to Sven Elverfeld at "Aqua" in Wolfsburg, and finally to Thomas Bühner at "La Vie" in Osnabrück.

When a chef was lacking at home in Arendsee, he only wanted to step in for a short time – but he stayed. And he loves living here, as he emphasizes. He also enjoys using products and produce from the Altmark region. "We have the best game in Northern Germany here." Pike or whitefish from Arendsee, lamb from the Elbe meadows, asparagus and strawberries from the Altmark region – Christian Döpelheuer cooks with the seasons, combining tradition with modernity: The fish is served as sushi, the venison as a praline. The iconic dish, egg in mustard sauce, is baked in panko bread and served with carrots, peas, and capers, and the traditional Altmark wedding soup is served from a sauceboat at the table. The seven-course menu is also available vegan upon advance reservation. "We combine regionality with cosmopolitanism," explains Döpelheuer. And that's very popular with guests at Arendsee.

Enjoyable preservation of biodiversity in the Harz Mountains

From the Altmark up to the Harz Mountains. In the small village of Tanne near the Brocken, great efforts are being made for species conservation, biodiversity, and enjoyment: The Thielecke family breeds Red Mountain Cattle here. For centuries, they were kept in the Harz region, but they had to make way for more economical breeds, thus threatening to extinction. What began after reunification with half a dozen animals brought to Tanne is now a farm with almost 200 animals. And a true world of experience: The "Brockenbauer" is a hands-on organic farm where vacationers and school groups alike can discover the world of the "Harz cow," as the Red Mountain Cattle are called here.

The family's two daughters have since joined the business, and in addition to a farm shop selling their own and other regional products, the family also runs a restaurant—more precisely, a steakhouse. The meat, of course, doesn't come from overseas. Instead, it comes from the farm's own slaughterhouse, and everything from tongue ragout to goulash to porterhouse steak is prepared according to the nose-to-tail principle. The meat matures for several weeks in the curing cell, developing its full flavor. "Our guests always rave about how tender the meat is," reports Susann Thielecke. The animals, perfectly adapted to the harsh Harz climate, are allowed to spend their happy lives in meadows and pastures almost year-round until the first snow falls. In this way, the mountain meadows are also recultivated. Plants and insects return, and biodiversity increases. The Thieleckes' goal is to have the Red Mountain Cattle recognized as a cultural heritage – and thus protect it even further.

"Incredibly diverse": Saale-Unstrut

The Saale-Unstrut wine-growing region in southern Saxony-Anhalt is now known beyond Germany's borders, yet remains an insider tip. Those who want to enjoy the delicately flavorful wines that thrive on mineral soils can do so in style at the "51°" wine bar. It is located in the vaulted cellar of the historic granary in Freyburg, the center of Saale-Unstrut, today the Hotel "Freylich Zahn." The name "51°" refers to the latitude of this wine-growing region, one of the northernmost on the continent, and the interior design is reminiscent of metropolitan bars. "We offer big-city flair and uncomplicated enjoyment," explains Elvira Zahn-General, managing director of "Ursprung Saale-Unstrut," which operates the hotel and wine bar. Cyclists, wine enthusiasts, and neighbors—all are welcome. Along with hearty dishes like tarte flambée with herb sour cream, rainbow trout fillet, or the house's own burger creation, guests can discover the variety of wines and grapes of Saale-Unstrut by the glass—from the main grape variety Müller-Thurgau to the regional tradition of Gutedel, which is still cultivated on small plots. "Saale-Unstrut is incredibly diverse, and we want to show that to our guests," says Elvira Zahn-General. If you like, you can also enjoy the variety in your hotel room: Eight products from regional wineries are available in small wine climate cabinets.

Gastronomy with attitude and a smile

Who's ever heard of rice pudding with bratwurst? If not, head to Dessau. This is where not only the world-famous Bauhaus design,

which is currently celebrating its centenary, originated, but also this unique dish. "It's a tradition here," explains chef and restaurateur Tobias Felger, owner of "Tobi ornot ToBe." Whether Guatemala or Singapore – Felger has lived and worked in many places. Upon his return to Germany in 2016, he decided against Sylt, Hamburg, or Berlin and instead chose his hometown of Dessau. This is also because he sees his profession as a mission: East Germany needs more creative chefs who maintain culinary contact with the people, he believes: "We have to move forward with attitude and a smile." He makes it possible with a small, three-person team, offering affordable à la carte dishes and set menus; on Mondays, five courses are available for just €35. His "Tobi ornot ToBe" restaurant is just as popular with Bauhaus visitors as it has built a local fan base.

Felger uses herbs and vegetables from the "Urbane Farm Dessau," meat and offal from Leicoma pigs from Gimritz, which were widely raised during the GDR era but are now rarely raised, and char from the Forellenhof (Forellenhof) in Thießen near Coswig. These produce dishes like the "Feine Sahne Fischfilet" (Fine Cream Fish Filet), a "Bauhaus classic," as the menu notes. And they also want to revive the rice pudding with bratwurst, which is indeed a tradition in Central German cuisine.

Enjoyment like at court

The "Hoflieferant" (purveyor to the court) is located in the state capital of Magdeburg. Opened in 2015, the restaurant is centrally located between Domplatz and the Elbe River—yet a bit hidden away. Anyone who finds the historic building with its beautiful garden can look forward to a great treat. Just as if they were supplying a royal court, hostess Josephine Clemens and her team place great importance on using the best regional products, which their guests enjoy in the form of freshly prepared dishes. The menu changes with the seasons, changing every six to eight weeks. In late summer, for example, there is chard quiche with Altmark cheese or fried Genthin venison meatballs with Erxleben oak leaf salad. Whether fruit or vegetables, meat or fish: Josephine Clemens explains that the "court purveyor" can source the majority of its ingredients from a radius of just 30 to 40 kilometers. Partners include Bauer Freigeist for dairy products, the Börde-Gärtnerei in Erxleben for vegetables, the Hof an der Eiche in Belsdorf for organically produced meat, and the Wildfleisch-Manufaktur in Genthin. As a gift or culinary souvenir, they also sell a "HeimatLiebe Box" containing regional delicacies, from homemade onion salt and honey from Magdeburg gardens to spirits from the Eckart distillery in Colbitz.

Their own network is extensive, but Josephine Clemens hopes to create an even larger network of regional restaurants and producers. This would make the culinary diversity and quality that Saxony-Anhalt has to offer even more widely known and accessible.

Author: Jan-Peter Wulf

Addresses:

Gustaf im Wellness-Hotel Haus am See, Lindenstraße 28, 39619 Arendsee, www.wellnesshotel-arendsee.de

Brockenbauer Thielecke, Schierker Weg 13, 38875 Tanne, www.brockenbauer.de

51° Eat & Weinbar, Schützenstraße 9, 06632 Freyburg, www.51grad.ursprung.de

ToBi ornot ToBe, Johannisstraße 14, 06844 Dessau, www.tobiornotto.be

Hoflieferant – Restaurant und Garten, Fürstenwall 3b, 39104 Magdeburg, www.restaurant-hoflieferant.de

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