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In-Cult



Knowledge Section

**Seven selected cultural treasures
of Germany**

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Cultural Treasures Germany



DE_1 | Swabian Noodles

(Image: © Pixabay)

Swabians love their Spätzle, a type of pasta. For centuries now, they have made Spätzle at home —as a side dish to roasts with lots of gravy or as a standalone dish coming with cheese or sauerkraut, for instance. The dough is traditionally mixed —not kneaded— using flour, eggs, water and salt. Mix one pound of flour (use special Spätzle flour; it is less lumpy), at least five eggs, salt and water (as needed), and beat until the dough becomes smooth and chewy. In batches, the dough is then scraped or shaved directly into simmering salted water. According to the traditional method, the dough must be placed on a board flattened at the front; later, with a special Spätzle scraper, it is cut into thin strips and put into the boiling salt water. On a Spätzle shaver, you push a slide back and forth, and the dough will fall through holes into the water below. If the holes are round and smooth, you get short, thick Spätzle; if they have noses pointing downward, you have long, thin Spätzle. Today there are Spätzle shavers in very different designs, but the dough is always spread through holes into the water. As a standalone dish, Spätzle are served with cheese and stewed onions, the so-called Kässpätzle (cheese Spätzle). Or they come mixed with sauerkraut and bacon as Krautspatzen (Sauerkraut Spätzle); or with lentils and sausages, or... Spätzle are still a cult dish in Swabia today.



DE_2 | "Stumbling blocks"

(Image: © Bertram Wegemer)

The Stolpersteine (Stumbling Blocks) are 10x10x10 cm in size. The artist Gunter Demnig launched the Stumbling Blocks project in 1992 by laying the first stone. It was intended to cherish the memory of all the victims of the Nazi regime: Jews, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, those politically persecuted, Jehovah's Witnesses and euthanasia victims. The names on the Stumbling Blocks were meant to return personality and dignity to the people who had been reduced to numbers. A conscious pause at the Block with the inscription is a "stumbling with the head and the heart". Today, the Stumbling Blocks are held in high esteem. 75 000 have already been laid in Germany and in 25 other European countries. They form the world's largest decentralised memorial, increasingly becoming a community issue in cities and towns. Every year on the 9th of November, the date of the Kristallnacht of 1938, people gather to clean and polish the metal plaques so that the names of the victims of National Socialism remain legible. It is a reminder in the present times, when new signs of violence, contempt for humanity and anti-Semitism are reappearing.

DE_3 | Folk song "The thoughts are free"

(Image: © Wikipedia Commons)



Written as early as around 1800, this song had a special impact at the time of the first democratic revolution on German soil, the "March Revolution" of 1848/49. It was a time of democratic awakening as well as the overthrow of existing orders. The common striving and rebellion for freedom, equality and fraternity of the liberal and young population in defiance of all violence and repression were reflected in the lines of this simple song. Between 1810 and 1820 a melody was written in Bern, which was printed together with the text in Swiss hymnals. Finally, in 1842, the German poets Hoffmann von Fallersleben and Ernst Richter published *Die Gedanken sind frei* in the "Silesian Folk Songs". The song enabled citizens to sing against political and personal oppression and to give voice to their longing for independence and self-determination. The Ulm resistance fighter Sophie Scholl is said to have played the song at the prison wall for her father when he was imprisoned for statements critical of Hitler. To this day, artists continue to reinterpret the song of longed-for freedom, for example Nena or Leonhard Cohen.



DE_4 | Baking houses

(Image: © Dr. Wolfgang Doster)

In Southern Germany, especially in Württemberg, there is a tradition of communal bread baking houses in many villages. It was initiated at the beginning of the 19th century by a decree of the Württemberg Fire Protection Authority. The villagers should no longer bake bread in their own homes because the risk of fire was too high. For this reason, bakehouses intended for collective use started to be built in the village centre, often near the church or the village hall. In addition to the safety factor, an economic factor also played a role, since collecting wood and heating of the oven were now done jointly or on a shared basis. The social factor was also important: bakehouses were community places. People met at the bakehouse and talked about everyday village life and work. Today, the tradition of the bakehouse is maintained by people who care about ecology. Many want to bake bread from the sourdough that, in contrast to bread from chain stores, keeps longer and is produced without artificial additives. Bakehouses still foster social bonding in many communities today. Nowadays, the use of the bakehouses and the life around the bakehouse are mostly regulated by clubs and associations. This has given rise to many newer traditions, e.g., bakehouse festivals, which often attract many people from the whole area.



DE_5 | Folk dance "Schuhplattler"

(Image: © Heimatverein Thalkirchdorf)

Men in Lederhosen (short leather pants) stand in a circle; their embroidered suspenders and shoes are also made of leather; they wear white linen shirts, loden hats decorated with Gamsbart (tuft of chamois hair) and knitted wool calf warmers. The dancers hold their bent arms up in front; as soon as the music hits three-quarter time, they pull up their knee and jump from one leg to the other, and then slap with their hands alternately their thighs, their knees or the soles of their shoes. They stomp with their leather shoes on the ground and cheer loudly. They are dancing the Schuhplattler, which means "shoe slapping". The synchronised, rhythmic slapping and stomping reminisces of modern body percussion. Schuhplattler is a purely male dance intended to impress women. It has been danced in South Tyrol, southern Bavaria and parts of Austria for over a century. The Schuhplattler is still performed at many church and traditional festivals today, being also taught and passed on in many traditional costume clubs (Trachtenvereine). The posing behaviour reminds us of the behaviour of a capercaillie, which dances in a circle with raised tail feathers and makes loud clicking sounds to impress the female bird. Hence the belief that the capercaillie inspired the Schuhplattler.



DE_6 | Carnival in Rottweil

(Image: © Horst Buchmann)

Shrovetide is celebrated before Ash Wednesday. The tradition goes back to the Middle Ages. Originally, its purpose was to consume any leftover meat and fat. In Christianity, this was not allowed to be eaten during Lent. Over the centuries, Shrovetide in southern Germany developed into a folk festival with pageants, music and dancing. Jesters' Guilds in predominantly Catholic communities organise jesters' pageants. The jesters wear special masks and costumes. These often have something to do with the legends and history of the place.

The jesters can get up to mischief under their disguise. They take on a new identity and play a role that has nothing to do with their everyday lives. Strongholds of the "Fasnet" (the nights before Lent) are Rottweil, Villingen, Riedlingen, Bad Waldsee, etc. Each jesters' guild cultivates its own customs. In Rottweil, a jesters' leap takes place on Shrove Monday at 8:00 a.m., in Riedlingen, a meal of "tripe of frogs" is celebrated on Shrove Tuesday. Fasnet has become increasingly popular since the 1960s. So popular, in fact, that the Rottweil Jesters' Guild is even discussing restrictions on admission. Television and radio report on the events with thousands of spectators.



DE_7 | City Festival "Schwörmontag"

(Image: © Ulmer Stadtarchiv)

Schwörmontag is the day of the people of Ulm. Every year on the penultimate Monday in July, the city celebrates its traditional folk festival and repeats an oath that dates back to the 14th century. Afterwards there is a celebration - first on the Danube and then throughout the city.

At that time, a conflict was smouldering in the Free Imperial City of Ulm between the patricians, i.e. the nobility, and the guilds, the craftsmen. The latter gained more and more influence in the 14th century and fought for a share of political power. This struggle was settled with the 1397 "Großer Schwörbrief", which gave the guilds a clear majority in the city council.

Every year, the mayor of Ulm gives an account of what has happened in Ulm in the past year in front of the city's traditional Schwörhaus. He then raises his right hand and swears to "be a common man to the rich and the poor"-that is, to work for all citizens equally.

Nowadays, Nabada, a colourful folk festival on the Danube, is associated with Schwörmontag.

The Schwör Week before Schwörmontag is filled with events such as the Lichterserenade and every four years the Fischerstechen and the Ulm Bindertanz.