



A Lesson in German Cuisine

Story and photos by Genevieve Northup

I inherited my love of cooking from my southern stay-at-home mom. She always baked birthday cakes worthy of "Southern Living" covers and made dinner every night.

I have a few hundred food pins saved on Pinterest, and aside from a few of Mom's recipes, I never make the same thing twice. To celebrate our shared interest during her visit last summer, I surprised Mom with a private lesson by chef Klaus Hartmann.

On a hot Saturday afternoon, Klaus and his girlfriend/assistant arrived five minutes early, each with an eager smile and full arms. I directed them to the kitchen, where Klaus rapidly assessed the available counter space and layout. With a half grin, he said, "This will work," and set a giant Rubbermaid container of supplies on the floor.

continued on page 20

Cooking with Klaus

At age 10, Klaus began his hands-on culinary schooling by helping his mother in their family-owned restaurant. He grew up with American children in the Ansbach area and turned his passion for teaching Americans the basics of German cooking into a business: Cooking with Klaus. For an hourly fee, Klaus shows individuals and groups basic techniques and pro tips. He is now based in the Kaiserslautern area.

Klaus' current rate is 40 euros per hour, regardless of the number of students (four or five is a great number), plus the cost of ingredients. The fee includes instruction, a tasty meal and kitchen cleanup. Klaus can either complete the shopping in advance and charge for his time, or meet students at a local grocery store for a shopping lesson. To schedule a session with Klaus, visit his Facebook page, www.facebook.com/CookingWithKlaus.





"A good chef always comes prepared," Klaus remarked as he unloaded knives, pans, groceries and a number of kitchen gadgets. My large orange tabby, Garfield, inspected a now empty, cat-sized Rubbermaid container.

We began with *Rouladen*, thinly sliced beef stuffed with onions, pickles and bacon. The six-foot-something-tall Klaus — sporting a black chef's jacket, full mustache and groomed goatee — towered over the short counters in my small kitchen. He looked like a bull in a china shop, but he rapidly sliced onions with the finesse of a Food Network Iron Chef.

While tenderizing the meat with a mallet, he explained, "Look for *Rouladen* at Globus, which is already the right size." He continued, "The *Oberschale*, or top round, is the best part of the cow for this dish. It is like top-round in English."



On each piece, he spread Dijon mustard and sprinkled spices before topping them with uncooked bacon, onion and pickles. He demonstrated how to roll and pin the *Rouladen*, and I carefully finished them. Klaus seared the rolled meat in a large pot on the stovetop before adding red wine and onion.

Now for the apple strudel. Working quickly, Klaus weighed flour first, then butter, and made dough. I kneaded and rolled it into a rectangle, and he made short work of chopping apples.

"Soak the raisins in rum, sugar and water for a week before baking," he offered as he spooned the apple and raisin mixture on the dough, folded the ends like wrapping paper on a Christmas gift and placed the strudel in the oven.

Moving on to *Bratkartoffeln*, home-fried potatoes, Klaus said it was important to boil the potatoes the day before and refrigerate them overnight, so they are easier to peel. Mom and I peeled and chopped the soft, pre-cooked potatoes — it was a slow process.



The potatoes and more sliced onion went into two skillets with sizzling melted butter, and Klaus alternated between browning potatoes and prepping a salad. My stomach growled as I set the table, the house filled with the aromas of cooked beef, simmering wine, fried potatoes and crisping pastry.

My husband came in from work, opened a bottle of wine and sat down to a full plate. We toasted glasses of pinot noir, except for Klaus, who considered himself still at work. The *Rouladen* was tender and flavorful, the *Bratkartoffeln* crispy outside, soft inside, and well seasoned but not overly salted. The strudel had a nice kick from the liquor-soaked raisins.

Once finished, I put away the leftovers, and Klaus began cleaning. Four hours after starting, Klaus and his girlfriend said farewell.

"That was so good! I'm so excited we can have *Rouladen* and *Bratkartoffeln* at home now," my husband said. I looked at him, pondering the time and effort that had gone into our dinner.

I finally responded, "Only if Klaus will be my assistant. Otherwise, you'll have to wait until we move back to the States and need a German food fix." ■

