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## EATING IN MUNICH: PART ONE

# TANTRIS

## MUNICH'S TEMPLE TO GOURMET DINING



Text ©2010 by Lucy Gordan

*For over three decades Tantris in Munich's non-descript residential neighborhood of Schwabing has been one of the best restaurants in the city, in Bavaria, and in all of Germany. "This attitude to life" was the brain-child of an improbable founder, Fritz Eichbauer, a local property developer of "turn-key" houses, who had grown tired of having to travel to France for a gourmet meal.*

*However, the idea did not come to him in France, but rather in a very unlikely spot: Nebraska, USA, where he had traveled with a German delegation to inspect American concrete structures. During supper in a steakhouse with a large parking lot he thought to himself perhaps people don't go out to eat in Munich because it's so difficult to find parking near the restaurant.*

*Eichbauer's fantasy became a reality in 1967 in Zurich at a culinary evening at Mowenpick's gourmet restaurant "Baron de la Moulette." It had precisely the style that Fritz and his new wife Sigrid were searching for. Consequently, for the next 18 months they worked in symbiosis with Mowenpick's Zurich-based architect Justus Dahinden, who perhaps ironically, but in this case appropriately, specialized in designing churches. Eichbauer chose the name "Tantris" because it's pronounced the same way in all languages, but more importantly because in Balinese it means "the search for perfection," exactly his aim, what he wanted his*



guests to experience and enjoy. For Eichbauer food is the basis for happiness.

Once the Eichbauers had their desired architectural plans and the restaurant's name, they started looking for their chef. Fritz consulted Paul Haeberlin who without hesitation recommended Eckhart Witzigmann "as the only man for the job." At the time Witzigmann was the young and up-and-coming culinary star at Washington D.C.'s "Jockey Club."

After modifying the kitchen's layout to Witzigmann's taste and needs, Tantris opened in December 1971. It took five years for this "temple to gastronomy," which now has two Michelin stars, to make its mark. "We practically had to educate our guests," Eichbauer is often quoted as saying. "Back then there was nothing similar in Germany to what we were trying to achieve, and definitely not in Munich." The restaurant's website [www.tantris.de](http://www.tantris.de) explains that "Tantris is said to have heralded the start of a new era in German gastronomy. Eichbauer and Witzigmann wanted to apply the basic principles of tantric philosophy to cuisine, with the aim of 'finding a balance between the body and the mind; not asceticism but pleasure without remorse.' From the start Tantris's motto has been "Simply for enjoyment."

When Witzigmann left to open his own restaurant "Aubergine" in 1980, Heinz Winkler (a then unknown chef born in the Italian region of Alto Adige and trained in Austria) took his place in the kitchen and won the restaurant three Michelin stars. In 1991, he too left to open his own hotel and restaurant, "Residenz Heinz Winkler" in Aschau im Chiemgau located between Salzburg and Munich not far from Lake Chiemsee in the heart of idyllic Bavarian landscapes. Since then Hans Haas, who prepares food precisely in accordance with his temperament (refreshingly natural), has been in-charge of the kitchen. Formerly the sous-chef at Aubergine, in 1987 Haas won the 3rd Bocuse d'Or World Championship for new cooks, in 1995 Gault et Millau's Chef of the Year, and in 1999 the European Culture Award.

Paula Bosch, Germany's first female sommelier and now its most famous and highly-regarded, arrived that same year. She oversees a cellar of over 70,000 bottles of wine of the very first order. "It's about each guest and their palate," Tantris's website quotes her as saying. "I endeavor to discern their preferences, so that I can select the best wine for them." In 1984/5 the Gastronomie Akademie in Berlin elected Bosch as Germany's Best Sommelier and in 1988 Gault et Millau followed suit. In 2006 Bosch won the Menininger-Award "Excellence in Wine and Spirits" and in 2007 Austria's Bacchus-Preis ÖWM.

In June, thanks to the Munich Tourist Board and Bettina Von Massenbach, Tantris's PR and Operations Manager, Epicurean-Traveler.com's Rome Bureau Chief, Lucy Gordan, enjoyed a splendid lunch here after which she interviewed both Haas and Bosch. Their menu recommendations were as follows:

Chilled terrine of duck breast with goose liver parfait, celeriac and medlar and Roasted lobster with rocket purée and lemon grass stock, both accompanied by a dry 2008 Gelber Muskateller; from the Oekonomierat Rebholz winery in Germany's Palatinate region; Saddle of lamb au gratin with bok choy, eggplant, vegetables and roasted olive polenta and chocolate soufflé "Mohr im Hemd" with strawberries and macadamia-brittle ice cream, accompanied by a 2008 Hochheimer Reichststal Kabinett Riesling, from the Franz Künstler winery in the Rheingau region of Germany.

## PAULA BOSCH

**What are your first memories of wine?**

**PB:** Sweet Austrian wines.

**What are your first memories of food?**

**PB:** Wiener Schnitzel.

**So why and how did you decide to become a sommelier instead of a chef?**

**PB:** These are two very different professions. My talent was and is on the wine side; therefore I'm a sommelier.

**Is anyone else in your family a sommelier?**

**PB:** No.

**From your c.v. it looks as if you learned hands-on, on the job, to become a sommelier, or did you take the three-year course? If so, where?**

**PB:** When I started my career as a sommelier, there were no wine/sommelier courses in Germany at all. I was co-founder of the first wine school which was in Heidelberg.



**Who was your mentor? Since you are the first woman sommelier in Germany, what did you learn from him or her?**

**PB:** Nobody. There weren't any female sommeliers and my male colleagues didn't accept a female colleague in the wine business.

**What are the essential qualities for being a top sommelier?**

**PB:** Sensitive nose, curiosity and open-mindedness, a good memory, and steadfastness.

**Other sommeliers you admire?**

**PB:** No one.

**Can you describe one or two of your most challenging professional experiences?**

**PB:** Starting my job here as the first sommelier at Tantris in 1991 and writing my first book, 500 Weine unter 20 DM (500 Wines for Under 20 German Marks) in 1997.

**What was your greatest professional satisfaction?**

**PB:** My success of almost 20 years here at Tantris.

**To what do you attribute your professional success?**

**PB:** The happy faces of our guests.

**Up to now we have talked about Paula Bosch the sommelier, but my readers and I would like to know more about you as a person. For example, what's your favorite wine?**

**PB:** At the moment it's vintage 2009 of German wines, especially Riesling.

**This interview is for an American and for an Italian magazine. Do you have a favorite American wine? A favorite Italian wine?**

**PB:** American: Mount Eden, Chardonnay. Italian: L'Apparita, Castello di Ama, Tuscany.

**A wine or type of wine you don't like?**

**PB:** All wines with screw tops.

**Your favorite food?**

**PB:** All of Hans Haas's dishes, and pasta when I'm at home.

**Part of judging a wine is its color and its perfume. What's your favorite color?**

**PB:** Blue.

**Your favorite flower?**

**PB:** Peony.

**What zodiac sign are you?**

**PB:** Pisces.

**Chefs are known for their collections of fancy watches, fast cars and motorcycles. What about sommeliers? Do you have a collection?**

**PB:** Watches and corks.

**If you had not become a sommelier, what profession would you have chosen instead?**

**PB:** There was never any question of choosing any other profession. Becoming a sommelier was my destiny.

## HANS HAAS

**Our tastes in food are closely connected to our childhood; what are your first memories of food?**

**HH:** My Mum's beans with bacon and breadcrumbs.

**Why did you decide to become a chef?**

**HH:** I always wanted to be a chef. I discovered my passion for cooking as a young child. I wanted to use this talent professionally, so, right after finishing school I had a year's apprenticeship at the Gasthof Kellerwirt in Oberau where I was born.



**Are there other chefs in your family?**

**HH:** No.

**You worked with Eckart Witzigmann, known as “Chef of the Century” and certainly one of the greatest living chefs, at Aubergine, his three Michelin-starred restaurant here in Munich. What did you learn from him?**

**HH:** I worked as Witzigmann’s sous-chef from 1982-1987, but before that, from 1980-1982, I was chef-de-partie at Paul Haeberlin’s Auberge de L’ill. I was very lucky to work with these two masterminds. From them both I learned and developed my passion for artisanry in the kitchen, my professionalism, and my staying power.

**Did you also work here at Tantris with Heinz Winkler?**

**HH:** Mr. Eichbauer recruited me to replace him when Winkler left to open his own restaurant.

**The first chef I ever interviewed is now my friend Heinz Beck. He too worked at Tantris. I believe he left the year you came, but perhaps you worked together a short time?**

**HH:** I never worked with Heinz Beck because he left Tantris to follow Winkler before going to Rome.

**What are the essential qualities of a top chef?**

**HH:** Curiosity, the desire to learn, creativity, manual competence, and good taste.

**Did you ever think of hosting a blind tasting to see if you could recognize, say, your own dish, one of Witzigmann’s, of Winkler’s, of Bocuse’s, of Marchesi’s etc.?**

**HH:** No.

**What do you like best about your work?**

**HH:** Learning many new things day after day.

**The least?**

**HH:** Administrative responsibilities. Sitting in my office instead of being in the kitchen.

**What’s your culinary philosophy?**

**HH:** That what looks easy is often difficult.

**In a nutshell, how would you define your cuisine?**

**HH:** Fresh, seasonal, product-driven, and creative.

**What are your signature dish and other specialties?**

**HH:** Stewed beef cheeks, salmon with leak purée and brown butter, and calf’s head with tomato marinade.

**What do you believe is the reason for your success?**

**HH:** My creativity, stamina, and the fact that I’m always in my kitchen.



**Up to now you've told me about Hans Haas the chef; I'd like to know more about Hans Haas himself. For example, what are your favorite foods?**

**HH:** Everything that is well-prepared and well-presented.

**A dish you dislike?**

**HH:** None.

**Your favorite wines?**

**HH:** French: Puligny-Montrachet “Les Pucelles” 1er Cru Domaine Leflaive; Chateau Figeac St. Emilion Grand Cru Classé; Austrian: Bernhard Ott, Gruener Veltliner, and Donauland; and German: Franz Kuenstler, Hochheimer Kirchenstueck, Riesling Spaetlese, trocken and [German wines from the] Rheingau.



**Do you think the best German food is Bavarian?**

**HH:** Not necessarily. There are some excellent local dishes in many regions of Germany and Austria.

**Another cuisine you like?**

**HH:** Food from everywhere when it's well-prepared and well-presented.

**Where do you like to go on vacation?**

**HH:** To my hometown in the Austrian Tyrol.

**Chefs are well-known for having collections, often of motorcycles, fast cars, or watches; what about you?**

**HH:** I don't have a collection, but I drive a collector's item: a FIAT 500 manufactured in 1970.

**You have published four cookbooks, only available in German; are you writing a book now? If so, its title and publication date?**

**HH:** Not at the moment; my last one was published in December 2009.

**Your feelings about food critics and restaurant guides; have they been helpful to you or do they add stress?**

**HH:** Favorable reviews are always a motivation and inspiration. However, the most important thing for a chef and his or her restaurant is satisfied and happy guests.

**Other chefs you admire?**

**HH:** There are many colleagues that I admire, too many to list here.

**I'm doing this interview for an Italian monthly; your favorite restaurants in Italy and why?**

**HH:** Norbert Niederkofler at the Hotel & Spa Rosa Alpina San Cassiano in Alto Adige. I like him personally and I respect his talent as a chef. He too worked under Witzigmann.

**If they hadn't become chefs, Heinz Beck told me he had wanted to be a painter, Marchesi a pianist; Thomas Keller the short-stop for the New York Yankees. What about you?**

**HH:** A champion skier or a sculptor. To relax in what little free time I have I sculpt. It's my hobby. My pseudonym is Jean Lapin, or Hans Haas in French.

**Who is your favorite or favorite artist?**

**HH:** I'm a fan of Friedensreich Hundertwasser, the Austrian painter and architect.



#### EPILOGUE

In 2005 Hans Haas opened his own cooking school. Classes are limited to 10-12 students and last nine hours over one day at a cost of 380 euro — around \$500 a lesson. Perhaps the only drawback is that only German is spoken. To book, click on [www.hans-haas.de](http://www.hans-haas.de) which includes a course schedule (check availability as these classes sell out in advance), plus a hotline for more information.

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