

## Simply does it Hamburg

### Preface

A restaurant in central Hamburg has been pleasing guests with its homely cooking for more than 20 years.

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Some things are built to last. Tucked into a busy corner of central Hamburg is Marinehof, a restaurant that's been serving the city for 20 years. Owner Astrid Wettstein had the idea for Marinehof in 1984, 10 years after she had moved into an apartment in a building on the Fleetinsel, which was then a bastion of bohemian life surrounded by Hamburg's famous canals. Marinehof occupies the building's ground floor, which was previously a rundown shop front.

A lifelong foodie, Wettstein first started learning how to cook from her mother in her northern German hometown of Cloppenburg. As a student she worked in restaurants and in 1988, with the help of partners Eckhard Rhode and architect Hans Thalgott, she secured a spot for Marinehof in the late 19th-century building. They created a comfortable dining room with soaring ceilings and a mezzanine. Antique pillars were restored; a kitchen and spiral staircase installed. Marinehof (named after the original restaurant here, which served sailors from 1904) opened to instant success in November 1990. Then as now, unadorned custom-made

blonde-wood chairs and tables sit aside vast windows that let in the soft light from Hamburg's harbour. The surrounding office buildings and adjacent Steigenberger hotel date to the mid-1990s; the nearby HafenCity developments are much newer. Marinehof no longer has a monopoly on good eating in Hamburg's city centre but has remained a classic. "We've had our ups and downs but we're still here," says the lively Wettstein. "We always wanted to be unpretentious."

The menu, too, is unfussy. The selection features a few German standards and head chef Claudia Krügerke's modern take on *Mutti-küche* ("mum's comfort food"). But there's also plenty of room for experimentation: six days a week the menu features specials thought up by the kitchen staff – often vegetarian, sometimes Asian.

From the beginning, Wettstein worked with regional farmers to cultivate interesting potato varieties; the farmers also supply seasonal fare such as *Grünkohl* (green cabbage) or white asparagus.

Tender rare roast beef has been on Marinehof's menu "since day one",



### Recipe 01

#### Bratkartoffeln (fried potatoes)

(Serves 6)

8-10 potatoes

3 onions

1 tbsp butter

Salt and pepper

#### The method

**01** The day before you plan to serve the potatoes, boil until the centre is cooked but still has some "bite". Immediately remove from heat and rinse with cold water.

**02** Leave them, unpeeled, overnight in a cool, airy place (not the refrigerator).

**03** The next day peel the potatoes and cut them into medium-sized cubes. Toss-fry in hot concentrated butter.

**04** When the potatoes start to brown slightly, add the cubed white onions to taste. Keep frying the mixture until browned and season with salt and freshly ground pepper.



### Recipe 02

#### Rare roast beef

(Serves 6-8)

1kg top-quality beef

#### Marinade

100ml olive oil

2 tbsp mustard

100ml Worcestershire sauce

300ml soy sauce

2 tsp fresh-ground pepper

2 tsp sea salt

#### The method

**01** Mix the marinade ingredients and coat the beef with it. Put the roast in a freezer bag and place in the refrigerator overnight. When ready to prepare, pour marinade off the meat and set aside.

**02** Preheat oven to 80C. Sear the meat in hot butter first on the skin side and then on the other. Put the roast with the skin up in a baking pan and cover with marinade.

**03** Put a meat thermometer into the thick end of the meat, making sure to find a central spot. When the meat reaches 57C, remove the roast and set aside for at least 40 minutes.

**04** Slice thinly and serve with remoulade sauce (below).

#### Remoulade sauce

250g homemade mayonnaise

150g crème fraîche

Pinch sugar

Dash mustard

A few squirts lemon juice

10 cornichons, finely cubed

1 red onion, finely diced

1 tbsp finely diced capers

3 mashed sardine filets (strain if bony)

2-3 tbsps finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

#### The method

**01** Stir together the mayonnaise, crème fraîche, sugar, mustard and lemon juice.

**02** Add all the other ingredients.



says Wettstein, who gets as much grass-fed beef as she can from near Hamburg; otherwise she orders from New Zealand. The texture of her roast beef comes from marinating overnight then quickly frying it before slowly roasting. Fried potatoes, too, are a speciality here, and their simplicity is deceptive – the flavour and smooth texture comes from letting boiled potatoes sit unpeeled overnight before frying and adding onions after the potatoes begin to brown. "In northern Germany, potatoes are a philosophy," says Wettstein.

Casual enough to relax in but just proper enough to talk business over lunch, Marinehof, which serves up to 200 patrons on busy days, never looks dated. "Looking around, we've hardly changed anything," says Wettstein, smiling. She even still lives upstairs. — (M)

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