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# PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



## BAVARIA

*Maidult* Fair | April 25–May 3, 2026

*Maidult* is the first *Auer Dult* of the year, a city fair in the district of AU Munich that takes place three times per year on the Mariahilfplatz (main square) in front of the church, a tradition dating back to 1310. There is a large flea market, handmade dolls clothes and furniture, live music and plenty of German food to try, especially steamed noodles. For kids, there are puppet shows and Tuesdays are children's days with reduced prices on entertainment.



## KAISERSLAUTERN

*Heidelberger Frühling: USA Day* | March 28, 2026

During the Heidelberg Spring Music Festival which will occur from March 14–April 19, 2026. A special "USA Day" event will occur put on in collaboration with the German-American Institute Heidelberg. The event intends to bridge cultures and celebrate America's 250 years of independence. There will be four events included in the USA Pass and the theme is "the other 50%." Music, readings and conversations will reflect on the meaning of freedom.



## SPANGDAHLEM

*Moselle Peach Blossom Market, Cochem* | April 11–12, 2026

Annually, the Blossom Market in Cochem takes place on Endertplatz Square. The blossoming of the Moselle vineyard peach is celebrated and from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., market stalls offer a variety of products made from them, including tea, liquors, chocolates and much more. Visitors can also stroll through the area and find nearby hikes to admire the pretty pink blossoms.



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## STUTTGART

*Stuttgarter Frühlingsfest* | April 18–May 10, 2026

The biggest Spring Fest in all of Europe is back. This festival welcomes the return of warmer days and Wasenhasi, a friendly rabbit and the official mascot, who regularly walks around the site ready to take pictures and encourage guests to ride the rides. A variety of stalls sell drinks and favorite fest-foods like schnitzel. The Trader's Market has more than 50 traders offering textiles, handicrafts, jewelry, teas, spices and more. Every Wednesday is family day which offers reduced prices.



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## WIESBADEN

*Frankfurt Dippemess* | March 27–April 19, 2026

Only 40 minutes from Wiesbaden, Dippemess has a history dating back to the 14th century where it was known as the *maamess* (a medieval market for household goods). Frankfurt's oldest folkfest, has plenty of vendors selling crafts and wares, thrilling rides, carnival games, live entertainers like jugglers and, of course, yummy festival food. Apple wine is a specialty offered along with traditional fest food. Every Tuesday is children's day and ticket prices are reduced. ■



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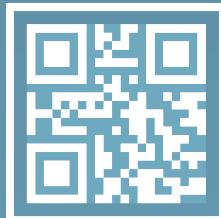
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# Toastbrot



By Kat Nickola

In America, you likely bought your bread off a grocery store shelf where it was sold sliced and in a plastic bag. Here in Germany, the equivalent product is called *Toastbrot* or just *toast*. Because of German regulations, it will not contain the additives and preservatives common in U.S. breads. To be clear, however, it is not real German *Brot* (bread).

*Toastbrot* is an American invention that was brought to Germany after World War II. It was never fully accepted, though, since it simply didn't stand a chance competing against the local fresh-baked German *Brot*. The word *toast* was adapted from English into German because the bagged loaves were, in the German mind, designed for the novelty of being used in a toaster. In fact, some *Toast* is marketed as "American Style" when it is 50 percent larger than the regular varieties.

*Brot* is a different thing entirely, intricately entwined in the centuries-old German bread culture. Also, *Brot* comes from a bakery. You will not find *Toastbrot* at a bakery since the lower-quality product is only used for toasting or making snack sandwiches. It is, essentially, seen as the fast-food of baked goods and certainly not equivalent to healthy, fresh German bakery *Brot*. ■

## GERMAN WORD OF THE MONTH

**Abendbrot** (noun) *Ah-bend-brote*

Literal translation: Evening bread

Meaning: A cold supper-time meal of various breads, meats, cheeses and spreads, especially popular when a hot meal was eaten at lunch time in a restaurant or worksite canteen.



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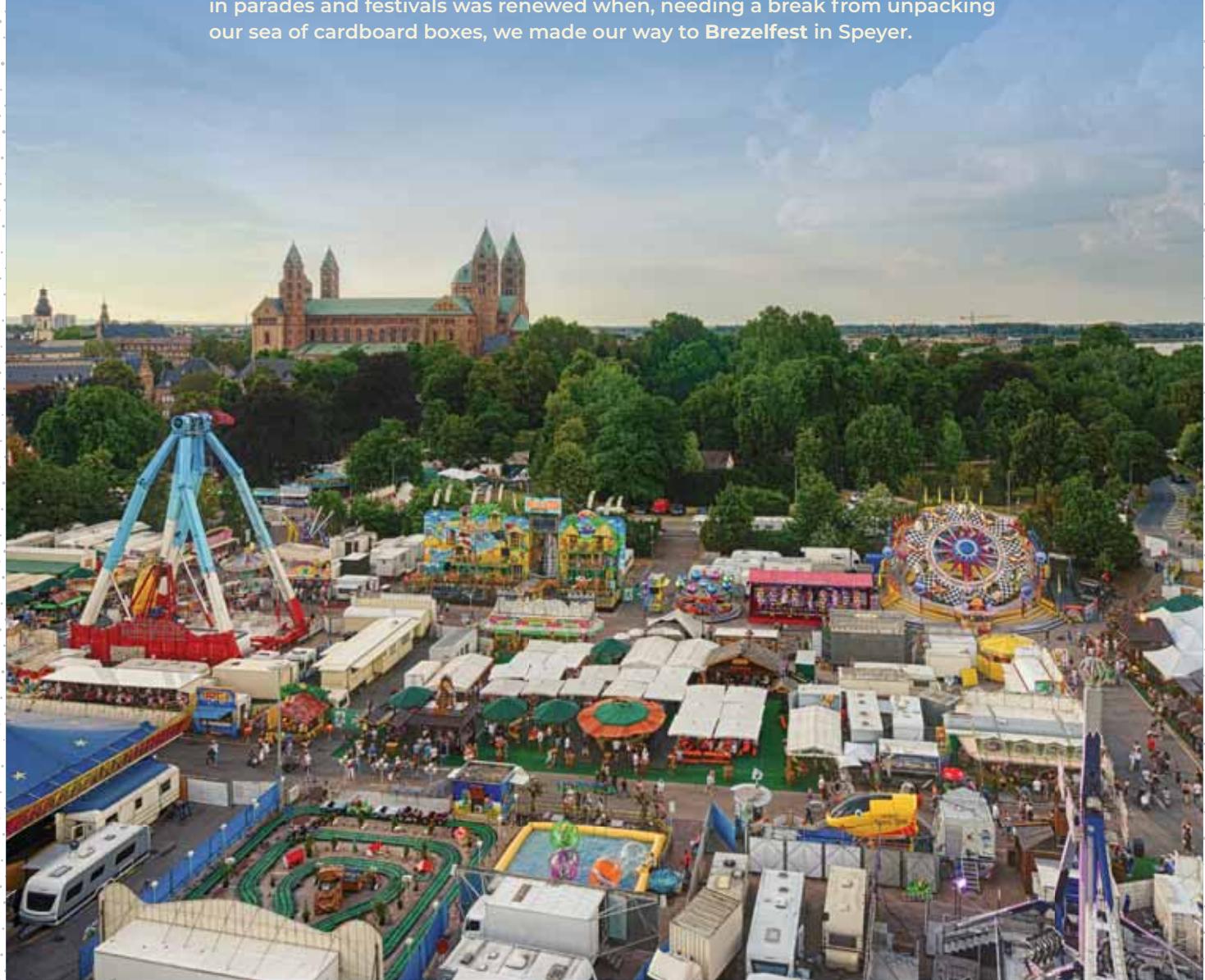
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# SPYEYER BREZELFEST BAKES ITS WAY INTO YOUR HEART

By Stacy Roman

**A**fter being stationed in Louisiana, Mardi Gras ruined us for parades. That multi-week affair consisted of overindulgence in king cake and gumbo, extravagant balls hosted by local Krewes, and a parade filled with fabulous floats, marching bands and an impressive haul of plastic beads and foam toys. It wasn't until we moved to Germany five years later that our faith in parades and festivals was renewed when, needing a break from unpacking our sea of cardboard boxes, we made our way to Brezelfest in Speyer.





Every July, the city of Speyer is transformed into a love letter to the humble *Brezel* (pretzel). Raucous floats rumble along the cobblestone streets to the soundtrack of live brass *Oompah* bands. However, this isn't your usual sit-back-and-watch-demurely kind of parade. After all, what kind of **Brezelfest** would it be if giant pretzels weren't thrown from the floats?

This festival is dedicated to the unofficial German national food. There are plenty of flying pretzels and enough produce thrown from parade floats to make a small side salad. However, I don't recommend eating the thrown pretzels. They make better weapons than food. Instead, hit up one of the local pop-up *Brezel* stands. Most offer a variety of hot, fresh, doughy goodness. My favorite was the *Käsebrezel*, or cheese pretzel, which was as big as my head. If you need a good brew to wash it down, *Eichbaum* is an excellent choice.

The parade typically begins later in the afternoon, leaving plenty of time for rides, games and delicious German fair food! Once you've had your fill, stake your spot along the parade route in the **Altstadt** and prepare to be peppered with pretzels! There is so much to love about Speyer! Constructed in the 11th century, the **Speyer Cathedral** is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is the final resting place of former German emperors. The nearby **Technik Museum** pays homage to the technical marvels of the past century. Visitors can walk through the Boeing 747 aircraft precariously perched above the museum and slide back down to the ground. For budding marine biologists, take a visit to **SEA LIFE Speyer**. This aquarium features a vast array of coral from around the globe and an exhibit dedicated to aquatic life in the North Sea.

Although Speyer is an easy day trip from Wiesbaden and Kaiserslautern, take your time and enjoy this enchanting city with a weekend stay. **Hotel Domhof** is a charming hotel in the heart of the Altstadt near the Speyer Cathedral. The accommodations are quite comfortable and feature air conditioning, a plus in the stifling July heat. However, the proximity to the cathedral equates to loud bells ringing all day and night. Another option is **Hotel Speyer am Technik Museum**, which makes a wonderful, family-friendly choice. Located on the museum grounds, visitors can book a package deal that includes tickets to the nearby museum and **SEA LIFE Speyer**.

**In 2026, the Speyer Brezelfest takes place July 9–14.** For more information, visit [www.speyerer-brezelfest.de](http://www.speyerer-brezelfest.de). ■



© PHOTO BY STACY ROMAN



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# IN DER **BÄCKEREI**

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## A TASTE OF GERMAN BREAD CULTURE

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By Kat Nickola

As I walk through the door, a cozy smell of grain, yeast, coffee and warmth envelope me like a hug. I'm at my local **Bäckerei**, taking in the selection of daily breads behind the counter and eyeing the treats in the display case. I shake off the morning's winter cold and glance around at the bustling employees and tables of patrons – a few workmen in coveralls, a group of police in uniforms, older adults socializing and teens hurrying off to school.

The server behind the bakery counter looks at me expectantly. "Bitte schön?"

---

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WEIGH MY CHOICES AND DECIDE ON TWO  
THINGS: WHAT I'M GOING TO EAT NOW, AND  
WHAT I'LL TAKE HOME FOR THE FAMILY."**

---

I make eye contact with the server. "Einen Moment, bitte," I say and gesture for another patron to go ahead. That bought me about two minutes; time to decide what I'd like....



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# BAKERY CULTURE

Bread holds a place of prominence on the German table. It has been a staple of the European diet since people began agriculturally settling the area during the Neolithic period, starting about 9,000 years ago. Ancient varieties of wheat and barley grew and developed, eventually forming the basis of a culture built on bread (and that other wheat product: beer).

Bread was made in the home while subsistence farming ruled the ancient world. However, as towns grew in the Middle Ages, local households shared communal ovens. Baking as a profession was first recognized in the 10th century when guilds ensured quality and training. Still, many peasants couldn't afford to purchase bread, so communal bakehouses were used into the early 1900s. They were places to share stories, chat and build community.

Becoming a baker in Germany requires a three-year apprenticeship after getting a standard high school diploma (10th grade). The training combines vocational coursework with paid practical training at a bakery. Once bakers have five years of experience, they can choose to begin the intensive two-year studies to become a *Meisterbäcker* (master baker).

Though production now occurs at centralized bakeries and throughout the day, bread is traditionally baked in the dark early morning hours. This means that the best selection is available when shops open, and shelves can be a bit picked over by the afternoon.



# GERMAN BREADS

I'm at the bakery early, so there are plenty of loaves and small treats to choose from. Most bakeries have a good variety, but there are thousands of German breads available across the country. In fact, the *Deutsche Brotinstitut* maintains a register of German breads that currently has over 3,000 entries. Here are some that are good to know:

A WEISEN-MISCHBROT has more white flour while a ROGGEN-MISCHBROT has more rye.



**Mischbrot** – The most popular bread in Germany. A sourdough loaf of fine-ground wheat and rye flour baked into an oblong golden-brown loaf.



**Weißbrot** – These white-wheat breads can be baked in sandwich loaves, oblongs, rounds and baguettes.



**Roggenvollkornbrot** – A variety of breads that contain more than 90 percent whole grain rye flour. Some are rustic and crusty, others are soft, dense loaves for slicing.



**Mehrkornbrot** – A multi-grain loaf with at least three different grains, often baked with seeds and nuts.





**Landbrot** – A light, crusty round bread baked with white wheat flour and a small amount of rye.



**Bauernbrot** – A dark, rustic and crusty round bread made with more rye flour than wheat.



**Vollkornbrot** – A bread with more than 90 percent whole grain, often a dense wheat and rye flour blend baked into a small loaf.



**Weizenvollkornbrot** – A loaf or crusty oblong bread baked with more than 90 percent whole wheat.



**Sonnenblumenbrot** – A popular bread made with whole grain wheat and rye flour baked with sunflower seeds.



**Hefezopf** – A braided sweet bread that contains white wheat flour, eggs, sugar and yeast.



**Semmeln** – These small rolls come in numerous varieties, from white rounded buns to crusty, dark rolls baked with seeds and nuts.



**Brötchen** – A German staple, this crusty, oval white wheat roll is perfect for spreads at breakfast and sandwiches at snack time.

## WHAT'S IN A LOAF?

At the bakery, I decide on *Sonnenblumenbrot* and a round *Weißbrot*. They are freshly baked, so whatever we don't eat with this evening's meal will make good toast tomorrow morning at breakfast, but beyond that it will soon be stale and on its way to my compost bin.

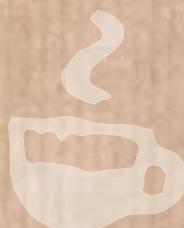
While that may seem wasteful, I doubt there will be more than a small crust leftover. Bakery breads in Germany do not contain the same additives and preservatives that exist in the US;

they are simply flour, yeast, salt and water, plus any herbs, seeds, nuts, spices or sweeteners needed to make specialty loaves. There is a natural tastiness to this fresh bread that sets it apart from shelf-stable bread. Even the pickiest of my teenagers devour it.

I also grab a coffee and my favorite treat: a buttered pretzel with chives.

**"EINEN KAFFEE UND  
SCHNITTLAUCH BREZEL, BITTE."**

As I sit down, a neighbor wanders in, and I am reminded of the old communal bakehouses. A German bakery is still a vibrant place that brings people together. In 2014, German bread culture was even recognized as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, and as I bite into my pretzel I'm happy to be part of it. ■





# Käsekuchen

## Germany's Delicious Cheesecake

By Julia Cahill

### German bakeries are a blessing.

They're plentiful, and nearly all of them have shelves stocked with freshly made staples like *Käsekuchen*.

Käsekuchen is a delicious, airy German version of cheesecake. Instead of using the heavy cream cheese that weighs down American-style cheesecake, Käsekuchen is full of *Quark*.

Quark is an unsalted, fresh, cheese curd product that is common in Germany. It is likened to a creamy cottage cheese and sometimes compared to a light Ricotta or cream cheese, plus a variety of other interesting German-to-English translations that don't quite do it justice. I have yet to find it in America, but Germany is full of Quark—just like Käsekuchen.

You can find Käsekuchen covered in strawberries or cherries during the summer months, just like the American-style cheesecakes, but texturally it is different since the Quark gives the cake a cloud-like bounce.

If you like cheesecake, give Käsekuchen a taste. You may never go back.

### Prepare Pastry Crust

1 2/3 cups (200g) flour  
2/3 cup (75g) sugar  
5 tablespoons (75g) butter  
1 egg

Make the crust by combining all pastry crust ingredients with a spoon until combined into a crumbly dough. Press in the bottom of a greased 9" springform pan.

### Prepare Filling

3 eggs  
1 cup (240ml) heavy cream  
6 tablespoons (85g) butter  
3/4 cup (150g) sugar  
1 packet (9g) Vanillezucker (this German product is vanilla sugar and comes in a small packet)  
1 packet (1.5oz or 37g) vanilla pudding powder  
2 cups (500g) Quark  
Zest of 1 lemon

1. Separate the eggs. Beat whites until soft peaks form.
2. Whip heavy cream until soft peaks form.
3. In a large bowl, mix egg yolks, butter, sugar, Vanillezucker, pudding powder, quark and lemon zest until smooth.
4. Gently fold in the egg whites and whipped cream.
5. Pour filling over crust in the pan.

### Bake

Bake at 350° F (180°C) for 1 hour. Turn off the oven, crack the door and let the cheesecake stand inside the cooling oven for another 10 minutes. Allow it to come to room temperature before placing it in a refrigerator to chill before serving. ■



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PHOTO BY  
Jeffrey "Woody" Torres



**Peacocks in Mallorca, Spain**

While peacocks are not a native species to **Mallorca, Spain**, they can be seen in gardens of large estates on the Balearic Island and at Sa Cova, an old cave house. Photographer Jeffrey "Woody" Torres was lucky enough to spot these two love birds at Alcanada Golf Course. He perfectly captures the photo with the caption, "Alcanada Peacocks Posed in Love."

Keep an eye out on your next trip to Mallorca, you never know where you might spot a peacock. ■



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