



***U.S. ARMY GARRISON RHEINLAND-PFALZ
RETIRED SOLDIER/SPOUSE AND SURVIVING
SPOUSES
NOVEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER***



HAPPY THANKSGIVING, RETIREES AND FAMILY

Here we are in November which does not seem possible. This has been a whirlwind couple of months for our office and, I am sure, for your family as well.

As we prepare to sit down with our family and friends on either Thanksgiving Day or, as some say, Friendsgiving let us not forget to count our many blessings that you and others like you have given to us. For without your sacrifice, we could not have survived for as long as we have.

Unless you have spent the last couple of months in a cave, you should be aware of the world events that are unfolding over in the Middle East and other points around the globe. We have troops currently deployed to these areas and will not be able to be home with their families. They won't partake of the meal nor sit down and watch the Cowboys lose again; uh, I mean, Thanksgiving football. So please on this holiday, bow your



heads and offer a prayer of protection for our troops. We have all been in harm's way throughout our careers and, like us, our troops will continue to protect our freedoms that we sometimes take for granted. Some, unfortunately, will pay the ultimate sacrifice for defending this great country. Keep their families in your prayers.

If you thought that you had missed October's newsletter, you are good as we did not publish in October. Due to the RAD, we will not publish an October newsletter. I hope you made this past year's RAD on 19 Oct and, like you heard, our office has already started to lean forward for the 2024 Retiree Appreciation Day. Stay tuned for more in this Newsletter. From my family to yours, I wish all Retired Soldiers/Spouses and surviving spouses a very Happy Thanksgiving and talk with you in December.

Until next month,
Erik





**LTC (RET) BENJAMIN STRANGE
KMC RETIREE COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Twenty Favorite German Foods

Most of our Newsletter readers have been residing in Germany for 10 years or more and a few for over 50 years. I think all of us are well acquainted with German cuisine and probably have our favorite dishes to order when we dine out. I've compiled a list of the twenty best German dishes according to several surveys. Remember though, these are just opinions but I'm sure at least a few of the following are on your list as well. Anyway, here goes:

1. Königsberger klopse

Named after the former East Prussian capital of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad in Russia), this tasty dish of meatballs is a creamy white sauce with capers. It's especially popular in Berlin and Brandenburg .



2. Maultaschen

Maultaschen from Swabia, southwestern Germany, are a lot like ravioli but bigger. They are typically palm-sized, square pockets of dough with fillings that run the gamut from savory to sweet and meaty to vegetarian.

3. Labskaus

Labskaus is not the most visually appealing dish, but a delectable mess that represents the seafaring traditions of northern Germany like no other. Salted beef, onions, potatoes, and pickled beetroot are all mashed up like porridge and served with pickled gherkins and rollmops (see below). It has long been a favorite of Baltic and North Sea sailors. Labskaus has been touted as a hangover cure.

4. Sausages

No further explanation required except to mention there are over forty varieties of Bratwurst.



5. Currywurst

We've all probably eaten a Currywurst and pommes frites smothered in a mixture of ketchup and curry. A popular street food.

6. Döner kebab

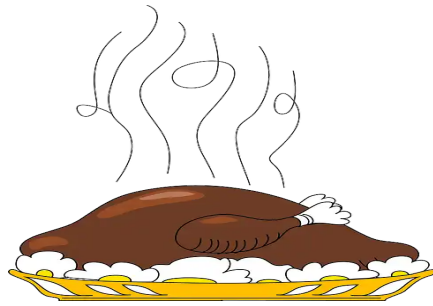
Döner kebab was introduced to Germany by Turkish immigrant workers coming here in the 1960s and '70s. Döner kebab stands or restaurants are ubiquitous in just about every town.

7. Schnitzel

Did you know that its origins are Italian?

8. Käsespätzle

Spätzle originally come from Baden-Württemberg. Essentially a sort of pasta, the noodles are a simple combination of eggs, flour, salt, and cheese. Traditionally served as a side to meat dishes or dropped into soups, it can be spiced up by adding cheese.



9. Rouladen

Rouladen is a delicious blend of bacon, onions, mustard, and pickles wrapped together in sliced beef or veal. This is a staple of family dinners and special occasions. They are usually served with potato dumplings, mashed potatoes, and pickled red cabbage. A red wine gravy is an absolute requirement to round off the dish. Rouladen is a popular dish in western Germany.

10. Sauerbraten

This pot roast takes quite a while to prepare. Before cooking, the meat is marinated for several days in a mixture of red wine vinegar, herbs, and spices. Drowned in a dark gravy made with beetroot sugar sauce and rye bread to balance the sour taste of the vinegar, sauerbraten is then traditionally served with red cabbage, potato dumplings or boiled potatoes.

11. Himmel un ääd

This is another messy and not necessarily optically appealing dish, but nevertheless definitely worth trying. Himmel und erde, or himmel un ääd in Cologne (both mean “Heaven and Earth”) is popular in the Rhineland, Westphalia and Lower



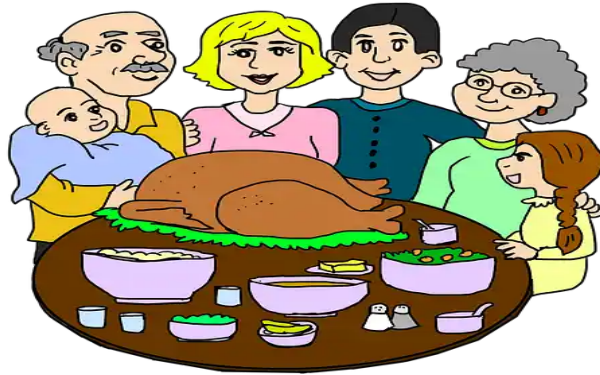
Saxony. The dish consists of black pudding, fried onions and mashed potatoes with apple sauce. It has been around since the 18th century, and these days is a beloved staple of the many Kölsch breweries and beer halls in Cologne, where it goes perfectly well with a glass or three of the popular beer.

(Think I will take a pass on this dish).

12. Zwiebelkuchen and Federweisser

October is the month to taste the first wines of the year in Germany, and a well-known culinary treat in the south is Federweisser und zwiebelkuchen (partially fermented young white wine and onion tart).

Federweisser literally means “feather white” and is made by adding yeast to grapes, allowing fermentation to proceed rapidly. Once the alcohol level reaches 4%, Federweisser is sold. This is a treat that is close to our area in most towns along the Mosel River.



13. Saumagen

Saumagen was made famous by former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl, who (like the dish) hailed from the western Palatinate region. Kohl loved Saumagen and served it to visiting dignitaries including 1980s British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and US Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. Somewhat resembling Scottish haggis, it is prepared by using the stomach of a pig (or an artificial one) as a casing for the stuffing made from pork, potatoes, carrots, onions, marjoram, nutmeg and white pepper.

14. Pinkel mit grünkohl

Pinkel mit grünkohl, or cooked kale and sausage, is a delicious winter comfort food eaten mainly in northwest Germany, especially the region around Oldenburg, Bremen and Osnabrück as well as East Frisia and Friesland. The cooked kale is mixed with mustard and bacon, and the “pinkel” sausage (named after the pinky) is made of bacon, groats of oats or barley, beef suet, pig lard, onions, and salt and pepper.



15. Spargel

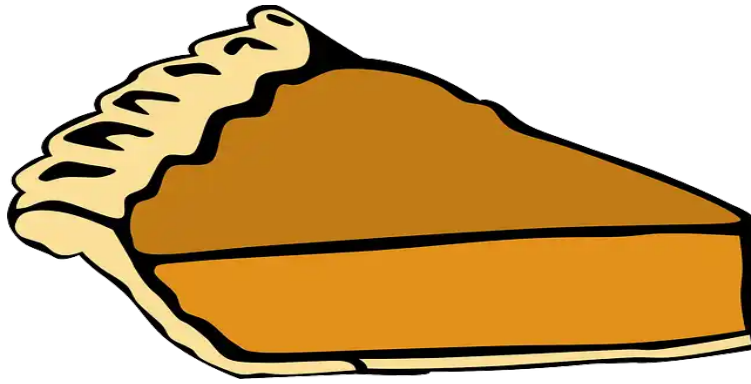
Germans are mad about white asparagus. As soon as harvest time arrives around mid-April, asparagus dishes appear on the menus of restaurants all over Germany, from Flensburg to Munich and Aachen to Frankfurt.

16. Reibekuchen

Reibekuchen or fried potato pancakes are one of my favorite German foods. My wife's Reibekuchen are delicious. The deal is that if I grate the potatoes, she will make them. Apple sauce is usually served with them. Fried potato pancakes are so popular in Germany that there are more than 40 names for them. Perhaps you have heard of them being called kartoffelpuffer, reibeplätzchen, reiberdatschi, and grumbeerpannekuche.

17. Rollmops

Rollmöpfe (plural) are pickled herring fillets, rolled around a savory filling like a pickled gherkin or green olive with pimento. Rollmöpfe are usually bought in ready-to-eat in jars and are eaten straight, without unrolling, or on bread.



18. Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte (Black Forest Cake)

Probably the most famous cake in Germany. An interesting note, the cake is not named after the Black Forest mountain range in southwestern Germany, but the specialty liquor of that region, Schwarzwälder kirsch, distilled from tart cherries.

19. Käsekuchen Cheesecake. No explanation needed.

20. Spaghettieis

This dessert is another immigrant legacy and is popular with German children. Spaghettieis is an ice cream dish made to look like a plate of spaghetti. Vanilla ice cream is pressed through a modified noodle press or potato ricer, giving it the appearance of spaghetti. It is then placed over whipped cream and topped with strawberry sauce representing the tomato sauce and white chocolate shavings for the Parmesan. Spaghetti ice cream was invented in 1969 by Dario Fontanella, son of an ice cream-making Italian immigrant in Mannheim, Germany. Thankfully for us and perhaps unfortunately for Dario, he didn't patent his spaghetti ice cream and it is today available at almost every ice cream parlor anywhere in Germany.



There you go. I've probably left off many other favorite foods and desserts.

Happy Dining!
Benny



**OVERSEAS MILITARY SERVICE COORDINATORS (OMSC)
RETURN**

This is fantastic and many of you have been asking when they will return. If you need to start a Disability Claim, follow up with a claim, or a Spouse of a Veteran who has passed this service is for you. See the poster on the next page.

VA Overseas Military Services Coordinators (OMSCs)



We're back, and ready to assist you with all your VA benefit questions!

Kleber Kaserne, Building 3213, Room 311, Kaiserslautern, Germany 67657

DSN: (314) 541-1408 / (314) 541-1415

Comm: +49 (0) 611-143-541-1408 / +49 (0) 611-143-541-1415

Normal Office Hours: 0900-1200, 1300-1500 M-F

***Subject to change due to special events and travel. Please check our online calendar for operating status, or to schedule an In-Person Appointment or Phone Conference

E-mail for Kaiserslautern, Ramstein, Wiesbaden, Baumholder, Sembach, Spangdahlem, Belgium, Netherlands:	Online Calendar:	E-mail for Stuttgart, Vilseck, Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels, Ansbach, Garmisch, Bavaria Region, Poland:
		
SCAN ME	SCAN ME	SCAN ME
OMSCGER1.VBAVACO@va.gov	https://calendly.com/va-omsc-ktown	OMSCGER3.VBAVACO@va.gov

Next time on Kleber, stop by and say Hello! They are here for you.



PRE-DEATH PROGRAM TITLE CHANGE!!!

The program formerly known as the Pre-Death Program has a new title. The new title is, “Next Chapter Preparation and Counseling Service (NCPC). It is still the same program which allows you and your Spouse to come into my office and complete all the documents needed for DFAS, VA, Consulate and Social Security; plus, a list of Funeral Homes that are in your postal code. The response has been tremendous and is still being well received with approx. 3 to 4 appointments per week. Call my office at 06111-43541-1021 for more information and your appointment. Take care of your spouse and don’t leave her unprepared. They will thank you for doing that.



SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN OPEN SEASON

As many of you know, the Survivor Benefit Plan has had their open Season since 01 Jan 2023. However, be aware that the Open season is due to expire on 31 Dec 2023. If you have wanted to dis-enroll or enroll in the SBP now is the time. For more information, give us a call.

RETIREE/ANNUITANT ANNUAL PAY INCREASE

If you haven't heard, Military retirees and disabled veterans will see their monthly checks increase by 3.2% for 2024, thanks to the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). What it breaks down to is: For 2024, retired military members will see a \$32 increase for each \$1000.00 of military pension that you receive.

If you are a Surviving Spouse who is receiving Survivor Benefit Plan payments, you will also see your monthly checks rising 3.2 %.

If you are receiving VA Disability payments your checks will rise \$5.31 per month with a 10 percent rating and \$115.90 for those rated at 100 percent without dependents.

If you are also receiving Dependency and Indemnity



Compensation you will also have a 3.2% pay increase. Start looking for the new amounts in your upcoming checks. If you don't have Direct Deposit, perhaps now is a good time to sign up for it and you will never have to worry about your paper check turning up missing. Call us for more information.



JUST FOR RETIREES RADIO SHOW

The radio show that is made just for you, the Retiree. We are live on the air every 2nd Friday from 1600-1630 and every 4th Monday from 1500-1530. The next show will be

27 November from 1500-1530. We would normally have a show on the 2nd Friday which is Veteran's Day, and our offices will be closed. If you have a topic you wish to have discussed, please send me that topic so we can address your concerns.

2023 RETIREE APPRECIATION DAY (RAD)

Another RAD is in the books and I want to thank all of you who sent in your AAR Comments. We received about 4 pages of good, bad and improvements needed. Our 2024 RAD committee will be taking a close look at those comments and will try to implement as many as we can. For the 2024 RAD, the US Army Garrison Retirement Services Offices will be the lead agency. We look forward to sharing the details after Jan 2024. Keep submitting ideas as this is for YOU (Retiree, Spouse and Surviving Spouse).

DO YOU KNOW WE HAVE TWO OFFICES TO SERVE YOU?

We do have two offices in which to serve you, our Retirees, Spouses and surviving Spouses. I am in Baumholder the 2nd and 4th Thursdays from 0900-1500 and by appointment. For all of you who live in the BMC area, I encourage you to come visit us in Building 8660 (Baumholder Military Personnel Division). Of course, we are still located on Kleber Kaserne in the Central Processing Facility, Building 3245, Room 217. Stop by and say hello.



VETERAN'S DAY 2023

Veteran's Day 2023 is coming up on 10 NOV. Take a minute to reach out to a battle buddy, friend or one of our many Active Duty Soldiers and say Thank you. Less than 1 percent of us raised our hand to defend our country and can be called a Veteran. Happy Veteran's Day to all of our Vets, Current Active Duty and Retirees. We salute you.



BATTLE BUDDIES REUNITING

Check out Roll Call every Saturday morning and Monday evening at Café Rhema in Landstuhl. This is a place where it is Military friendly with treats, coffee, relaxing or just getting reacquainted with a Battle Buddy from previous service. There are many other services offered for Roll Call. Check it out!



NOVEMBER DATES TO REMEMBER

04 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1000

06 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1700

10 NOVEMBER: VETERAN'S DAY

11 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1000

13 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1700

16 NOVEMBER: BAUMHOLDER OFFICE 0900-1500

18 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1000

20 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1700

23 NOVEMBER: THANKSGIVING DAY OUR OFFICE CLOSED

24 NOVEMBER: OFFICE CLOSED

25 NOVEMBER: ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA, LANDSTUHL 1000

27 NOVEMBER: JUST FOR RETIREES RADIO SHOW 1500

ROLL CALL CAFÉ RHEMA LANDSTUHL 1700

30 NOVEMBER: ARTICLES FOR DECEMBER NEWSLETTER DUE.



SEE YOU NEXT MONTH!

Please feel free to contact our office at any time with questions, issues, or concerns. We are here 24 hours a day/7 day a week for

YOU, THE RETIREE!!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!!!!!!!





CONTACT INFORMATION

Your Retirement Services Officers for USAG Rheinland-Pfalz:

Erik Thomsen/Dale Vogel

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Kaiserslautern Military Community

Cell: 0611 143 541 1021

To report a death, call: 0160 1085 359

Email: usarmy.rheinland-pfalz.id-europe.mbx.garrison-retiree-svcs@army.mil

Webpage: <https://home.army.mil/rheinland-pfalz/index.php/about/directorates-support-offices/directorate-human-resources-dhr/post-retirement-services-program>