

Created by: Debra C. Argen
first floor (Lunch)

first floor restaurant in **Berlin, Germany** has a **Michelin-star**, a graceful ambience and award-winning **Chef Matthias Buchholz** creating dazzling cuisine.



Elegant is how I would best describe **first floor** with its floral design on the ceiling, Prussian blue banquettes and café-au-lait table linens with a fleur de lis pattern adorned with cymbidium orchids in low cobalt bowls, tall tapers in crystal candlesticks and silver salt and pepper mills. The restaurant has gleaming polished wood with wraparound windows sumptuously draped with Prussian blue and café-au-lait fabric, which offer a view of Berlin with exotic arrangements of birds of paradise in tall cobalt vases lining the expansive window ledges.



In March 2006, Edward F. Nesta and I had lunch at first floor, where sipping aperitifs of Ruinart Champagne while looking at the menu and it seemed to be most indulgent, and for that I am very glad; we like to indulge ourselves in the pleasure of taking the time occasionally for a relaxing leisurely lunch.

When our waiter asked us our water choice, the standard answer of sparkling or still won't suffice, as there are 24 water selections from seven countries on the menu.

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We began with an Amuse Bouche of Kohlrabi soup served in a demitasse cup, Lobster mousse served on an Asian spoon, Crayfish ravioli on a bed of chopped asparagus and a mixture of Oxtail, lentils and carrots with a light oil served in a small bowl. The china was stark white as a blank canvas for Chef Matthias' creativity, and was placed on gold charger plates with fleur de lis design. The restaurant pays attention to the small details, with the staff wearing white gloves when replacing the silver.



Sommelier, Gunnar Tietz, paired our appetizer of Terrine of codfish with a 2004 Spatlese Stiegler Shriner Wintelberg from Baden which is the warmest area in Germany for wine making, and is a family-owned vineyard. The wine made of Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc was made in the Loire style and was spicy on the palate with a creamy, long finish. The terrine was gorgeously presented, and was made with orange and yellow peppers, sundried tomatoes and codfish sat on a bed of strips of roasted red, orange and yellow peppers, black olives and diced palm hearts and was crowned with frisée and tiny diced purple potatoes, tomatoes and green pepper with black and red dots painted on the plate, and was served with a mustard and herb sauce.



We continued with Ravioli with smoked pike-perch served with horseradish ice cream and beetroot crème, that for me really stood out as an exceptionally appealing recipe, with a tender ravioli filled with smoked pike perch presented in a small dish on a bed of tiny diced cucumber and topped with tiny diced apples, another small bowl held a dollop of horseradish ice cream that brought out the extensive flavor of the fish, and a cup of deep rose colored beetroot crème calmed the palate after the excitement of the ice cream.

I took a moment between courses to look around the dining room which has banquettes in the corners of the room, with the banquettes in the front having curved niches that are decorated with awards and trophies. In the center of the room there are two curved banquettes that are separated by etched glass with a floral design to provide intimate seating areas. The center banquettes are flanked with curved wood bars that feature premium brandies on one side and grappas on the other. Orchid plants in footed planters add to the overall ambience of the room. There are tables with upholstered chairs placed at spacious intervals to afford each diner privacy.

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Our next course was Codfish wrapped in bok choy, drizzled with a curry sauce and served with noodles, aubergine, two stuffed mushrooms and a lemongrass sauce served in a demitasse cup, paired with a 1999 Frunzar Reisling, Bremmer Calmont from the Mosel area with 12.5% alcohol, and Rare Venison with cranberries with sliced dumplings paired with a 2003 Von der Mark Soätburgunder Pinot Noir with tobacco, spice, black cherry and chocolate on the nose, balanced tannins on the palate, and had a deliciously long finish.



To begin our dessert course, Chef Matthias sent us a pre-dessert of a small chocolate cake with chocolate mousse and fig filling, that was wrapped in chocolate, had a chocolate shell and was served with a chocolate foam, that was pure chocolate decadence and heavenly. Dessert continued with a rhubarb and green tea soup served with a mousse like cake with red raspberries and a green tea ice cream garnished with mint, but for me, the chocolate dessert was a real knockout. Our dessert wine was a 1983 Kanzemer Altenberg Spätlese, Guton Borner grape, Weighet Kanzemerberg, which had a harvest gold color, a light earthy nose and was lightly sweet on the palate.



As a dessert finale, our waiter pushed a trolley laden with sweet delicacies which included petit fours, blood orange jellies, truffles with rum, many cakes and of course, we had to sample a few of them as we relaxed with cups of espresso.

Afterwards, we toured their 12,000-bottle wine cellar with Sommelier Gunnar Tietz, who told us that the oldest bottle in the cellar is an 1891 Lafite Rothschild. Their extensive and most impressive cellar features 22 consecutive vintages from Mouton-Rothschild, 3 bottles of 1945 Mouton Rothschild priced at 5,000 euros, a 15-liter 1988 Le Montrachet Domaine Pomerol priced at 18,000 euros, and a 12-liter 1996 Lafite-Margaux. In 2005, first floor received an award for the Best Wine Menu.

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In addition to their red wine cellar, they also have a small white wine and champagne cellar. For Gunnar Tietz, who has been a sommelier for 15 years, wine is his hobby and his job. He spends his free time learning and drinking wine. He said that after 10 years he thought he had learned a lot about wine, now after 15 years he modestly says that he knows a little about wine. He travels around the world in his quest to continue learning about wine.

His vision is that wine is a medium that goes with friendship, like a ball going back and forth, combining wine with cooking and family. This Chef/Sommelier also likes to cook and prefers German Rieslings and German Pinot Noirs. He ended our wine cellar tour by saying, "There are good wines all over, but you must find them," and judging by their wine cellar, he has.

When we returned to the dining room, Chef Matthias Buchholz took time out of his day for an interview and to share his recipe for the fabulous Ravioli with smoked pike-perch served with horseradish ice cream and beetroot crème, which you can read about in the **Chefs' Recipes** section in **English** and **German**.

first floor

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Please read the articles on Berlin in the [Restaurants](#) and [Chefs' Recipes](#) sections, as well as articles in the [Destinations](#), Hotels and Resorts, [Music Scene](#) and [Arts and Antiques](#) sections.

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