

DINING

THE OLDEST RESTAURANT

GERMANY

The Oldest Restaurant In The World

by MARK STACHIEW



... The historic building that houses the inn is nearly a thousand years old...

THIS PHOTO Gaststätte Röhrl Eilsbrunn.



WHERE ON EARTH

Many restaurants claim to be the oldest in the world, but Muk Röhrl proudly points to a Guinness Book of World Records certificate hanging on the wall of one of the dining rooms of the Bavarian guesthouse that his family has continuously operated since 1658 to prove that his really is.

"A lot of restaurants say they are older than us, but it's usually because of the age of their building. We have been operating longer than any of them with 11 generations of my family running this restaurant," said innkeeper Röhrl as he welcomed us to the Gaststätte Röhrl in the German village of Eilsbrunn, which is 15 minutes away from Regensburg, a popular stop for cruises along the Danube River.

Clad in traditional lederhosen, the affable innkeeper explained to us how after he took over the restaurant from his uncle in 2006, a friend told him he had seen a television report about a Madrid restaurant from 1725 claiming to be the world's oldest. Röhrl was annoyed because he knew his inn's restaurant was much older and he decided he should do something to have it officially recognized which is why he reached out to Guinness.

Fortunately, a distant relative of his had written a 150-page chronicle about the history of his family which included reports of the Röhrls operating the inn generations ago. That paper trail was sufficient to garner Gaststätte Röhrl the record in 2010 as the world's oldest »



Muk Röhl shows off his inn's Guinness Book of World Records certificate.



The Historic Sausage Kitchen of Regensburg also claims that it is the world's oldest restaurant.

«permanently opened inn and while the Madrid restaurant is still technically recognized by Guinness as the world's oldest, Röhl says his inn's dining room is obviously older.

Today, he welcomes guests for dinner at his inn seven days a week with additional lunch seating on the weekends. Their biergarten under the chestnut trees is especially popular in the summer and they host many wedding parties throughout the year.

The historic building that houses the inn is nearly a thousand years old and much of the interior is furnished with pieces from the 19th century. Ceiling and doorways are lower than you'd see today, but Röhl explained how they update the traditional Bavarian fare on their menu to satisfy modern tastes.

"Once, for a TV show, we cooked a dish from a recipe from the 1800s and it had so much vinegar and strange spices, it was terrible so we changed it with techniques and flavours that we would use today and it was so much better," he says.

People come to his restaurant not just for the novelty of eating in the world's oldest, but for the quality of their menu items like *schäuferl*, which is roast pork with crackling from the shoulder served with potato dumpling and sauerkraut. You could also sample their *weißwurstfrühstück*, the Bavarian white veal sausages that tradition dictates can only be consumed before noon. They are typically served with pretzel and mild mustard along with wheat beer and are so tender that you can cut them without a knife.

Röhl recommended we try their schnitzel because it's unlike any served elsewhere in Germany.

"In every Bavarian restaurant, you can get a schnitzel, but we wanted to have our own creation so we created *pretzelschnitzel* which uses sweet mustard, horseradish and pretzel crumbs," he explains.

His mother, who is in her 70s, welcomes guests and shows them to their tables, but Röhl boasted that she is also a fantastic baker which is why her *apfelstrudel* recipe is the number one seller on their dessert menu.



Gaststätte Röhl's unique schnitzel recipe uses sweet mustard, horseradish and pretzel crumbs.



The Historic Sausage Kitchen of Regensburg's dining room is tiny, so most guests eat on tables outdoors.

The inn's guest rooms have been closed since the 1960s, but they have since been turned into a sort of Röhl family museum where you can get a tour to see the things they have collected over the centuries and learn more about their history.

Many people who come to Eilsbrunn, where Röhl's inn is located, arrive from nearby Regensburg, a medieval city which actually claims one of its own restaurants as the world's oldest, although it doesn't have a Guinness certificate to prove it.

The Historic Sausage Kitchen of Regensburg, whose formal name in German is the Historische Wurstküche zu Regensburg, says that it is the oldest continuously open public restaurant in the world. More colloquially known as the Wurstküchl, this restaurant serves thousands of tasty sausages to locals and visitors throughout the year in the shadow of a stone bridge that has spanned the Danube River since 1146.

Archeologists have found evidence that a building has existed in that spot ever since the bridge's construction and likely was a place that fed workers who built the bridge, but also those in later centuries when the nearby St Peter Cathedral was being built.

The current building, however, only dates back to the 17th century, the same time frame that the Gaststätte Röhl in Eilsbrunn first opened. The restaurant is tiny, so most guests eat on tables outdoors. While you can order traditional Bavarian dishes like *saure zipfel* (bratwurst cooked in vinegar), *krautwickel* (cabbage rolls) and *sauerbraten* (pot roast) most people come for their renowned

sausages which come in portions of six, eight or ten, along with sauerkraut and mustard.

No matter which of these restaurants is really the oldest in the world, what has kept them both in business for so long is their desire to preserve local traditions not only of food, but also of hospitality. T&T



Gaststätte Röhl

www.gaststaette-roehrl.de

Historic Sausage Kitchen of Regensburg

www.wurstkuechl.de/?lang=en

MARK STACHIEW is a Montreal-based writer who has loved to travel ever since his parents took him on epic cross-country road trips as a child. He believes travel can be a force for good in the world and hopes his stories inspire others to encounter different cultures in order to gain a greater understanding of how we are all connected.