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Your Just Desserts— Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum

A family find in the attic serves as the basis for a museum dedicated to the history of the German penchant for beautiful sweets.

BY KAY LAWRENCE

Photographs courtesy Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum

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Kitzingen am Main is a pleasant little city on the Main River in the German region of Franconia. Established more than one thousand years ago, it's a major wine-production center that today has a population of about twenty thousand.

One of Kitzingen's claims to fame is that the first German wine regulatory law originated there in 1482. And tourists still travel to Kitzingen to taste the excellent local wines. One of the oldest wine cellars in Germany is located in a Benedictine cloister there, which also houses the largest wooden wine barrel in Lower Franconia.

Kitzingen also boasts the Deutsches Fastnacht Museum (German Fasching, or Carnival, Museum), with a fascinating and colorful collection of more than forty-five hundred items relating to the carnival season in Germany, including costumes, masks, and posters dating from the sixteenth century to the present.

However, if you love to eat sweets—and want to learn

more about pastry-and-confection-making in this region—head to the Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum at Marktstrasse 26 in the downtown pedestrian zone. (*Conditorei*—with a “c”—is sometimes a south German and Austrian spelling of *Konditorei*, meaning “pastry and confectionery shop.”) The museum is located within the historic “Poganietz-Haus,” a tall, half-timbered house dating from the sixteenth century, one of the oldest and most beautiful buildings in Kitzingen.

This privately owned pastry-and-confectionery museum has an interesting history of its own. The building it occupies was originally constructed in 1579 to 1580 for a Kitzingen businessman. In 1722, it was sold to a *Lebküchler*, or gingerbread baker. (Back then, the German professional guilds distinguished between the occupations of “gingerbread bakers,” who sweetened their spice cakes with honey, and “sugar bakers,” who made cakes, pastries, and confections sweetened with sugar.) In 1831, Kitzingen's first *Conditorei* (pastry shop) was opened in the building, selling sweet baked goods and confections. And, in 1893, the house was purchased by the Poganietz family. The five-story building remained the site of a *Conditorei* continuously from 1831 until 1937. In 1994, descendants of the first Poganietz owner began restoring the “Poganietz-Haus” to its original sixteenth-century beauty, a project that was completed two years later.

The Poganietz family had owned the house for nearly a century when, in 1981, someone cleaning out the attic



stumbled over several large, dust-covered boxes that had been stored there for more than one hundred years. To the delight of the building's owner, himself a professional pastry chef, the boxes contained artifacts that had belonged to the earlier professional confectioners who had lived, worked, and sold their wares in that same location. The historic treasure trove of two thousand items, some dating back to the late 1700s, included intricately carved wooden molds for shaping gingerbread, *Springerle*, and *Spekulatius* cookies; rolling pins and cookie cutters; marzipan, chocolate, and ice cream molds; cookbooks, inventories of ingredients, and handwritten recipes. Some of the most valuable artifacts were sent to the Bavarian National Museum in Munich for restoration, before being exhibited in the Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum today.

Since that fortuitous discovery in the "Poganietz-Haus" attic, the museum's collection has grown to three thousand two hundred pieces. Still a private collection, focusing primarily on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is said to constitute the most complete overview of a single confectionery business in Germany.

You'll have no difficulty recognizing the "Poganietz-Haus" from its handsome half-timbered facade. Today, the Rösner Backstube, a modern *Bäckerei-Conditorei* owned by a Würzburg-based company, is located on the ground floor, with a large glass case displaying freshly made breads, cakes, tortes, pastries, and other confections for sale to the public. Upstairs on the first floor, you can enjoy your

Opposite far left: Exterior of the Conditorei-Museum. **Opposite left:** A very intricate cake featuring marzipan decorations. **Top left:** The actual molds used in the preparation of the cake. **Top center:** Two-part ceramic cake molds for baking three-dimensional Easter lamb cakes. **Above left and center:** Museum items in their display cases. **Above right:** Eighteenth-century wooden cookie mold depicting a horse and fancily dressed rider.

BAKERS OR CONFECTIONERS?

In English, we use the terms "confections and confectioners" to mean "sweets, candies, and the people who make them," and the term "baker" to mean "someone who makes breads, cakes, pastries, and so on, cooked in an oven." In German, however, the term *Konditor* (*Conditorei*, confectioner) has come to include professional makers of several categories of sweets—candies, ice creams, and pastries (cakes, tortes, cookies, pies)—as distinguished from a *Bäcker* (baker), whose products (breads, buns) are primarily non-sweet and are made with yeast. Formerly, a *Konditorei* sold only sweet products, whereas a *Bäckerei* sold only breads. Today in Germany, businesses identified as a *Bäckerei-Konditorei* or a *Backstube* make and sell both kinds of baked goods. And today's modern categories of *Konditor* and *Bäcker* are also a simplification of the earlier professional guild categories that, at different times in history, regulated which people could use only honey in their products, which could use sugar, and which could bake only certain kinds of products, such as butter cakes or yeast-raised breads.



Kaffee und Kuchen (coffee and cake) in an elegant, cozy, Viennese-style café. And, in nice weather, you can linger over the same sweet treats at the sidewalk café in front of the building.

Dozens of artifacts from the Poganietz family's collection are displayed in twenty-four glass cases located in five rooms on the two floors above the pastry shop-café. Have you ever seen a completely white, scale model of a Baroque castle and garden—made out of meringue? Or an eighteenth-century-style table decoration (made by a master confectioner in 1996) of an ornate temple-fountain, constructed from a mixture of sugar, gelatin, and water?

My own favorite exhibits are the intricately carved, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wooden molds for imprinting raised designs on honey-spice cookies such as *Lebkuchen* and *Spekulatius*, on dainty white *Springerle* cookies, and on pliable marzipan, a rich, ivory-colored paste made of ground almonds, sugar, and egg white, sometimes flavored with rosewater.

The designs on these beautiful molds range from the political (a double-headed eagle, symbol of the state; a knight in full armor on horseback; a noble family's coat of arms) to the spiritual (the Holy Family; the Christ Child in swaddling clothes; an Easter lamb, symbol of the sacrificed Lamb of God). Secular designs were popular, too, from hearts, flowers, and animals to fairy-tale characters and ladies wearing the latest fashions. Molds for edible educational confections display all the letters of the alphabet, whereas others depict the different professions of the era.

Other glass cases in the museum contain ceramic and metal molds for baking three-dimensional lamb cakes for Easter; wooden and metal molds for shaping small figures out of marzipan, fondant, or wax; metal molds for choco-

Above left: Really nice place to take a break and reflect on the exhibit. **Above right:** Carved wooden cookie mold from the eighteenth century, with a painted plaster model of a white Springerle Easter lamb cookie shaped in that mold.

lates and ice creams (including forms shaped like fruits, Easter eggs, and Easter rabbits); and copper and ceramic molds for turban-shaped cakes.

For the casual visitor, the Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum is a small, intimate set of interesting exhibits that you can easily visit in half an hour, leaving plenty of time for sampling the modern *Backstube's* tempting breads and pastries after you finish touring the museum. Serious researchers will want to directly contact the museum's owner and founder, Walter Poganietz, to ask about gaining access to the extensive archives in this private collection (info@conditorei-museum.de). But whether you're a home baker or a professional, you're certain to learn more about the German *Conditorei's* art and craft at this interesting little museum tucked away on two floors of the "Poganietz-Haus" in the heart of Kitzingen. (Note: The exhibits are labeled only in German.)

Kitzingen Conditorei-Museum

Marktstrasse 26, 97318 Kitzingen am Main; Telephone: 09321-92-94-35; www.conditorei-museum.de; info@conditorei-museum.de.

Open Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Entry fee: €1.50. **GL**

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