

Bavaria's Best In Michigan

By Susan R. Pollak

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When Michigan residents hear the name Frankenmuth, they smack their lips. This German community, 85 miles north of Detroit, is synonymous with good cooking, which has drawn visitors for many generations.

Though she's often found in her restaurant kitchen and rarely takes a bow for her contributions, Dorothy Zehnder (pictured center) numbers among those most responsible for Frankenmuth's well-earned, century-old culinary reputation.

For more than 45 years, this trim whirling dervish has worked behind the scenes at the Bavarian Inn, one of two Frankenmuth eateries that members of the Zehnder family operate. As the kitchen manager, Dorothy creates recipes, while supervising staffs of 110 in the winter and 200 in the summer.

Dorothy grew up with German recipes. She and her husband, William ("We call him 'Tiny'" she says, laughing about the nickname that's stuck with her

With her German specialties, Dorothy Zehnder nurtures the food traditions of her heritage.

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husband since childhood), were raised in homes where they spoke only German. Their great-grandparents settled in Michigan.

"If we have 100 recipes at the restaurant, I would say 80 percent come from our childhoods," says Dorothy, who retains a slight accent.

She expertly stirs a vat of custard and notes with pride, "I made this at home with my mother." As a farm girl, Dorothy cooked with her mother and sister.

Before a dish earns a place on the menu at the restaurant, the recipe must meet Dorothy's standards. Recently, she tinkered with a stroganoff at home, remembering that her three kids refused repeated samplings of her creations. But Tiny, his wife's biggest fan, applauds her efforts: "He said, 'You've got to put that on the menu,'" notes Dorothy. Frankenmuth visitors will be glad she did.



RICHARD HIRSHEN

Dorothy Zehnder with her grandchildren and Apple Kuchen.

Apple Kuchen

Dorothy used her mother's recipe for this German apple/cream cheese pie

- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 3-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and chopped apples
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and thinly sliced apples

- 2 tablespoons apple juice
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine

1. In a bowl, combine 1/2 cup butter, 1/4 cup sugar and 1/4 teaspoon vanilla. Gradually beat in 1 1/4 cups flour. Press crumbly mixture onto bottom and up sides of a 9-inch pie plate. Bake in 350° oven for 5 minutes. Cool.

2. Beat cream cheese, 1/4 cup sugar and 1/2 teaspoon vanilla till combined. Beat in egg. Pour over crust.

3. Mix apples, juice, 1/4 cup sugar, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice. Spoon over cheese. Bake in 350° oven for 45 minutes.

4. Combine oats, 1/3 cup flour and 1/3 cup brown sugar. Cut in 1/4 cup butter or margarine to resemble coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over pie. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes more. Makes 1 pie. ■

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