

Curate's eggs in a city where they live to eat

Nicholas Lander visits Munich and reports on two meals that were very good in parts

A poor first-half certainly got our meal at Tantris, one of Munich's most respected and long-established restaurants, off to a disappointing start but the hour we had to wait for our first course allowed plenty of time to admire its exceptional interior.

Purpose-built more than 35 years ago to provide a restaurant with adjacent car parking, then a rarity in the city, Tantris is located directly opposite a police station in the charming Schwabing district (described by a taxi driver as "our Greenwich Village" because of its shops and local artists). The interior decoration is almost entirely orange. The large plastic lampshades are orange, the tall totems dotted around are orange, the walls are orange, and the carpet material that covers the ceiling (yes, really) is orange.

This design is odd, 1970s, but highly memorable and extremely effective in that, without any piped music, the acoustics are excellent. One other consequence of the fact that it was specifically built as a restaurant is that every table has its own small service table next to it for the wine, water bottles and any decanters, an attribute my restaurateur friend described as "something that would be on every waiter's wish list".

That we had time to study all this in detail was because although the restaurant had taken our reservation that

afternoon they had already two large tables booked, one for about 25 and the other for about 15, and our order obviously got stuck behind theirs. It was somewhat galling as we were finally finishing after 11pm to see the chef, Hans Haas, walking in to receive a large round of applause from one of these parties.

Several of Haas's dishes were, however, very good. Our meal got off to a terrific start with an amuse-bouche of a small fillet of warm trout with char caviar and a horseradish mousse.

The smoked pigeon broth with goose liver dumplings that eventually followed was good, too, although the breast of quail with juniper cream had been cooked too hastily after my complaint about the delay and was still raw in part.

Best of all were two dishes of very different styles. The first was pieces of lobster served with segments of blood orange, endive and pine nuts that showed innovation while a dessert of white cheese and sour cream dumplings with sour cream ice-cream was an excellent rendition of this classic Bavarian dish.

In a city where food prices seem relatively low, Tantris's menu prices are high, certainly approaching London prices, and rather random – the breast of quail at €28, for example, is only €8 cheaper than the lobster.

The contrast between Tan-



Orange appeal: Hans Haas is chef at Tantris (above) in Munich. Below: Haas' smoked eel baked in ciabatta



tris and the other Munich restaurant where we ate, and where the second half of the meal was disappointing, could not have been greater. Ederer, named after chef/proprietor Karl Ederer, is located in the centre of town and occupies an imposing room that was once part of a banking hall. Its proportions are large and gracious and the four tall windows offer lots of natural light into a room which Ederer has furnished with some fascinating art he has acquired over his years as a chef.

Most impressive is a large still life of an empty dining table and chairs set in a private house; a lone diner sat under this still life, seemingly very content. The centre of the room is taken up with an antique drinks trolley, a venerable carving trolley, a well stocked cheese trolley and a table for wine glasses and service.

Ederer's cooking style is

quintessentially Bavarian and was, initially, impressive. We began with a bread soup with chives interlaced with blood sausage that, with a glass of beer, convinced me that I was in Munich. Then I was directed

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by my friends to a dish that incorporated Grünkohl, a type of cabbage that comes from the north of Germany and is only picked when the ground is frozen. Cooked here in goose fat and served alongside some venison with cranberries, it was delicious. But the rest of the main

course, our dessert and the rather cool manner in which we were seen out of the restaurant were disappointing.

It was then that my friend Gert, a proud Munich resident and formerly a strategist with Siemens, came to the rescue. Walking us through the streets, he explained that from November to March was his favourite time to be in this city before it was invaded by tourists.

And it was quite hard to imagine just how busy it must be during Oktoberfest with 7m visitors over 16 days or, as he put it, "the equivalent of a Woodstock on our streets every day".

To show what it was possible to enjoy without crowds, he took me to several of the city's haunts: Schumann's, one of the few remaining coffee houses since the arrival of Starbucks and the local San Francisco Coffee House; the famous delicatessen Dall-

mayr, next to the more modern household goods store Manufactum; Haxnbauer, with its rotisserie loaded that afternoon with 14 of its speciality, whole pork knuckles; and finally the Hofbräuhaus, Weisses Brauhaus and Ratskeller under the Town Hall dating back to the 16th century, all beer halls serving copious amounts of food.

Cheek by jowl in this compact city are the more modern Cosmo Grill; an extraordinary chocolate shop called Stancsics at the back of the Bayerischer Hof; and a string of restaurants built up by Alfons Schuhbeck which now includes a really exciting spice shop.

Gert's only disappointment as a keen cook came when he discovered that Helmut Lehner, renowned for his handmade knives, had finally given up his physical shop for an internet presence. Gert had one more place he wanted me to see which involved a 15-minute taxi ride to a site opposite the 1972 Olympic Stadium.

Over the past decade, BMW Welt has risen to fill the skyline and provide buyers with an appropriate place to take delivery of their car as soon as it rolls off the production line.

With commendable foresight, five years ago BMW began to design and build two restaurants, a café and a coffee shop with their eventual partner, the Austrian company DO&CO in one corner of the building.

The level of comfort and finish is exemplary and although time only allowed for an aperitif it is here I would like to return to first on my next visit to a city whose citizens do seem to live to eat.

Musts in Munich

www.tantris.de
www.restaurant-ederer.de
www.stancsics.de
www.schuhbeck.de
www.bmw-welt.de
www.dallmayr.de

Helmut Lehner's knives:
www.feinste-stahlwaren.de