

Someone's In The Kitchen

Come Hungry. Be Prepared to Sing

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**
Special to CASA

WE ALWAYS SAY THAT WE ARE BIG FANS OF REGIONAL COOKING.

Brummis, on upper State Street, is a real treat for us. We have

both spent a lot of time in Germany and Austria. One of our favorite things about that part of the world is the cooking. Brummis is the real thing. It is the family restaurant you find down a side street in Berlin. The food, the folk, and the experience is exactly what we cherish about our visits to Germany.

When she was a child growing up in East Berlin, Veronika Brumm loved to watch Western television. One of the shows that was very popular was one known in Germany as *California Clan*. We would know the show from its American television title of *Santa Barbara*. Veronika loved it. There was something glamorous and wonderful about Santa Barbara. It was full of a beauty that was not to be found in East Berlin in the days when The Wall still stood between East and West. She dreamed that some day she would visit that

mythical town. But, stuck in the Eastern Sector, there wasn't much that she could do. She worked in her family's restaurant, studied economics, and eventually got a job working in the insurance business. And then, in 1989, on November 9th, something wonderful happened: The Wall came down. Possibilities opened up that had never existed before. Veronika and her husband, Ruediger, began to save their money to spend on a dream.

In February of 2008, Veronika, Ruediger, and their daughter Manuela arrived in San Francisco, with the aim of starting a restaurant. They drove South, and, at the insistence of Manuela, they detoured into Santa Barbara. By August of 2008, they had signed papers on their dream: a restaurant in Santa Barbara.

The restaurant itself is very typical of what one finds all over Berlin: spartan decoration, white tablecloths, and overall simplicity. The food here is a treat. It is exactly what you get in everyday restaurants in Germany. It is all from Veronika's grandmother's recipes from the

family restaurant in Berlin.

The Kartoffelpuffer appetizer (potato pancakes with applesauce) is a must. It is so crisp and crunchy that you will want to order a second one. The spatzle, a handmade German noodle, is made every day in the restaurant, and is more like a little flat dumpling than the Italian pasta we are all used to. It is so marvelously flavorful, that we couldn't get enough of it. The sauerkraut, red cabbage, potato salad, and all of the vegetable dishes are made by Manuela. A vegetarian, Manuela makes them tasty and true to the family recipes. The bratwurst, bockwurst, and other sausages are grilled up until the skin crackles in your mouth. The goulash (goulash) is not as hot and spicy as its Hungarian cousin, but it is rich and savory. The schnitzel, a great German favorite, comes in pork or chicken. It is lightly breaded and fried until it is as crisp as can be. Then, it is smothered in a variety of traditional sauces.

The fun begins when you are greeted by a tiny firecracker of a woman, with bright red hair, black leather lederhosen, and the most amazing stockings. This is Veronika. For a few lucky months out of the year, you might also be greeted by her best friend from Berlin, Jutta. Jutta is very tall, with bright blonde hair, and a charming tendency to wear

dirndl dresses. No matter who greets you, you are whisked over to a table, and given help with understanding the menu. Order a beer on tap. Be aware that a short beer is a one-pint glass. A large beer is about a litre, and naturally comes in the gargantuan steins that you get when you are in Germany.

Portions here are large. When the plates arrive, you will be taken aback by the size. You will be astounded when the ladies, with sweet motherly charm, insist that you finish your plate. We were even spoon fed the last drop of applesauce on our starter course! Another gigantic plate of food will then arrive, and once again, you will find the prospect of finishing the platter daunting.

In the middle of the meal, spot on 7:30, the music comes up, and everybody is given sheet music for a sing-along. This is how they do it in Berlin, and we are delighted that the Brumm family insisted upon bringing the tradition with them. The hospitality and fun is irresistible. You walk in a stranger. You walk out as part of the family, with a very large bag of leftovers. Just like back home.

Brummis the German Taste is located at 3130 State Street and is open for dinner from 5-9pm Mon to Sat. Reach them at 687-5916.

Amanda and Richard Payatt combine their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.



Veronika Brumm, Owner (right) with her best friend from Berlin, Jutta

