

Cultural Differences between the USA and Germany

(2) Restaurants and Dining

USA	GERMANY
Wait to be seated by host/hostess.	Seat yourself. More...
Automatic glass of water (with ice) except in drought-stricken areas	No water unless you order it (in a bottle); no ice cubes More...
Soft drinks are served with lots of ice.	Soft drinks usually served without ice.
Tip is left on the table or added to credit card bill.	Tip is given directly to food-server; credit cards not always accepted. More...
Sharing a restaurant table with strangers is rare.	Sharing a table (longer, family-style tables) is common when a restaurant is crowded. More...
Most restaurants are non-smoking. Many US states have made all restaurants and bars non-smoking.	Smoking is still more common, but Germany has improved a great deal in this area. Even Oktoberfest began banning smoking in 2010.
Steak houses, serving US corn-fed beef are very popular.	German steak houses (Asado, Block House, Maredo, etc.) usually serve Argentinian beef. High-end steak houses like Ruth's Chris or Mortons are rare.
Many kinds of international cuisine and restaurants are available.	More limited selection of world cuisine. Good Asian, Indian, Greek and Italian restaurants.
Mexican restaurants are common and very popular.	German "Mexican" restaurants serve cuisine that is not really Mexican.
McDonald's, Burger King, Subway and other fast food restaurants are ubiquitous.	In addition to McDonald's, Burger King and Subway, Turkish <i>Döner Kabap</i> , a sort of shish kebab in pita bread, is the "German" fast food.
Your food-server will gladly put leftovers in a box to take home.	Asking to take leftovers home from a restaurant is less common.
In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, the sweet-and-sour sauce is colored red. There is always hot mustard.	In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, the sweet-and-sour sauce is not colored red. There is never any hot mustard.
In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, chopsticks are sometimes on the table.	In a Chinese or Asian restaurant, you have to ask for chopsticks (<i>Stäbchen</i>).

McCafé and Starbucks: The Vienna coffee house may be the old world tradition, but McDonald's Germany introduced its McCafé coffee bars in Germany in 2003, long before they were seen widely across the US. Today there are over 500 McCafés in Germany and 100+ in Austria. (The very first one was in Australia in 1993.) Starbucks also has a large presence in Germany. As in the US, the two chains are big rivals in Germany and Europe. [More...](#)

More about this topic: See the [Dining](#) page and the [Table Manners](#) comparison chart.

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