

## Where to Dine

If it's true that optimism and appetite go hand in hand, Berliners must be among the most optimistic people in Europe. But just because Berliners like to eat doesn't mean that they like to spend a lot on food. Locals know that you can often have a memorable dinner here in an unheralded wine restaurant or sidewalk cafe. Rising food costs in the east, however, mean that in the new Berlin, the eastern section can no longer be viewed as a bargain basement in the food department.

If a restaurant bill says *Bedienung*, that means a service charge has already been added, so just round up to the nearest euro.

Examples of typical dishes are the Berliner *Schlachteplatte* (cold plate); pigs' trotters cooked with sauerkraut and pea purée; and *Eis-bein* (pickled knuckle of pork with sauerkraut). Venison, wildfowl, and wild boar also appear frequently, as do carp and trout, along with an infinite variety of sausages.

But Berlin does not limit itself to traditional cuisine. A new wave of restaurants has swept across the city, from east to west. More and more are going ethnic, serving everything from Indonesian or French to Thai or Japanese. Eastern European wines are now almost as popular as those from Germany itself.

### 1 Restaurants by Cuisine

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Key to Abbreviations: \$\$\$\$ = Very Expensive \$\$\$ = Expensive \$\$ = Moderate \$ = Inexpensive

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Langhans ★★ (Berlin-Mitte,  
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## 2 Near the Kurfürstendamm

### VERY EXPENSIVE

**Bamberger Reiter** ★★ CONTINENTAL Bamberger Reiter, serving French, German, and Austrian dishes in the style of *neue Deutsche Küche*, is still the choice of savvy local foodies. Don't judge it by its location in an undistinguished 19th-century apartment house. The decor evokes old Germany, with lots of mirrors and fresh flowers. The quality is beyond question here—only Rockendorf's or Alt-Luxemburg can even pretend to have better food. The menu changes daily according to the availability of fresh ingredients and the inspiration of the chef, but might include a roulade of quail, bass with Riesling sauce, cream of fresh asparagus soup, lamb with beans and potato croutons, and date strudel with almond ice cream. German seafood aficionados go here for the fresh fish, which is caught with hook and line—not netted. Chef Cristoph Fischer believes that fish caught in a net die of shock, whereas the hooked fish fights until the bitter end and the meat is stronger. "It tastes like fish," he says. The wine list is enormous, with a dozen varieties of champagne alone.

Regensburgerstrasse 7. ☎ 030/2-18-42-82. Reservations required. Main courses 20€–33€ (\$23–\$38); 4- or 5-course fixed-price menu 48€–52€ (\$55–\$60). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 5:30pm–1am (last order 10:30pm). U-Bahn: Spichernstrasse.

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### *Kids* **Family-Friendly Restaurants**

**Funkturm Restaurant** (p. 80) Kids delight in ascending this radio tower on Messedam, open daily 10:30am to 11:30pm. The food at the restaurant is good, and later you can go to the observation platform for a truly grand view. The elevator costs 3.05€ (\$3.50) for adults, 1.55€ (\$1.80) for children.

**Hard Rock Cafe** (p. 77) After enough sauerkraut and wurst, kids may want a familiar American hamburger, and this place dispenses them by the truckload.

**Harlekin** ★★ FRENCH/INTERNATIONAL This is among the top three restaurants of Berlin, ranking up there with First Floor and Bamberger Reiter. This restaurant's rise to prominence chagrined jealous chefs at old favorites like the Kempinski. The menu is perfectly balanced between tradition and innovation. For example, appetizers are likely to include such dishes as calves' consommé with crayfish or osso bucco consommé with lobster Spätzle. For your main course, you might be won over by the saddle of lamb baked in a spring roll or turbot roasted with mixed root vegetables. All dishes are made with fresh local produce and are perfectly prepared. Set menus are always delightful and often pleasantly surprising.

In the Grand Hotel Esplanade, Lützowufer. ☎ **030/254-78-858**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 25€–32€ (\$29–\$37); 4- to 6-course fixed-price menu 68€–86€ (\$78–\$99). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 6:30–11pm. Closed 3½ weeks in July (dates vary). U-Bahn: Nollendorfplatz or Wittenbergplatz.

### **EXPENSIVE**

**Paris Bar** ★ FRENCH (TRADITIONAL) This French bistro has been a local favorite since it cheered up the postwar years in dismal bombed-out Berlin. It's crowded with elbow-to-elbow tables like a Montmartre tourist trap but is a genuinely pleasing little place on the see-and-be-seen circuit, close to the Theater des Westens. The food is invariably fresh and well prepared, but not particularly innovative.

Kantstrasse 152. ☎ **030/313-80-52**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–35€ (\$15–\$40). AE. Daily noon–3am. U-Bahn: Uhlandstrasse.

**MODERATE**

**Kaefer's Restaurant Dachgarten** CONTINENTAL When a team of cutting-edge architects redesigned the most famous building in Berlin, the Reichstag (Parliament House), they added a restaurant on the uppermost floor, just behind the soaring metallic dome that inspires so many photographs. Lines leading to this edgy setting merge sightseers and diners into the same queues, so here's how to shorten the potential wait: Phone for a table and note the reservation number. Head for the Reichstag's handicapped entrance on the building's west side (facing the Platz der Republik), give the attendant your number, and ride an elevator directly to the restaurant. Your meal will include a close-up view of the dome and the building's interior, plus a sweeping view over former East Berlin. Frankly, a visit here might be best at breakfast, when there's a business-like aura consistent with the Reichstag's august role as a Teutonic icon. The "Berliner" lunch menu includes house-style meatballs with potato salad, grilled steaks, and wursts, while the Continental/Asian dinner menus are more exotic, focusing on dishes like fried filet of duck with Austrian-style scalloped potatoes, Asian asparagus, and water chestnuts; and filet of turbot with a purée of truffles and herb-flavored risotto.

In the Reichstag, Platz der Republik. ☎ **030/2262-9933**. Reservations necessary. Breakfast 5.30€–19€ (\$6.10–\$22) per person. Lunch main courses 12€–19€ (\$14–\$22); dinner main courses 18€–24€ (\$21–\$27). Fixed-price lunch 29€ (\$33); fixed-price dinner 39€–63€ (\$45–\$72). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 9–11am; 11:30am–2:30pm and 6:30–10:30pm (last food order). S-Bahn: Unter den Linden.

**Marjellchen** ★ EAST PRUSSIAN This is the only restaurant in Berlin specializing in the cuisine of Germany's long-lost province of East Prussia, along with the cuisines of Pomerania and Silesia. The restaurant's unusual name comes from an East Prussian word meaning "young girl." Ramona Azzaro, whose East Prussian mother taught her many of the region's famous recipes, is the creative force here. Amid a Bismarckian ambience of vested waiters and oil lamps, you can enjoy a savory version of red-beet soup with strips of beef, East Prussian potato soup with shrimp and bacon, *Falscher Gänsebraten* (pork spare ribs stuffed with prunes and bread crumbs "as if the cook had prepared a goose"), marinated elk, and *Mecklenburger Kümmelfleisch* (lamb with chives and onions). This is the type of food Goethe or Schiller liked; perhaps you'll be a convert, too. Of course, Marjellchen isn't the place to go if you want to keep tabs on the cholesterol intake.

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Mommсенstrasse 9. ☎ **030/883-26-76**. Reservations required. Main courses 12€–22€ (\$14–\$25). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5pm–midnight. Closed Dec 23, 24, and 31. U-Bahn: Adenauerplatz or Uhlandstrasse. Bus: 109, 119, or 129.

**Restaurant Mario** NORTHERN ITALIAN Here you'll find Berlin's most imaginative northern Italian food. The innovative chefs shop for the best and most market-fresh ingredients. Begin with a platter of the most delectable antipasti in town. At least two different kinds of pastas are offered nightly, including a favorite made with a green-pepper pesto. Also on hand are more traditional dishes such as chicken breast stuffed with mozzarella and herbs, tantalizing herb-seasoned lamb cutlets, and fresh fish simply grilled and perfectly seasoned.

Carmerstrasse 2. ☎ **030/312-31-15**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–18€ (\$12–\$21); fixed-price menus 14€–35€ (\$16–\$40). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–midnight; Sat 4pm–1am. S-Bahn: Savignyplatz.

**Seidler Restaurant** GERMAN This restaurant enjoys a reputation as a select dining spot and social center. Your host, Mr. Seidler, has a devoted local following among theater and media personalities. The chef believes in strong flavors and good hearty cookery. Savor the *Kohlroulade*, a stuffed cabbage roll—few chefs would want to compete with it. The *Tafelspitz*, boiled beef with vegetables, would have pleased Emperor Josef of Austria (it was his favorite dish). Another highlight is the rack of lamb with honey onions and rosemary potatoes. Look also for market-fresh daily specials. The ambience is that of a Berlin bistro, charmingly cluttered with kitsch from all over the world.

Damaschkestrasse 26. ☎ **030/3-23-14-04**. Reservations required. Main courses 9€–22€ (\$10–\$25). MC. Mon–Sat 5pm–midnight. U-Bahn: Adenauerplatz.

**YVA Suite** ★ *(Finds)* INTERNATIONAL There's an excellent restaurant associated with this club, a meeting place for friendly and ultra-hip denizens of Berlin's inner sanctum of writers, artists, and cultural icons. The setting is on the ground floor of the building near the Savignyplatz, within a stylish and almost surgically minimalist, high-ceilinged decor. Expect walls that are almost entirely sheathed in slabs of volcanic lava rock, elegant table settings, well-prepared food for both hearty and delicate appetites, and a formidable tradition of welcoming stars and starlets from Germany's world of high fashion, sports, and the arts. Many *Mitteleuropa* household names have shown up here, including tennis star Boris Becker, models Heidi Klum and Nadia Auermann, and Berlin TV personality Verona Feldbusch. Menu items vary with the season and



## NEAR THE MEMORIAL CHURCH &amp; ZOO 77

the chef's inspiration, but are likely to include lemon-coconut soup with chicken satay; goose liver terrine; curried breast of duck with chorizo sausages; and Thai-style bouillabaisse. Incidentally, the name of this place is derived from the building's former resident, photographer Elsa ("YVA") Simon, a well-known teacher and inspiration for such latter-day artists as Helmut Newton.

Schlüterstrasse 52. ☎ 030/88-72-55-73. Reservations recommended. Main courses 7€–21€ (\$8–\$24). AE, MC, V. Bar and full menu daily 6pm–midnight; bar and limited menu daily midnight–3 or 4am. U-Bahn: Savignyplatz.

**INEXPENSIVE**

**Hard Rock Cafe** *Kids* AMERICAN This is the local branch of the familiar worldwide chain that mingles rock-'n'-roll nostalgia with American food. Menu choices range from a veggie burger to a "pig" sandwich (hickory smoked pork barbecue) like you might find in rural Georgia. The food is unexceptional, but service is friendly.

Meinekestrasse 21. ☎ 030/88-46-20. www.hardrockcafe.com. Reservations accepted for groups of 10 or more. Main courses 9€–20€ (\$10–\$23). AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs noon–midnight; Fri–Sat noon–1am. U-Bahn: Kurfürstendamm.

**Lubitsch** CONTINENTAL Lubitsch is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of many local residents, and it's considered in some quarters to have a degree of conservative chic. That reputation was enhanced in 1999 when Chancellor Schröder dropped in for lunch and a photo-op, causing ripples of energy to reverberate through the neighborhood. Menu items include lots of cafe drinks, with glasses of wine priced at 4.50€ to 7€ (\$5.20–\$8), and steaming pots of afternoon tea, but if you drop in for a meal, expect platters of chicken curry salad with roasted potatoes; Berlin-style potato soup; braised chicken with salad and fresh vegetables; a roulade of suckling pig; and Nürnberger-style *wursts*. Count on a not so friendly staff, a black-and-white decor with Thonet-style chairs, and a somewhat arrogant environment that despite its drawbacks, is very, very *Berliner*.

Bleibtreustrasse 47. ☎ 030/882-37-56. Reservations not necessary. Main courses 6€–21€ (\$6.90–\$24). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 9:30am–midnight. U-Bahn: Kurfürstendamm.

**3 Near the Memorial Church & Zoo****VERY EXPENSIVE**

**First Floor** ★★ REGIONAL GERMAN/FRENCH This is the showcase restaurant of the Palace Berlin Hotel. Located near the Tiergarten and set one floor above street level, it features a perfectly

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orchestrated service and setting that revolves around the cuisine of a master chef. Carefully rehearsed staff members smooth over the logistics and details of an upscale meal. Winning our praise are such dishes as a terrine of veal with arugula-flavored butter; sophisticated variations of Bresse chicken; guinea fowl stuffed with foie gras and served with a truffled vinaigrette sauce; a cassoulet of lobster and broad beans in a style vaguely influenced by the culinary precepts of southwestern France; filet of sole with champagne sauce; and a mascarpone mousse with lavender-scented honey.

In the Palace Berlin, Budapesterstrasse 42. ☎ 030/25-02-10-20. Reservations recommended. Main courses 28€–39€ (\$32–\$45). Set menus 42€ (\$48) at lunch only; and 68€–105€ (\$78–\$121) at lunch and dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2pm and 8–11pm. U-Bahn: Zoologischer Garten.

**EXPENSIVE**

**Daitokai** ★ JAPANESE Think of it as a less-institutionalized Benihana's. Vermilion carp lanterns illuminate the labyrinth of reflecting pools. Chefs prepare the meals before your eyes at several long tables. This teppanyaki restaurant offers some of the city's finest grilled steak—tender, juicy, and never overcooked. The seafood and vegetables are served with an artistic flair, and the fish is always fresh and beautifully presented. Quality is never skimped. The flawless service features kindly, almost overly polite waitresses in kimonos. To dine here inexpensively and still eat well, take advantage of the set luncheons.

Europa Center. ☎ 030/2-61-80-99. Reservations recommended. Main courses 10.50€–30€ (\$12–\$35); fixed-price meals 46€–75€ (\$53–\$86). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun noon–3pm and 6–midnight. U-Bahn: Bahnhofzoo.

**4 Near the Tiergarten****EXPENSIVE**

**Paris-Moskau** ★ INTERNATIONAL The grand days of the 19th century are alive and well at this restaurant in the beautiful Tiergarten area, where good dining spots are scarce. The menu features both classic and more cutting-edge dishes. The fresh tomato soup is excellent. Some of the dishes are mundane—the grilled filet of beef in mushroom sauce comes to mind—but other lighter dishes with delicate seasonings are delightful. We recommend the grilled North Sea salmon with herbs accompanied by basil-flavored noodles. The chef should market his recipe for saffron sauce, which accompanies several dishes. You'll receive attentive service from the formally dressed staff.

## IN GREATER CHARLOTTENBURG 79

Alt-Moabit 141. ☎ 030/3-94-20-81. Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–26€ (\$18–\$30); fixed-price menus 56€–80€ (\$64–\$92). No credit cards. Daily 6–11:30pm. S-Bahn: Bellevue.

## 5 In Greater Charlottenburg

### VERY EXPENSIVE

**Alt-Luxemburg** ★★ CONTINENTAL Bamberger Reiter is still the leader among Berlin restaurants, but Alt-Luxemburg is nipping at its heels. Karl Wannemacher is one of the outstanding chefs of Germany. Try the honey-glazed duck breast or the saddle of venison with juniper sauce. His Bavarian cream of eel and sturgeon terrine is also excellent. For dessert, don't miss the memorable semolina dumplings with orange ragout or the orange sorbet. The service is both unpretentious and gracious. The dark paneling, evenly spaced mirrors, antique chandeliers, and old-fashioned ambience create a Belle Époque aura.

Windscheidstrasse 31. ☎ 030/3-23-87-30. Reservations required. Fixed-price 4-course menu 68€ (\$78); 5-course menu 76€ (\$87). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–11pm. U-Bahn: Sophie-Charlotte-Platz.

### EXPENSIVE

**Ana e Bruno** ★ ITALIAN This is one of Berlin's most charming Italian restaurants. Ana and Bruno turn out a delectable cuisine that takes full advantage of the freshest ingredients and produce in any season. *Nuova cucina* is emphasized here more strongly than traditional Italian classics, and the chefs like to experiment. The combinations of food offer delicious flavors and the creations a harmonious medley. Expect dishes such as a radicchio-studded pasta with perfectly cooked shrimp or an Italian filet of veal with a tuna sauce. Regular customers and gourmets keen on experimenting always seem satisfied with the results. A large, reasonably priced wine selection complements the well-chosen menus.

Sophie-Charlotten-Strasse 101. ☎ 030/325-71-10. Reservations recommended. Main courses 29€–35€ (\$33–\$40); fixed-price menus 65€–99€ (\$75–\$114). AE, V. Tues–Fri 6–10:30pm. U-Bahn: Bismarckstrasse.

**Ponte Vecchio** ★★ ITALIAN We've dined here many times before and were moderately pleased, but the kitchen is so improved that we now view it as the finest Italian restaurant in Berlin. Market-fresh ingredients produce a winning cuisine with a Tuscan focus. If you don't opt for the excellent fresh fish of the day, you'll find any number of other tempting dishes, such as several variations of veal. Shellfish is deftly handled according to Tuscan style, with fresh basil

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and olive oil. For a succulent, savory, and spicy pasta, we'd recommend the *penne all'arrabiata*, that old Roman favorite.

Spielhagenstrasse 3. ☎ 030/3-42-19-99. Reservations required. Main courses 18€–36€ (\$21–\$41). DC. Wed–Mon 6:30–11pm. Closed 4 weeks in summer. U-Bahn: Bismarckstrasse.

**MODERATE**

**Funkturm Restaurant** *Kids* INTERNATIONAL This restaurant at the radio tower's 65m (213-ft.) midway point provides both good food and sweeping, high-altitude views. You'll first have to pay 1.50€ (\$1.75) for the elevator ride up. Inside the restaurant's metallic, glossy interior, every table sits near a window, which is entertaining for kids. Menu items include saddle of lamb with vegetables, pepper steak, and seafood. If you just want to enjoy the view without the food, consider paying 3€ (\$3.45) for a ride up to the observation platform near the top of the 136m- (446-ft.-) high tower. The higher platform is open daily 10am to 11:30pm. For information about the tower and its upper-tier observation platform, call ☎ 030/30-38-0996.

Messedamm 22. ☎ 030/303-829-96. Reservations not necessary. Fixed-price lunch 20€ (\$23); buffet dinner 29€ (\$33). Main course 9€–18€ (\$10–\$21). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 11am–11pm. U-Bahn: Kaiserdamm.

**INEXPENSIVE**

**Bierhaus Luisen-Bräu** GERMAN One of the city's largest breweries, Luisen-Bräu dates from 1987. The decor includes enormous stainless-steel vats of the fermenting brew, from which the waiters refill your mug. There is no subtlety of cuisine here; it's robust and hearty fare. You serve yourself from a long buffet table. The seating is indoor or outdoor, depending on the season, at long picnic tables that encourage a sense of beer-hall *Bruderschaft* (camaraderie).

Luisenplatz 1, Charlottenburg (close to Charlottenburg Palace). ☎ 030/3-41-93-88. Reservations recommended on weekends. Salads, snacks, and platters 6.80€–15€ (\$7.80–\$17). MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9am–1am; Fri–Sat 9am–2am. U-Bahn: Richard-Wagner-Platz.

**6 In Grunewald****VERY EXPENSIVE**

**Vivaldi** ★ INTERNATIONAL This is the culinary showcase of one of the most unusual small hotels in Berlin, a neo-Renaissance palace built in 1912 by an advisor to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Vivaldi serves, with panache, some of the most elegant hotel food in Berlin, within a paneled and antique-strewn setting that's as grand as anything you're likely to find in Europe. Most diners opt for one of two

fixed-price menus, although there's also a limited a la carte list. A clear soup of lentils with smoked duck breast might be followed by gratinated oysters and scallops resting on a bed of spinach salad, Turbot braised with green asparagus. Venison with black Perigord truffles are triumphs of subtle flavors. Service is impeccable. For dessert, consider a honey and clementine orange parfait.

In the Regent Schlosshotel Berlin, Brahmstrasse 10. ☎ 030/89-58-40. Reservations recommended. Main courses 33€–51€ (\$38–\$59). Fixed-price 4-course dinner 80€ (\$92); fixed-price 6-course dinner 115€ (\$132). AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 6–10:30pm. S-Bahn: Grunewald.

## 7 In Berlin-Mitte

### VERY EXPENSIVE

**Facil** ★★ CONTINENTAL The Madison Hotel received one of the most exciting—and expensive—new restaurants in Berlin. A crane lifted a vast tonnage of glass, steel, and garden supplies to the fifth floor terrace of a modern, 11-story hotel near the Potsdamer Platz. Don't expect a view of the skyline of Berlin, as you'll probably get something even better: a verdant oasis of Zen-like calm smack in the middle of one of Berlin's most frenetic neighborhoods, replete with stone floors, mahogany trim, copses of bamboo, trees, seasonal flowers, and waterfalls. A glass roof, tightly closed for midwinter views of the falling rain and snow, opens dramatically during clement weather for a view of the moon and stars, to a mere 14 tables. A formal, alert, and attentive staff serves a medley of sophisticated menu items that change with the seasons and the chef's inspiration. Starters may include marinated tuna with lime oil, pine nuts, and olives; foie gras terrine with stewed South African gooseberries; sliced octopus with wild fennel and olive oil; and bread salad with slices of fried quail. Main courses offer braised shoulder of beef with cêpes and polenta; lamb with artichokes and potatoes; and sea bass with tomatoes and romaine lettuce leaves. The fabulous desserts include curd dumplings with chocolate sauce and apricots.

In the Madison Hotel, Potsdamer Strasse 3. Tel. 030/5900-51234. Reservations recommended. Main courses 32€–40€ (\$37–\$46); set menus 75€–120€ (\$86–\$138). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 7–11pm. U-Bahn: Potsdamer Platz.

**Guy** ★ INTERNATIONAL This is gastronomy as theater. You'll understand this as you proceed to any of three separate balconies, each supporting at least one row of artfully decorated tables. The overall effect can be compared to the balconies of an old-fashioned opera house, where sightlines tend to focus on whatever's happening

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on the stage, or on the occupants of other balconies. Don't expect beer and schnitzels, as the cuisine is very haute, even to the point of seeming experimental. The menu changes frequently but might include a medley of marinated quail and goose liver; mussels served on a purée of arugula; lobster and sweetbreads cooked in puff pastry with tarragon-flavored cream sauce; and braised breast of goose with a roulade of potatoes and herbs. If you're in the mood for strong doses of *Gemütlichkeit*, ask for one of the limited number of tables within its cozy wine cellar. During clement weather, there's additional seating on the terrace in front.

Jägerstrasse 59–60. ☎ 030/20-94-26-00. Reservations recommended. Main courses 26€–30€ (\$30–\$35). Fixed-price lunch 15€–20€ (\$17–\$23); fixed-price dinner 51€–74€ (\$59–\$85). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6pm–1am; Sat 6pm–1am. U-Bahn: Stadtmitte or Französischer Strasse.

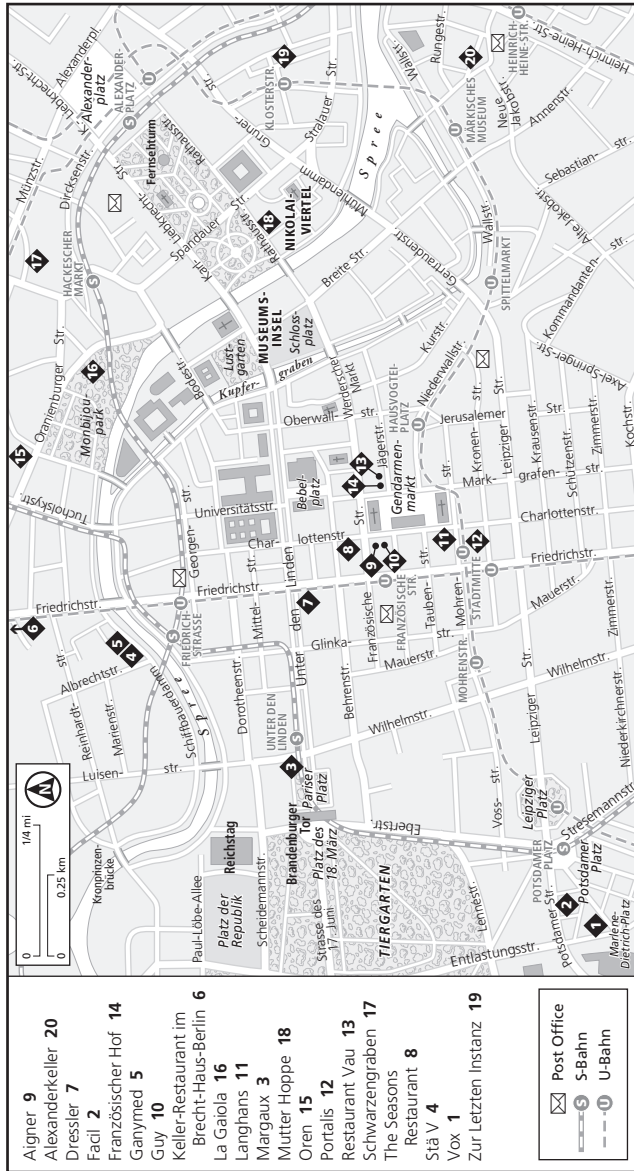
## EXPENSIVE

**Französischer Hof** GERMAN If you want a reasonable meal in a relaxed atmosphere, this is the place. Französischer Hof fills two floors connected by a Belle Epoque staircase, evoking a century-old Parisian bistro. The kitchen may not be the finest, but ingredients are fresh and deftly handled. One recent memorable dinner included roast duck breast with calvados along with zucchini and potato pancakes. You can begin with the delectable selection of fish canapés. Saddle of lamb is always admirably done, although you may prefer the rather theatrical flambéed filet Stroganoff with almond-studded dumplings.

Jägerstrasse 56. ☎ 030/2-04-35-70. Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–38€ (\$23–\$44). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Closed Dec 24. U-Bahn: Hausvogteiplatz.

**Margaux** ★★★ CONTINENTAL Chef Michael Hoffman will dazzle your palate with his seductive, inventive dishes and his brilliant wine cellar. Only a few steps from the Brandenburg Gate, Margaux has won raves from several gourmet magazines, many of which have called it “best gourmet restaurant in Berlin” in the 21st century. Noted architect Johanne Nalbach designed the stunning modern interior, and the paintings of Ingeborg zu Schleswig—Andy Warhol's assistant in 1980s New York—grace the walls. The exceptional food is based on only the highest quality of ingredients. Our party of four recently launched our repast with such perfectly prepared starters as marinated duck liver and Breton lobster appearing with curry and surprisingly with watermelon. Hoffman's star shines brightest with his fish, such as John Dory with a Mediterranean “aroma” that turned out

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to be anchovies, olives, tomatoes, and pepper. Frog legs are perfectly—even delectably—perfumed with parsley and garlic, and a roasted saddle of venison won our hearts with a red wine sauce flavored with basil, pepper, and peach.

Unter den Linden 78. ☎ 030/22-65-26-11. Reservations required. Main courses 28€–38€ (\$32–\$44). Set lunch menus 48€–120€ (\$55–\$138). Fixed price dinner 75€ (\$86). Mon–Sat noon–2pm and 7–11pm. S-Bahn: Unter den Linden.

**Portalis** ★★ *Finds* FRENCH/MEDITERRANEAN This is one of the best examples in Berlin of the sophisticated, worldly, and hip restaurants that import ideas from sunnier, usually Mediterranean, climes. Don't be fooled by its resemblance to a bistro: the cuisine is far more ambitious than that. The color scheme meshes earth tones with dark grays, cherrywood floors, black leather, and stainless steel, providing an artful showcase for the avant-garde cuisine. Textures here are light, without extravagant uses of cream or butter, well suited to palates and waistlines jaded with frequent exposure to *mitteleuropäische* (Central European) food. High-energy chef Volker Drkosch's cuisine varies with the seasons, but may include lobster and lemongrass tempuras; scallops with fresh peas and kohlrabi; a perfectly braised filet of sole with spinach; polenta-stuffed ravioli and morels; sorbets flavored with the juice of prickly pear or obscure French cheeses. When available, freshwater crayfish might be simply but flavorfully seared and seasoned with salt, pepper, and butter. Expect a scattering of well-heeled *Berliner* insiders here, including politicians and personalities from the stage and screen.

Kronenstrasse 55–58. ☎ 030/20-45-54-96. Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–24€ (\$23–\$27); fixed-price lunch menu 28€ (\$32); fixed-price dinner menu 94€–106€ (\$108–\$122). AE, MC, V. Tues–Fri noon–2pm and 6:30–11pm. U-Bahn: Stadtmitte.

**Restaurant Vau** ★★ INTERNATIONAL This restaurant is the culinary showcase of up-and-coming chef Kolja Kleeburg. You can select from well-chosen international wine list and a menu based on fresh and seasonal ingredients. Choices include terrine of salmon and morels with rocket salad; smoked sturgeon with white beans and caviar; aspic of suckling pig with sauerkraut; salad with marinated red mullet, mint, and almonds; crisp-fried duck with marjoram; ribs of suckling lamb with thyme-flavored polenta; and desserts such as woodruff soup with champagne-flavored ice cream.

Jägerstrasse 54. ☎ 030/202-9730. Reservations recommended. Main courses 26€–36€ (\$30–\$41) each. Set price lunch 48€–52€ (\$55–\$60). Fixed-price 4-course dinner 75€–100€ (\$86–\$115). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 7–10:30pm. U-Bahn: Hausvogteiplatz.



**The Seasons Restaurant** ✨ INTERNATIONAL One of the most appealing hotel dining rooms in Berlin, The Seasons Restaurant exudes a sense of prosperity, thanks to a decor that might have been inspired by Versailles, a sheathing of carefully oiled and partially gilded oak, an open fireplace, and a color scheme of champagne and brown. Despite the upscale decor, the restaurant maintains a deliberately reasonable price-to-value ratio. An impeccably trained staff offers elaborate versions of tuna carpaccio with sesame; smoked breast of pheasant with wild mushrooms, black nuts, and farmer's salad; filet and liver of veal with truffled mashed potatoes and glazed apples; and quail stuffed with goose liver baked in a clay pot. Consider prefacing a meal here with a drink in the hotel's supremely elegant bar.

In the Four Seasons Hotel, Charlottenstrasse 49. ☎ 030/2-03-38. Reservations recommended. Lunch main courses 15€–29€ (\$17–\$33); dinner main courses 26€–39€ (\$30–\$45); fixed-price menu 49€–94€ (\$56–\$108). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2pm and 6:30–11pm. U-Bahn: Französische Strasse.

**Vox** ✨ INTERNATIONAL This is one of the most exciting and creative restaurants in Berlin, far outshining any competition within the vast architectural complex at Potsdamer Platz. One of Switzerland's best design teams created the minimalist decor, with lots of visual emphasis on a stainless steel dominated, open-view kitchen. A team of uniformed chefs concoct artfully present Mediterranean and Asian cuisines in ways you might not expect, such as platters of braised goose liver with apple-flavored vinaigrette; filet of lamb cooked in a wood-burning oven with goat cheese, pepper oil, and Mediterranean vegetables; rotisserie-cooked breast of Barbary duck with mango chutney; and roasted sturgeon on a frothy sauce of white rosemary. One corner of the restaurant features the best sushi bar in Berlin. The venue is enhanced by an attentive and very hip staff, some of whom shuttle between the restaurant and a stylish cocktail lounge that features jazz and blues every night beginning at 10pm. During clement weather, tables spill out onto the terrace, beneath verdant rows of linden trees.

In the Grand Hyatt Berlin, Marlene-Dietrich-Platz 2. ☎ 030/25-53-12-34. Reservations recommended. Lunch main courses 14€–20€ (\$16–\$23); dinner main courses 29€–36€ (\$33–\$41); platters of sushi 12€–31€ (\$14–\$36). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6:30pm–11:30pm. U-Bahn: Potsdamer Platz.

## MODERATE

**Aigner** CONTINENTAL Habsburg Austria lives on here. In the late 1990s, the Dorint chain bought the furnishings from one of Vienna's oldest cafes, the Aigner, and moved them into the ground

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floor of one of Berlin's newest hotels. The result is a black-and-white Jugendstil setting replete with Thonet chairs. There's a lot of ambience here, thanks partly to a location that overlooks the Gendarmenmarkt, and a staff that provides old-fashioned service with a modern flair. The restaurant's signature dish is *Tafelspitz*, the boiled-beef-with-horseradish dish. Here, it's served in a big brass kettle with both haunch and shoulder of beef, with lots of soup, vegetables, savoy cabbage, crème fraîche, and apple-flavored horseradish. Other choices include baked and crusty pike-perch; octopus carpaccio; Wiener schnitzel; and codfish filet with white beans and chorizo.

In the Das Hotel am Gendarmenmarkt, Charlottenstrasse 50–52. ☎ 030/20375-0. Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–23€ (\$14–\$26). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2am. U-Bahn: Stadtmitte.

**Ganymed** GERMAN/INTERNATIONAL There's nothing trendy or immediately fashionable about this restaurant, which occupied these premises beginning in 1929 and stalwartly continued doing business within East Berlin throughout the Cold War. The setting includes two formal dining rooms, one with an ornate plaster ceiling of great beauty; the other a more modern, big-windowed affair that overlooks the Spree. Food arrives in worthy portions, with plenty of flavor, albeit without too much concern for modern culinary fancies or trends. Examples include the house assortment of appetizers (*Vorspeisen*), laden high with smoked fish, smoked ham, stuffed dumplings, and fish mousse; goose liver terrine; *Eisbein*—the pork shank specialty of 19th-century Berlin; schnitzels made from organically raised veal; mussels in Choron sauce; and breast of pheasant wrapped in Black Forest cured ham.

Schiffbauerdamm 5. ☎ 030/28-59-90-46. Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–20€ (\$14–\$23). Fixed-price menus 25€–50€ (\$29–\$58). AE, MC. Daily noon–2am. U-Bahn: Friedrichstrasse.

**Langhans** ★★ INTERNATIONAL (MODERN) Few other restaurants combine the culinary traditions of Italy and Japan with such skill and style. Named after the 18th-century designer of the Brandenburg Gate, and created by Detlef Bernhardt, a German-born long-time resident of Japan, it occupies two floors of a grandly proportioned building that flanks the Gendarmenmarkt. Downstairs is a convivial and hip bar loaded with well-dressed patrons, some of whom munch on Spanish-inspired tapas. The most visible culinary zest, however, is upstairs, within a long, minimalist dining room whose views sweep simultaneously out over the twin domes of the square's two churches and a panorama of the brightly lit kitchen.

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Here, an international team produces dishes whose flavors are as intriguing as they are delicious. They include lemongrass-and-coconut soup with shrimp; veal carpaccio with sesame and arugula; spaghetti with salmon caviar, Japanese wakame, and lemongrass; braised dorado with green curry and mango; and a superb version of free-range hen with ginger-flavored risotto and sukiyaki sauce. Desserts, as well as virtually everything else on the menu, change frequently, but if it's available you'd probably be richly satisfied with a pear charlotte with tonka bean ice cream.

Charlottenstrasse 59. ☎ 030/20-94-50-70. Reservations recommended. Main courses 7.50€–19€ (\$8.65–\$21); set-price menus 26€–29€ (\$30–\$33). AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–2am. U-Bahn: Gendarmenmarkt.

**Schwarzengraben** ✨ CONTINENTAL This is the watering hole of the Berlin *schickeria* or chic crowd. One Berlin paper defined these trendies as “media honchos and their overblond dates.” The see-and-be-seen scene might be more important than the cuisine, but two Italian brothers, Ivo and Rudolf Girolo, succeed admirably with superfresh ingredients that are well prepared. Sea bass baked between slices of eggplant is a most credible dish, as is the Italian gnocchi with sausage and green olives. “Black Crows” (its English name) evokes a Soho-style restaurant in New York. Remarkably, the kitchen is prepared to make 300 pasta dishes on short notice, and the chefs know 150 fish recipes by heart. There are even 20 different types of salami that may rest on your plate. Our dining companion for the evening hailed the gnocchi with rabbit ragout and truffles dish as “orgasmic.” We’re fond of the duck and rabbit paste. The main dining is upstairs; downstairs for whisky and cigars.

Neue Schonhauswer Schonhauser Strasse 13. ☎ 030/2839-1698. Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–23€ (\$16–\$26). AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–3:30pm and 6–midnight. U-Bahn: Weinmeister.

## INEXPENSIVE

**Alexanderkeller** GERMAN This reasonably priced, unpretentious restaurant is a lunchtime favorite of neighborhood residents and office workers. The generous meals might include filet of roast beef served with potatoes and artichoke hearts; filet of zander with parsley and new potatoes; or roast pork with red-wine sauce. Food is rich and the meat dishes heavy, but the people in this area love this type of food.

In the cellar of the Hotel Luisen Hof, Köpenicker Strasse 92. ☎ 030/2-75-01-42. Main courses 10€–15€ (\$12–\$17). MC, V. Daily 11am–midnight. U-Bahn: Märkisches Museum.

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**Dressler CONTINENTAL** No other bistro along Unter den Linden as successfully re-creates Berlin's prewar decor and style. Designed to resemble an arts-conscious bistro of the sort that might have amused and entertained tuxedo-clad clients in the 1920s, it's set behind a wine-colored façade, and outfitted with leather banquettes, black-and-white tile floors, mirrors, and film memorabilia from the great days of early German cinema. Waiters with vests and aprons scurry around carrying trays of everything from caviar to strudel, as well as three kinds of oysters and hefty portions of lobster salad. You can always drop in to ogle the racks of elegant pastries, consuming them with steaming pots of tea or coffee. Otherwise, more substantial menu items include turbot with champagne vinaigrette; pheasant breast with Riesling sauce; local salmon trout with white wine sauce and braised endive; stuffed breast of veal; and calf's liver with apples.

Unter den Linden 39. ☎ 030/204-44-22. Reservations recommended. Main courses 19€–23€ (\$21–\$26). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight. S-Bahn: Unter den Linden.

**Keller-Restaurant im Brecht-Haus-Berlin SOUTH GERMAN/AUSTRIAN** This is a dining oddity. From 1953 until his death in 1956, Bertolt Brecht lived here with his wife, Helene Weigel. Today the building houses the Brecht-Weigel-Museum (see “Exploring Berlin-Mitte” in chapter 6). The restaurant, with white plaster and exposed stone, is decorated with photographs of the playwright's family, friends, and theatrical productions. No one will mind if you just stop in for a glass of wine—the place specializes in eastern German wines, French and New World wines. Traditional south German and Austrian food is served, such as an Austrian recipe for *Fleisch Laberln*, meatballs made from minced pork, beef, green beans, and bacon and served with dumplings. In good weather, the seating area includes an enclosed courtyard upstairs.

Chausseestrasse 125. ☎ 030/2-82-38-43. Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–17€ (\$10–\$20). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 6pm–midnight, and from May–Oct 11am–3pm and 6pm–midnight. U-Bahn: Zinnowitzer Strasse.

**La Gaiola ITALIAN** The owner of this restaurant, an Italian immigrant, wanted to bring the rich flavor of his country's cuisine to Berlin and has done so admirably. Food is served in generous portions. We're especially fond of the fresh seafood or the pasta with sautéed calamari. Two of our favorite dishes include the halibut sautéed or grilled and the lobster ravioli, which is only featured on weekends.

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Monbijouplatz 11–12. ☎ **030/28-53-98-90**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–18€ (\$12–\$21). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 6pm–midnight. U-Bahn: Hackescher Markt.

**Mutter Hoppe** *Value* GERMAN This cozy, wood-paneled restaurant still serves the solid Teutonic cuisine favored by a quasi-legendary matriarch (Mother Hoppe) who used to churn out vast amounts of food to members of her extended family and entourage. Within a quartet of old-fashioned dining rooms, you'll enjoy heaping portions of such rib-sticking fare as sauerbraten with roasted potatoes; creamy goulash with wild mushrooms; filet of zander with dill-flavored cream sauce; and braised filet of pork in mushroom-flavored cream sauce. Wine is available, but most guests opt for a foaming mug of beer.

Rathausstrasse 21, Nikolaiviertel. ☎ **030/241-56-25**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–20€ (\$10–\$23). MC, V. Daily 11:30am–midnight. U-Bahn/S-Bahn: Alexanderplatz.

**Oren** ISRAELI/ARABIC You'll notice a similarity in architecture between this restaurant and the massive reconstruction of the Oranienburger synagogue, next door. The cream-colored, high-ceilinged premises are owned by, and rented from, Berlin's Jewish community. Savory aromas of old-fashioned Jewish cooking permeate the restaurant. As such, the site tends to exert a powerful and immediate emotional appeal on customers, most of whom are visitors making a pilgrimage to the nearby synagogue. Prices are reasonable, and the vegetarian and fish platters are both wholesome and plentiful. The menu includes cream of garlic soup; vegetarian platters with hollandaise or choron sauce; filet of zander with fresh cucumber salad; falafel with hummus, tahini, olives, and pita; cold gefilte fish with red-beet salad; and a ragout of zucchini and mushroom with herbed rice. Red or white meat rarely appears on the menu.

Oranienburger Strasse 28. ☎ **030/282-8228**. Reservations recommended. Main courses 6€–16€ (\$6.90–\$18). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–1am; Sun 10am–3am. S-Bahn: Oranienburger Tor or Hackescher Markt.

**Stäv** *Finds* RHENISH For years, this upscale tavern entertained politicians and reporters in Germany's former capital of Bonn. Its owners opposed the re-inauguration of Berlin as the German capital, but they valiantly pulled out of the Rhineland after the switch and followed their clientele to new digs within a 5-minute walk of the Brandenburg Gate. In addition to a taste of Rhenish kitsch, you'll find some of the most politically savvy and astute elected officials, journalists, and bureaucrats in Berlin lining the walls of this high-energy place which only serves one beer, Kölsch,

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a brew closely associated with the Rhineland. Expect Rhenish food items like *Himmel and Ärd* (heaven and hell), a mass of apples, onions, and blood sausage; braised beef with pumpernickel and raisin sauce; and sauerbraten with noodles; as well as *Berliner* braised liver with bacon and onions, a crisp Alsatian pizza known as *Flammenküche*, and potato cakes topped with apples and shredded beets or smoked salmon and sour cream.

8 Schiffbauerdamm. ☎ 030/282-3965. Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–14€ (\$10–\$16); fixed-price menu 16€–22€ (\$18–\$25). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–1am. U-Bahn: Friedrichstrasse.

**Zur Letzten Instanz** GERMAN Reputedly this is Berlin's oldest restaurant, dating from 1525. Zur Letzten Instanz has been frequented by everybody from Napoléon to Beethoven. Prisoners used to stop off here for one last beer before going to jail. The place is located on two floors of a baroque building just outside the crumbling brick wall that once ringed medieval Berlin. Double doors open on a series of small woodsy rooms, one with a bar and ceramic *Kachelofen* (stove). At the back, a circular staircase leads to another series of rooms, where every evening at 6pm, food and wine (no beer) are served. The menu is old-fashioned, mainly limited to Berlin staples.

Waisenstrasse 14–16 (near the Alexanderplatz). ☎ 030/2-42-55-28. Soup 4€–7€ (\$4.60–\$8.05); main courses 8€–13€ (\$9.20–\$15); fixed-price dinner from 20€–29€ (\$23–\$33). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–1am; Sun noon–11pm. U-Bahn: Klosterstrasse.