

# EATING

## top picks

- Aubergine (p155)
- Restaurant Mraz & Sohn (p168)
- Urbanek (p162)
- Silberwirt (p160)
- ON (p162)
- Österreicher im MAK (p156)
- Neni (p160)
- Steirereck im Stadtpark (p154)
- Die Burgermacher (p164)

# EATING

One of the most exciting aspects of visiting Vienna is indulging in the local cuisine, which is currently experiencing a renaissance driven by a new wave of talented Viennese chefs, such as Heinz Reitbauer from Steirereck im Stadtpark (p154), Tommy Möbius from Restaurant Bauer (p155), Markus Mraz from Restaurant Mraz & Sohn in Brigittenau (p168) and Thomas Dorfer from Landhaus Bacher in Mautern (across the Danube from Krems in Lower Austria; see p223). This revival is also driven by a movement back to the roots of Viennese cuisine – best typified by the *Beisl*n (a word of Yiddish origin meaning ‘little houses’), the traditional taverns where enjoying good, homemade-style food is just as important as sipping a fine wine or beer.

The summer surge of visitors to Vienna has also helped boost the number and variety of places to eat. Choosing what kind of food you want to eat on a given morning, day or night will be one aspect of your eating experience in Vienna – the choices are many. Another key factor will be the type of place you choose to eat in – a fully fledged restaurant or a *Beisl*, for instance (see [opposite](#)). Another factor will be the time of day – whether you choose a lunch menu or go all out for an evening splash. And despite the modern age of the jet-setting winter tomato, season still plays a crucial role in good Viennese dining.

## HISTORY

As a wit once noted, the good thing about history is that it’s so old. Historically, classic Viennese cuisine has always thrived on foreign influences and change. Wiener Schnitzel (a true Wiener Schnitzel is made with veal) is rumoured – though hotly disputed today – to have originated from the recipe for Milanese crumbed veal cutlet brought back by Field Marshal Radetzky in 1857. *Gulasch* (goulash) comes from Hungary, but the dumplings served with it come from Czech regions. Interestingly, *Tafelspitz* (prime boiled beef, served with radish) was the favourite dish of Kaiser Franz Josef, but when foreign guests visited Schönbrunn Palace, he fed them French delights. Once they had left, he ate his Wiener Schnitzel and *Tafelspitz* again.

The fastidious Viennese approach to coffee and the tradition of the *Kaffeehaus* (coffee house, where you can also eat a light meal) owes much to Ottoman Turks who brought their exotic elixir into Vienna’s Vorstadt in 1683. This approach captures the essence of *die klassische Wiener Küche* (classic Viennese cuisine): pilfered by the Habsburgs wherever they reigned, localised at home, shoehorned into the imperial tradition, and given new blood by the great culinary capitals abroad, like Paris – in this case, one of the relatively few places where the Habsburgs didn’t actually rule – before being stylised in all its rich features for the contemporary table.

## top picks

### VIENNA'S BEST SCHNITZELS

- Figlmüller (p156)
- Gasthaus Wickerl (p165)
- Schloss Concordia (p170)
- Zu den Zwei Liesln (p163)
- Zum Alten Fassl (p162)

## SPECIALITIES

### Classic Cuisine

Undoubtedly the best-known classic Viennese dish is Wiener Schnitzel. Goulash, another dish familiar to almost everyone, arguably attains its highest form as the *Rindsgulasch* (beef goulash), which excels at Meierei im Stadtpark (see the boxed text, p154). *Tafelspitz* has conquered if not the world, then at least the German-speaking countries, and often swims in the juices of the locally produced *Suppengrün* (fresh soup vegetables) that it’s stewed in, before being served with *Kren* sauce (horseradish sauce). Try it in *neo-Beisl*n (see p152) to get some new angles on this dish.

*Beuschel* (offal, usually sliced lung and heart with a slightly creamy sauce) is another *Beisl*n-type dish, but at Aubergine (p155) it has been elevated to new culinary heights by chef Florian Hrachowina, who adds locally produced snails, topped off by snail caviar.