

PRESS INFORMATION

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Nuremberg's Exotic Legacy from the "Pepper Sacks"

In the Middle Ages, one could buy drugs at the farmer's market – that didn't mean narcotics, but spices. In addition to pepper and saffron, it was ginger, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom which were particularly sought after. The growing regions in the Middle East, in Asia and in Africa were far away. That's why exotic spices were a rarity.

That wasn't the case in Nuremberg. The city was located at the crossroads of the most important European trade routes and played a central role in the distribution of goods in Central and Eastern Europe. Trade of treasures from the Orient brought immense wealth to the city.

The easy availability of exotic spices, the abundance of honey gathered in the surrounding forests, and the curiosity for experimentation from Nuremberg's bakers were the basis for the success story of Nuremberg gingerbread, called lebkuchen in German.

This spicy baked good is proud to be more than 600 years old and is loved by young and old alike.

As early as the 12th century, guilds began to bake gingerbread; the first written mention of a Nuremberg gingerbread baker is in a document from 1395. It was 250 years later, in 1643, that the first "sworn" Nuremberg Lebküchner-craft with 14 members was started. The recipe – especially the mix of spices – was so secret that no gingerbread baker was allowed to leave the city.

The city council advised the public to consume gingerbread for every possible celebration, such as Christmas or at baptisms or weddings; it was even allowed during Lent. After all, lebkuchen were considered to be a type of medicine, as the delicate spices they contained were thought to have healing properties.

Although gingerbread is no longer used as medicine today, they haven't lost any of their popularity. Whether round or square, chocolate-covered or gluten-free, in organic quality or as the classic high-end Elisenlebkuchen – this specialty is purchased throughout the year, although the peak season is naturally in winter.

One soon discovered that exotic spices were not only good for baked delicacies, but could also be used for liquid delights. Together with gingerbread, mulled wine has a long tradition in Nuremberg. Today, Original Nuremberg "Glühwein" is produced by established wineries – now for more than 40 years. With its balanced mix of spices, it is of especially high quality. Only mulled wine produced within the city limits may be called Original Nuremberg Glühwein.

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Nuremberg's tradition as a city of trade is continued in the many markets held here today. The most famous is no doubt the Nuremberg Christkindlesmarkt. Each year, during the Christmas holiday season, the most delicious gingerbread can be enjoyed and the most beautiful Christmas decorations and gifts admired and purchased on the Main Market Square.

At markets such as the Easter, flea or food market and at events such as "Experience Organic" there is always something new to discover. At the many farmers' markets held in local neighborhoods and the daily fruit and vegetable market in the Old Town, traders offer their wares throughout the year – a long tradition, kept alive by the city today.