

Sebastian Junge



My name is Sebastian Junge.

This is what I do:

I am the loving father of 2 beautiful children, a husband, a head chef, and the owner of the organic restaurant Wolfs Junge in Hamburg.

This is what I could teach you, that you cannot learn from a book:

I could teach you how to survive in a professional kitchen, to work really hard and fast, and to deal with pressure, anger, fear, and all the psychopaths who will come along your path, and to do it all ethically and with moral consciousness at the end of the day!

This is what culture means to me:

Culture means recognizing and celebrating human creations that were made with passion and love.

This is how my work reflects my culture/s:

First of all, my work is pretty hard and exhausting. Focusing on the cultural aspects of it is quite hard sometimes, even though we connect our food and our culinary art very strongly to a political and cultural ideal and fight for its appropriate position in life and society now and in the future.



This is my utopia:

Living in a world where no one has to suffer for my food production or consumption, where there is no hunger or poverty, and where nature, people and animal are respected and taken care of with dignity and respect.

Quick bits



My favorite book genre: too many options

My favorite book: again, too many options

My favorite place to read: on a vacation

Where I buy my books: in a small independent store or online at buch7, a bookseller that donates its profits to social projects

My favorite museum: unfortunately, I don't have enough time to visit a museum at all, and much less to have a favorite museum. But recently, I was in Copenhagen in a natural historic museum that shows human evolution. That was pretty cool!

My favorite artist (painter/sculptor/performance): I kind of like Janosch

My favorite source/s for news/information/further education: Deutschlandfunk, several political Podcasts, online News

My favorite dish to eat: Again, too many options. It depends on the season, where I am, what mood I'm in, etc.

My favorite outside activity: Doing sports

My favorite place in Hamburg: Wherever my family is.



A new beginning after a busy year

10. November 2022

Today is the last day of our fall holidays. Strictly speaking, this means that it is the last day of vacation for all of my other employees, myself not included. As a self-employed restaurant owner, I need to look over our inventory, repairs that need to be done, orders, etc. at least 2 days before we actually open again. Menus have to be created and written, technicians have to be ordered for the broken equipment, the answering machine wants to be listened to and answered after a week's vacation, not to mention email correspondence, bills, and general mail. It doesn't help that I had to have 2 teeth pulled this morning.

The German word for self-employed is "selbstständig", which is the union of the words, "selbst," as in the self, alone, by itself, and the word, "ständig," as in always, constantly. So, in German, when you say self-employed, you are basically saying always on-call and forever self-reliant. And this is so true! So, when the doctor asked me this morning if I needed to be written off sick, I just smiled and said, "No, thank you," thinking of all the work that was awaiting my attention at the restaurant.

My thoughts are always somehow on the restaurant. Even during my week of vacation, after my family and I got over a Corona infection and recharged our batteries briefly, my thoughts quickly turned again to future business and errands.

You can never really switch off the needs of the restaurant! We are actually facing a fresh start at the restaurant. My deputy head chef is leaving the company in the third week of October. He worked for us for over 4 years and helped me remodel the restaurant and set up the kitchen. Another cook is leaving with him – I may tell you this very special story in another month's entry. We also parted ways with our first host this year. By the end of the month, all the original crew members will have left and been replaced. But, we welcome these circumstances and see in these developments and opportunities for change and improvement.

However, it all still creates a lot of dust and work.

Ultimately, I am responsible for all processes, decisions, and transactions at my restaurant – sometimes more, sometimes less. When managers leave us, of course there is more work for me. On the other hand, this opens the door for upcoming employees, and there is enormous potential to awaken undiscovered talents and to develop the restaurant even further.

Whether facing a small or a substantial new beginning, we have always managed. We mastered Corona lockdowns, survived a kitchen fire and the lengthy renovations that followed, and many other new beginnings, and will manage again this time. We are coming out of 2 very exhausting pandemic years, in which we were plagued by many worries, and we are sliding into the next crisis, with no time to even take a deep breath. It

is therefore once again a new beginning without a chance to rest up beforehand. I am not really in good spirits, but I do still have strength and an unconditional sense of perseverance and determination!

In this first entry, I have written little about our culinary art, but have hopefully given you some insight into my unsteady, chaotic, and challenging everyday workplace.

Written by Sebastian Junge; Translation by H. Runte



Of Geese, Ducks and Ham

26. November 2022



Autumn has unmistakably reached Hamburg since my last entry. The last warm days are over. It rains a lot, and it gets dark very early. We live in a perpetual gray haze. Temperatures are falling and the last late summer vegetables from our producers are coming in. We have finally harvested all the vegetables from our own fields as well. It was a great year that produced an excellent harvest and provided us with wonderful new impressions and experiences. Now, it is time to begin pickling and processing all the vegetables we have harvested ourselves or have received from our producers.



What the month of November also brings to our kitchen is so-called waterfowl, or in other words, duck, geese, and other aquatic birds or winged game. Maurice Blank, a longtime companion from Lemsahl-Mellingstedt, a neighborhood in the north-east of Hamburg, has been raising small groups of ducks and geese for us for a long time.

Maurice serves a few private customers and otherwise only our restaurant, and we feel incredibly lucky to be able to enjoy the fruits of his work at the end of the years.

We process waterfowl in as many different way as we do domestic pigs. We make rilette and paté, both braised and

pan-fried. We make pastrami. And best of all, we can make our very own cold-smoked ham again. This is only possible in the really cold months. The temperature has to fall below 10 degrees at night so that we can cold smoke the salted pieces of meat over a longer period of time. We can typically do this starting in November, and we truly celebrated this.

The knowledge and craft we use to create our cold-smoked ham has been fascinating fellow chefs and guests for a while now. Smoked products have been an integral part of our menus and cuisine from the very beginning.



We use ancient preservation methods that help create a feeling of well-being and bring back great memories for many people, including me. Our hams represent the type of cuisine we stand for. They are unique and can only be enjoyed here, at Wolfs Junge, and they unmistakably bear our signature. In the spring, for example, when we will cut open our ham from our domestic pigs after 4 months of ripening and smoking, just in time for the first asparagus, I am always filled with great pride in what we do. The knowledge that this ham can only be enjoyed here, in combination with other unique products, is a superb feeling.

Tomorrow, I will try our first goose ham. After 4 weeks of preparation, it is now ready. Its taste will transport me and my taste buds full into the autumn spirit.

Written by Sebastian Junge; Translation by H. Runte



One pig – one year – so many mouths fed

27. Februar 2023



Traditionally, we process a whole pig in my organic restaurant at the beginning of the year. For us, this is pretty much the most exciting part of our work when it comes to processing animals. The variety of products that can be prepared from the whole animal is pretty unbelievable, as is how much yield we have from one animal and how many people eat from it.

Pork has a catastrophic image due to the slaughter industry, discounters, various scandals and contemptuous forms of husbandry and production. Of course, this is not the path we follow. We select a farm from the area and insist on exceptional quality.

For us, it is worth looking at the pig and the task entrusted to him on the farm. As an omnivore, the pig is responsible for using up leftovers on the farm – unused vegetables, unbackable cereals, catch crops, maybe even whey from the farm's own cheese dairy. In return, the pig produces offspring, fertilizer for the fields, and of course, the entirety of his/her body, which we then process into food. The farms from which we obtain pigs have entrusted their animals with these tasks, in contrast to factory farming, which is about producing meat in the most effective way, as quickly and as cheaply as possible.

In general, we only use old breeds of pigs, which, in contrast to industrial animals, offer significantly more fat and are in much better health. This year we processed a field pig for the first time. These animals are on the pasture all year round and can pursue their natural behavior, such as wallowing in the mud. I visited the farm last year with my daughter to get an idea of the animal husbandry and to get to know the people who are responsible for the farm. We exchanged ideas extensively, got to know each other and learned a lot about farrow-to-finish pig farming.





We agreed to take over an animal in January.

When the time comes and we pick up the slaughtered animal, the kitchen is on high alert for a week. It is an enormous challenge to process a whole animal in so many different ways while still keeping the restaurant open to our guests. We are talking about almost 150 kg slaughter weight and well over 15 different ways of preparing and preserving the product. For example, we process blood and offal into blood sausage, black pudding, and coarse liver sausage. The head is boiled and made into jelly and baked pralines. We salt a large quantity of ham, to use over the next few months and especially during the asparagus season. Then ham is also cold or hot smoked, air dried and cured. We make sausages for lunch, cook rinds for sauerkraut and prepare many pieces for main courses. Then rillette,

lard and other sausages are boiled down. All in all, it is a lot of work and also a technical challenge. It requires a lot of organization and impeccable teamwork.

Once the work is done, we are eager to taste the products ourselves and are very proud to serve them to our guests at the restaurant. It is an absolute rarity to work with such exceptional quality and to prepare dishes from it.

I have acquired the tools of the trade over the years by reading specialized literature, attending internships with butchers, visiting slaughterhouses and participating in trainings digitally. Then came the time to try out what I learned, in practice, on actual products.

We at *Wolfs Junge* process the animals whole, because when we consume meat and take the life of a living being for our food, it is our responsibility to make sure it is treated with respect and used fully.



“Nose-2-Tail” is not a marketing strategy for us, but an integral part of the concept behind our restaurant. There is so much waste in the industrial slaughterhouse and in the wholesale trade, and the animals are treated anonymously and with such lack of dignity, that I would find it repugnant to use such products. Were we to order from these providers, we would know nothing about the origin of this meat, who raised the animal, where the animal was raised and what it was fed, where it was slaughtered, and and and ... For us and our restaurant, it is essential to know the animals we process and to have a relationship with the people who raise and slaughter these animals.



By now, we have completely processed the pork in our kitchen and are in the process of serving it, little by little, much to the delight of our guests. We serve it in a variety of ways: at lunchtime we have the bratwurst described above, in the evening we roast coarse black pudding with olives and raisins as an intermediate course, and for the main course we grill the neck and combine it with beetroot from the surrounding area.

We are absolutely committed to the high-quality of the food we serve. We wish to educate our guests and to explain why we think pigs are important on farms, how diversely they can be processed, and what cultural background these processes have.

What actively moves me personally are the moral and ethical foundations and problems that come with the consumption of meat. But to write about this here would go beyond the scope of this blog entry. At the moment, what I can say is that I take on this responsibility for myself and for my restaurant and that I look forward to the time when we can cut and taste our self-smoked ham in a few weeks, right on time for asparagus season.

Written by Sebastian Junge; Translation by H. Runte



Our daily bread

2. August 2023



An essential part of my restaurant's concept is for us to produce almost everything ourselves. Of course, this also includes different types of sourdough bread. I have learned how to do this on my own, over the past few years through trial and error, and also through various internships. When I was training to become a

chef, baking bread didn't play a major role in my education, and when it did, it was mostly to learn how to bake very simple yeast breads, baked with some anonymous, generic types of flour; nobody really had any idea how it worked or what could actually be possible. There was a lot of pseudo-knowledge in circulation, and most of the cooks and chefs showed little interest in trying to change anything. Most of the bread was ordered from bakeries or wholesalers.

However, access to culinary knowledge has been revolutionized rapidly over the past decades through the Internet. Today, there are numerous bloggers, youtubers and influencers who can and do teach us many tools and techniques. A lot of very good books on this subject have also come out into the market in recent years, making specialized knowledge easily accessible. And lastly, the Corona pandemic and the resulting lockdowns also triggered a real hype and an outpour of interest in home-made breads.

As I said, I learned how to bake bread on my own, through internships and just trying it out. I started baking bread about 9 years ago. I grew sourdough and baked it for me and my wife once a week, usually on Sundays, without a kneading machine, everything by hand. Baking always gives me great pleasure and always makes me want to try something new.



My internships have also enriched my baking skills enormously, and I have always tremendously enjoyed learning this way. To this day, I am still in close contact with the bakers who taught me. These bakeries are right on the farms where I have also worked in the past, and we still meet quite frequently to bake there together, using the grains grown directly on the farms. This is a way for me to stay in direct contact with the people who grow and grind the grains for my restaurant as well.



At *Wolfs Junge*, I bake with wheat sourdough and rye sourdough. Both cultures are almost 9 years old. Every time you look at our menu, whether at lunchtime and in the evening, there are always two types of bread presented, and we always communicate the age of the sourdough, as well as its other properties, for example that it is homemade, what particular farm the flour comes from, etc.

These details underline the importance that our breads play in each of our courses. I find it enormously important and appetizing for you to start your experience at my restaurant with one of our breads. They represent the art and complexity of our craft in a very straightforward way, because our simplest breads usually consist of 3 ingredients: water, flour and salt – and of course sourdough, but that only consists of water and flour. The presentation and the introduction of the types of bread we bake give us a chance to speak and to connect with our guests at the very beginning of their meal. We serve them a product that is baked with passion, and that is close to our hearts, and our guests feel that they are taking part in something special. We place the initial nuance on our breads by serving up an important part of our culinary DNA.

When I think back to my time in Australia, one of the things I missed the most was the lack of a deep-rooted local bread culture. I remember it was a real treat when we finally found a handful of bakeries that offered really good sourdough breads that actually had flavor, smelled good, stayed fresh for a while, and were hand rather than machine made. In Australia, a lot of industrial, light bread was baked and consumed. There were very few small, artisanal bakeries, and most people bought their bread at the supermarket. So, before I



returned to Germany, I decided I wanted to learn how to bake my own sourdough bread! And even now, making the dough, baking, and, of course, tasting the finished bread, is one of the things I enjoy most in my kitchen.

Written by Sebastian Junge; Translation by H. Runte

