

The Grand Traveler's Lunch

There is a simple yet elegant answer to the question of where to eat in Europe

Where does the motorist touring Europe have his mid-day meal? All too often our choice is influenced, if not determined, by an available parking place on the main square of the town or city through which we are passing.

After a few such decisions based upon "Let's take a chance on that pretty sidewalk cafe...we can even keep an eye on the Alfa while we eat," the glamour of dining on busy pedestrian thoroughfares or inside dreary restaurants crowded with noon-day customers, begins to wane and the traveler soon yearns for a more agreeable and less expensive solution.

Therefore, we suggest that the motorist touring Europe buy the basic ingredients for a mid-day repast. For whether in Vienna, Oslo, Paris or some provincial town or village astride our route, we are assured of truly magnificent bread and cheese of the region as well as wines ranging from the cheap, but usually pleasant, to those more costly but memorable.

Equally important is the distinct chance of enjoying that simple, delightful, satisfying lunch in quiet scenic splendor beside a country lane. A welcome change from noisy sidewalks and crowded restaurants.

But whether lunching beside a cart track with a view of Spain's Picos de Europa or amidst the pastoral loveliness of the French countryside, only half an hour outside the hurly-burly of Paris and two minutes off the Autoroute, what makes such a meal so gratifying is its main component: bread.

Not "bread" manufactured by computer controlled machines, wrapped in plastic, having the consistency of a marshmallow and tasting as though made from Kleenex...but BREAD, *real bread*.



The ingredients are basic, the results are superb

Bread made by actual bakers. Bread shaped by human hands into eye-pleasing loaves of graceful shapes and every size: crisp and beautifully textured on the outside, firm on the inside, tasting of sunshine and grain. Bread worthy of being reverently called the "Staff of Life." Bread sold on its merits as *bread* rather than by the words of too-clever ad writers and the vacuous smirking of precocious brats on television and billboards.

Call it *pan* or *pain*, call it *bröt* or bread...it is the heart and soul of your Traveler's Lunch. It is good enough to be eaten and enjoyed just by itself. Consumed with a variety of country cheeses and wine it makes a repast fit for gods.

Made by human hands it should be broken by human hands. Carry a knife for the cheese and sausage but never, never, subject these lovely loaves to the indignity of being sliced. To do so cuts the flavor in half and destroys the kinship of man! The ancients had perfectly effective cutting tools but they invited a

friend (or stranger) to *break bread* with them, not to cut it.

Once back home we only vaguely remember the excellent meals we enjoyed in European restaurants but, with closed eyes, we can still see clearly those roadside luncheons. Still hear the birds and the sounds of farmers at work in their fields, recall the music of belled sheep and cattle in mountain meadows, taste the cool sharp tang of those unpretentious wines and, above all, savor again the rich, full flavor and aroma of that incomparable bread.

So, a belated but heartfelt "thank you" to those flour-dusty, hard-working, not-very-rich bakers of Europe. One and all, true benefactors of mankind.

So what to do when traveling in the U.S.—eat the junk food available at every Interstate exit? Not if we can help it! But to find the few, though vital, components of the Traveler's Lunch is not always easy. The wine is the most readily obtained. Liquor stores—even supermarkets—have a fair variety of both domestic and imported from which to choose. But interesting cheese and good bread is almost impossible to find in a supermarket.

So, again, we are reminded that the main, most important, element of the Traveler's Lunch, at home or abroad, is bread. *Real bread*. Fortunately, ethnic bakeries do exist here. Look for them in the larger cities along your route. Their breads are also to be found in the proliferating "Wine and Cheese" shops where you can also augment your cheese supply before heading for the open road.

Bon appetit en route!

—Roger Barlow