

THE GRÄTZL / 'grɛ:tsl / noun*(Viennese dialect) a neighbourhood in Vienna contained by subjective boundaries and a coherent identity***Modsters, families, tourists and tradesmen give this eclectic market its charm** Photo: David Reali**The Naschmarkt – Hipster Market Mentality**by *Andreas Rainer*

“Kebab, kebab”, the young Turkish man shouts while cutting thin slices from an enormous skewer of meat. Its smell mixes with the odour of exotic spices, cheese, grilled fish and the sweat of thousands of visitors, who – especially now that summer has embraced Vienna – are enjoying the city’s most famous farmers’ market.

Originally the Kärntnertormarkt, the market was founded in 1780 on the right side of the Wienfluss, between Wiedner Hauptstraße and Operngasse. All fruits and vegetables that were delivered into the city by wagon had to be sold here. The name “Naschmarkt” began being used around 1820 and probably refers to the snacking on exotic sweets and nibbles like sugar pickled orange peels and dates that were sold at many of the booths. In 1902 the market was moved to today’s location between Getreidemarkt and Kettenbrückengasse and Rechte and Linke Wienzeile.

Until 2009, the Naschmarkt was split between two districts (Mariahilf and Wieden), when juris-

diction was conveyed entirely to the 6th District, to make administration easier – however those who have tried to get a permit for a stand there know that it can still be quite a challenge.

From Turkish breakfast to Japanese pizza

The market today is about 1.5 kilometres long and is a unique microcosm of bobos, hipsters, families and old folks, tourists and tradesmen from all over the world. For many Viennese, the Naschmarkt is a kind of love-hate thing: While there are great restaurants, bars and stores to be discovered amidst the lively and international atmosphere, you also fight the feeling of getting ripped off when going grocery shopping: €5 for a spoonful of hummus, €10 for a handful of olives – the same stuff at the nearby Billa would be far less. Of course it would also have less flavour... But that’s another story.

There is no way to prepare to discover the Naschmarkt, but we can look at some of the hotspots in and around this culinary oasis. On a sunny day, getting a table at Deli is almost impossible

because all the cool kids of Vienna seem to have gathered here to enjoy a veggie-wok for €10 or an equally popular Turkish breakfast. Fortunately, the epicentre of hipness has spawned a couple of clones such as Do-An or Neni that look identical and serve the same bobo-cuisine together with a cool, copper-coloured glass of *Apérol-Spritzer*. While there is excellent Balkan fare, sea food specialities and Turkish delights, don’t expect haute cuisine or epicurean experiments here: This is a seller’s market and most customers will go to anywhere with a spare seat.

Outside, looking in

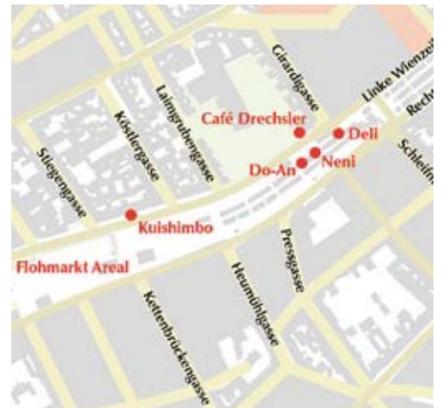
While people-watching is nowhere as enjoyable as right inside of the market, the more interesting gastronomic institutions are lined up on the Wienzeile: Café Drechsler, for example, is one of Vienna’s oldest *Kaffeehäuser* and reopened in 2007. The interior designers got rid of the dirt and decay of decades of shady characters. And while it isn’t as charmingly down at the heels anymore, it still is one of the few places in Vienna where you can get a full warm meal after midnight. And legend has it that the original Engelbert Drechsler was the first to serve the now commonly available “coffee to go” in Vienna, by providing take-away brew for the Naschmarkt vendors.

Right next to the metro station Kettenbrückengasse may be the most charming Japanese restaurant of the city: Kuishimbo is little more than a hole in the wall, but serves authentic Japanese cuisine (see Restaurant Review, page 27). With the vast number of sushi joints in Vienna you’d think that the Japanese eat nothing but raw fish. In fact, they more often enjoy a pot of hot noodle soup instead. Kuishimbo gives you a taste of that, and the adventurous can try Japanese pizza – where the ingredients still move around on the plate!

Save it for Saturday

The most exciting day to visit the Naschmarkt is Saturday, when the flea market takes over in the outer section at Kettenbrückengasse. If you really plan on buying something, ignore your Friday night hangover and come early because the good stuff is definitely gone by noon. For all who just want to soak in the atmosphere of hundreds of onlookers walking between decades-old telephones, videocassettes and dusty dishes, this is the perfect place at any time of day.

When the dusk slowly envelopes the market on a slow and hot Viennese summer day, when the vendors start to pack away the fake football shirts and shisha-tobacco, and dozens of different languages – of visitors and vendors – bubble over the heads of the crowd, and as people storm the bars and bistros, even the Viennese are reminded once again why they are in love with their city. ◇

**On Saturdays, useless paraphernalia and rare treasures await at the Flohmarkt** Photo: D. Reali

Deli
Naschmarkt 421-436
(01) 5850823

Kuishimbo
Linke Wienzeile 40
0699 171 923 55 (no reservations)

Café Drechsler
Linke Wienzeile 22 / Girardigasse 1
(01) 581 20 44

Naschmarkt Flohmarkt Area

Do-An
Naschmarkt 412-415
(01) 58 58 253

Neni
Naschmarkt 510
(01) 585 20 20

by *Duncan J. D. Smith*

On 14 Dec. 2009, the fabled Orient Express pulled into Vienna’s Westbahnhof for the last time, a victim of high-speed trains and cut-price airlines. In the months that followed, the station at the top of Mariahilferstraße was dramatically overhauled. Now as much a shopping centre as a railway station, it contains reminders of a past both glorious and grim.

Station for an Empress

The Westbahnhof opened in 1858 to service trains connecting Vienna with Salzburg, Germany, and beyond. It was a grand affair realised in the Emperor’s preferred Historicist style, a mélange of Renaissance pavilions and Gothic turrets, with Tuscan-style arcades to afford protection in bad weather. There was statuary, too, including a rendering in Carrara marble of the wasp-waisted Empress Sisi. The Westbahn was originally named in her honour, and she would use it regularly to reach her Bavarian homeland, as well as the Habsburg retreat at Bad Ischl.

The interior was equally impressive and redolent of the industrial age in which it was built. The four platforms stretched into the distance beneath a glass-and-iron roof over a hundred metres long. It is difficult now to imagine how the place must have appeared, filled with smoke and steam and carts and porters.

End of the line?

As the railway age sped inexorably forward, so the capacity of the Westbahnhof was expanded. Things came to a grinding halt, however, with the Second World War, and like Vienna’s handful of other mainline stations, the Westbahnhof now served a darker purpose. A wall plaque recalls 150 Austrians transported from here in 1938 to the concentration camp

STONES OF VIENNA*Having seen a past both glorious and grim, Vienna’s Western Station is again being reinvented for a new age***All Change at Westbahnhof: The History of a Crossroads****A reminder of the pre-war Kindertransport trains that left to England** Photo: Duncan Smith

at Dachau. More upbeat is the statue of a young Jewish boy sitting on his suitcase. It reminds passers-by of the *Kindertransport* trains that departed Nazi-occupied Europe for the safety of Britain in the months before the outbreak of war.

Near the end of the war in April 1945, the station was badly damaged during an air raid, and its great roof collapsed. Although the line was soon cleared it was decided to rebuild the station, and so in 1949 the old one was torn down. It was the end of an era and only old photographs can convey the former grandeur of this lost palace of travel.

Born-again Bahnhof

The rebuilt Westbahnhof looked very different when it was unveiled in 1952. Gone were the fussy pavilions and arcades, replaced by a sleek,

open-plan arrivals hall illuminated by a glass façade. Beyond were eleven platforms reached by escalators, and later a direct connection was established with the city’s U-Bahn network. An affectionate nod to the old station was made by displaying the marble statue of Sisi, which had appeared unexpectedly in a council warehouse in 1982.

Then in 2008 the station was revamped again, in line with current trends seen at other European transport hubs. As BahnhofCity Wien West, the station is now a multifunctional space offering not only transport connections but also shops, office space, catering facilities, and a hotel.

What’s left of the rest?

In 2015 things will change yet again at the Westbahnhof, when the long-planned Wiener Hauptbahnhof opens on the former site of the old Süd- and Ostbahnhof. Both were also once beautiful buildings and it is to be hoped that the Venetian lion of Saint Mark that adorned the Südbahnhof before the war will be returned to the site. Trains bound for Eastern Europe will now bypass the Westbahnhof and proceed directly to the Hauptbahnhof via a new tunnel beneath the Lainzer Tiergarten. So the rail timetable looks set to get a little quieter at the Westbahnhof. But then there’s always the shopping... ◇

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