

Full of Fun

Walk into Herwig's Austrian Bistro on College Avenue and you'd better be ready for a side of spectacle with your dinner. "It's not a regular restaurant," says owner Herwig "Brandy" Brandstatter. "If you're not too busy, it's like show time."

Herwig has had a passion for food since his childhood. "I was so delighted when I was 5 and my dad taught me how to make scrambled eggs, and I have been cooking ever since," he says. In fact, you can often find Herwig, and his son, Bernd, making hundreds of sausages and other Austrian delights in the kitchen when they're not out on the floor entertaining guests.

Herwig's serves classic Austrian dishes that have customers from all over coming to try them. "People drive from far away to eat here—places like Harrisburg, Erie and Johnstown," says Herwig. Some bestsellers include wiener schnitzel, fresh made bratwurst, sauerkraut, which is cooked for eight hours, and a potato salad made with oil, vinegar and mustard, rather than typical mayonnaise.

All of this food is put on your plate in massive portions—but don't even think about not finishing it all. Some of Herwig's infamous, tongue-in-cheek rules include a directive to clean your plate. If not, you risk Herwig's empty threats made with a giant wooden spoon. Take-out boxes are \$35 there.

Herwig's wife, Gundi, and Bernd help maintain the lively reputation of the restaurant in addition to cooking the traditional food, and you'll meet them all in the family business. "We don't have any waiters;



we don't have any cooks; everyone does everything—but the only one who can yodel, however, is me," says Herwig.

In fact, he yodels live on Wednesday and Friday mornings on WOWY 97.1 FM while dishing about Herwig's menu. He's got an audience—customers come in to hear him yodel and enjoy a slice of chocolate-covered bacon (Bernd's creation) or fresh sausage, some of the other trademarks of the bistro.

Bacon desserts have become extremely popular. Favorites include bacon ice cream, bacon cheesecake and Bernd's hand-dipped, chocolate-covered bacon slices. "People come in and ask for five slices of chocolate-covered bacon, and

we only have two left," Herwig says. But this should come as no surprise because at Herwig's, "Bacon is an Herb," the restaurant's official trademark.

Herwig's is also known for its sausage, which Herwig and Bernd make by hand each week. They used to purchase ready-made sausage but weren't happy with the ingredients. So, although they had never made their own sausage before, the family collected flavorful ingredients and created a secret recipe, which has now been around for more than 20 years. "We just realized if you put good stuff in there it is going to be good," Herwig says.

Herwig's offers all the entertainment and authenticity of Austria while serving delicious food. "We cook everything fresh everyday; we use as many local ingredients as we can get; we don't get anything frozen or ready made. We want to get the ingredients and do our own cooking," Herwig says. "We make eating fun." —SCM