

Kris Hermes, owner and chef of Schnitzel Haus in downtown Bryan, prepares a traditional German meal.



A Taste of Germany

Story by Travis Irby

Photography by Brandon Bollom

Schnitzel Haus brings a touch of German culture to Bryan-College Station

When some A&M students think of great German exports, super model Claudia Schiffer might come to mind, but the Schnitzel Haus is looking to broaden local views on German culture and German food.

Kris Hermes, owner and chef of Schnitzel Haus, brings a lifetime of experience into her kitchen. Hermes has cooked all over the United States and the world.

She is a native of Frankfurt, Germany, where her father ran a restaurant.

"When I was five, I would pull up a stool to the stove and start cooking," Hermes said. "Cooking is in my blood and family. I knew it was all I wanted to do."

At 14 years old, Hermes started working at a hotel in Frankfurt, and then went to culinary school in Austria. She then worked in the United States for a year, before heading off to France to earn her master's degree in cooking.

Hermes ended up in Houston working as a chef in a hotel, but she wanted to open her own restaurant.

"I didn't want to work all the hours for as little money as I was getting," Hermes said. "It was

equivalent to working for minimum wage."

She quit and took some time off in Europe to visit family and friends. During the vacation, she realized her goal was to open a restaurant.

"I would cook all this food for family and friends; then I would get the grocery bill," Hermes said. "After a while, I thought I better open up my own place and make some money."

Hermes opened a restaurant in Brenham, which soon developed a loyal following, including a large number of A&M faculty members.

"I've been eating with Kris since she was in Brenham, and I've eaten all over the world," said Bart Childs, a computer science professor. "She is the best chef I've ever had cook for me."

"My sister originally introduced me to Kris' cooking in Brenham, and it is the best food I've ever had," said Mary Lindeman, a Texas A&M Foundation employee.

Eight years ago, Hermes decided to move the restaurant to Bryan.

"Many people were asking me to move it to a bigger venue," Hermes said.

She found the space she needed in downtown Bryan. Schnitzel Haus contains a bar, a

mammoth kitchen and a large dining room decorated with bottles of German beer and pictures of Germany.

"Our busiest times are graduation, Valentine's Day and other important social functions," Hermes said.

Hermes said the restaurant offers a nice meal for a family or a couple, a statement with which Lindeman said she agrees.

"People can always go to Chili's or McDonald's, but they rarely have an opportunity to enjoy a high-quality, fresh-cooked meal," Lindeman said.

The food is the reason Hermes is in the business, and she revels in her culinary creativity.

"She can cook almost anything at anytime, with any ingredients," Lindeman said. "And it is always excellent."

Jenny Foster, a senior journalism major, first visited Schnitzel Haus for Ring Dance.

"My boyfriend and I wanted a quiet, nice place to eat, and we'd heard good things about it," Foster said. "I asked for a vegetarian dish, but they didn't have any. They made one up on the spot and it was the best thing I've ever had."

The Schnitzel Haus' menu is not limited to traditional German cuisine.

"Kris has a wealth of cooking

experience, extending beyond just German food," Childs said. "She has some of the best seafood I've ever had."

A meal for two at Schnitzel Haus usually runs around \$40. Hermes said she realizes college students are on a budget and offers deals to help keep them well fed.

Tuesday through Thursday nights, Schnitzel Haus offers a wide range of food discounted to \$7.95 for college students. The portions are the regular size, but the prices are not.

"College kids don't have any money," Hermes said. "So I try to make it easier for them to eat well. The special is for students only, not the professors — they have money."

The Schnitzel Haus might not be in the everyday price range of students, but the restaurant offers an opportunity for students to enjoy a nice meal with family and friends.

"I would highly recommend it to students looking for a great place to eat and enjoy yourself," Foster said.

Schnitzel Haus offers students a chance to eat good food in a quality atmosphere.

All they have to do make reservations and bring an appetite the size of Deutschland.

Internet Job-Find: Employers sought with the click of a mouse

By STEPHEN WELLS
Staff writer

It can be frustrating for students when they enter the real world and find out that not every company on the face of the Earth is chucking job interviews at them.

Enter the men of houstonemployment.com, Jerry Kowalchik, a former student of A&M, and Ryan Murphey, chief executive officer of houstonemployment.com. Their company is an Internet version of a placement service.

Kowalchik, the company's president, said the niche existed in Houston's job market for a locally-maintained database of employers and employees.

"What started the idea was the recognition of a need for job seekers and employers to find each other," Kowalchik said.

"For employers, it's tough financially to find the right employees, to contact all the job agencies and to place ads in the papers. For job seekers, it's tough because they don't directly contact employers. They just answer ads in the paper or give a resume to a placement service."

For those job seekers, www.houstonemployment.com makes life considerably easier.

"Job seekers interested in employment can access our resume template and fill in the blanks," Kowalchik said. "They can complete the template and advertise themselves to all

of the employers who use the service. At any given time we've got about 1500 resumes on our page, and about 17 percent get notified for job interviews."

Some of Houston's largest employers regularly use the page and recruit college students actively, so job seekers need not be wary of getting stuck with a job they will not enjoy.

"At any given time, there are probably 50 businesses on the system, including Enron and Compaq," Kowalchik said. "That's the advantage of using our site over a national site, because a national service will usually only offer technical jobs. We have ads for managers, machinists, even hairstylists," Kowalchik said.

Right now, the job market in Houston is extremely good."

Jerry Kowalchik
President of
houstonemployment.com

Internet services like this one are a boon to students, eliminating much of the stress of leaving the comfortable cocoon of college life and jumping feet first into the daily grind. Being easy to use and successful makes these sites popular for job seekers.

"We've had over a million hits on our Website in the past six months, but

we were just starting out," Kowalchik said. "Now, we average about 300,000 hits per month. Every day, we probably get 100 people who access our site from the Texas A&M Home Page, because there's a link there under Career Opportunities."

The job market for educated or skilled workers in Houston is expanding, and a lot of the companies look to the Web for employees.


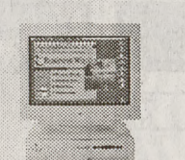


"Right now, the job market in Houston is extremely good," Kowalchik said. "As far as frequency of job offers, there's really a lot of computer engineering jobs out there."

Kowalchik and Murphey said the greatest benefit is the local nature of the Website.

"One of the most unique things about our Website is that we target a local area even though we are Internet based," Murphey said. "We only advertise local jobs. People coming from A&M don't want to work in Green Bay. We concentrate on where people want to work, and we have Internet links to almost every major campus in Texas."

So, students do not need to suffer from the machinations of the real world and the cruel sport job hunting has become. Instead of pounding pavement and becoming numb to rejection, Internet placement services offer convenience and mass appeal.

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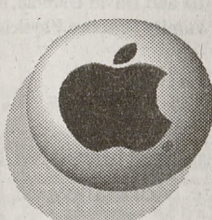
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