

**THE GRÄTZL / 'grɛ:tsl / noun***(Viennese dialect) a neighbourhood in Vienna contained by subjective boundaries and a coherent identity*

Guests at Tewa on the Karmelitermarkt defy the cold amidst the mid-day bustle Photo: M. Childs

**Karmeliterviertel – No Mazzes is an Island**

by Margaret Childs

Just over the Danube Canal from Schottenring, the Karmeliterviertel in the second district is sandwiched between the Canal and the Augarten, loosely carved out between Taborstraße and Obere Augartenstraße, a tangle of curvy, one-way streets. Over the last decade, more and more addresses in Leopoldstadt want to be counted as part of this *Grätzl*. Formerly a “problem neighborhood,” today’s Karmeliterviertel has become more international, more sophisticated and more beautiful. All this without losing its old-school Viennese charm: a BoBo’s dreamland.

**Mazzes Island**

The history is a lot less pleasant. The *Grätzl* was named after the popular Karmeliter Market, named for the Karmeliter Church, which is all that remains of a vast Monastery whose wall surrounded the area from today’s Karmeliterplatz to Tandelmarktstraße, with fields and orchards stretching to the Danube beyond.

In the 1600s, the vicinity north of the monastery was the Judenstadt (Jew City), a ghetto made for the Viennese Jews who had been “relocated” from their community centre in Himmelfortgasse, within the city walls. The violence against Jews continued to grow, peaking in 1670, when Emperor Leopold I banished them from the city altogether.

Still they gradually came back, establishing the quarter’s Jewish character over two centuries, earning it the name *Mazzes Insel*, after the traditional Jewish bread. Then, on 9 Nov. 1938, the *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) saw the majority of Jewish residents driven out or killed.

After the war, Jewish families gradually returned, including many Orthodox Jews, especially from Eastern Europe – if only for the infrastructure, which offers Jewish community centres, Hebrew schools, a Rabbinical School and kosher food stores.

Today, they have been joined by international artists, politicians, young families and the well-

meaning BoBos, the Bourgeois Bohemians whose taste and ready cash are helping fuel the revival.

On Fridays and Saturdays religious families flock to Shabbat services at the neighbouring temples or cross the bridge to Vienna’s largest synagogue on Seitenstettengasse. And everyone else heads for the Karmelitermarkt.

**The Market**

From pheasant eggs and goat cheese, to walnut bread and asparagus-ham, the farmer’s market whets the appetite, especially the “Slow-Food Corner” with seasonal regional organic products. Saturday morning is a nibbler’s prime time; tasting is always welcome.

During the week, there is still a lot going on: From flower shops to fruit stands, the shops on the market are thriving. After construction on an underground parking garage was completed in 2000, the market has slowly come back to life. Staples like the Gasthaus Marktacherl have gotten much-needed makeovers (see restaurant review in October 2011 issue), and other gems are shining, like Madiani, where the Georgian menu and neighbourly service make you feel immediately welcome. On an evening with live music, try the pomegranate and bean salad or *khartscho*, a beef ragout with walnuts.

The newest favorite is Tewa (meaning “nature” in Hebrew; see photo), sister of the Naschmarkt restaurant, with a reasonably priced Middle-Eastern menu and a laid-back atmosphere for drinks with friends or coffee after slow-food shopping.

**One Way Streets**

First off: this *Grätzl* is best experienced on foot. If you are sporting wheels, a *Fiaker*, even a tricycle, beware of the (sometimes cycle-mounted) police. Walking from the market on Haidgasse, you’ll run into one of the most hidden attractions of the *Viertel*, the Wiener Kriminalmuseum (Vienna Museum of Crime). A mecca for the morbid, this place – ranging from medieval torture to modern-day homicide – is way beyond the TV series *CSI*.

Continuing to Taborstraße, across the street you’ll find Lhotsky’s Literaturbuffet, a cafe-bookstore serving a select assortment of fiction, and non-fiction, including neighbourhood memoirs and guides, as well as excellent coffee and snacks.

Down Taborstraße, outbound, turn left onto Grosse Pfarrgasse. Past the Leopoldskirche, built on the foundations of a 17th-century synagogue, the restaurant Leopold is a warm beacon on a dark night. The high ceilings, good food and clean décor are inviting, but more private than the alternatives around the market.

Taking a right onto Grosse Sperlasse, discover Café Sperlhof, a living room away from home. It features billiards, board games, cards,

dice, a foosball table, chess, table tennis, backgammon and a daily book flea market. And an “extra” room you can book for free.

Following Grosse Sperlasse further you reach the Augarten. This back yard to the entire *Grätzl* is where young families, panting joggers, groups of grandmothers laughing behind headscarves, old men playing *boule*, picnickers and lovers take their time, find serenity.

After all this walking, it’s time for one of the best inside scoops of the Karmeliterviertel. At Dianabad, the real steal are the saunas. Professionals offer special treatments with salt, honey or yogurt – the perfect way to wind down after Karmeliter-combing.

Perhaps it’s the bustle at the Market, the proximity to the centre, or just the charming maze of one-way streets that make you glad not to need a car. Something about the mix of international, intercultural, of old and new, the artists, musicians, brings out the real feeling of a village in the city – a definitive *Grätzl*. ♦



Augarten, Main entrance on Obere Augartenstraße

Café Sperlhof: Grosse Sperlasse 41

Dianabad: Lilienbrunnengasse 7–9  
[www.dianabad-wien.at](http://www.dianabad-wien.at)

Kriminalmuseum: Grosse Sperlasse 24  
[www.kriminalmuseum.at](http://www.kriminalmuseum.at)

Leopold, Grosse Pfarrgasse 11  
[www.restaurant-leopold.at](http://www.restaurant-leopold.at)

Lhotsky's: Taborstraße 28  
[www.literaturbuffet.com](http://www.literaturbuffet.com)

Madiani: Karmelitermarkt 21–24  
[www.madiani.com](http://www.madiani.com)

Tewa: Karmelitermarkt 26–32  
[www.tewa672.com](http://www.tewa672.com)

by Duncan J. D. Smith

For the last hundred years, only sparkling wine made in the French Champagne region has been permitted to carry that region’s name. Producers elsewhere have not been allowed to profit from one of the world’s strongest brands. For the Vienna-based company Schlumberger, however, this has not been a handicap, and its sparkling wines are as popular as ever.

**From Champagne to Vienna**

Robert Alwin Schlumberger (1814–1879) was the first producer of sparkling *Sekt* in Austria. Born in Stuttgart, he was forced to give up his studies following the early death of his father. He then became a merchant, a job that took him to Reims in France. It was there that he found a job in the oldest champagne cellar in France.

In 1841, during a pleasure cruise along the Rhine, Schlumberger met and fell in love with Sophie Kirchner, the daughter of a wealthy Viennese factory owner. Marriage was soon in the air, but Sophie’s mother firmly opposed her daughter moving to France. Instead Schlumberger relinquished his job in Reims and relocated to Vienna. The following year the pair moved to nearby Vöslau, where with his wife’s financial support, Schlumberger rented several vineyards in the area that he had identified as ideal for the production of sparkling wine.

**A Sparkling Success**

Schlumberger’s dream was to produce his own sparkling wine from Austrian grapes according to the French Champagne tradition (*Méthode champenoise*). Such was his success that by the early 1860s, Schlumberger Champagne was not only the preferred toast of Viennese society but also a favourite at the table of the Queen of England. For his efforts Schlumberger was ennobled by Emperor Franz Joseph

**STONES OF VIENNA***Deep beneath Döbling, a hidden labyrinth of cellars has long been used to create some of Vienna’s oldest and finest Sekt***A Story of Love and Bubbles**

I, and as a purveyor to the Habsburg court, the company was eventually permitted to use the prestigious appointment of a *k.u.k.-Hoflieferant* – an Imperial and Royal Supplier to the Court.

The First World War changed everything. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was dissolved and its economy left in tatters. Under the punitive terms of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Lye (1919), the new Republic of Austria was forbidden to use the name champagne. Despite this setback Schlumberger survived, as it did through the Second World War as well. Indeed, since being acquired by the German family-owned company Underberg in 1973, Schlumberger has continued producing some of the highest quality sparkling wines in all of Europe.

**Adding the Bubbles**

After 1919, Schlumberger were still allowed to advertise their wines as being made by the *Méthode champenoise*. Since 1995, however, Austria’s accession to the European Union prompted a further restriction, and now Schlumberger’s bottles (adorned with the company’s familiar fairy logo) can only lay claim to the *Méthode traditionnelle*. Whatever the name, the technique is the same: An in-bottle secondary fermentation is used to carbonate the wine.

This signature process was first discovered around 1700 by the French Benedictine monk Dom Pérignon. After harvesting his grapes, he placed their slightly fermented juice (German: *Most*) into barrels containing yeast to continue the process. Fermentation was suspended due to the cold winter temperatures, only for it to recommence in the spring, resulting in the bubbles. From the late 17th century, the wine was put directly into glass bottles, allowing better control of the fermentation process, as well as easier transportation.

For their basic wine, Schlumberger today uses a *cuvée* of different grape varieties from the

**Sekt-making sticks to traditional processes to create its signature taste** Photo: Duncan Smith

Weinviertel and Burgenland. Once the yeast and a little sugar (*dosage*) are added, the bottles are stored 18 to 36 months in dark, cool cellars. Then they are placed upside down in wooden racks and turned an eighth of a revolution 32 times. (The cellar mark on the bottom of each bottle gives an accurate measure of the bottle’s position at any given time.) Known as riddling, the process encourages the dead yeast cells to congregate in the neck of the bottle, where it is shock-frozen, and the icy plug containing the yeast is disgorged by the pressure accumulated during fermentation. The bottle is then topped up, corked and wired to prevent it from popping prematurely.

**Visiting the Cellars**

Schlumberger’s wine cellars have long been located in Döbling, close to the Danube Canal along which the wine was originally shipped. Two and a half kilometres of brick-lined tunnels provide the constant temperature (13°C) necessary to guarantee fermentation – and storage for the 1.7 million bottles produced each year. A masterpiece of engineering, the tunnels were designed by Carl Ritter von Ghega, the architect behind the Semmering railway. Each cellar is named after one of the twelve disciples – all except Judas, who might give away the secret formula.

Twice-weekly cellar tours are available, and visitors are treated to a perfect glass of Schlumberger *Sekt*. Now that’s worth toasting! ♦

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[www.schlumberger.at](http://www.schlumberger.at)

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