

# WORK

## KITCHEN STORIES

### INNOVATION

Fresh ideas from  
the autumn in-house  
exhibition

### IN THE GALLEY

How Häcker  
fitted out a floating  
luxury villa

# SOPHISTICATED WOODWORK

Veneer fronts have always been a popular choice.  
New production methods have given rise to new designs  
for today's urban trends.





## SPACE FOR NEW IDEAS!

Check out our unusual innovations for unique kitchen and living space design.



Find out more on our website.

[www.haecker-kuechen.com](http://www.haecker-kuechen.com)

Cover: HÄCKER KÜCHEN; Photo: HÄCKER KÜCHEN



Jochen Finkemeier sees a bright future ahead.  
He believes in Häcker's innovative spirit.

## Dear Readers,

Our in-house exhibition is already a few weeks behind us, but I still feel buoyed by the positive atmosphere I experienced there. I was able to talk to many customers and hear their enthusiasm for our products. Our in-house exhibition motto 'Be unique' is so much more than just a motto. Every innovation that we present contributes to this. We produce distinctive kitchens that are the result of a harmonic symbiosis of tradition and innovation.

We set new standards when it comes to technology and utility: the new carcass depth of 61 centimetres, which provides an additional 10 per cent storage space, our SlimLine Drawer (or SLD for short) and the integrated lighting in the pull-outs are all recent additions to systemat's standard equipment. These are all highly functional details that are hidden within the kitchen and so not immediately visible.

The added value here is of particular benefit to our end consumers. Alongside the new inner element, we have also introduced a range of new fronts and materials, from granite and concrete décors to refined

wood veneers. This year, we have also put our woodworking expertise to good use in our systemat range.

High-quality materials, precise processing, careful design and functional planning – these are our ingredients for a perfect kitchen. What's more, we constantly work on better understanding the wants and needs of our customers. We place great importance on working closely and keeping in touch with our employees, customers and suppliers. We are proud to stand by their side as a reliable partner. As a family company with a rich history, we live our values in our day-to-day interactions not only in Europe but all around the world.

We are looking to the future with foresight and optimism.

Warm Regards,

*J. Finkemeier*

You can find more information at:  
[haecker-kuechen.com/en](http://haecker-kuechen.com/en)





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**SOPHISTICATED WOODWORK**  
Häcker kitchens are characterised by traditional craftsmanship, outstanding quality and new ideas. The new real wood veneer fronts are a perfect example of this.

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PHOTOS: HÄCKER KÜCHEN, JARED PEARLMA / ARKUP, SIMON HOFMANN, FINCA AMISTAD, STOCK

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**DELICIOUS DRINKS**  
Imaginative sommeliers are experimenting with alcohol-free drinks using berries, fruit and herbs to concoct tasty alternatives to traditional wine pairings.

### DELICATE AND CRISP

The pink oyster mushrooms produced by gourmet mushroom grower Mirko Kalkum are grown on wood. Their beautiful appearance, firm consistency and delicate flavour have made them a big hit among start chefs.



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# All the latest from Häcker

An anniversary party in India, a kitchen island that is also an artistic sculpture and five Red Dot Awards for Blaupunkt's products. Häcker has lots of exciting news to share.



## CELEBRATING A FANTASTIC PARTNERSHIP

Häcker Managing Director Markus Sander and Captain Mukesh Kumar Gombar, Chairman of the Indian Kanu Group, cut the anniversary cake together.

## 20 years of Häcker in India

**FROM EAST WESTPHALIA TO ALL FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE** – this is by no means something new from Häcker. In summer 2024, Häcker headed to Delhi to celebrate 20 years of Häcker in India together with their partner and business associate Captain Mukesh Kumar Gombar and his family. The anniversary was the perfect opportunity for Häcker's Managing Director Markus Sander and a small delegation to travel to the subcontinent and celebrate with their retail partner, the Kanu Group. During the festivities, Markus Sander thanked Captain Mukesh Kumar Gombar and his daughter Kanupriya for their involvement in the long-standing collaboration. He was very optimistic about the future, saying: "We will achieve many more milestones together in the years to come." Thomas Tharakan, a Häcker partner in Kochi since 2008, shared his opinion too: "It's great working with Häcker. Everything has a system and it all works seamlessly."

Häcker is now present in 16 Indian cities, from Mumbai to Hyderabad and Pune. Customers love the minimalist and modern designs and the innovative technology in the spacious premium kitchens with additional smaller working kitchens. Another plus point for these customers is the outstanding functionality of the kitchens that can be used to create perfectly tailored solutions for even the smallest of apartments.



## SMALL LUXURY WITH A SCULPTURAL KITCHEN ISLAND

The angular island made from dark green natural stone and elegant class cabinets make a perfect combination.

## An avant-garde island solution

**A MUCH-ADMIRED HIGHLIGHT** of the in-house exhibition was a kitchen island made from dark green natural stone – the perfect embodiment of the small luxury trend. Not only did the finely veined stone wow visitors, but the unusual shape – a polyhedron with a five-sided front that looks more like a sculpture than a piece of kitchen furniture – caused quite a stir. The clean lines convey a sense of urban modernity in an avant-garde design language. Despite its minimalist aesthetic, the island is particularly impressive because of how efficiently it uses the available space. Its compact structure and

functional design makes the angular island a high-quality kitchen solution for smaller, urban living areas – even more so when combined with the glass cabinet with a built-in oven: small luxury perfection.

All the necessary kitchen functions are integrated and it offers maximum comfort in a minimal amount of space. Häcker presented the natural stone island for the very first time at EuroCucina in April, and the avant-garde piece enjoyed its German premier at the in-house exhibition. With this island, Häcker has more than stayed true to its motto: 'Be unique'.

Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN



## 'ALENTO' KITCHEN SINK SERIES

Alento sinks are made from a quartz composite that is particularly hygienic, durable and heat-resistant. The jury recognised their "contemporary design and innovative material technology, which combines robustness with an interesting feel."



reddot winner 2024

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## 'MAIRA' KITCHEN SINK SERIES

This kitchen sink series, also made from quartz composite, won the jury over with their straight lines and expressive shapes. According to the experts that selected the winner of the 'Best of the Best' award, the 'Maira' kitchen sink series is "perfectly reduced to its function... There is not one single superfluous detail, a fact that simplifies the cleaning process. And the material is simply fantastic."



## Blaupunkt: five awards

**HIGH PRAISE** for five of Blaupunkt's products: Blaupunkt was recognised in the Product Design category at the internationally renowned Red Dot Awards. They even received the 'Red Dot: Best of the Best' award, the highest possible accolade, for the "pioneering design" of their 'Maira' kitchen sink series.

"Receiving five Red Dot Awards this year, including the highest possible prize 'Best of the Best', is a great honour for our whole team and confirmation of their hard work," explains Olaf Thuleweit, Managing Director of HK Appliances. "Product features like the high material quality and aesthetic design are just as important to us as ensuring that our products are flexible and convenient to use. The fact that the jury praised these features is confirmation of all our efforts and massive motivation for us to continue working on more Blaupunkt innovations in the future."

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## REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER COMBINATION 5CD-891SC0

This free-standing appliance has several special features, including a four-door French door design and the option to switch the bottom right compartment from freezing to refrigeration and back again. The jury praised the "high capacity" (522 litres), "clearly organised interior" and the "intelligent functions".



## INDUCTION HOB 5II 86250

This hob has enough space for up to six pots and pans. According to the jury: "Characterised by a strict geometry, the cooktop with its flexible surface makes preparing large quantities of food a pleasure."

## INTEGRATED OVEN 5B50P 8690

This appliance is part of the Dark Steel series. The jury described this model as "an expressive and stylish appliance, whose craftsmanship shows considerable care down to the tiniest detail."



# BE UNIQUE

Sei einzigartig

## All the news from Rödinghausen

At the traditional in-house exhibition in September, Häcker presented a whole host of fresh innovations. The systemat range now comes with several new features as standard, including a carcass depth of 61 centimetres, inner lighting and extra narrow frames. Häcker also introduced a series of new fronts and glass cabinets – all in keeping with their motto ‘Be unique’.

### BE UNIQUE

At the in-house exhibition in September 2024, Häcker presented a host of fresh innovations and customisation options – proof that the company takes their ‘Be unique’ motto seriously.



Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN





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H

äcker was ready with a host of exciting innovations at the in-house exhibition in September. This year, there was a particular focus on the systemat range. The product managers developed a wide variety of new features that illustrate Häcker's high standards. Häcker sets themselves apart from the competition at an international level with the motto 'Be unique'. It represents the individuality and uniqueness in Häcker's kitchen designs. With their new products, Häcker and their retail partners offer many options for customisation and solutions during planning that will make any kitchen unique and meet the requirements of demanding customers who are placing ever greater emphasis on individuality.

### Three new stunning standard features

In the systemat range, Häcker now offers three new elements as standard that significantly expand the scope for kitchen planning and increase the added value for end customers. With a new carcass depth of 61 centimetres for pull-outs, Häcker is expanding upon their product portfolio with a basic planning element that offers plenty of

advantages in terms of storage space and appearance. Since autumn, the pull-outs have also been equipped with fully integrated lighting as standard which significantly increases user comfort and helps to create a pleasant lighting environment. A further design highlight from Häcker that is now also included in the systemat range as standard is the SLD SlimLine Drawer. The drawers have the most delicate pull-out system on the market with particularly narrow metal frames measuring just eight millimetres thick.

### A focus on wood

With the systemat range, Häcker is focusing on its core competence of wood in the form of extra-narrow framed fronts, a new veneer front inspired by Viennese canework and open-jointed solid wood pull-outs (see Pages 18 and 36 for more information). Häcker has also given the inside of their kitchens a makeover with a new design carcass in natural fine oak, a light, fine-grained wood décor.

### A variety of fronts

Framed fronts continue to be a popular option, but many customers find them too rural and rustic. With their delicately designed new fronts, Häcker has come up with a solution that better fits more minimalist, urban kitchens. They have an extra narrow frame in a dainty faceted design. Alongside an impressive programme of colours, which includes shades like eucalyptus or velvet blue, this kitchen can also be ordered in 2,000 colours on the RAL and NCS colour spectrum, thus ensuring almost endless design options.



3

**1 LIGHT, DEEP, NARROW** With more storage space and a whole new look, the new systemat pull-outs offer significantly more added value for users. **2 NEW TOP STANDARD** The systemat pull-outs now offer 10 per cent more space as standard, are illuminated from above and have extra-narrow frames. **3 FINE EDGES** The narrow frames of the new faceted fronts give them a warm, inviting look.

Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN





The attention of many visitors was drawn to a new front made using a material that combines two of Häcker's core competences, sustainability and trend-conscious colour variety: linoleum. This familiar material is made almost exclusively from natural, sustainable raw materials like linseed oil, sawdust from certified sustainable forests and limestone powder. Linoleum surfaces are also a real treat for the hands. They feel pleasantly soft and warm. What's more, they

look great in natural, matt shades like smoky blue and sage green. When combined with edging made from real wood veneer in elegant oak, these fronts look particularly natural and contemporary. The linoleum surfaces are robust, durable and easy to clean, and you can barely see any fingerprints that get left on them.

**Living stone**

Stone veneer is a truly ancient material that Häcker now offers for its fronts. It can be used to create unique kitchens, as each stone has its own character and its own pattern. Stone veneer fronts bring a touch of nature into the home and their feel is inimitable. Using natural stone in a kitchen is technically challenging and certainly not the most affordable option out there. But for anyone who wants the stone look, Häcker has now brought out their new surfaces with a range of different granite effects. They have the authentic structure and unique look of real granite, but they offer all the practical advantages of laminated surfaces. Now, if this is too much stone for you, you can intersperse them with coloured fronts – a really eye-catching option that was on display at the in-house exhibition.

Even though stone is renowned for being a cold material, it's actually surprisingly warm and homely. Another new range of fronts offers a clear, minimalist and almost industrial look. Häcker recently added kitchens with a raw cement structure and concrete look to their systemat range. Even small pores and bumps can be felt on the textured surfaces. These fronts offer a timeless and stylish aesthetic that's also incredibly functional. All these alternatives are a great way to add some urban flair to modern kitchens. The showroom kitchens at the in-house exhibition also showed just how fantastic the combination of open cabinets with illuminated glass shelves and narrow metal frames looks.

**Shining and shimmering**

Surfaces made from modern polymer glass are a massive trend right now. Their shimmering effect gives off an elegant and high-quality look and feel. They reflect the light and make rooms look lighter and larger. Roller shutter cabinets with polymer glass doors are an additional eye-catcher.



“Our visionary approach gives planners lots of freedom to design unique kitchens.”

MICHAEL DITTBERNER

Head of Product Development and Product Management

**WITH NUANCE**  
All systemat kitchens are available in 190 RAL shades and 2,000 tones from the NCS colour system. Pictured here is a kitchen in greige with grey worktops with a structure that resembles concrete.



**1 MAGICAL** The new pocket doors can be easily slid into side openings in the kitchen cabinets and so help to save space in an aesthetic way (photo above). **2 NEAT JOINTS** The new solid wood pull-outs from systemat are made using precise open joints, an old woodworking technique (photo below). **3 INDIVIDUAL** All the natural stone fronts, like the granite version shown here in combination with the greige furniture, tell a story.



Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN



Another striking and contemporary option from the systemat range is the polished, glossy metallic paint in a new shade of bronze that offers up a new interpretation of the highly sought-after industrial style.

### Exciting interiors

The outer aesthetic of Häcker's kitchens is like their face. This year, visitors were particularly impressed by the innovations hidden behind the 'faces'. The high-quality SLD pull-outs with their eight millimetre frames were already part of the programme, but they have now been given a makeover with new integrated inner lighting, which is now included as standard, just like the SLD pull-out itself. The sustainable new OrganiQ cutlery insert completes the pictures. These new features are clever solutions that will help you find hidden things or pick out matching plates. With the new carcass depth of 610 millimetres, all

systemat pull-outs now have 10 per cent more space than the older pull-outs with a depth of 56 centimetres. And this additional space certainly comes in handy!

The traditional craftsmanship that is part of Häcker's DNA can clearly be seen in the new, open-jointed pull-outs made from solid wood. The precisely worked notches ensure lasting durability, stability and outstanding quality. In addition, these decorative pull-outs give the kitchen furniture an elegant appearance and lovely feel.

### On-trend details

The metal handles and tabs from the new 'Black Chrome' series created by Häcker have a timeless and elegant finish – an incredibly modern, on-trend surface with a dark shine that looks particularly refined. The details are dark and a little mysterious, adding more masculine accents to any kitchen they're used in.

With their minimalist designs, contemporary kitchens nowadays often resemble monolithic sculptures. Clean lines, well-defined blocks and a high degree of functionality define this trend. The new pocket door variants that Häcker is adding to their programme this autumn offer another option for removing anything that could distract the eye. The space-saving pocket doors, floor-to-ceiling doors that can be pushed away to the side, can hide kitchens or other solutions that are up to 240 centimetres wide. An integrated folding-sliding mechanism helps the doors to open and close smoothly. Pocket doors can even be used as room separators and to hide work area and storage spaces. The sliding doors simply disappear, thus creating more space and offering greater flexibility.

### Elegant living with glass cabinets

The new glass cabinets create an exclusive connection between the kitchen and other living areas. Narrow metal-framed doors and high-quality, tinted smoked glass give these cabinets a certain timeless elegance. Delicate, indirect lighting inside can be used to draw attention to collectables and decorative objects. As minimalist as these cabinets may be, their refined design and lighting concept make them captivating pieces of furniture.



“Häcker kitchens are more than just pieces of furniture, they are a statement for a better future. Each of our decisions reflects our dedication to the environment and to innovation.”

KARIN PADINGER

Head of Marketing and Interior Design

### CREATING A CONNECTION

The new glass cabinets with their narrow metal-framed doors and smoked glass act as an elegant connection between the kitchen and living areas.

Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN







“Our commitment to quality can be seen in every little detail of our kitchens, from the precise processing to the careful design.”

MARKUS SANDER

Managing Director

#### New additions to the concept130 range

Even though the systemat range took centre-stage at this year’s in-house exhibition, concept130 also had a lot of new things to offer. With the design carcass in titan, which has the same colour inside and out, Häcker is able to provide new planning and combination options. Thanks to this new colour, kitchen designs that use dark fronts can now get a matching, exclusive inner design that looks particularly good with glass-frame doors.

#### Innovative front highlights

The new VEGAS concept130 kitchen comes in four soft, matt, metallic colours (brown, blue, green and champagne) and provides a stylish update. The matt shades give off a nice metallic effect in certain lights – classic and elegant. The fronts also feel velvety soft to the touch.

With LINEA, Häcker introduced a new wood effect front with an exclusive slatted design that offers a stylish aesthetic for the entry-level range. The SCALA concept130 fronts introduced last year have been expanded upon with two new on-trend colours: a deep, stimulating baltic blue and a refreshing eucalyptus.

With the new products on show at the in-house exhibition in September, it is clear to see that Häcker has taken another step towards making their kitchens truly unique.



**1 CLASSIC ELEGANCE** The metallic effect of the VEGAS fronts from the concept130 range is available in brown, blue, champagne or green, as shown here. **2 MOOD BOARD** The in-house exhibition showed some examples of great decoration. **3 SHIMMERING** A concept130 kitchen with VEGAS fronts in metallic champagne. **4 YOUNG LIVING** The crystal white concept130 kitchen combined with METEOR fronts in quartz grey with a ceramic structure is a great example of a stylish, youthful kitchen in the entry-level range.



# Viennese canework

The new fronts from Häcker pay homage to the iconic furniture seen in all Vienna coffee houses.



## 400 tonnes of pressure

“With the Viennese canework fronts, the connection between kitchen and living areas is even closer,” explains Michael Dittberner, Head of Product Development and Product Management at Häcker, another advantage of these new fronts.

The finely structured design is a subtle homage to traditional craftsmanship, while the fronts themselves, made from walnut, light or black oak, are a masterpiece of complex, modern production technologies. “For one square metre of fronts, we need eight square metres of veneer,” Michael explains. “We start by adding two layers of fully tinted poplar veneer to the base. Then comes the top layer, the actual veneer. We apply a sheet with the canework pattern on it to the veneer with a pressure of 400 tonnes and at a temperature of 120 degrees Celsius.

This embosses the veneer itself – something that has never been seen before in the industry and meets one of Häcker’s key requirements: ‘Be unique.’”

If you think about it carefully, these Viennese canework fronts are a logical continuation of Michael Thonet’s centuries-old idea. While he used steam and pressure to shape the bentwood frame of his chairs, Häcker also uses pressure and high temperatures to give the wood used to make their innovative fronts their characteristic structure. Sometimes history does repeat itself.

# V

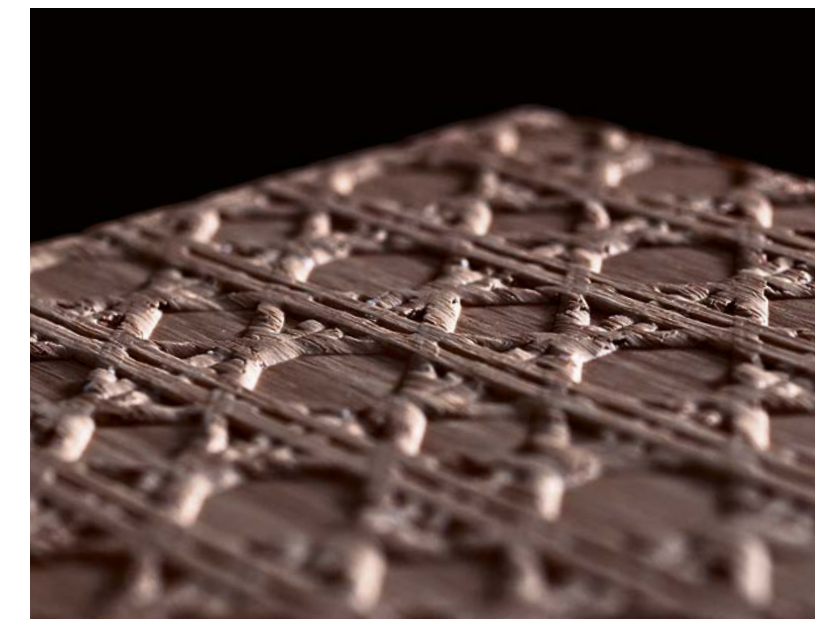
iennese canework has a long history – over 200 years – but is still on trend today. When Michael Thonet designed the No. 14 Chair, also known as the coffee house chair, in the mid-19th century, he used bent wood for the frame. But when it came to the seat, he opted for a material that was light, elastic and resilient but elegant: honeycomb-shaped canework made from six strands of rattan that had been used in Austria since the 18th century. Not only is it extremely comfortable, it also provides a great contrast to the wood and gives the chair a more elegant look.

The inimitable flair of this canework immediately sprang to mind when the product managers at Häcker were designing new kitchen fronts. They eventually came up with these veneer fronts embossed with the canework pattern that were presented at the in-house exhibition for the first time in autumn. Thanks to this, the minimalist kitchen furniture from the Westphalia-based manufacturer gets a unique haptic structure and a fresh, new look that fits in perfectly with the current mid-century interior design trend.

Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN

## UNIQUE FRONTS

No other manufacturer offers kitchen fronts with this embossed, canework-inspired style. These new fronts are a real visual and sensory experience. They come in walnut, light or black oak.





# No alcohol? No problem!

Today, alcohol-free drinks are a popular alternative to classic wine pairings. Sommeliers are turning to unusual ingredients to craft creative concoctions.



**A**nyone that has ordered a set menu at a high-end restaurant knows that it is usually accompanied with a wine pairing. The restaurant's sommelier is responsible for picking out the perfect wines to match the carefully prepared dishes. However, classic wines are faced with increasingly stiffer competition from refined beverages that don't contain a drop of alcohol but go perfectly with exquisite meals.

## Perfecting drinks

Not only are clever, innovative restaurateurs serving more and more vegetarian and vegan dishes, their sommeliers regularly put together alcohol-free accompaniments that fulfil exactly the same purpose as a wine pairing – they elevate dishes, add unusual nuances, and ultimately perfect them. Thanks to this, diners no longer have to worry about being 'party poopers' and can save money on a taxi home after their meal.

Whether its vintage fruit and vegetable juices, shrubs or fermented drinks, teas and extracts, wheys, syrups and herb essences or drinking vinegars – the possibilities are endless and there's lots more variety than with wine. 'PriSeccos' from Jörg Geiger, monovarietal mountain apple juices from South Tyrol or fresh juices from van Nahmen are all now just as popular as the red and white grape kombucha invented by young winemaker Markus Weiss. Kombucha cultures transform the naturally occurring glucose in the grapes into organic acids. The result is a multi-faceted fermented flavour that is similar to wine.

Another juice pioneer is Werner Retter, Managing Director of Obsthof Retter in Pöllau, Styria. His refined, fresh juices are made from wild blueberries from the Carpathian Mountains, wild lingonberries from Lapland or wild grapes from the highest areas in Peru. The fruit is harvested by hand, gently pressed and carefully stored, just like a good wine. Wild fruits contain significantly less sugar and more acid, which means that the juices can be stored for longer and are not as sweet. The delicate drop-lets are drunk 'au naturel', that is to say undiluted, from the right glasses and at the right temperature.

The Gross & Gross family of wine-makers takes a very similar approach with their pure juices, which they distribute under the brand Flein. With these juices, drinkers can taste the "freshly pressed grape flavour, which usually only winemakers get to enjoy" and professionals should even be able to get a taste of the terroir where the grapes were grown. Van Nahmen presses wild plums from the Piedmont region of Italy into a delicious juice that the German Chancellor has served to guests, including King Charles III.

For many sommeliers, pure juices – no matter how royal, special and refined they may be – are just too simple to serve as an alternative to wine. Instead, they are experimenting with cocktails made from refined grape juice, eucalyptus and olive oil (which goes great with venison) or cherry juice, Lapsang Souchong tea and red alcohol-free

## A GLASS FULL OF NATURE'S BEST

Flowers, berries, herbs – alcohol-free drinks can be made using a wide variety of natural ingredients. Their unusual flavours add a unique, often surprising, note as an accompaniment to refined dishes.



'grape-secco' (as an accompaniment to a smoked chocolate and plum dessert). They have even crafted a flavourful herb lemonade from fennel, celery and basil, and with tibicos as a base, that goes wonderfully with king crab. In the Berlin restaurant Nobelhart & Schmutzig, quince juice is combined with hay, cold-extracted and then passed through a sieve. For patrons that are looking for a more refined drink, sommeliers can mix fruit and vegetable juices, separate the solids from the liquid using hot filtration and then add whey, camelina oil, horseradish or honey. Kombucha drinks are now flavoured with herbs, berries, fruits but also spruce, asparagus or tomato. The most important thing is that these new drinks either harmonise or contrast with the dishes they are served with. Creamy dishes can be contrasted with notes of citrus or celery, while dark meats pair beautifully with coffee or cacao aromas. The most important thing is that the drink goes with the dish and awakens the diners' curiosity.

Unfortunately, anyone hoping to save a few pennies by skipping the wine is in for a bit of a surprise – these new non-alcoholic drinks are actually quite expensive. For example, Werner Retter sells bottles of his 2015 WILD loganberry juice for €133 apiece.

# 0%

*alcohol content does not detract from the exquisite flavour.*



# Kitchen ahoy!

Häcker is heading out to sea. The first exclusive Arkup yachts have been launched in Florida. On-board: high-quality kitchens from Rödinghausen.

## UNINTERRUPTED VIEWS

The guests on board the Arkup 75 Livable Yacht can enjoy stunning views of the horizon from the open-plan systemat kitchen.

L

ast year, the Häcker representatives in the US were approached by a company with an unusual task. The Arkup development team wanted them to design kitchens for their luxurious, floating homes. Arkup created their signature liveable yacht, a mix between a yacht and a floating house, in collaboration with Dutch architect Koen Olthuis. While they may look like a villa from the outside, the self-sufficient liveable yachts from Arkup have their own drive unit and can move independently without having to be towed.

With the Arkup 75 Livable Yacht prototype, Koen Olthuis, who is a pioneer in the field of floating constructions and is currently working on building an entire district of a town with around 5,000 houses on the water in the Maldives, created an elegant, light and airy €2.5 million luxury villa with an engine that the inhabitant can use to putter around. "As part of this project I was able to develop a sort of stilt system that lifts the yachts out of the water but still rests on the ground and so is very stable. And now this principle can be scaled." Thanks to the retractable stilt system, the Livable Yachts can even be moored in shallow coastal waters, like those near Miami, so that they are not exposed to the sea.

## Two companies with the same values

"It was a tricky task for us," confides Andreas Gommeringer, Director Sales Overseas for Häcker in the US. "The job was actually passed onto us by a Häcker retail partner in the Netherlands. The founders of Arkup had already worked with Häcker when designing the kitchen for their Arkup 75. And they were very happy with the quality, the fitting and with Häcker products in general. Now they asked us to come up with a concept for the smaller Arkup 50 Livable Yacht. We

Photo: ARKUP





“It was something new and really interesting for us. We had to take a lot of unusual features into account, like the access hatches in the floor.”

JULIA KLINGE

took a look at the project and quickly discovered that both companies, Häcker and Arkup, shared the same values: sustainability, modernity, technology and innovation. We recognised ourselves in these values and immediately established a rapport.”

So Häcker USA designed a kitchen for this floating home that takes up little room but offers plenty of storage space and fits in perfectly with the minimalist elegance and modern feel of the yacht. Since then, the Arkup yachts have gone into series production and the first ones have already been launched, complete with kitchens from Häcker equipped with appliances from Miele.

### Two kitchens on board

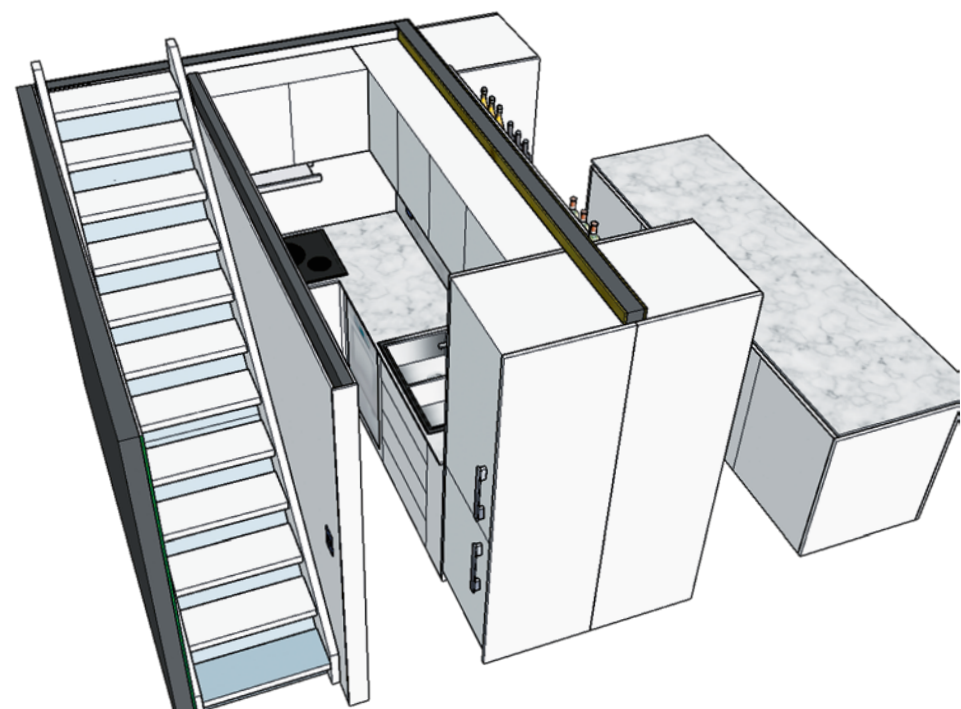
“The space available on board was very limited,” explains Andreas Gommeringer. “There was a lot that had to be accommodated. For example, Boat 2 had a hidden TV in the wall unit. And the unusual designs for Boats 3 and 4 included two kitchens. One is hidden and is where the hired chef prepares the passengers’ meals. The second takes the form of open living space equipped with a kitchen island.

Julia Klinge, the person responsible for the project, adds: “It was something new and really interesting for us. We had to take a lot of unusual features into account, like the access hatches in the floor. As such, we built a sliding island which makes the space even more flexible. With the kitchens for Boats 3

and 4, both of which had these two kitchens, space was a major issue. When it came to the cooking area for the personal chef, we had to check whether we had left enough space to open all the cupboard doors properly. And we had to make sure that there was enough room for the fridge door to open fully. Space was really, really tight. We even used some corners that could be accessed from the other side, the hallway. We added hidden cabinets by fitting the walls with panels that can be opened.”

### TWIN KITCHENS

Despite the limited space, the planners opted for a double kitchen – a working kitchen near the stairs and a stylish open kitchen with an island at the front.



Photos: ARKUP



### A MOVING HOUSE

The Arkup 75 Livable Yacht, with a Häcker kitchen on board, can move around independently like a yacht and so can take its passengers on their own personal cruise.

Now, contrary to what you might think, weight wasn't a massive issue. In fact, the kitchens in the Arkup yachts were fitted with natural stone worktops. A good degree of mobility and access to the appliances was far more important. As Andreas explains: “For most customers, the yachts would remain stationary, but they are still mobile. This means that they can be moved around and must be able to cope with a certain amount of movement, which is something that normal kitchens don't have to do.” The stability of the structure was also incredibly important, as Julia shares: “To achieve this, we built parti-

tion walls that the kitchen was fastened to. This means that even when the sea is rough, the kitchen will stay secure and stable.”

What swung the decision in favour of Häcker was their modern designs. So what exactly was installed in the yachts? Andreas tells all: “We chose the systemat range and the AV 4030 model with high-gloss paint in a clean but welcoming crystal white. For Boats 3 and 4, we opted for a combination. In the front area, we chose to install illuminated channels handles, and in the back area, where all the cooking actually happens, we used standard handles.”

You can find more information at:  
[arkup.com](http://arkup.com)





# 10 Years

A plethora of new products released to celebrate the special anniversary reflect the design skills and innovative spirit of the brand.

## Blaupunkt and Häcker

**T**he move was logical, consistent and far-sighted – but it still came as a surprise for many. Exactly ten years ago, Häcker started selling kitchen appliances and has never looked back. Now instead of selling just kitchen furniture, they exclusively supply matching appliances from Blaupunkt, Häcker's integrated appliance brand of choice. Together with experienced producers and service providers and the renowned company Blaupunkt as the licensor of trademark rights, they produce a wide range of outstanding and innovative household appliances with completely redesigned surfaces that includes refrigerators, ovens, ceramic hobs, dishwashers and extractor fans. And the range continues to be expanded upon today.

"By partnering up with Blaupunkt, we have created a basis for moving our business, our company, forwards," explained Jochen Finkemeier when this collaboration began, and that's exactly what has happened. With

the appliances from Blaupunkt, Häcker is able to offer retailers premium products with a high degree of price stability, exclusivity, a well-known brand name and outstanding after-sales service. All of this comes from the same provider and in perfect coordination with the kitchen planning.

### Comprehensive solutions for kitchens and appliances

The two companies, Blaupunkt and Häcker, have been working together for over ten years. Their partnership means that customers can enjoy the major advantage of being able to get their kitchens and appliances from the same provider. In addition, because they can get the two kitchen ranges – concept130 and systemat – and Blaupunkt appliances from the same place, retailers can offer their customers excellent value for money. Häcker only supplies Blaupunkt appliances, but their kitchens can also be planned with appliances from other manufacturers.

Photos: BLAUPUNKT

### KITCHENS IN A NUTSHELL

Blaupunkt started offering kitchen appliances under this slogan ten years ago. Their unique, elegant designs are a perfect fit for Häcker kitchens.





Joint development concepts with Häcker means that care is taken to ensure that the kitchen furniture and electronic appliances look good together. This results in comprehensive solutions like the multi-control function and cabinet technology that can accommodate integrated hob extractors. Carefully thought-out planning variants and design lines characterise the Blaupunkt range and make it easy for planners to create stylish overall concepts for kitchens.

#### Award-winning design

At the renowned Red Dot Awards this year, Blaupunkt was recognised five times – their 'Maira' kitchen sink range even won the 'Best of the Best' Award (see Page 7). They have also introduced a variety of new products that once again shows that the company is dedicated to their continuous development.

At Häcker's in-house exhibition in Rödینگhausen, Blaupunkt presented an innovative hob with an integrated extractor hood. It demonstrated a new design language and combined two fundamentally different materials with its use of glass and aluminium.

They also recently brought out an integrated refrigerator that offers 40 per cent more storage space even though it is just 15 centimetres wider than other standard refrigerators (75 centimetres vs. 60 centimetres). A real space gain.

#### Everything fits

The brand has also built on its range of sinks. The 'Maira' series, recognised with the 'Best of the Best' Red Dot Award, and the 'Iseo' series are now both available in Slate Grey.

The range of taps from Blaupunkt has also been expanded with a total of 25 new variants in stainless steel, chrome and matt black. This means that there is now a wide selection of taps available that are precisely tailored to Blaupunkt's sinks. There have also been some improvements in the dishwasher segment. With a noise output of just 39 dB, their new dishwashers are quieter than ever before, and they have been equipped with practical inner lighting. Their energy efficiency ratings have also been given a welcome boost.

A further selling point of Blaupunkt appliances is the 5-year warranty, which is automatically applied to the entire Blaupunkt range.

If you would like more information about the products and latest in-built kitchen appliance innovations from Blaupunkt, you can find the new Blaupunkt magazine at their specialist retailers. The same information is also published in the blog on the Blaupunkt website ([www.blaupunkt-einbaugeraete.com/en/news-2024.html](http://www.blaupunkt-einbaugeraete.com/en/news-2024.html)) together with a range of delicious recipes as well as product and service information. You can also follow Blaupunkt on almost all social media channels.



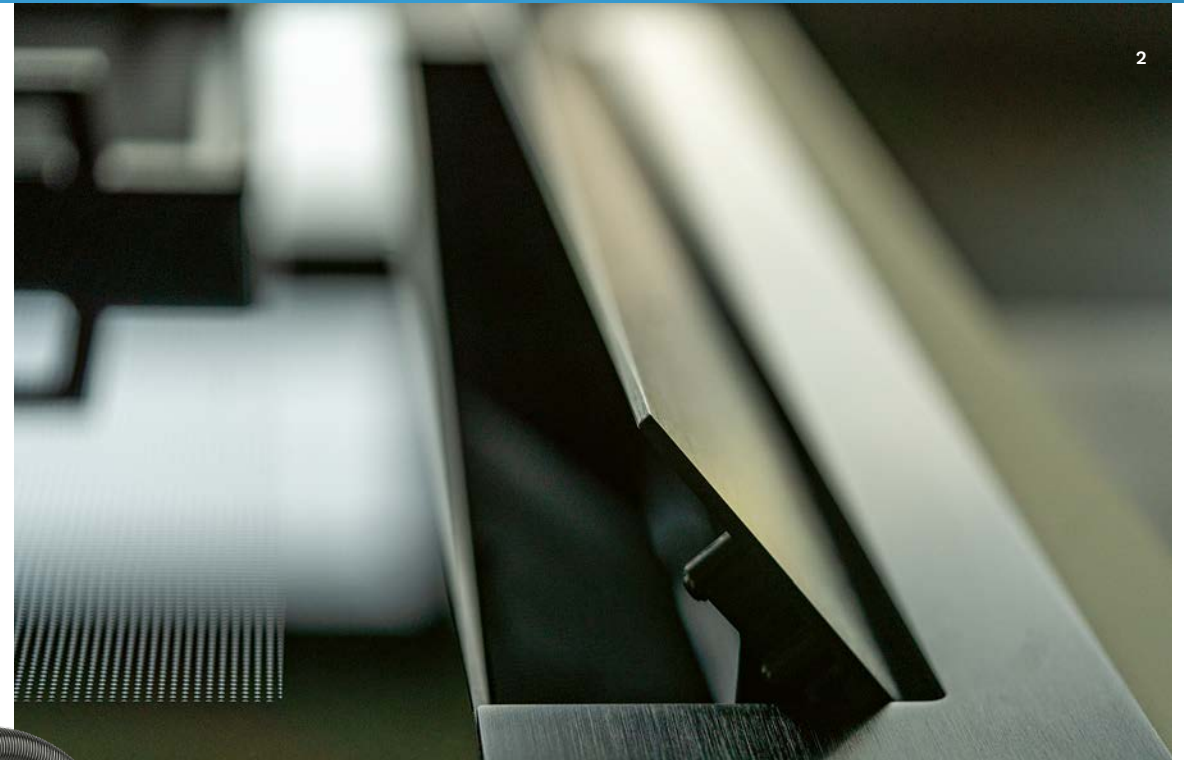
You can find more information at:  
[blaupunkt-einbaugeraete.com/en/news-2024.html](http://blaupunkt-einbaugeraete.com/en/news-2024.html)



Photos: BLAUPUNKT

“With Blaupunkt, we have created  
a basis for moving our company forwards.”

JOCHEN FINKEMEIER



## New arrivals

New appliances and a five-year warranty  
with no need to register.

- 1 PLENTY OF SPACE FOR TASTY TREATS** The new integrated refrigerator 5CR 394FD0 has a capacity of 400 litres and so offers around 40 per cent more space but it is only 15 centimetres wider than standard 60-centimetre refrigerators.
- 2 INNER VALUES** The innovative hob 5IX 99300 has an integrated extractor hood and stands out from the competition with its stylish mix of aluminium and glass.
- 3 EASY TO FIND** The telescopic pull-outs in the new wine refrigerator make it much easier and quicker to find your bottles. **4 NEW COLOURS** The 'Maira' sink series, winner of the 'Best of the Best' Red Dot Award, is now available in Slate Grey. And so is the new 'Impero' tap.







# Mushrooms grown by expert hands

Mirko Kalkum grows the best edible mushrooms. They taste sensational and are a real treat for the eyes.

TEXT: PETER WÜRTH PHOTOS: SIMON HOFMANN



## GROWN ON WOOD

Mirko Kalkum only grows mushrooms that break down wood, like shiitakes (photo left page) and pink oyster mushrooms (this page). The quality of the mushrooms is checked closely, as high-end restaurants usually also want to offer their patrons a visual experience.





#### DELICIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL

Whether it's pink oysters (photo far left), nameko, shiitake or, again, pink oysters (in the crate, clockwise) – every mushroom is different and grows differently. In the shiitake growing room (photo below), you can spot the brown and white trunk-shaped shiitake substrate that Mirko uses to grow his mushrooms.



**W**hen it comes to mushrooms, Mirko Kalkum definitely knows what he's talking about. He studied biology in Münster, obtained his diploma and spent a good chunk of his studies on mushrooms and fungi and the plant diseases that they cause in wheat and rye. Life and love then took him to Saarbrücken, where he started working in the pharmaceutical industry, selling lipid reducers for people with high cholesterol.

As this medication started to be more and more regulated in Germany and his job was at risk, he thought back to his expertise. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), shiitake mushrooms are used to treat high cholesterol. They help to reduce the amount of cholesterol absorbed and metabolised by the intestine.

#### How a curiosity became a career

Mirko started experimenting with mushrooms to produce a naturopathic medicine. “I quickly realised that, due to the regulations, this would be very expensive and would take a long time.” In the meantime, his mushrooms kept growing.

The decisive day came when a neighbour, a buyer for a local shop, popped by to take a look at what he was doing. He had heard that Mirko was growing mushrooms and wanted

to see if he could buy some. He could, and just like that Mirko had a new job.

He started out growing mushrooms in the cellar of a converted barn and a greenhouse, then moved into a long but narrow tunnel measuring around 200 square metres that used to be used by the fire brigade. “Shiitake mushrooms have very specific requirements,” explains Mirko. “This only became clear to me over time. I started by concentrating on well-known mushrooms, because I wanted

to sell them locally, without a middleman and freshly harvested.”

#### Supply and demand

The demanding restaurateurs in Saarland quickly realised what a treasure Mirko had – but they were also just as quick to let him know that they wanted to be able to constantly add new dishes to their menu. As such, the mushroom supplier gradually expanded his range.

“Pink oyster mushrooms can be seared quickly like bacon,” shares Mirko, “and a beautiful golden oyster mushroom, which is delicious with fish, by the way, is the perfect way to brighten up any dish. Lion's mane mushrooms look a little bit like a cauliflower and can be breaded. Finally, comb coral mushrooms are a great meat substitute. One of my customers actually tried frying them together with black salsify in choux pastry – it was absolutely delicious.”

Mirko only grows mushrooms that break down wood. On sawdust and with a little lime, which acts as a buffer to the acids, he grows 15 different varieties of mushrooms, including king oysters, shiitake, brown and white shimeji, orange nameko, poplar field-caps, oysters, Indian oysters, elm oysters and hen-of-the-wood, in the tunnel where the humidity is between 90 and 100 per cent and the temperature is more or less a constant 14 degrees Celsius. They consume an awful lot of oxygen, so the tunnel needs a constant supply of fresh air.

“At this temperature, the mushrooms grow slowly but the flavours develop more intensively and the mushrooms last a long time. You can even freeze them if you have bought too many,” explains Mirko. “By the way, the mushrooms incorporate the wood that they break down into their cap.”

Unlike with more popular standard mushrooms, mushrooms that break down wood don't need a lot of water, have a firm bite and are perfect for searing. As Mirko gives his mushrooms plenty of time to grow, their quality is so high that a lot of top chefs from the area practically tear them from his hands.

#### Knowing what the mushrooms need

A lot of care and attention is needed here, too. Even though mushrooms can largely be left to their own devices, the smallest

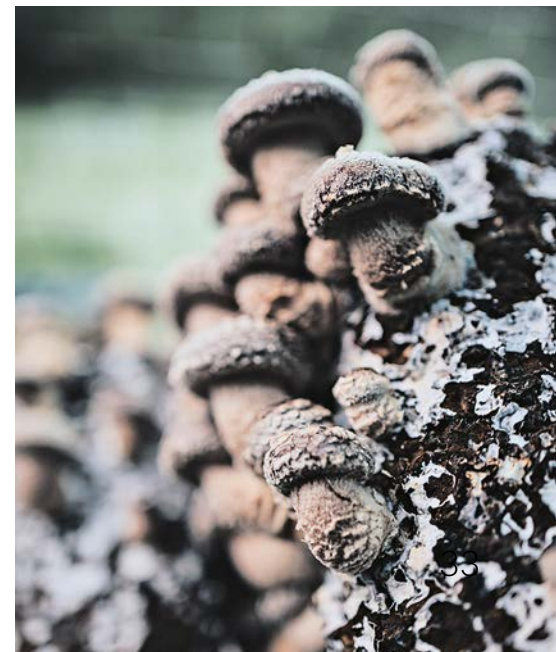
misstep can have a massive impact. “If the fan breaks down, an entire harvest can be quickly ruined,” explains Mirko. “You have to have a feeling and an eye for what the mushrooms need. If not, they will grow differently and the caps may be too small.” While this doesn't change the flavour of the mushrooms, it does change their appearance, which is a big problem for top chefs who place great importance on the aesthetics of their dishes. Beautiful, unusual and tasty mushrooms can make a big difference here.

“Unlike with 'normal' farming, where you get at most two harvests a year, mushrooms grow in waves,” shares the expert. “They can be harvested every four weeks. It's a lot of manual work, but luckily the tunnel is always cool and calm – after all, there's no mobile reception in here.”

The tunnel is built into the Nussberg Hill in Saarbrücken, and there's a wonderful view over the town from the area in front of the door where the tastings are held. “I was just lucky,” says Mirko, who sells his mushrooms for around €30 per kilo and even sends them to customers who purchase them online during the cooler months of the year. “The increase in the number of people that now follow a vegan diet has also boosted business. Even though it's a lot of hard work, it's amazing, and very satisfying, to see the mushrooms grow.”

#### HEALTHY AND DELICIOUS

Shiitake mushrooms, around four days before harvesting. Mirko's career as a mushroom grower started with shiitakes.





# What a mess!

Simple ingredients and a delicious result: Kaiserschmarrn is the ultimate comfort food. Emperor Franz Joseph I himself was a big fan.

**SERIES**  
COMFORT FOOD  
INSTALMENT 4  
KAISERSCHMARRN



Photos: STOCKFOOD / GRÄFE & UNZER VERLAG / BONISOLLI, BARBARA, WALDESRUH / HALSERALM

**SIMPLY DELICIOUS**  
No matter how simple Kaiserschmarrn may be – making a really good one is an art in itself. The kitchen team at Halseralm master this dish. And the location of the tavern is straight out of a fairytale.

Nothing embodies the spirit of Austria quite as well as their desserts. They may look simple, but they are incredibly refined, extremely nutritious and a real delicacy. The origins of these tasty treats can actually be traced back to the simple Lenten fare eaten by Austrian monks, when Catholic Austrians weren't allowed to eat any meat for almost half the day. Back then, these were part of their main meals rather than a dessert.

One dish, however, reigns supreme over the sweet soufflés, dumplings, strudels and pancakes, and it's something that anyone who has stopped off for a bite to eat in a cosy Austrian tavern or mountain hut has probably come across: Kaiserschmarrn.

### Royal approval

It's the quintessential Austrian dessert, and to make it, all you need is some flour, eggs, sugar and a few raisins. What chefs in our neighbouring country can conjure up with these few ingredients definitely deserves high praise.

Apparently, the name of the dish comes from Emperor Franz Joseph (yes, the one who was married to the famous Empress Sisi) himself, as 'Kaiserschmarrn' can be translated as 'Emperor's Mess'. According to legend, after a hunt the Emperor was surprised by a storm and sought shelter nearby with a family of farmers. Now the unprepared farmer's wife didn't have much in the way of food, just eggs, milk, flour and sugar that she used to whip up a sweet dish. The Emperor absolutely loved it, but she said modestly: "It's a bit of a mess." "Ah, but a mess fit for an Emperor!" quipped Franz Joseph.

At its worst, Kaiserschmarrn is a wonderful staple food and at its best, it's like a poem that only a select few are able to compose.

There are not a lot of secrets about how to prepare the dish, which is why there are so many different variants. Flour, milk, eggs, sugar and a pinch of salt are combined to make the batter. Some chefs separate the eggs and beat the whites until they are nice and fluffy to make the batter even lighter and more airy. There are even some specialists who add a splash of sparkling water.

The batter is cooked in a cast iron pan in some clarified butter on a medium heat until the bottom is firm and a little crisp because of the caramelised sugar. The cooked Kaiserschmarrn is shredded with a wooden spoon and then flipped again and again. Raisins (which you can soak in rum if you want) are added right at the end so that they don't burn, giving the Kaiserschmarrn a more refined twist. The finished Kaiserschmarrn is sprinkled with icing sugar and can be served with stewed plums or apple compote.

You can enjoy a really delicious, flambéed Kaiserschmarrn at Halseralm on the Rittisberg mountain, a 400-year-old Alpine tavern located in Schladming, Austria. [waldesruh-halseralm.at](http://waldesruh-halseralm.at)



“It’s a bit of a mess.”  
“Ah, but a mess fit for an Emperor!”



# Sophisticated woodwork

With a range of new modern designs, wood veneer fronts are having a bit of a comeback in urban, minimalist kitchens. WORK shows you just what this could look like.



Photo: HACKER KÜCHEN

**FINE STRUCTURE**  
The new wood veneer and painted fronts with narrow frames are minimalist and reserved, but thanks to their delicate structure, they bring warmth and life to any kitchen.





**CHIC CABINETS**  
The kitchen from the systemat range with its new fronts in black-stained oak looks great with the 'Climber' cabinets in black glass.

Photos: HÄCKER KÜCHEN

T

he longing for things that are authentic, real, alive, is deeply human. With our everyday lives determined by digital, technical, hectic and unmanageable things, many people like to come home to their own four walls – including, of course, their kitchen – and enjoy an atmosphere that is real and tangible. An atmosphere that lives with them.

Manufacturers like Häcker have noticed this, in particular, with the steady demand for kitchen fronts made from wood. People love their warmth, structure and vitality. They're pieces of furniture with soul and their own individual character. Each veneer is slightly different because every tree grows differently. This helps customers to create an identity and a connection to their own kitchen.

### Wood has a long history at Häcker

Häcker actually started out as a joinery that made kitchens by hand to order. The company has never forgotten their connection to craftsmanship, even today, as a major industrial company. And you can really feel it in the kitchens with wood fronts that they produce.

"By using wood veneer, you can bring a natural material into your home that brings with it a radiance and value that is truly unique," explains Michael Dittberner, Head of Product Development and Product Management at Häcker. "The fronts aren't a reproduction with a printed image that is repeated but a natural material."

The majority of the wood fronts in Häcker's range are covered with veneer in different designs, including oak or walnut. The veneers go through several processing steps that seal the wood to protect it against the demands of the kitchen and make it more durable without impacting its aesthetic and senso-



WOOD — LIVING | WORK

**EVERYTHING IS HANDLED**  
'Black Chrome' is a new material that can be used for handles, among other things, and that brings a real shine to the kitchen (above). With the wood veneer fronts, the varnish is applied so that the grain of the wood can be seen and the feel of the natural material maintained.

ry properties. This might include varnishing or staining; the surfaces then end up being brushed or smooth.

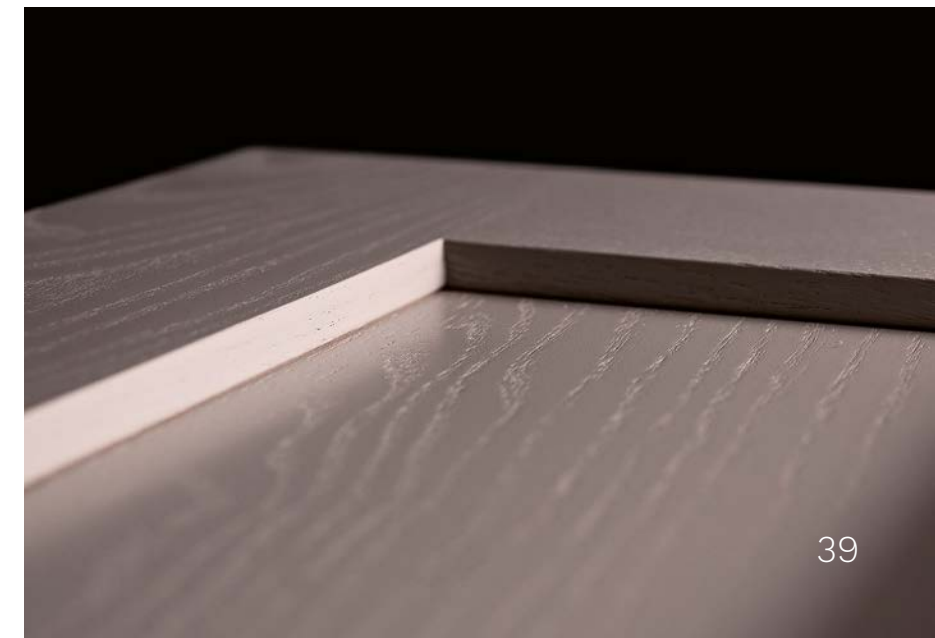
In keeping with their history, Häcker also has a kitchen in their range made from solid ash and with a clear varnish. Michael Dittberner: "This is a very high-quality product. The grain of the raw wood is visible through the varnish, so you can really see the natural structure of the material. It just looks fantastic. The front is stunning and has been a big hit with customers – and not just with those who want farmhouse-style kitchens, but also with those who opt for modern versions of our framed fronts."

### Classic and modern oak

Michael Dittberner has discovered that oak still seems to be the wood of choice for the majority of customers. "Consumers are really

100

*years old is the age of the oak veneer that Häcker offers to customers who want a more rustic look. The fronts made from it are really unique pieces.*







focused on this. It's probably a matter of habit. You see it everywhere. Oak isn't even really a cheap option because it's quite hard to get hold of at the moment, but it can be dyed a whole host of different colours and it just looks great. It has a really lovely grain to it. And it can be interpreted in both classic and very modern ways. This is why oak really is everywhere – both in Germany and overseas.”

At Häcker, most high-quality wood veneers are used in more elegant-looking kitchens, even though there are still some consumers out there who prefer a more rustic look. “We have a range where we use veneers that are guaranteed to be 100 years old,” explains Michael. “The fronts made with these veneers are really quite rustic and so really special. Every front is completely unique.”

A particularly popular variant made with the oak veneer is the slatted natural-wood fronts that Häcker introduced two years ago. These fronts look very homely and reinforce an effect that all kitchens with wood fronts have: they create a closer connection to the living spaces in the home. They establish a visual and aesthetic link between the kitchen and living area, thus eliminating any separa-

**SKILLED CRAFTSMANSHIP**  
The galvanised solid wood pull-outs, shown here in combination with the new linoleum fronts, reflect Häcker's history of craftsmanship. The slatted wood veneer fronts introduced by Häcker two years ago have been a big hit.

tion which may have existed previously. The slatted fronts are particularly effective at this. They are made from four layers of poplar wood plus a top layer of oak or walnut. The slats are pressed deep into the material with heat and massive amounts of pressure. Michael Dittberner: “You have to be careful that the edges don't break here. It's a very long and complicated process that requires a lot of expertise.”

### Combining wood and colour

Anyone who is unsure about ordering a full wood-look kitchen can choose a different option that often comes up during the planning of kitchen studios: the combination of wood fronts and smooth, often coloured surfaces. “We regularly design stunning kitchens with wood and plain fronts in a range of different versions,” found Michael when looking at orders. “There are no limits on the creativity of our in-store planners when it comes to creating new kitchens. Whether it's a row of tall cabinets, an island block or a wood wall unit – you can go in so many different directions.” You could combine them with high-quality glass or stone veneer fronts or opt for more affordable fronts from the entry-level range and visually enhance them with some wooden elements. This is entirely up to the creativity of the designers. Häcker provides the tools, so to speak, and the planners use the different options available to create one-off kitchens in line with the Häcker motto ‘Be unique’.

Now there is one question that customers ask time and time again when it comes to kitchens with wood fronts – how are you supposed to maintain them? For Michael, the answer is simple: “There isn't really any difference between veneers and painted surfaces. When we manufacture our veneer surfaces, we add a protective UV varnish which more or less prevents any damage. UV light is the biggest enemy of surfaces, and we make sure that the resulting change process happens very slowly. It's normal for natural materials to change a little over time, and I think that's really beautiful. They're living materials and you should be able to see that even after many, many years.”







**RED PODS, LUSH GREEN HILLS**

Finca La Amistad lies in the north of Costa Rica. The Brugger family continues to reforest the surrounding rain-forest. The pods produced by their 25,000 cacao trees are harvested by hand.

# So sweet ...

Everyone knows that the Swiss make the best chocolate. But this particular chocolatier makes his using some of the best cacao beans in the world that he grows himself thousands of kilometres away from Switzerland in Costa Rica.

TEXT: PETER WÜRTH





The liquid chocolate slowly trickles from the pitcher into the moulds below. A few gentle shakes to evenly disperse the chocolate, a sprinkle of dessicated coconut, almonds or chilli flakes, and then the chocolate is left to cool. The first few bars of home-made chocolate are ready for tasting.

We are at Finca La Amistad (or ‘Friendship Farm’ in English), in the canton of Upala, which is in the far north of Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border. This entire area was once rainforest, and a small part still remains on the farm today. Long before Simon Brugger’s parents arrived here over 40 years ago, the majority of the rainforest in Costa Rica was cut down to make way for banana cultivation or cattle farming, with the popular tropical timber being shipped off across the world. Even La Amistad used to be a cattle farm.

Simon’s father Ernst, a sustainability expert, had travelled to Costa Rica for work when he came across the farm in 1997 and decided to turn it into a reforestation project. “My family did not want to just use the farm to earn money. My parents were all about sustainability,” explains Simon. “They saw it as an environmental, economic and social way to create value in the region.” Since then, 20 hectares of the farm’s 95 hectares have been turned back into rainforest. Another 20 hectares have been turned into biodiversity-optimised land that, together with the rainforest, acts as a biological corridor that offers a habitat for tapirs, howler monkeys and even sloths.

The perfect location

Cacao grows best at 200 to 600 metres above sea level, and La Amistad meets these requirements exactly. The dark volcanic soil and on-site water source ensure the best conditions, but the climate also plays a crucial role. In this region, it doesn’t rain as often or as much as in other areas of Costa Rica. However, it is still quite humid, so the harvest has to be transported to the lower-lying province of Guanacaste to be dried out.

Today, La Amistad still operates in line with Simon’s parents’ philosophy as a certified organic farm with over 25,000 cacao trees. Laurel, guava, banana and citrus fruit plants and trees provide shade and prevent soil leaching which can often be a consequence of monoculture. The grass, however, does most of the work. It covers all the ground on the farm and keeps it moist, but it does have to be mowed regularly.

The farm cultivates 40 different varieties of cacao trees, primarily the ‘Trinitario’, a crossbreed of the ‘Criollo’ and ‘Forastero’ varieties, which is in high demand in the chocolate industry. There are also several ‘Criollo’ trees here, one of the rarest varieties of cacao trees, but it is difficult to get them to produce cacao beans that are of a consistently high quality.

Cacao beans grow all year round in Costa Rica but the main harvesting period is from December to April. The workers can tell whether a pod is ripe or not depending on its colour. They can be green, yellow, red or almost purple depending on the variety, can easily grow to the



**HIDDEN TREASURE**  
The ripe, hand-picked pods are opened by hand and the tasty white beans extracted.

size of two fists and are individually picked by hand. Once opened with a splitting tool, the shiny white beans can be removed from the thin, sweet-and-sour-tasting skin that surrounds them.

The beans are then fermented in a multi-step process and dried on racks before being packed into jute sacks and shipped off to Switzerland. The careful processes used during the fermenting, drying and storage are important when it comes to ensuring the excellent quality of the Amistad beans.

A difficult undertaking

From the very beginning, Finca La Amistad placed great importance on quality and on working with high-quality customers. The majority of the beans produced on the farm go to Swiss manufacturers of top-class couverture chocolate – the basis of most chocolate products. The different varieties are mixed during production. “We

separate them based on bean size,” explains overseer Yulian. Medium-sized beans are in the highest demand from customers, as they are the best option for ensuring an even roasting. Cacao production is a fluctuating business. While prices were on the decline for years, they rose sharply in 2024 because the weather in certain cultivation areas was pretty poor. For Simon, these fluctuations were too risky for the farm in the long term. He started to think about diversification and came up with a solution that would result in his father’s passion project bearing sufficient financial fruit.

“We made a shift to agrotourism around nine years ago,” shares Simon. “We built a series of ‘cabinas’ on our extensive farmland that can host up to 20 guests. We show them around the farm and teach them how to make chocolate by hand.” The elegant log cabins have generously sized bedrooms, large verandas and stunning views of the farm and neighbouring jungle. Simon even built a stylish spa bungalow for his guests. The two nearby

national parks – Tenorio with its breathtaking waterfall and the Miravalles National Park – are another attraction for holidaymakers travelling around the north of the eco-friendly model country Costa Rica.

But because tourism is also a seasonal business – peak times for Costa Rica are from December to March – Simon was looking for another source of income for the small business when it hit him: chocolate! Why not branch out from supplying professionals? Why not make chocolate, a really outstanding chocolate, that is second to none?

Simon, who started out as a financial analyst and expert in micro-finance business, read up and taught himself how to make chocolate. “I did take a course, but I mostly taught myself,” shares Simon. He learnt how to roast and grind the beans and then conch the mass. He noticed that this conching was particularly important. During this process, the cacao mass is warmed and stirred for up to 72 hours. “This gets the acid out,” explains Simon.

**GENTLE DRYING**  
The fermented beans are dried slowly and gently on open racks, they are turned regularly and any bad beans are removed. The more carefully the harvest is handled, the better the quality.

“The family did not want to just use the farm to earn money. My parents were all about the environment.”

SIMON BRUGGER



Photos: FINCA AMISTAD, SEAN DAVIS





**SELF-TAUGHT  
CHOCOLATIER**

Simon Brugger produces the finest, hand-made chocolate with precision and passion. And it can be tasted in every bite. Alongside cacao beans and chocolate, La Amistad also relies on sustainable tourism. Their stylish log cabins offer accommodation for up to 20 guests and provide stunning views of the surrounding rainforest from the large terraces.



He experimented, tested, practised and was happy to see that his results improved gradually. Then in 2020, in the mountains of Costa Rica, he started to build his own chocolate factory. He bought all the necessary machines for professional chocolate production to meet Swiss hygiene standards and set up a sales department.

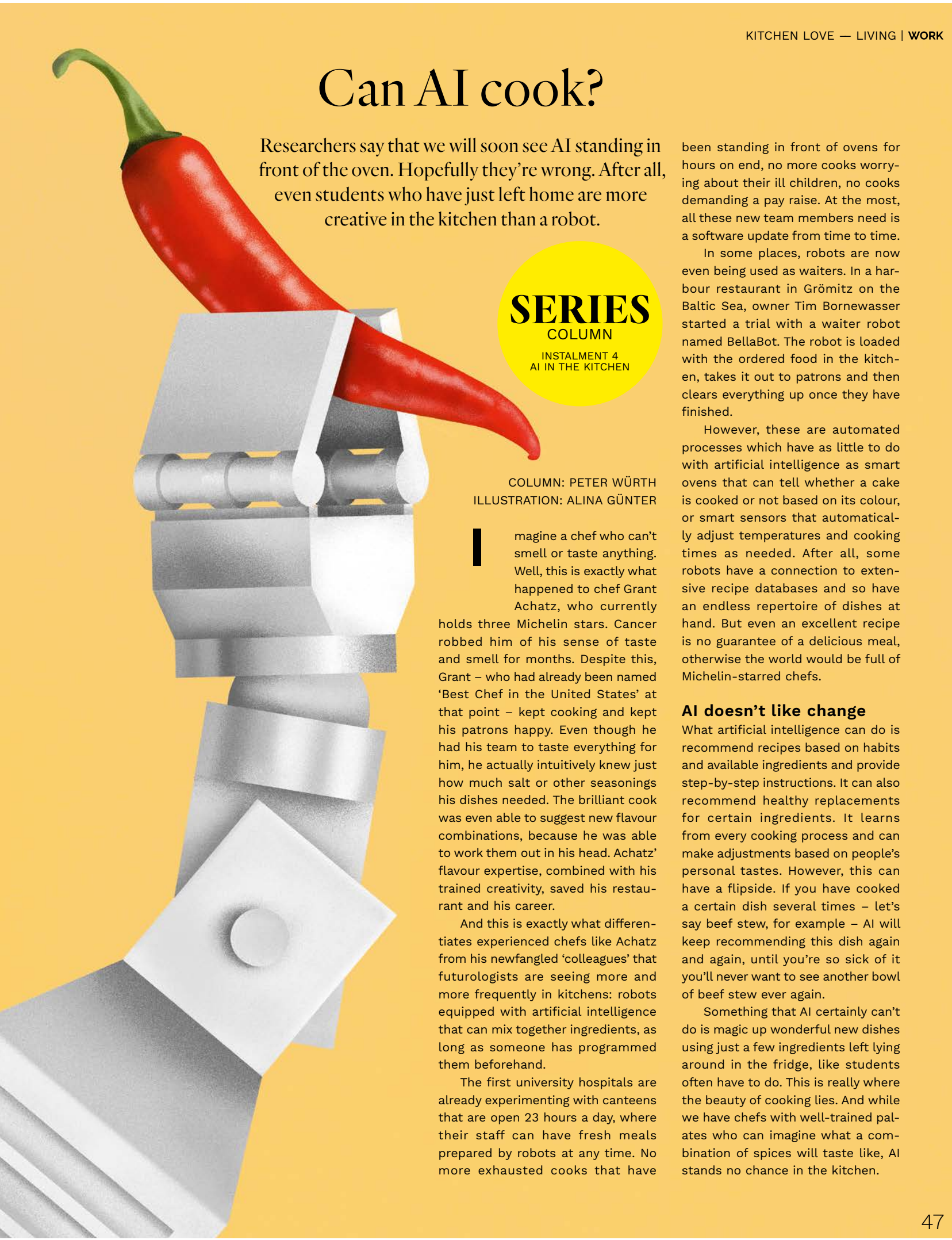
The chocolate from La Amistad is mainly sold in Costa Rica. It can be found in some of the best destinations in the country, also sometimes called the Switzerland of Central America. You can find it at the checkout in shops, cafés and hotels, basically anywhere where clients can treat themselves to the little luxury of an eight-euro bar of chocolate. A smaller part of his production is exported to Switzerland or sold online. It's hard to imagine, isn't it? The Swiss importing chocolate.

Thanks to his cabins and his outstanding organic chocolate, Simon has managed to turn La Amistad into a profitable business. His La Amistad organic project is also thriving. The new, old rainforest is continuing to grow; 28 local workers have been permanently employed by La Amistad and are now intensively involved in the further development of the farm. Three young women from the nearby villages have been trained up as chocolate experts and are responsible for ensuring the high quality of the delicious chocolate. In addition, the family works with another 50 small-scale cacao growers from the surrounding area. Simon offers them cacao seedlings and then trains them in how to look after the trees and harvest the pods. "Through our social and environmental commitments, we are able to create added value for the whole region," he proudly explains. The fact that he also produces delicious chocolate is an added bonus.

You can find more information at:  
[finca-amistad.com/en/home-english/](https://finca-amistad.com/en/home-english/)



Photos: FINCA AMISTAD, SEAN DAVIS



# Can AI cook?

Researchers say that we will soon see AI standing in front of the oven. Hopefully they're wrong. After all, even students who have just left home are more creative in the kitchen than a robot.

## SERIES COLUMN

INSTALMENT 4  
AI IN THE KITCHEN

COLUMN: PETER WÜRTH  
ILLUSTRATION: ALINA GÜNTHER

Imagine a chef who can't smell or taste anything. Well, this is exactly what happened to chef Grant Achatz, who currently holds three Michelin stars. Cancer robbed him of his sense of taste and smell for months. Despite this, Grant – who had already been named 'Best Chef in the United States' at that point – kept cooking and kept his patrons happy. Even though he had his team to taste everything for him, he actually intuitively knew just how much salt or other seasonings his dishes needed. The brilliant cook was even able to suggest new flavour combinations, because he was able to work them out in his head. Achatz' flavour expertise, combined with his trained creativity, saved his restaurant and his career.

And this is exactly what differentiates experienced chefs like Achatz from his newfangled 'colleagues' that futurologists are seeing more and more frequently in kitchens: robots equipped with artificial intelligence that can mix together ingredients, as long as someone has programmed them beforehand.

The first university hospitals are already experimenting with canteens that are open 23 hours a day, where their staff can have fresh meals prepared by robots at any time. No more exhausted cooks that have

been standing in front of ovens for hours on end, no more cooks worrying about their ill children, no cooks demanding a pay raise. At the most, all these new team members need is a software update from time to time.

In some places, robots are now even being used as waiters. In a harbour restaurant in Grömitz on the Baltic Sea, owner Tim Bornewasser started a trial with a waiter robot named BellaBot. The robot is loaded with the ordered food in the kitchen, takes it out to patrons and then clears everything up once they have finished.

However, these are automated processes which have as little to do with artificial intelligence as smart ovens that can tell whether a cake is cooked or not based on its colour, or smart sensors that automatically adjust temperatures and cooking times as needed. After all, some robots have a connection to extensive recipe databases and so have an endless repertoire of dishes at hand. But even an excellent recipe is no guarantee of a delicious meal, otherwise the world would be full of Michelin-starred chefs.

### AI doesn't like change

What artificial intelligence can do is recommend recipes based on habits and available ingredients and provide step-by-step instructions. It can also recommend healthy replacements for certain ingredients. It learns from every cooking process and can make adjustments based on people's personal tastes. However, this can have a flipside. If you have cooked a certain dish several times – let's say beef stew, for example – AI will keep recommending this dish again and again, until you're so sick of it you'll never want to see another bowl of beef stew ever again.

Something that AI certainly can't do is magic up wonderful new dishes using just a few ingredients left lying around in the fridge, like students often have to do. This is really where the beauty of cooking lies. And while we have chefs with well-trained palates who can imagine what a combination of spices will taste like, AI stands no chance in the kitchen.





## Charming Hyderabad

Hyderabad is an important technology hub with several upscale restaurants and businesses. But it's also a breathtakingly beautiful city, brimming with old-world charm. In addition to all its stunning sites, the city is renowned for its delicious cuisine and fantastic traditional bakeries.

Häcker is committed to internationalisation. And India is set to be one of the most important markets in the future. Claudia Schubert, Head of Interior Design at Häcker, headed to India to visit several customers and celebrate Häcker India's 20th anniversary and the company's partnership with Captain Mukesh Kumar Gombar. She also took the opportunity to travel around the country with the Captain's daughter Kanupriya and has put together a few top tips for WORK.

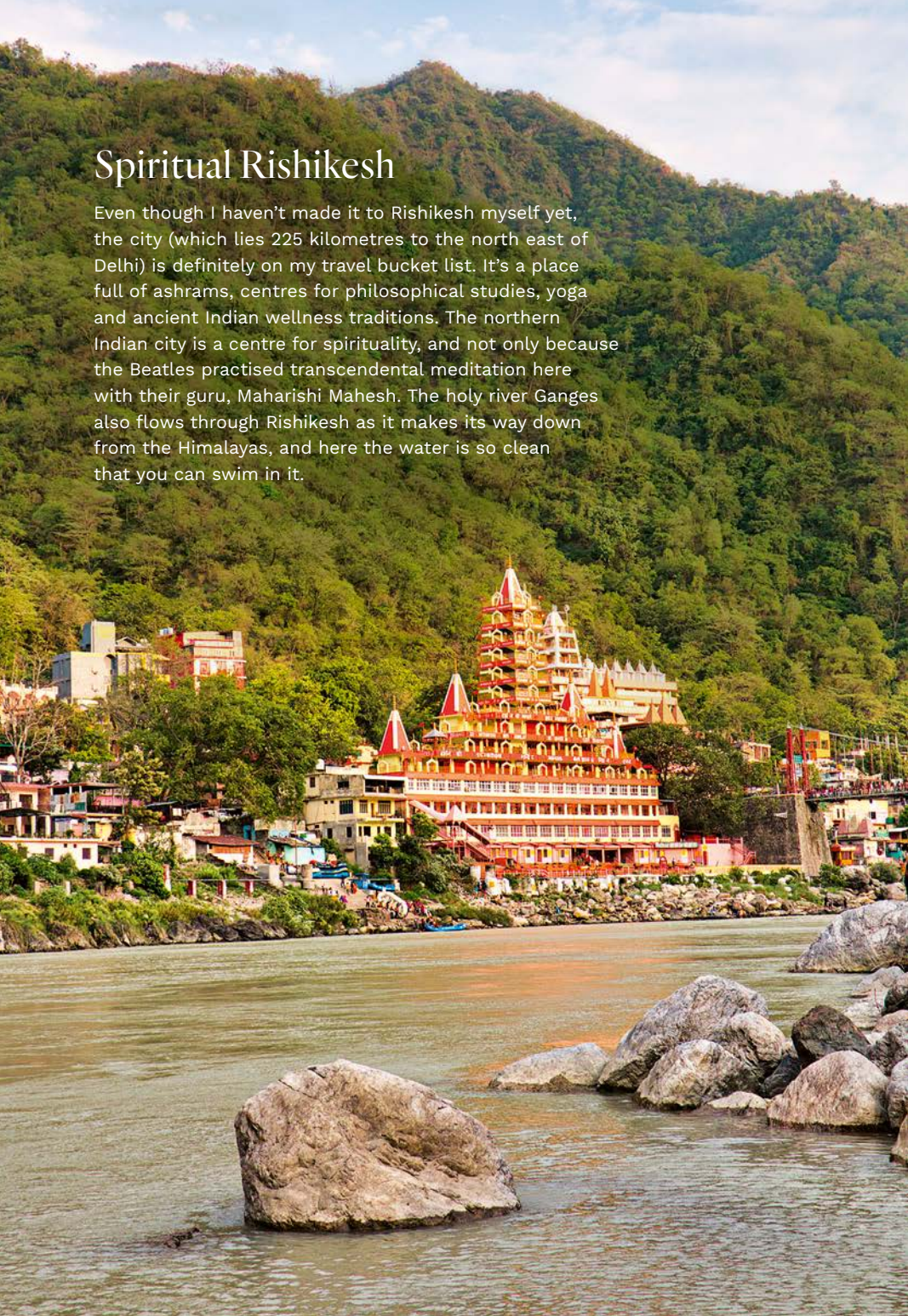


## Cool Mumbai

The skyline of this modern metropolis is incredibly impressive and absolutely not something I expected to see in India. It's a very cosmopolitan city full of culture and creativity. Dance, music, art and theatre are right at home here. It's difficult to be bored in this vibrant city!

## Spiritual Rishikesh

Even though I haven't made it to Rishikesh myself yet, the city (which lies 225 kilometres to the north east of Delhi) is definitely on my travel bucket list. It's a place full of ashrams, centres for philosophical studies, yoga and ancient Indian wellness traditions. The northern Indian city is a centre for spirituality, and not only because the Beatles practised transcendental meditation here with their guru, Maharishi Mahesh. The holy river Ganges also flows through Rishikesh as it makes its way down from the Himalayas, and here the water is so clean that you can swim in it.



**CLAUDIA SCHUBERT**  
travelled to India for the first time and definitely wants to go back one day.  
Pictured here with her colleagues  
Dirk Wittland and Kanupriya Mal (r.)  
against Mumbai's skyline.



## Coastal Kochi

A hidden gem and certainly a future destination for me is Kochi on the southwest coast: a bubbling harbour town and the economic centre of the state of Kerala. Here you can take in lots of colonial architecture, endless beaches, fantastic shops and one of the most beautiful and grandest villas in the country. Kochi used to be the centre of the spice trade – and the scent of the spices still lingers in the air.



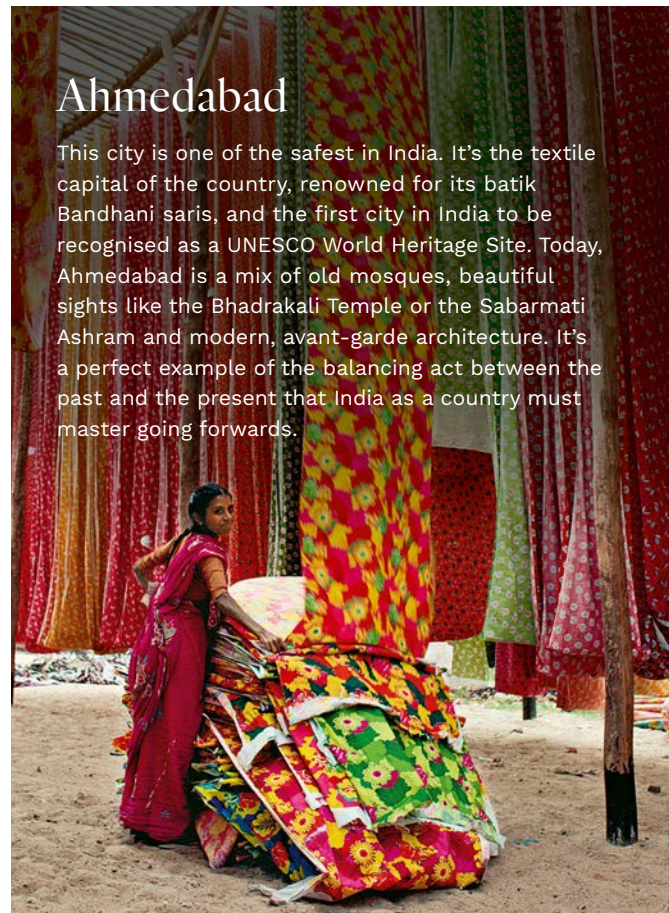
## Taj Mahal

Of course, I also wanted to try and get to the Taj Mahal. Unfortunately, I didn't manage during this trip, but I will definitely squeeze it in during my next visit.



## Ahmedabad

This city is one of the safest in India. It's the textile capital of the country, renowned for its batik Bandhani saris, and the first city in India to be recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, Ahmedabad is a mix of old mosques, beautiful sights like the Bhadrakali Temple or the Sabarmati Ashram and modern, avant-garde architecture. It's a perfect example of the balancing act between the past and the present that India as a country must master going forwards.



## Bustling Delhi

This trip was my first time in India. Unfortunately I didn't have enough time to see everything, but Delhi was certainly impressive. A melting pot of cultures, so many people, such a big city, so much hustle and bustle and traffic, beautiful old quarters and amazing modern architecture. It's something that everyone should experience at least once.



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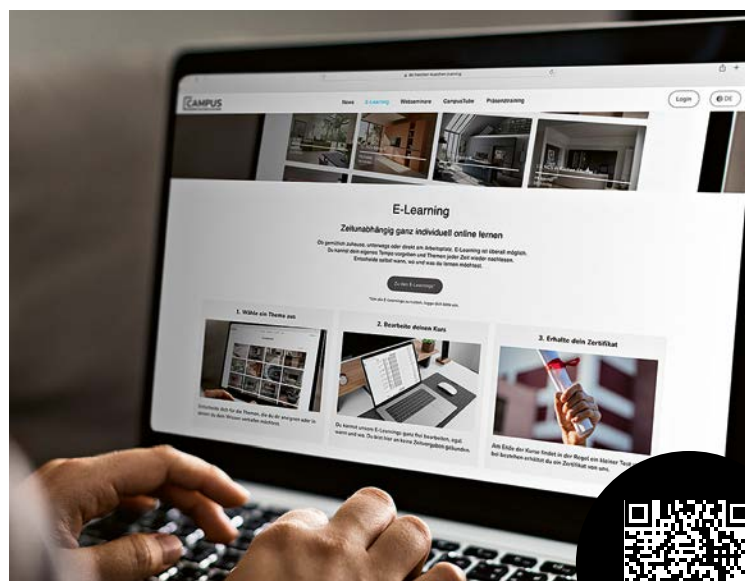




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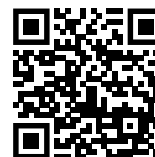
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## CONTACT

Nergün Röttger-Ates  
nroettger-ates@haecker-kuechen.de

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