

YANGON GETS FIRST AUTHENTIC GERMAN RESTAURANT, MINUS THE BEER



Cooking action in the kitchen of German restaurant Mahlzeit. Photo: Ann Wang

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If a German restaurant doesn't serve German beer can you call it a German restaurant? That is the question. The difficulties involved in getting affordable German beer in to Myanmar might explain why there have thus far been a dearth of Teutonic eateries in Yangon, where French, Italian, Thai and Vietnamese outlets now abound. This has now changed, with the launch on November 2 of *Mahlzeit* (Meal Time), in Sanchaung township. Although there are nine locally-brewed beers on the menu, don't expect any of the German beverage German restaurants are famed for worldwide. Nor does the place look like a Bavarian beer house, thankfully.

"As we don't have German beer we have to focus on German food first," said Magnus Scherr, 35, *Mahlzeit's* affable general manager. Mr Scherr, a professional chef with 15 years of cookery under his belt, was lured to Yangon 10 months ago by Uniteam Marine (Yangon) Ltd - a seamen training and recruiting company that has been operating in Myanmar for the past 25 years. His initial mandate was to run a training kitchen in Uniteam's new office building on Pan Hlaing Road. But when Scherr saw the industrial-size, spic-and-span, fully-equipped kitchen, his ambitions turned to opening a local

bakery and restaurant. The owners agreed. Uniteam's management shifted to the same building recently, so a restaurant on premise no doubt appealed. The US Peace Corps and Telenor also rent office space in the office building, giving Mahlzeit a captive lunch crowd.

On the menu are some good old German favorites, such as crispy pork knuckles with dumplings and sauerkraut, sausage platter, Vienna Snitzel and a choice of Flammkuchen (Alsatian pizza with cream cheese and onions as toppings.) The array of breads that come with each meal are especially welcome, in dough-deprived Yangon. Although there is no German beer on tap, the inventive Scherr has come up with a special bread made from the residue from the local Carlsberg brewery. "It is a full meal, already fermented, that I have made a nice bread out of," Scherr said. Alas, too bad you can't drink it.

Frontier rating:

Food: ****

Service: ****

Hygiene: *****

Atmosphere: *** 1/2

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