



# American Aid Society

of German Descendants

## Vereinszeitung



Jahrgang 55 - Folge 3

September – November 2025

Nummer 180

## Brezeln – nicht nur fürs Oktoberfest Pretzels – not just for Oktoberfest



### Tradition: Germany vs. America

From Wikipedia

That's only four degrees of separation between Dirndl and Brezeln! Well at least in my mind haha! I love, love, love, a good German pretzel; I don't know if I have ever met someone who doesn't.

With this in mind, I decided to do a bit of research on the tradition of the pretzel in Germany, how it differs from those in America, and then share two delicious authentic Bavarian pretzel recipe with you.

#### Pretzels in Germany

The ideal soft pretzel, as served in Germany, has a dark golden brown, crispy, salty crust, and inside a soft dough. It has a plump "body" and thin, crispy (not dry) crossed "arms."

In the lower parts of Bavaria, a popular variety is known as a white pretzel, which is sprinkled with pretzel salt and caraway seeds.

*Continued on page 13*

## AMERICAN AID SOCIETY of German Descendants

is a **501 (c) (3) non-profit organization** dedicated to the preservation of our German culture and heritage. All gifts and donations given to this organization are fully tax deductible.

This organization is headquartered at our clubhouse address below:

6540 N. Milwaukee Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60631-1750

website: [www.americanaidsofgerndescendants.org](http://www.americanaidsofgerndescendants.org)  
email: [americanaidsofgerndescendants@gmail.com](mailto:americanaidsofgerndescendants@gmail.com)

### Our Mission

*This organization's mission is to cultivate and maintain our German heritage by our traditions, customs, beliefs, music, dance, language, and to remember and preserve our history. To respect and accept Germans from Europe and their descendants living throughout the world. To aid other Germanic peoples in times of need such as when natural disasters occur. Also, to give support to other ethnic groups in times of crisis throughout the world. To maintain our loyalty, trust, love, and duty to the United States. And locally, to foster goodwill among all non Germans living amongst us in our community through education and entertainment.*

### Officers

**Robert Lengfelder**  
President

**Jenette Goecke**  
1st Vice President

**Blanca Tilli**  
2nd Vice President

**Matthias Wissmann**  
3rd Vice President

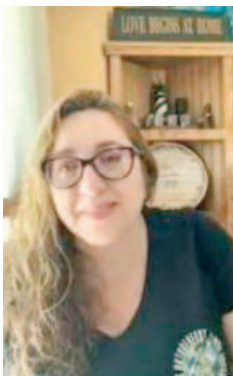
**Michelle Heidrich**  
Recording Secretary

**James Heidrich**  
Treasurer

**Laura Casey**  
Communication's Secretary

## 1. Vizepräsidentinbericht

A few words from our 1st Vice President



Ever since I took office, I have tried to promote that we use our non-profit status as a way to reach out to the community and help others. One of the ways to do that has been to hold the annual holiday food drive at our Christmas program. It has been very successful over the past several years and we have decided that we would like to help the Lake Villa Food Pantry. They have been very grateful for our yearly donation and we are very happy to help out our neighbors in the Lake Villa area.

In many of the past newsletters we have featured other non-profit groups or foundations with the hopes that our members would find it in their hearts to reach out and consider making a donation. A description of what the foundation is about, what they provide and who they help is included. Please take a look at this section in your newsletter and think about what you can do to help others in our surrounding communities.

Our featured non-profit is Ronald McDonald House Charities. I traditionally like to feature local, smaller charities or foundations, but this particular one holds a special place in my heart for a couple of reasons. First, our Jugendgruppe Tanzleiterin (dance instructor), Megan Gabler, has been collecting aluminum can "pop tabs" for this organization for years. We collect them at both the Chicago clubhouse and out at Lake Villa. Please collect these at home and bring them to our monthly meetings! I would personally like to thank Megan for starting this. Second, when my nephew was fighting cancer in New York, he and his family stayed at the Ronald McDonald House near the hospital, so he could receive the treatment he needed and be a part of a study for the rare cancer he had. As you know, Manhattan is very expensive, so to have the Ronald McDonald House as an option was amazing. Ronald McDonald House provides housing for patients and families near the hospital. They also provide meals, basically a home away from home, during a very difficult time. To find out more information about Ronald McDonald House Charities, visit [rmhc.org](http://rmhc.org).

As a non-profit organization, we receive donations from generous people throughout the year. Let's remember to also reach out to others in need as well. There are many non-profit charities, organizations, groups, and foundations in our surrounding communities. If you have a non-profit organization that you would like featured in our newsletter, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

– Jenette Goecke

Join the Pop Tab Program by collecting aluminum tabs from cans, soups, and more! Every tab you collect helps families stay close to their sick or injured children at the Ronald McDonald House. With help from our partner, United Scrap Metal, each pound of pop tabs and other recycled materials raises an average of \$0.55 for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Chicagoland & Northwest Indiana.





## Vereinunternehmungen (Club Activities)

### Versammlungen (Club Meetings)

<b>10 Sep 25</b>	Rentnertreffen (Seniors' Meeting), 9 AM at our Clubhouse
<b>19 Sep 25</b>	Mitgliederversammlung (Membership Meeting), 8 PM at our Clubhouse
<b>03 Oct 25</b>	Vorstandsversammlung (Officers' Meeting), 8 PM at our Clubhouse
<b>08 Oct 25</b>	Rentnertreffen (Seniors' Meeting), 9 AM at our Clubhouse
<b>17 Oct 25</b>	Mitgliederversammlung (Membership Meeting), 8 PM at our Clubhouse
<b>07 Nov 25</b>	Vorstandsversammlung (Officers' Meeting), 8 PM at our Clubhouse
<b>12 Nov 25</b>	Rentnertreffen (Seniors' Meeting), 9 AM at our Clubhouse
<b>21 Nov 25</b>	Mitgliederversammlung (Membership Meeting), 8 PM at our Clubhouse

### Veranstaltungen (Events)

#### 20 Sep 25, 27 Sep 25 & 4 Oct 25 **THREE Oktoberfest Parties**

**Saturdays** at our German Cultural Center, 259 W. Grand Ave. in Lake Villa  
1 mile west of Route 83 in Lake Villa & 9 miles west of Great America on Route 132  
**All dates from 6:30 PM until Midnight**

#### 18 Oct 25 **Kirchweih (Kermes - Church Consecration)**

**Saturday** at our German Cultural Center, 259 W. Grand Ave. in Lake Villa  
Donations are \$ 10.00 per person – cash bar – credit cards now accepted  
Doors open at **6:00 PM**  
Dinner available at 7:00 PM

#### 24 Oct 25 **Kindergruppe Kürbisschnitzen (Children's Pumpkin Carving)**

**Friday** 7:00 PM at our Clubhouse, 6540 N. Milwaukee Ave. in Chicago  
Doors open at **6:45 PM**  
Pumpkins provided. Bring your own pumpkin carving supplies.  
Fun for both parents and children! Show off your talents. Event begins at 7:30 PM.

#### 2 Nov 25 **Schlachtfest (Harvest Feast)**

**Sunday** at our German Cultural Center, 259 W. Grand Ave in Lake Villa  
**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED, Reservations due October 26, 2025, NO REFUNDS**  
Doors open at **12:00 PM**, Dinner served at 1:00 PM  
Donation is \$ 45.00 per person, cash bar – credit cards now accepted  
Send reservations, payment, and requests for tables of 8 or 10:  
**Marianne Lisauskas**, 3040 Fox Hill Rd., Aurora, IL, 60504, Tel. 630-484-8607  
The club email address for reservations is: **americanaidociety@yahoo.com**

### Membership Dues

Dues to the American Aid Society are  
\$25.00 per person or  
\$50.00 per couple.

Anyone interested in the  
German culture and in its heritage  
is welcome to join.

-- TRY IT --



Try our QR Code for  
event information at  
any time from any  
smart device.

### Welcome New Member

Since our last issue, our organization has  
grown with the following new member:

#### **MUELLER, Peter**

We heartily welcome you to our large  
American Aid Society family. Your member-  
ship and your involvement in our organization  
will be greatly appreciated.

We hope that you will join us in our many  
activities, attend our monthly membership  
meetings, and offer your talents and services  
to the club. An organization can only remain  
strong through the service of its members.

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This Vereinszeitung (club newspaper)  
is published quarterly with mailings to  
the membership prior to **March, June,**  
**September,** and **December** of each year.

**It is your active participation** which  
makes this newsletter informative,  
educational and entertaining reading.  
Mail or e-mail all articles, pictures or whatever  
you wish to share to the address below.  
Pictures will not be returned unless requested.

Walter Scheffrahn

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**Email publicist if you wish to receive your  
newsletters electronically.**  
**Include NEWSLETTER in the subject line.**

DO NOT wait until the last minute since late  
submissions will either be heavily edited or  
omitted entirely. Best to submit shortly after  
each activity or event. *Accuracy is the  
responsibility of each author and not the  
Publisher!* Second, the publicist  
**will NOT write articles** on your behalf.

*Contribution deadline* for articles  
is **February 1st, May 1st,**  
**August 1st, and November 1st.** This allows  
sufficient time to edit, proofread, layout,  
print, and mail the newsletters to the  
membership before month's end.

*Laura Casey:* Communication's Secretary  
and advertising

*Margaret Wolf:* Editor and proofreader

*Walter Scheffrahn:* Layout, printing,  
and distribution

PLEASE VISIT **www.germanday.com** FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS

## Rückblick seit der letzten Ausgabe

(Review since the last issue)

### Gedenktagsfeier

(Memorial Day Remembrance)

By Kelsey McMahan

Memorial Day weekend often marks the beginning of summer. Weather permitting, families and friends enjoy a variety of outdoor activities, gearing up for the busy season ahead. This modern-day holiday is quite different than its somber beginnings. As early as 1868 Memorial Day, then known as Decoration Day, was observed to honor soldiers who had lost their lives in the Civil War. By the year 1890, May 30th was observed nationally as a day of remembrance. The honor of the holiday spread to all American soldiers who lost their lives in service through the 20th century and became a federally recognized holiday in 1968. The intention of remembrance is not always at the forefront of modern Memorial Day. The allure of summer and appeal of an extra day off can often overshadow the origins of the holiday. Although in stark contrast of each other, grief and joy may exist simultaneously. This contradiction is a common experience among communities who have experienced loss. Many communities gather during this time, hosting events to remember those who have been lost while celebrating the season to come.

The American Aid Society hosts a Memorial Day picnic annually. The event has evolved through the years, but the theme has remained; remember those who have come and gone, celebrate their lives and enjoy the company of those present. Preparation for the picnic begins weeks before. A dedicated group of volunteers spends their Tuesdays maintaining the Lake Villa Property. Picnic tables have been repaired and repainted, the landscaping freshened up and the playground got a fresh mountain of mulch. Saturday the 24th of May members arrived at the grounds ready to prepare for the following day. There are several moving parts that all come together to prepare for a picnic. Volunteers worked together to prepare several hundred pounds of homemade Hungarian Wurst for the sausage sale as well as to serve at the picnic. The most wholesome group of ladies sat diligently dicing onions and peeling potatoes, while an equally dedicated group of men young and old prepared the meat for sausage. Blanca Tilli coordinated the food for the following day while Laura Casey greeted customers arriving to pick up their freshly bagged Wurst.

Sunday morning arrived with a crisp breeze, and rays of sun shining through a scape of clouds. Given the chill in the air, the prayer service and later performances were held inside the hall. Through the years members Linda Byrom and Angela Balcerak have diligently organized the Memorial Day prayer service. They prepared the altar, made leaflets, and worked alongside the Kinder and Jugend groups on the service. Margaret Wolf assisted Angela Balcerak beautifully with the prayers and readings. We give a big thank you to St. Juliana Parish for providing the Blessed Eucharist for the prayer service. Each year different local clubs donate wreaths to honor those they have lost. The German Day Association and The Egerländer Dance group, along with AAS donated wreaths which were placed on the outdoor memorial monument in Lake Villa. This meaningful part of the day has grown smaller in attendance through the years but continues to be an integral part of The AAS Memorial Day picnic. Honoring the service men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country is a responsibility the club respects and will continue to uphold. Through most of their cultural events, the American Aid Society recognizes the horrors experienced by the Donauschwaben Landsleute in the years following World War II. The continued effort to keep the Donauschwaben culture alive honors those men and women and the battles they fought.

After the prayer service, guests socialized indoors and out, children headed to the playground and the kitchen prepared to open for lunch. The hot Gulasch was well received and as usual the homemade Wurst was a hit.

Around 1pm the Kinder and Jugend groups readied themselves to take the stage. The Kindergruppe, led by Linda Byrom and Erika Ehrat, performed three dances: *Liebe Schwester*, *Ein Steller* and *New Bibi*. Their last dance was a lovely performance by some of their older members, showcasing a faster paced dance. They danced beautifully. Before exiting the stage, Kinder members were joined by some of the Jugend members to perform the *Klarinetten Polka* together! The crowd loved seeing the combined dance. The Jugend then carried on the performance with three dances of their own beginning with *Es ist so schön* and ending with a fan favorite, *The Crescent*. The performance was impressive, as usual. Guests continued to enjoy the picnic grounds after the program had ended, soaking up the day spent with friends and family.





## AAS Golf Ausflug (AAS Golf Outing)

By Christine O'Reilly

The Event Committee decided to plan a new event this year – one that we hoped would be fun and successful and become an annual event that attracts a broad range of participants – AAS members, Donau members, friends, neighbors, and extended families. The result was our first annual AAS Golf Outing, held on Saturday, June 21 at Renwood Golf Course in Round Lake Beach.

The day started as our 47 golfers gathered at Renwood around 9am to check-in, find their golf carts, grab a drink, and socialize with friends, family and new acquaintances. We had a fantastic mix of players – ranging in age groups and skill level. We hope that many women are encouraged to grab their golf bags next year and join this year's four women golfers. Each golfer received a warm welcome and a 'goody bag' with some snacks, water, and a sleeve of three American Aid Society logo golf balls. We are not sure how many of those golf balls may still be in the woods or water at the golf course! We were very grateful to avoid any rain for our first golf outing, but it was a scorcher that day – sunny with the temperature approaching 100 degrees most of the day and gusty winds that helped to cool off, but added a bit of challenge to the game.

Our twelve teams were excited to tee off at 10am with a shotgun start which means that every team started at the same time, but on different holes in the front 9 of the course. Since we had twelve teams and only the front nine holes available for our start, some holes had A and B teams which allowed for more golfers to meet each other and make a connection. We played a scramble format on all eighteen holes: all players on a team teeing off on each hole and then the team decides the best tee shot and they all drop their balls at that spot and play their next shot from there. This process continues until the ball lands in the hole/cup. Scramble format is a fun way to take some of the frustration out of the game – even if your shot falls in a sand trap or in the trees, chances are someone else on your team had a better shot and you get to play from where their ball landed. Hopefully everyone experienced their ball being the chosen one at some point during the outing, and

perhaps some teams discovered a ringer! To add some friendly competition to the game, there were four holes which held *closest to the pin and longest drive* contests.

After finishing all eighteen holes, everyone's efforts were rewarded with a delicious dinner and open bar at the AAS Lake Villa fest/picnic grounds. Despite the sweltering heat, all golfers remained hydrated and returned safely from the golf outing. It was a lot of fun to hear about the adventures, mishaps and speculation as to which team won and which golfers won the contests.

Prizes were awarded to the following golfers:

### Overall 1st Place Team Score of 64, -8 under par:

Robert Lengfelder  
Luke Romanini  
Michael O'Rourke  
Pete Schilling

### Closest to the Pin Winners:

Hole 4 Evan Fay  
Hole 11 Dave Baffa

### Longest Drive Winners:

Hole 5 Tim O'Reilly  
Hole 18 Kevin Casey

A very special thank you to our hole sponsors who were instrumental in helping make our 2025 Golf Outing a success. Our hole sponsors are listed below and in some of the attached pictures - we greatly appreciate your support of our club and we encourage our members to support you as well. A note of thanks to those who helped organize and run the event and obtain our hole sponsors – Angela Balcerak, Nick Balcerak, Laura Casey, Christine O'Reilly and Mattias Wissmann.

We hope that you all had a great time and will join us again next year for the 2026 American Aid Society Golf Outing (date pending). Spread the word and bring your friends, neighbors and fellow golfers to make next year as fun and successful as this year!

Hole #	Sponsor
1	American Aid Society Lake Villa Tuesday Crew
2	Bradtko Movers - Schumacher Imports
3	Maifest Chicago Board
4	Marianne Lisauskas - In Loving Memory of Jonas Lisauskas
5	Berger Heating & Air Conditioning
6	Davis & Engert Dentistry
7	Ludwig Interiors
8	Chicago Donauschwaben
9	Chicago Donauschwaben Jugendgruppe
10	RGLA - Retail Solutions By Design
11	GAPA - German American Police Association - 50 Year Anniversary
12	The Kuechel Family
13	Bernhard Woodwork
14	Laschet's Inn
15	Joe Richardt - The Wurst Man
16	John Meindl and Family
17	The Will Heidrich Foundation for Pediatric Cancer Research
18	North Shore Auto Rebuilders
11-Closest to the Pin	Bernhard Woodwork



Continued on the next page



## Rückblick seit der letzten Ausgabe

(Review since the last issue)

Continued from the previous page





## 4. Juli Picknick (4th of July Picnic)

By Kelsey McMahan

The American Aid Society has hosted a Fourth of July picnic for decades. It has always been a festive day to celebrate summer, culture, community, growth, family and of course, independence. The Lake Villa picnic grounds open at 10am sharp. Guests have been known to arrive early to lay out their tablecloths and seat cushions, ensuring a comfortable spot to enjoy the day. The Fourth of July Picnic has something for everyone. Children can be seen just about everywhere, enjoying the playground, eating a delicious lunch, preparing to perform, sneaking a popsicle and later in the day enjoying some water play. While the heat can be a challenge for some, many an Oma made it out to enjoy the day. Attendance was lower than years past, but the joy was just as high.

The kitchen opened at noon. This year, due to some construction on the outdoor kitchen, lunch was prepared and served using the kitchen located in the hall. While this is not the typical setup for this event, the dedicated kitchen staff adapted and put out a lovely meal. Homemade Hungarian Wurst, hot Gulasch, roasted chicken, and homemade potato salad were just a few of the items available. The bar offered the usual refreshments as well as the "famous" AAS Mai Tai. Guests enjoyed being outside, gathering around their picnic tables chatting over a slice of watermelon. After some time for lunch and socializing the program started at 2pm.

Led by the Balcerak brothers carrying the German and American flags, a parade kicked off the program. The Jugend and Kinder dance groups marched around the grounds, smiling, waving, and seemingly having a great time. Everyone marched right onto the stage, lining up in perfect formation to serenade their audience. After some enthusiastic singing, the group leaders took some time to recognize some accomplishments over the past year. Several Jugend members graduated high school and college; it is always nice to hear what the Jugend is up to. Kinder and Jugend also recognized Karl Goecke as he moved from the children's dance group to the youth group. Following the speech portion of the program, the audience enjoyed dancing from both groups. It was certainly a hot day to be hopping around outdoors but all the dancers put on their game face and persevered. After posing for their obligatory picture, the Kinder dashed

off to the hall to change into clothes for water play!

The rest of the day children were seen enjoying popsicles, running to and from the playground, and attacking 3rd VP Matthias Wissmann with water balloons. As the afternoon ended, families and friends continued to enjoy the picnic grounds and each other's company. This event is perhaps not the typical American style picnic, yet it highlights some important things America strives to stand for; family, community, and celebrating each and every person's unique cultural background.





**Spenden (Donations)****Donations**

The following people have generously donated to our club.

- Gerhard Stadler** — \$100.00  
in memory of Rosie Farland
- Stephanie Lorenz** — \$100.00
- Robert Lengfelder** — \$50.00  
in memory of Adam Sollmann
- Anonymous** — \$100.00
- Kevin & Laura Casey** — \$100.00
- Robert Lengfelder** — \$100.00
- Helene Schock** — \$100.00
- Christine Slabinger** — \$100.00
- Brigitte Spisla** — \$100.00
- Peter & Heidi Bappert** — \$50.00
- Mary Hagen** — \$50.00
- Peter & Linda Goff** — \$50.00
- Elisabeth Herman** — \$50.00
- Sandra Hull** — \$50.00
- Mark & Annamaria Kiefhaber** — \$50.00
- Elizabeth Walter** — \$50.00
- Veronica Weiner** — \$50.00
- Hollis Arnold** — \$40.00
- Adriana Dost** — \$20.00
- Heidrich Family** — Not disclosed  
in memory of Apollonia Katzenmayer
- Christina Ordower** — \$10.00  
for Oma Schwarz
- Matthias & Gerda Schnaufer** — \$300.00
- Marianne Lisaukas** — \$50.00
- Josef Sellner** — \$50.00  
for the club
- Rose Barth** — \$75.00  
for the newsletter
- Gerhard Stadler** — \$500.00
- Josef Sellner** — \$100.00  
for the Tuesday Group

Once again, a heartfelt **Dankeschön** for your generosity. Your support means a great deal to us. If anyone would still like to contribute a tax-deductible gift to support the club, it would be deeply appreciated.

**Mitglieder Meilensteine (Member Milestones)****Verstorbene (Deaths)**

Two of our members passed to their eternal reward.



Anni Kutschal Metzinger (lovingly known as Oma Anni) passed away peacefully on June 8, 2025 in Arlington Heights, IL with her family by her side.

Anni was born November 2, 1933 in Pardon, Yugoslavia to Pauline Kutschal and Valentine Kutschal. She grew up on a farm with the *Donauschwabern*, a community of German-speaking people that left their homeland in search of a better life.

Due to the turmoil of WWII, at the young age of only 8 years old, Anni and her family were separated and forced into detention camps. She did, however, stick with her younger cousins and looked out for them as best she could, given the circumstances. So began her loyalty and protective nature that Anni would continue to lead with throughout her life.

After escaping the camps, Anni and her mother fled to Vienna, Austria for freedom and a fresh start indeed, as this was the city where she met the love of her life, the late Hans Metzinger. After tying the knot and expecting their first child, the young couple fought tooth and nail to obtain visas allowing them to move to America to continue their pattern of seeking a better life for their family.

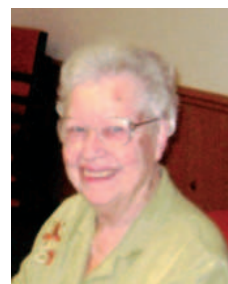
Once settled in Chicago, they gave birth to their two children, Hans and Christine. Anni's grit didn't stop there. She and Hans Sr. worked hard to provide for their family and make a good life for themselves. They formed a community of friends via Green White Soccer Club where Anni is remembered for being the life of any party along with her famous potato salad. Eventually, Anni became an "Oma" to five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, all of whom she loved deeply. It's safe to say, Anni finally found the "better life" she had always been in search of.

As a woman who has overcome so much adversity, Anni was still able to find the simple joys in life, including spending time playing cards with friends, cooking for family, entertaining her grandchildren, traveling with her

husband, and enjoying her go-to drink, Jägermeister.

Even until the end, Anni pushed through with grit and stoicism. Anni may have been tough on the outside but to those who knew her well, she loved and cared deeply. She will be very missed.

Anni is lovingly remembered and survived by her son Hans (Sonja), daughter Christine, grandchildren Olivia (Jonathan), Brigitta (Dominick), Kylie, Jonathan, Billy, Thiago, great-grandchildren Monroe and Arden.



Henrietta Marion Baltes (Baier), born August 31, 1924 in Chicago, passed away peacefully on June 4, 2025.

Henrietta attended Walter High School and had a long career working at Cook Electric Co. She is preceded in death by her parents Margaret and Harold Baier, her husband Peter, her sister Irene, and brother Harold.

She is survived by her sister Dorothy, son Peter, daughter Patti, grandson Harley, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Henrietta stayed very active throughout her life with her various clubs and groups, which included the Hummel Club, Germania Women's Club, American Aid Society of German Descendants, Niedersachsen Club, German Day Association, Schwaben-Verein of Chicago, and the Rheinischer Verein Mardi Gras Society.

Henrietta was also the consummate crafter who made items to sell at her church's Christmas bazaar, which she ran for several years to help raise money for the church. Every year she made Christmas ornaments and cards for all the members of her clubs.

Henrietta will be dearly missed by her numerous friends and fellow club members who enjoyed her participation in all of their activities.





## Komitee Bericht (AAS Committee Report)

### Lake Villa Committee Report

By Joe Stein

The many water leaks discovered after the winter are finally fixed. So far, so good. Everything seems to be in good working order. We are working on projects that can only be done during the summer months and weather permitting. Most of the work involves painting, grass cutting, cleaning the storage rooms, and trying to get rid of things that are no longer needed. We take care of things before and after the events that take place during the summer – Memorial Day, Golf Outing (a new event, replacing Summer Fest), 4th of July, etc.

The Golf Event was a great success. All participants enjoyed themselves and praised the way it was organized. It will be an event in 2026. This month we will trim all the bushes, stain all the benches and picnic tables, and seal all areas around the hall and the garage. We do all the things that need attention in order to improve the looks of Lake Villa. We work carefully and only half days when the weather is too hot. On rainy days or very hot days, we work inside the hall or in the basement. Up until now, we have been lucky with the weather. The whole working crew is doing a great job in beautifying our property and keeping everything in working order. A great big THANK YOU to all the volunteers.

## GAPA Golf Ausflug (GAPA Golf Outing)

By Laura Casey

We were happy to host the luncheon for the annual German American Police Association Golf Outing this past June.

We served a lunch consisting of homemade Bratwurst, Schnitzel, potato salad, and green beans, along with fresh rye bread and butter, followed by an array of desserts. The players enjoy relaxing under the pavilion after a day of golfing.

This luncheon has been a long-standing tradition and we enjoy supporting GAPA on one of their largest fundraisers of the year. Thanks to John Meindl and Joe Kirchens from GAPA, who organize this event every year and to Blanca Tilli, Brigitte Glasenhardt, Kathy Weiner, and Angela Balcerak for helping in the kitchen to make this day a success.

## Aus unseren Abteilungen (From our Departments)

### Kindergruppe

Linda Byrom – Kindergruppe Delegate  
lbyrom1@yahoo.com

### Maifest

By Christl Mueller

Maifest in Lincoln Square once again brought the vibrant spirit of German tradition to the heart of Chicago, and this year's celebration was nothing short of spectacular. With beautiful weather gracing the weekend, it was the perfect way to kick off summertime festivities.

The warm sunshine, cheerful crowds, and sounds of music and laughter created a lively, welcoming atmosphere that was enjoyed by all who attended. Families gathered, friends reconnected, and community pride was on full display.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the Kindergruppe's performance, which brought smiles to the faces of everyone in the audience. The children performed three well-loved dances: *Liebe Schwester*, the always popular *Kreuzpolka*, and the energetic *New Bibi*. Their enthusiasm and dedication were evident, and the audience responded with warm applause and admiration. For many of the children, the chance to share their heritage through dance, in front of such a large and supportive crowd, is a memory they will treasure.

Beyond the performance, the Kinder had just as much fun being part of the wider celebration. The festival's carnival games were a major hit, with the kids laughing, cheering, and, of course, begging parents for "just one more game." It was pure joy to watch them experience Maifest not only as performers, but as children soaking in every moment of the fun.

Our group also enjoyed watching other performers take the stage, especially Chicago Donau's Kindergruppe, whose dances brought their own flair and talent to the celebration. The Kinderchor's performance added a beautiful musical element to the day, showcasing young voices and songs that celebrated both culture and community.

Maifest in Lincoln Square is a tradition that reminds us why we gather: to honor our roots, share our stories, and enjoy the company of old and new friends. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the Kinder, cheer on all the performers, and celebrate with us. Your presence and enthusiasm help keep these traditions alive for future generations.

We are so proud of our Kindergruppe for their hard work and joyful spirit. We look forward to seeing you all at our next event, and until then, we wish you a summer full of sunshine, laughter, and a little bit of dancing.

Prost to a wonderful Maifest!

### Playground Mulch

By Christl Mueller

What began as a simple safety update quickly turned into a full-blown team effort when the Kindergruppe learned that twelve inches of mulch would be required to bring our playground into compliance with child safety regulations. The task seemed daunting at first, but as always, our community rose to the challenge with determination, unity, and a lot of shovels.

At the forefront of this effort was our unstoppable mulch coordinator, Erika Ehrat, whose leadership and organization made it all possible. Erika rallied the troops for two consecutive Saturdays of hard work. Several Kindergruppe parents, and even some of our Kinder themselves, showed up ready to dig in, armed with shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows, and fueled by dedication (and perhaps a little caffeine).

With a towering pile of mulch delivered by semi, it sometimes felt like we were climbing a mountain with no summit in sight. Though the job wasn't quite complete by Memorial Day Sunday, we were saved by the Tuesday Crew, many of whom proudly hold the title of "Opa" to our Kinder. Their experience, muscle, and good spirits got the job across the finish line.

Thanks to everyone's hard work, the playground is now not only safer but also more beautiful and inviting for our kids to enjoy. And with any luck, we're officially set on mulch for a good, long while!





## Aus unseren Abteilungen

(From our Departments)

### Kindergruppe

Linda Byrom – Kindergruppe Delegate  
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### Memorial Day

By Christi Mueller

As part of our cherished annual tradition, club members gathered once again on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. The intent is to not only to honor the brave men and women who gave their lives in military service, but also to remember the Donauschwaben who suffered and perished in the aftermath of the Second World War. This time of remembrance remains a solemn and meaningful cornerstone of our community's identity, reminding us of both the sacrifices of our ancestors and the values we strive to carry forward.

While the unpredictable weather led us to move the memorial service indoors, the spirit of the day was undiminished. The ceremony, beautifully led by Angela Balcerak and Margaret Wolf, was heartfelt and reverent. Continuing one of our most moving traditions, the children, our "Kinder", carried the statue of Mary, our Blessed Mother, with dignity and care. We extend our sincere thanks to Elsie, Emme, Addison, and Sonja, along with Callen, Luka, Charles, and Georg, for taking part in this special moment.

After the ceremony, the Kinder were treated to a lovingly prepared meal by our devoted kitchen staff. Their attention to detail and care for our youngest members ensures that every child feels valued, nourished, and ready to shine. This year also marked the beginning of a new tradition, as the Kinder performed three dances indoors, followed by spirited performances by the Jugend. The applause that followed each dance was a reflection of the joy and pride felt by all in attendance.

To cap off a beautiful day, the children were able to enjoy the fresh air and laughter on the playground, which had been refreshed with a new layer of mulch just the day before. This being another example of the behind-the-scenes dedication that makes days like this so special.

Though the skies threatened rain, the afternoon blossomed into one filled with remembrance, community, and joy. We are deeply grateful to all who made this day possible, and we look forward to continuing these meaningful traditions for generations to come.



### July 4th Picnic

By Christi Mueller

On Friday, July 4th, our club came together to celebrate Independence Day with our cherished annual picnic at Lake Villa. With a spirit of community and celebration, families, friends, and members gathered under sunny skies to honor our nation's history and enjoy a day full of tradition, laughter, and connection.

The afternoon began with the wonderful work of our kitchen crew, who prepared a delicious meal for our Kinder. Classic picnic favorites were served, i.e. hot dogs, pretzels, pickles, and a sweet M&M cookie to top it all off. Their hard work made sure our youngest members had full bellies and happy hearts as the festivities began.

At 2:00 p.m., the much-anticipated march-in commenced. With pride and reverence, our Kinder joined in, marching alongside the Jugend. Even our tiniest dancers kept in step with impressive determination. After the march, members of the Jugend and Kinder raised their voices in song, performing a patriotic and multicultural medley: *The National Anthem*, *You're a Grand Ole Flag*, *Mein Vater war ein Wandersmann*, *Mein Hut, der hat drei Ecken*, and *Bruder Jakob* in three languages (English, German, and French).

Following the march, Linda Byrom introduced the dance performances, beginning with an energetic and crowd-pleasing piece: *New Bibi Hendl*. Choreographed by Jenette Goecke and Michelle Heidrich, this fast-paced dance set to a quirky yodeling tune by Japanese artist Takeo Ischi had the audience tapping their toes and smiling ear to ear. (If you haven't seen the YouTube video yet, then be sure to check it out for some joyful entertainment!)

Next came a timeless favorite, *Kreuzpolka*, a dance with deep roots in our group's history. Many current adult members fondly remember dancing it themselves in their Kindergruppe days. In recent years, leaders have found ways to make this beloved piece inclusive of even our youngest dancers, modifying the choreography while keeping the heart of the tradition alive. The group forms a cross ("Kreuz") and creatively incorporates crossed legs into the movements, a clever, joyful tribute to its name.

Our third dance, the *Einsteller*, was a lively partner-changing number originally learned from the Cleveland Kinder. It's a favorite for its social energy and is also part of our upcoming program for Landestreffen, taking place August 29th – September 1st, in Mansfield, Ohio. We look forward to performing it with friends from other groups there!





Then, the older Kinder performed *Hammerschmieds Gesellen*, the blacksmith apprentice dance. This traditional piece brings to life the rhythmic hammering and movement of blacksmith work, a wonderful blend of history and physical storytelling.

Our final dance brought an American flair to the program with a classic square dance, performed by the older Kinder with help from the Jugend. This annual tradition reminds us how folk dance, no matter its origin, connects us to community, celebration, and shared joy. It was a fitting way to close the Kinder program in honor of Independence Day.

At the close of the performances, we celebrated Karl Goecke as he completed his time with the group and took the exciting next step into the Jugendgruppe. Karl has been a member of our Kindergruppe since he was two years old. He has a natural talent for dancing and could always be counted on to help teach other Kinder how to dance. He's been an asset to our group, and we'll miss him in Kinder, but wish him all the best in Jugend.

With the formal program complete, it was time for the Kinder to cool off. Water balloons flew, popsicles were enjoyed, and the playground became a hub of laughter and energy. It was a perfect end to a meaningful and memory-filled day.

As we reflect on this year's celebration, we're reminded of the strength of our community, the joy of shared traditions, and the power of passing these moments from one generation to the next. Thank you to everyone who made the day so special — from dancers and leaders to parents, volunteers, and supporters. We're already looking forward to next year.

Thank you for keeping our traditions alive with pride and love!





## Aus unseren Abteilungen (From our Departments)

### Seniorengruppe

Elvira Geist – Seniorengruppe Delegate  
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### Seniorengruppe Report

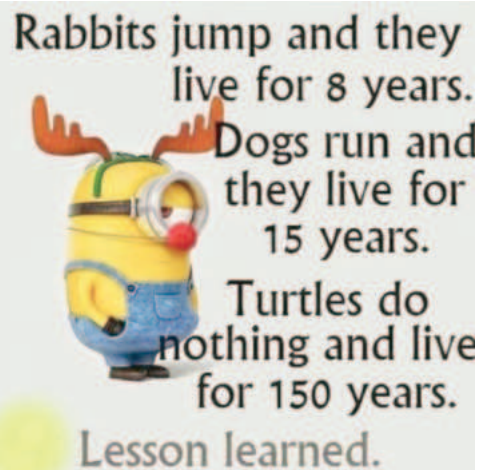
By Elvira Geist

For our seniors, the Seniorengruppe welcomes all to join us on the second Tuesday of every in 2025.

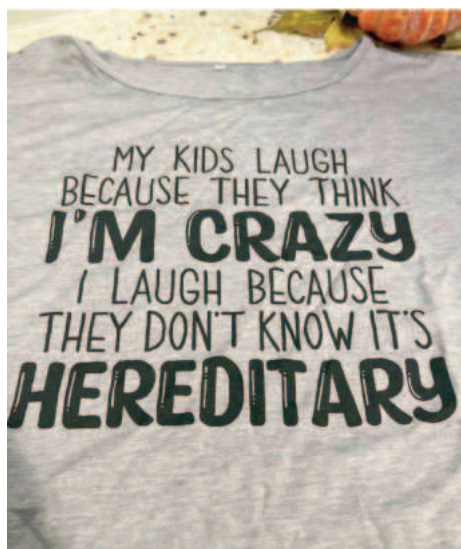
Our doors open at 9 AM for the opportunity to enjoy playing cards and games along with good conversation. We offer a warm lunch which is served at 12 noon for only \$12.

Come join us and have a relaxing good time.

We have some jokes for you:



The "WD" stands for Water Displacement and the "40" refers to the first successful chemical formulation after 39 previous failed attempts. This is a genuine print ad from 1958 when the inventor chemist launched his wonder product to the general public. Given today's cultural norms, this just might make you laugh out loud.



### Frauengruppe

Bernadette Henz – Frauengruppe Delegate  
hebernadett@aol.com

### Frauengruppe Updates

By Anne Lengfelder

Thank you to all who joined in on the fun at our June 29th meeting. The vanilla jars and rum balls were a success. Everyone received a jar of vanilla and rum balls to take home. Vielen Dank to Andrea Katzenmayer and Blanca Tilli for coordinating the event. YUM!!

### WHAT IS HAPPENING IN AUGUST



Additional activities in the planning stage are:

**GLASS PUMPKIN PATCH:** at the Morton Arboretum

Friday, October 10 and Sunday, October 12.

**LIGHT SCAPE:** at the BOTANIC GARDEN.

Step into an enchanting 1.3-mile trail of twinkling lights and show stopping displays expertly curated anew each year. Bundle up, grab a hot chocolate, and see the Chicago Botanic Garden glow beyond the expected.

The event runs from November 14 thru January 4. Please let us know if interested.

Please contact Bernadette at 773-339-5475.



## Brezeln (Pretzels)

*Continued from the cover page*

The major difference between pretzels in different regions is their thickness. For example, the Swabian pretzels have thin “arms” and a fat “belly.”

They are quite rich in fat content. Whereas, in the Bavarian region, the “arms” are thick and they have thin “bellies” to avoid the extra fat.



One of the variants of German homemade pretzels is the Butterbrezel, which involves the pretzel being cut in half and painted with melted butter. They can also be accompanied with cold meats or cheese.

**The popular toppings of authentic Bavarian pretzels are:**



Sesame seeds, poppy seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, caraway seeds, cheese sauce, and bacon bits. Bavarians especially enjoy their pretzels in the late morning with Weißwürste, sweet mustard, and a Bier.

**There are several pretzel-variations, depending on occasion and recipe:**

### New Year's Pretzels

This pretzel is made with either a milk-dough or with a sweet yeast dough.

### Sweet Pretzels

Also known as the nut-pretzel: it is made from puff-pastry and is crispy and flakey.

### Oktoberfest Pretzel

During Oktoberfest in Munich, a much larger pretzel is baked. The crust is light golden brown, and the texture of the bread is more like a soft, white bread.

### Lent Pretzel (Fastenbrezeln)

These pretzels are very light in color. The baker cooks the dough briefly in water before baking them. After baking, the pretzels are sprinkled with kosher salt.

### Burg Pretzels

The taste and texture of these pretzels are similar to very crispy toast.

### Pretzels in America



Pretzels were brought to the USA in the late 18th century. Southeastern Pennsylvania, (with its large population of Germans) is considered the birthplace of the American pretzel industry; many pretzel bakers are still located in the area.

Besides covered in salt, hard American pretzels commonly come dipped in chocolate or yogurt, while soft ones are served with mustard or liquid cheese.

Different flavors and toppings are popular lately including nuts, seeds, cheese, veggies and glazes.

Another trend is to use pretzel dough to make burger or hot dog buns. (and I must say... a burger on a pretzel bun is WAY better than a regular bun).

*Continued on the next page*



## Brezeln (Pretzels)

*Continued from the previous page*



photo from dirndlkitchen.com

November 11th is when St. Martin's Day is celebrated in Germany, marking the end of harvest season. St. Martin is known for his love for children and the poor.

On the night of November 11th, German children will walk in processions with lanterns they made in school, led by a man on a horse who is dressed like St. Martin.

The procession leads through town to a large bonfire, where Martinsbrezeln are passed out to the children. I remember the processions very vividly, and always enjoyed singing the St. Martin's Day songs while walking with my lantern.

The sweet reward at the end, the Martinsbrezel, was the best part though!



### TRADITIONAL SAVORY GERMAN PRETZEL RECIPE WITH PUMPKIN SEEDS



In the original recipe they use a lye solution, which can be very irritating to your skin and I read several articles telling me to stay away from it; it's the same chemicals they use to unclog drains after all! So instead of risking my health, I followed a recipe from this article in the New York Times.

It said to bake my baking soda on a baking sheet (or parchment paper). Cover the prepared baking sheet with foil and put it in the oven for an hour at 250 to 300 degrees Fahrenheit, making it more alkaline and closer to a PH value of lye, without being as dangerous! I know it sounds like magic, but this baking soda solution works in making the pretzels taste like authentic German pretzels!

I also recommend you have a kitchen scale that is able to show you weight in grams. This will make German cooking much easier in the future, too! The metric system rocks!

So, there you have it. A little pretzel history followed by two great recipes to make your own.

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## How to Fold a Pretzel: A Step-by-Step Guide

by Andrew Borinski - Savory Pastries website

It's difficult to imagine how those beautiful twisted pretzels come to be folded; instead, think about folding them. Creating that iconic pretzel shape requires more than just aesthetics – it necessitates the ideal balance of soft and crunchy elements inside and outside. What are some tips to learn the pretzel folding trick?

A good pretzel folding lesson is about transforming simple dough into a delicious snack that is both visually appealing and extremely delectable. By following this step-by-step guide, you will learn how to mix the dough, how to make the classic pretzel shape, and how to savor your baked goods. By the end of this article, you'll have the skills to make pretzels that resemble those found in your favorite bakery.

Let's move on to the world of pretzel making, which is where dough becomes art and each fold is a step toward achieving the perfect twist. Get ready to learn more about the mystery behind making these tasty treats as we get closer to Oktoberfest. This is where you'll begin the journey toward becoming a pretzel folding expert.

In the world of pretzel crafting, success hinges upon the meticulous selection of essential equipment and ingredients that lay the foundation for creating these delectable treats. Just as a painter requires the finest brushes and paints, a pretzel enthusiast must assemble a toolkit of culinary essentials to master the art of pretzel making. From the basic building blocks to the optional embellishments that elevate these twists of dough into culinary works of art, the right equipment and ingredients are the key to pretzel perfection.



**A Symphony of Ingredients:** At the heart of every pretzel creation lies a symphony of ingredients that harmoniously blend to deliver the distinct flavor and texture that pretzels are renowned for. Flour, the canvas upon which this masterpiece is crafted, forms the backbone of the dough. It provides structure, texture, and the characteristic chewiness that defines a pretzel's bite. Water acts as the catalyst, binding the elements together and facilitating the fermentation process, resulting in a dough that rises to perfection.

But it is the yeast that introduces the magic. This micro-organism, when nurtured, transforms the dough into a fluffy, airy concoction, yielding the soft interior that contrasts enticingly with the crispy exterior. As for salt, it not only enhances flavor but also plays a pivotal role in developing the dough's structure and controlling yeast activity. It's a fine balance that professionals master, creating pretzels that are neither too dense nor overly airy.

**Optional Accoutrements:** While the artistry of a classic pretzel is complete with the above components, the culinary canvas offers room for embellishment. Optional toppings, such as sesame seeds or coarse salt, allow the pretzel connoisseur to experiment and personalize their creations. These embellishments not only add visual appeal but also provide bursts of texture and flavor that delight the senses.

The process of selecting the right equipment and ingredients for pretzel making mirrors the meticulous craftsmanship found in other creative fields. Just as a sculptor selects the finest marble and chisel, and a writer chooses each word with care, a pretzel enthusiast curates their materials for optimal results. With each fold, twist, and bake, these edible masterpieces come to life – a testament to the fusion of skill, creativity, and the perfect blend of flour, water, yeast, and salt. As you embark on your own pretzel-making journey, remember that behind each delicious bite lies a symphony of culinary elements meticulously orchestrated to perfection.

### Step 1: Mixing the Dough

In the exhilarating journey of crafting the perfect pretzel, the inaugural step is an intricate dance of ingredients, precision, and technique. Picture this: a mixing bowl as your stage, and flour, water, yeast, and salt as the star performers, each playing a pivotal role in creating a symphony of flavor and texture that is unmistakably pretzel-esque.

**Creating the Flour Foundation:** The overture begins with flour, the cornerstone of this culinary masterpiece. As you measure out the flour, each particle becomes a potential vessel for the pretzel's signature chewiness and structure. Its interplay with the other ingredients sets the stage for the dough's transformation from a basic amalgamation to a tantalizing treat. This is where the magic starts – the birth of dough.

**The Alchemy of Water and Yeast:** Next, water steps in, introducing itself as the catalyst for transformation. As it mingles with the flour, it awakens the dormant yeast – the catalyst that transforms ordinary dough into an airy, risen marvel. Yeast's microscopic charm lies in fermentation, a chemical dance that fills the dough with bubbles, giving it the coveted rise that makes pretzels light and fluffy on the inside.

**Salt: The Underrated Hero:** Amidst the symphony of flavors, salt makes its entrance, underscoring each bite with a hint of complexity. But its role goes beyond taste; it's a conductor that orchestrates the yeast's activity, ensuring a controlled rise and impeccable texture. A pinch too much or too little, and the delicate balance could be disrupted. This symphonic collaboration transforms the dough from a mere mixture to a living, breathing entity.

**Mastering the Kneading Ritual:** Now comes the part where hands meet dough – the pivotal kneading process. This is where technique takes center stage, as the transformation from a sticky, formless mass to a smooth, elastic dough occurs through rhythmic kneading. As you work the dough, you're not just exercising your culinary muscles; you're coaxing gluten strands to form, providing the structure that contributes to the pretzel's characteristic chewiness.

**Knead It Right:** The act of kneading may seem straightforward, but it's an act that demands mindfulness. As your hands rhythmically push, fold, and stretch the dough, you're awakening its potential. This step isn't mere preparation; it's a labor of love that enhances the dough's texture, making it responsive to the shaping that follows. Kneading may be the unsung hero, but its impact resonates in every bite.

**Smoothness and Elasticity:** The Quest: The holy grail of kneading is achieving that sought-after smoothness and elasticity. It's a tactile journey, one where your fingers can sense the evolving texture. Smoothness indicates that the flour has fully hydrated, and the ingredients are harmonizing. Elasticity, on the other hand, reveals gluten's transformative power – it's the reason pretzels can stretch, twist, and fold without falling apart.

**Setting the Stage for Pretzel Success:** This initial step, seemingly straightforward, sets the stage for pretzel perfection. The act of combining flour, water, yeast, and salt in the mixing bowl evolves into an orchestrated dance of transformation and potential. The diligent kneading, born of technique and intuition, is a cornerstone in the pursuit of the quintessential pretzel. As you work the dough, you're not just crafting a snack; you're participating in a time-honored tradition that has tantalized taste buds for generations.

With every fold and twist, the dough takes on a personality of its own, a reflection of your dedication and mastery. So, as you embark on this pretzel-making odyssey, remember that step one is where the magic begins. The mixing, the kneading – it's a culinary alchemy that promises tantalizing results, encapsulating the essence of what a pretzel should be.



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## Brezeln (Pretzels)

*Continued from the previous page*

### Step 2: Allowing the Dough to Rise

As you venture deeper into the labyrinthine artistry of pretzel crafting, the spotlight now shifts to a pivotal act of transformation – the magical rise of the dough. Imagine this step as the intermission in a grand culinary performance, where the dough takes center stage and undergoes a metamorphosis, fueled by the yeast's intrinsic prowess.

**The Alchemical Intermission:** After the initial amalgamation of ingredients and the laborious kneading process, it's time to usher in the transformative act of rising. Here, patience is the virtuous conductor, directing the dough's ascent from a dense mass to an airy delight. As the dough rests under the cloak of a damp cloth, magic unfolds behind the scenes. It's a natural phenomenon, where the interaction of yeast, warmth, and time collaborates to elevate a seemingly inert mass to new heights.

**Yeast: The Alchemist's Apprentice:** At the heart of this transformation lies yeast – the living organism that weaves magic within the dough's matrix. Yeast's talents lie in fermentation, a metabolic dance where it consumes sugars and expels carbon dioxide. This seemingly mundane process is the driving force behind the dough's ascent. As carbon dioxide accumulates within the dough's structure, it inflates like a balloon, rendering it light, porous, and amenable to shaping.

**The Warm Embrace:** In this culinary theater, warmth is an essential player. Placing the dough in a cozy corner, covered with a damp cloth, provides the optimal environment for yeast's alchemical prowess to flourish. The combination of moisture and warmth acts as an incubator, expediting the yeast's fermentation and enabling it to create pockets of air that turn the dough from flat to fabulous.

**Time: The Patient Choreographer:** Patience, much like a conductor directing an orchestra, orchestrates the symphony of fermentation. The dough requires time to rise, and the duration depends on myriad factors, including the ambient temperature and the specific yeast strain used. As the dough rests and yeast diligently ferments, it evolves from a humble lump to an expansive creation, infused with airiness.

**The Euphoria of Transformation:** Witnessing the dough's rise is akin to witnessing a caterpillar transform into a butterfly. The once modest mass expands, evolving into a canvas of possibilities. When you peel back the damp cloth, you're greeted by a sight that is both awe-inspiring and satisfying. The dough, once contained, is now brimming with potential, a testament to the symbiotic relationship between ingredients, warmth, and time.

**From Dough to Promise:** Allowing the dough to rise isn't a mere step; it's an act of faith. It's the point where the chemistry of ingredients converges with the art of patience, creating a canvas of potential. As yeast ferments, sugars transform, carbon dioxide accumulates, and the dough ascends to new heights. It's a microcosm of culinary alchemy, where nature's forces collaborate to create a symphony of textures and flavors.

With the rise complete, the dough is now poised for the next phase – the transformation into the iconic pretzel shape. This

intermission, where yeast orchestrates its performance, is a testament to the artistry of baking. As you uncover the dough and witness its metamorphosis, remember that this is not just a dough's rise, but a rise in culinary possibility.

### Step 3: Shaping the Pretzel Dough



Source: prettysimplesweet

Prepare to embark on a journey that blends technique with artistry, as we delve into the intricate process of shaping pretzel dough – a step that elevates mere dough into the iconic, twisted delight we all adore. The canvas of dough, now risen and imbued with potential, awaits your touch to transform it into pretzel perfection.

**Divide and Conquer:** First, divide the dough into manageable portions. This not only facilitates easier handling but also sets the stage for consistent, well-proportioned pretzels. Each piece becomes a blank canvas for your culinary artistry, awaiting the shaping that will imbue it with character.

**Rolling Ropes of Wonder:** Roll each dough portion into a long, slender rope – an act that's as meditative as it is functional. Your hands guide the dough's transformation, applying gentle pressure as it lengthens. Feel the dough respond, the gluten strands aligning to create a smooth, uniform rope. This rope becomes the building block for your pretzel's iconic shape.

**Weaving the U-Shaped Prelude:** As you hold the rope, envision the symphony of twists and turns that will define your pretzel. Form a U-shape by bringing the two ends of the rope together – it's a simple, yet foundational maneuver that sets the stage for the intricate twists that follow. This is where the dough's malleability shines, responding to your creative touch.

**An Elegant Twist:** With the U-shape in place, it's time for the mesmerizing twist that imparts the pretzel's distinctive look. Cross the two ends of the rope over each other, ensuring that they don't stray too far from the U-shaped base. It's a



motion that weaves your dough creation into an elegant knot, the essence of the pretzel's charm.

**Sealing the Deal:** To finalize your pretzel's shape, gently press the ends onto the bottom of the U-shape. This not only secures the twist but also ensures that your pretzel maintains its form during baking. This step is akin to adding the final brushstrokes to a painting – the crowning touch that solidifies your creation.

**The Artistry Unveiled:** As you shape the pretzel dough, you're not just following steps; you're channeling your inner sculptor, weaving a narrative of form and texture. Each twist and press reflects your dedication to the craft, your commitment to creating a snack that transcends its humble ingredients. This shaping process is where dough transcends to art, where each pretzel becomes a testament to your culinary prowess.

And so, as you mold, twist, and press, remember that shaping pretzel dough isn't just about technique; it's a dance of creativity and craftsmanship. It's where dough comes to life, where each twist is a brushstroke, and each press is a signature. With this step, you've breathed life into your dough, and in return, it yields not just a pretzel, but a work of culinary art.

#### Step 4: Baking Soda Bath

In the symphony of pretzel crafting, a pivotal crescendo occurs with the introduction of a seemingly unusual protagonist – the baking soda bath. This step, both science and magic, plays a vital role in transforming dough into the quintessential pretzel, complete with its distinct flavor and golden-brown allure. As we delve into the intricate choreography of this process, the purpose and technique of the baking soda bath are unveiled, showcasing the alchemical journey from dough to pretzel.

**The Secret Chemistry:** Why dip pretzels into a baking soda bath? The answer lies in the interaction between alkaline baking soda and the dough's surface. This chemical exchange occurs during the bath, inducing a Maillard reaction – a process that leads to browning, enhanced flavor, and textural development during baking. As a result, the baking soda bath isn't just a ritual; it's a culinary magic trick that imparts the pretzel's iconic color and complex taste.

**Creating the Bath Elixir:** Preparing the baking soda bath requires precision – a process that mirrors the artistry of baking. Dissolve baking soda in warm water, creating a bath elixir that holds the transformative power. It's a solution that's both scientific and creative, a balance between chemistry and culinary expertise.

**The Baptism of Dough:** As each pretzel is meticulously shaped, it awaits its turn to be baptized in the baking soda bath. Gently immerse the pretzel into the bath, allowing the alkaline solution to kiss its surface. It's a moment of surrender, where the dough's destiny is forever changed. During this baptism, the dough absorbs the alkaline solution, setting the stage for the Maillard reaction to work its magic during baking.

**Elevating Flavor and Texture:** The alchemical dance of the baking soda bath is more than just surface-deep. As the pretzels undergo their transformation, the bath's influence penetrates the dough, elevating both flavor and texture. The Maillard reaction brings forth a symphony of flavors – nutty, toasty, and complex – and imbues the pretzel with its signature color.

**A Toast to Texture:** The bath isn't just about flavor; it also plays a pivotal role in creating the pretzel's desired texture. The reaction between baking soda and the dough's surface leads to a pH change, resulting in a surface that's slightly more rigid. This contributes to the pretzel's characteristic chewiness and adds to the overall sensory experience.

**The Final Flourish:** Once baptized and transformed, the pretzels emerge from their baking soda bath, now poised for the final act – baking. As they're placed on a parchment-lined baking sheet, the dough's surface glistens, a testament to the bath's transformative touch. The oven's heat seals the pretzel's fate, rendering it with a crust that's simultaneously crispy and tender, golden and inviting.

And so, as you dip each pretzel into the baking soda bath, remember that this step isn't just about tradition; it's about chemistry and culinary excellence. It's the final touch that ensures each pretzel bears the hallmarks of authenticity, flavor, and texture. The baking soda bath isn't a mere submersion; it's an immersion into the art and science of pretzel perfection.

#### Step 5: Baking the Pretzels

As we approach the crescendo of our pretzel-making symphony, the spotlight now shines on the transformative act of baking – a step that seals the culmination of efforts, transforming dough into golden-brown masterpieces. The oven becomes your stage, and the parchment-lined baking sheet, your canvas, as you wield the power of heat to elevate dough to its final form.

**Preheating: The Prologue:** Before your pretzels embark on their baking journey, ensure your oven is preheated to the optimal temperature. This initial step is akin to tuning an instrument before a performance – it's a necessary preparation to ensure uniform baking and that the pretzels emerge with the desired texture and color.

**Test of Mastery:** The mastery of baking is in recognizing the moment of perfection. The moment when the pretzels emerge from the oven, their surfaces adorned with a symphony of shades – the result of the Maillard reaction that unfolded during the baking process. As you gently tap the pretzels' bottoms, you're listening for a hollow sound – a signal that the interior is light, airy, and fully baked.

**From Oven to Plate:** The final act of baking isn't just about the oven; it's about the transition from oven to plate, where culinary artistry meets anticipation. As you carefully remove the pretzels from the oven, they bask in their post-baking glory, their golden exteriors a testament to your craftsmanship.

*Continued on the next page*



## Brezeln (Pretzels)

*Continued from the previous page*

**The Culmination of Craft:** In the world of pretzel crafting, baking isn't just an endpoint; it's the culmination of craftsmanship and creativity. It's where dough transforms into delight, where heat works its magic, and where the perfect balance between time and temperature yields pretzels that are both visually enticing and undeniably scrumptious.

With each batch that emerges from the oven, remember that this step isn't just about baking; it's about mastery and finesse. As you savor the aroma and admire the golden-brown hue, know that your journey from dough to pretzel is complete. The oven's heat has etched the final strokes in your culinary masterpiece, a symphony of flavors and textures that captivates both the eyes and the palate.

### Step 6: Optional Toppings

In the grand tapestry of pretzel craftsmanship, the journey doesn't end with baking. The canvas that emerges from the oven is both a blank slate and an opportunity for culinary expression. Optional toppings are the artist's palette, offering the chance to elevate your pretzels from delectable to dazzling, enhancing taste, texture, and visual appeal. Consider these embellishments as your brushstrokes, each one adding its own unique touch to the final masterpiece.

**The Symphony of Sesame Seeds:** Sesame seeds, those tiny marvels with a big impact, offer a harmonious contrast to the pretzel's tender crumb. As you sprinkle them liberally onto the surface, they contribute a delicate crunch and a nutty undertone that plays in tandem with the dough's natural flavors. These seeds aren't just decoration; they're a sensory experience, an invitation to explore the interplay of textures.

**The Allure of Coarse Salt:** Coarse salt, those dazzling crystals that catch the light, bestow a burst of flavor and a tactile thrill with every bite. Sprinkled generously, they lend a delightful juxtaposition – the pretzel's soft interior harmonizing with the salt's crunch. It's a dance of contrasts, where each morsel is a symphony of flavors and textures.

**Butter's Golden Embrace:** Melted butter, the liquid gold that enriches any culinary creation, offers a luscious finish to your pretzels. As it coats the surface, it imparts a glistening sheen and an indulgent aroma that beckons with promises of comfort and warmth. The butter's delicate richness melds seamlessly with the pretzel's savory notes, creating a flavor profile that's utterly irresistible.

**Cinnamon Sugar's Sweet Serenade:** For those who seek a sweeter note, cinnamon sugar is a melody of warmth and sweetness. A gentle dusting transforms your pretzels into treats that bridge the gap between snack and dessert. With each bite, the fragrant spices and sugary sweetness intertwine, creating a symphony that's both familiar and comforting.

**Crafting Your Signature:** These optional toppings aren't mere afterthoughts; they're the finishing touch that makes each pretzel uniquely yours. Whether you opt for the nuttiness of sesame seeds, the boldness of coarse salt, the richness of melted butter, or the sweetness of cinnamon sugar, you're crafting your signature on each pretzel's canvas. Your choice of topping isn't just about flavor; it's about self-expression.

**The Visual Feast:** Beyond flavor, these toppings contribute to a visual feast. They're a testament to your culinary finesse, enhancing the pretzels' aesthetics and making them irresistible to the eyes. A sprinkle of sesame seeds catches the light, a dusting of coarse salt adds texture, melted butter creates a glossy allure, and cinnamon sugar lends a touch of enchantment.

**An Invitation to Explore:** As you embark on the optional toppings journey, let your imagination run wild. Consider experimenting with combinations – perhaps sesame seeds and melted butter, or coarse salt and cinnamon sugar. These toppings aren't confined to tradition; they're an invitation to explore, to create, and to make each batch of pretzels a canvas for your culinary whimsy.

In the world of pretzel perfection, optional toppings are the final notes in a symphony of flavors and textures. They're the exclamation point that punctuates your culinary creation, the touch that transforms pretzels into individual works of art. With each sprinkle, each dash, and each brushstroke, you're adding your personal flair to the timeless art of pretzel-making.

### Step 7: Cooling and Serving

As the final curtain falls on your pretzel-making saga, a crucial yet often underestimated act takes center stage – the cooling and serving ritual. It's the bridge that connects the transformational heat of the oven to the anticipation of taste buds. The cooling process isn't just a technicality; it's a critical step that ensures your pretzels reach the pinnacle of flavor, texture, and enjoyment.

**The Art of Patience:** Just as a symphony needs a moment of silence before applause, your pretzels deserve a moment of rest before indulgence. Allowing the freshly baked pretzels to cool slightly is an exercise in patience, a pause that rewards with superior taste and texture. As the pretzels cool, the residual heat within continues to work its magic, firming up the crust and enhancing the flavors.

**Texture in the Spotlight:** The cooling process is where texture truly shines. As pretzels transition from piping hot to pleasantly warm, their interiors achieve the perfect balance of chewiness and softness. This transformation ensures that each bite is a harmonious symphony of contrasts – a crisp exterior yielding to a tender, flavorful core.

**The Ideal Serving Conditions:** The serving of pretzels is an art in itself. The ideal moment to serve your creations is when they're warm to the touch but not scalding. This balance ensures that the flavors are at their peak and the textures are at their most inviting. Prepare a welcoming platter, and as you arrange your pretzels, let their golden-brown hues and enticing aroma take center stage.

**Complements in Every Dip:** The canvas of your pretzels is ready to be adorned with complementary strokes of flavor. Accompanying dips and sauces offer a delightful contrast, adding complexity and excitement to each bite. Consider a classic mustard dip – its tanginess and subtle heat dance harmoniously with the pretzel's savory notes. Or venture into the realm of cheese dips, where the rich creaminess melds with



the pretzel's chewiness in a crescendo of delight.

**Savoring the Symphony:** As your guests or you embark on the pretzel experience, encourage them to savor each bite mindfully. Close your eyes and let the textures and flavors unfold on your palate. Feel the gentle resistance of the crust, the airy lightness of the interior, and the interplay of salt, butter, or seeds on your taste buds. It's a sensory symphony that's best enjoyed without haste.

**A Ritual of Connection:** Cooling and serving your pretzels isn't just a technicality; it's a ritual that connects creator and consumer, each bite a bridge of appreciation and enjoyment. The cooling time is an invitation to share stories, anecdotes, and laughter while eagerly awaiting the moment of taste. It's a reminder that the culinary arts are a form of expression that extends beyond the plate.

With each pretzel you serve, remember that this final step is your gift to those who gather around to enjoy your creations. The cooling process is a testament to your dedication, patience, and understanding of the culinary craft. As the pretzels grace the serving platter and delight the senses, let the symphony of your journey be savored by all who partake.

### Troubleshooting Pretzel Perfection

Creating pretzel magic isn't without its challenges, but fear not – each hurdle is an opportunity for growth. Here's a guide to navigate common pretzel-making issues and their solutions:

#### Dough Not Rising:

- Check yeast vitality; use fresh yeast.
- Ensure a warm mixing area for yeast activation.

#### Excessively Chewy Pretzels:

- Avoid over-kneading; seek elasticity.
- Adjust baking time for the desired texture.

#### Color Falls Short:

- Apply an egg wash before baking.
- Experiment with baking time and temperature.

#### Shape Retention:

- Press twists firmly during shaping.
- Chill shaped pretzels before baking.

#### Lackluster Flavor:

- Use ample salt for enhanced taste.
- Try toppings like sesame seeds or coarse salt.

#### Preventing Dryness:

- Give pretzels a brief boiling water and baking soda bath.

#### Perfect Dips:

- Opt for classic mustard dip for tanginess.
- Indulge with cheese-based dips for richness.

Remember, each challenge is a step toward mastering the art of pretzel-making. With practice, patience, and these solutions, you'll create pretzels that captivate taste buds and bring joy to all.



## Festivaleinführung (Festival Introduction)

### Halloween in Germany

**How is Halloween celebrated in Germany? All you need to know about the origin of the tradition, typical costumes and the best Halloween events in Germany.**

by deutschland.de



„Süßes oder Saueres!“ is what you might hear children trick-or-treating in Germany say when they knock on your door.

Halloween has been celebrated in Germany for just 25 years, and the “trick” aspect of Halloween traditions makes many Germans angry, according to Spiegel Online, as well as the overlap with St. Martin's Day, a holiday that follows less than two weeks after Halloween on November 11. On St. Martin's Day children walk around the neighborhood with lanterns, singing songs and reciting poems in exchange for treats.

Though many Germans are unhappy with Halloween's growing popularity in Germany, retailers rejoice: Costumes go on sale in department stores and Halloween-themed candy shows up on supermarket shelves. In America Halloween costumes can depict just about anything – from princesses and dragons to movie characters, doctors, and vampires; in Germany costumes should be scary. If you want to buy a pre-fab costume that is not horror-themed, check out the costume stores around Fasching (or Karneval, or Fastnacht) in February, Germany's biggest costumed celebration.

#### Origin of Halloween in Germany

Dieter Tschorn, a public relations consultant for the German Toy and Novelty Retailers Association, has named himself the father of German Halloween. When the German government canceled Fasching celebrations in 1991 due to the Gulf War, Tschorn says he introduced Halloween to Germany to make up for lost sales among costumers and other retailers. “The industry was forced to find a way of making up the losses. Halloween was chosen,” he told Spiegel Online.

Whether Halloween's growing popularity in Germany is due to Americanization or Tschorn's marketing work, the number of Halloween-themed parties and events give the impression that it is here to stay.

*Continued on the next page*

## Festivaleinführung (Festival Introduction)

*Continued from the previous page*

### Halloween parties and pumpkins

If you live in a big city, there may be neighborhoods or apartment buildings that organize informal trick-or-treating. By and large in Germany, Halloween is a holiday celebrated by adults at themed costume parties and clubs.

Pumpkin festivals are also a popular way to celebrate both the arrival of fall and Halloween with the whole family. Finding pumpkins in Germany should be no problem: they are a part of many favorite seasonal meals, and you will find them in supermarkets and at farmers' markets in abundance.

### Halloween events in Germany

The oldest and most revered Halloween event in Germany takes place at Burg Frankenstein near Darmstadt. Whether or not the castle was actually the inspiration for Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, it is the perfect location for an appropriately chilling Halloween event. Visitors are free to wander the ruins among actors dressed as ghouls, ghosts, and other gruesome creatures; flickering lights and an uncanny soundtrack make the castle ruins feel like a truly haunted house.

There are more notable Halloween events that happen annually in Germany. The Movie Park Horror Fest has taken place for over 25 years. Located north of Essen, this event has plenty of zombies, monsters, and mazes. Finally, the Mayen Market "Festival of Magic" in the Eifel region includes a parade, pumpkin carving, costumes, and beer. Recently even LEGOLAND began a Halloween event, and costumed children receive free park admission on October 31st.

### Halloween and Reformation Day

October 31st is also the date of another German holiday, *Reformationstag*. Reformation Day is a celebration of the reformation of the church, particularly for Lutherans, and is a public holiday in the German states of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia.

coworkers to join you in dressing up for Halloween.

### Halloween for Adults and Kids

Halloween is a party celebration for adults in Germany, whereas adults in the United States celebrate it through parties, costumes, and exceptional Halloween food. Kids in the United States also like to celebrate Halloween to its fullest as they trick-or-treat, whereas kids in Germany are less involved in going from door to door. It is not very popular in Germany, and people turn their lights off to convey the message "do not disturb". Unlike in Germany, trick-or-treating is trendy and common among kids in the United States.

### Halloween Parties and Events

Germans have fewer parties and events compared to the United States. However, the trend is increasing in Germany because of social media influencers. These influencers are making thousands of videos on how to throw a Halloween party, how to dress up for Halloween at the last moment, places to buy Halloween costumes, and much more.

Why is Halloween in Germany less popular than in the United States of America?

Some Germans believe that Halloween conflicts with the German traditional celebration called St. Martin's Day, when children parade on the streets, go door to door, sing songs, and receive sweets or candy. Children take part in small parades while holding small paper lanterns. This celebration starts two weeks after Halloween.

Some argue that Germany already has a tradition of carving and lighting a vegetable, the beet. So, they do not need another tradition or holiday to celebrate, such as Halloween. Some people prefer to spend their money, energy, and time on other activities to celebrate the German holiday. Some believe that Halloween is very commercial and infringes on privacy.

### Final Thoughts

Whether you want to stay home for a movie night or go out with friends or family to enjoy Halloween, the choice is all yours! You can go trick-or-treating, go to a dance party at a club, or throw your party; you can do whatever you want. There are a lot of suggestions in this article, and we hope you will find it unique and enjoy your upcoming Halloween. If you're going to spend your Halloween in Germany, make sure to wear a scary costume and grab a beer.

Enjoy the spooky Halloween season in Germany!

## German's Halloween vs. America's Halloween Celebration

by Jibran Shahid

Halloween celebration in Germany is quite different compared to the Halloween celebration in the USA. Let us tell you the difference between the Halloween celebration in Germany and that of the United States.

### Dressing Up on Halloween

In Germany, few people dress up and wear Halloween-specific costumes. Unlike in Germany, people in the United States love to dress up, even for work or school. People in the United States wear happy, joyful, colorful, and funny costumes, but people in Germany wear scary Halloween costumes. Only ex-pats or international employees wear costumes to work. If an organization's international employee ratio is lower, they feel awkward wearing costumes because no German wears them. If you love celebrating Halloween, do not expect your

Happy Halloween FRANK - IN - STEIN





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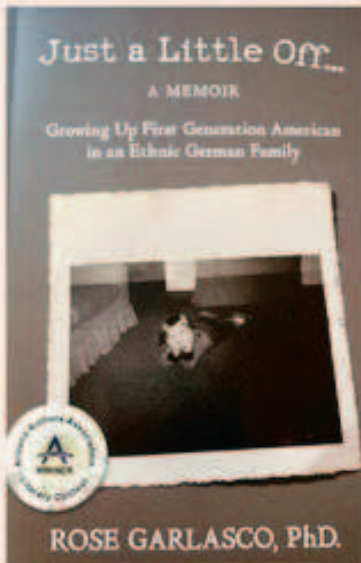
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Mom asked dad to put some Halloween decorations up. Have to admit, he nailed it





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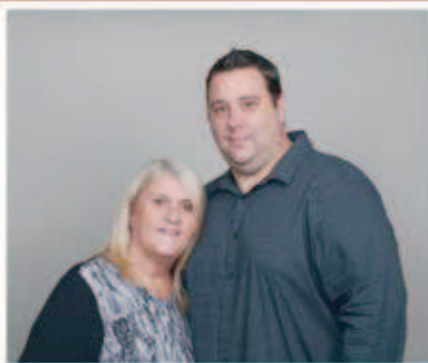
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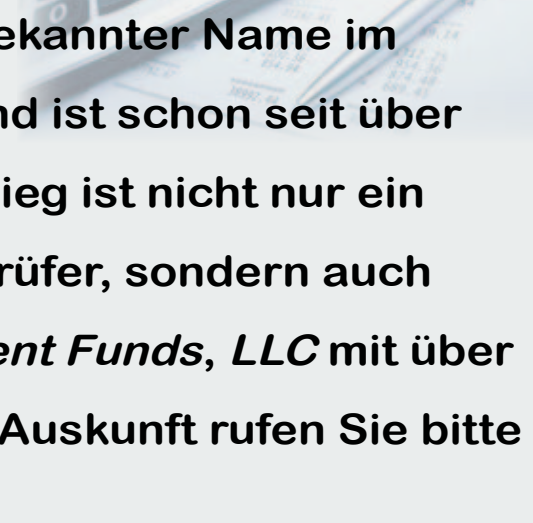
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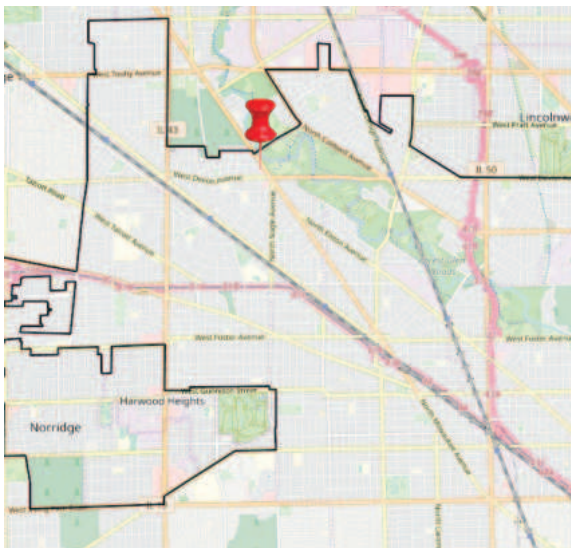
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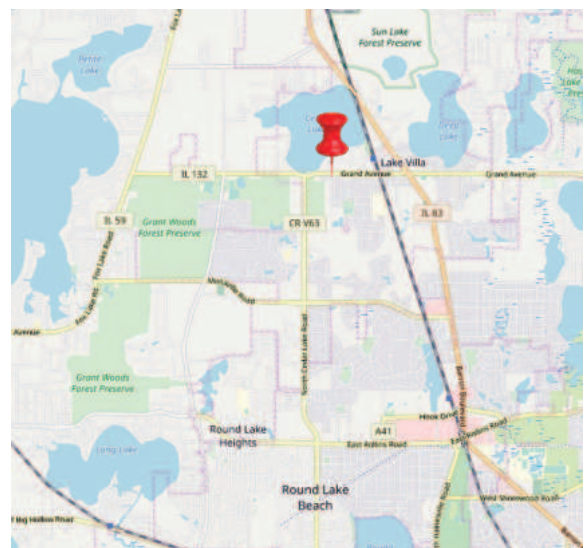
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