

TRAVEL + LEISURE

THE EUROPE ISSUE

TRAVEL SOLUTIONS

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From left: Stefan Strumbel's 2012 work *Lucky Heimat*; Aqua's spin on *Tafelspitz*, a traditional beef dish.

POINT OF VIEW

MADE IN GERMANY

Berlin resident Gisela Williams explores the proud new zeitgeist taking hold in her adopted homeland.

Like so many German words, *Heimat* is impossible to translate. Some describe it as a “homeland” or sense of belonging—your roots, so to speak. The French might liken it to *terroir*. But after the Nazis hijacked it, *Heimat* became a loaded term—all but erased from the German lexicon. Until a few years ago, I’d barely heard it uttered. Today, however, the concept is making a comeback, thanks to a cadre of artists, chefs, and thinkers who are trying to rescue *Heimat* from its nationalistic undertones and bring it up-to-date.

Few have been as high-profile as Pop provocateur Stefan Strumbel, one of a dozen artists showing in this month’s buzzy “Make Heimat” exhibition at the esteemed **Draiflessen Collection** (draiflessen.com), in Mettingen. In 2010, the Black Forest-

based artist captured international attention for reinventing that most German cliché, the cuckoo clock; his are adorned with contemporary icons (grenades; Rolling Stones lips), painted in garish colors, and illuminated in neon lights. (Karl Lagerfeld is a fan.) “It’s time to create a modern *Heimat* feeling, to pimp it up with humor and a global perspective,” Strumbel told me. “We’re a new generation that can be proud of our country.”

Joining Strumbel is Edgar Reitz, an acclaimed filmmaker whose epic trilogy, *Heimat*, gained a fourth sequel, *Home from Home* (*Die Andere Heimat*), shown at last year’s Venice Film Festival. It follows a bookish village boy who moves from rural Hunsrück to booming Brazil, where he must define his *Heimat* anew.

Chefs, meanwhile, have been keen to reboot the country’s culinary

scene, long defined by anything *but* homegrown flavors. “Less than ten years ago it was considered ‘unmodern’ to eat German food,” recalls Jan Schawe, the owner of **Mutterland** (mutterland.de), a trio of light-filled cafés in Hamburg that sell local, artisanal products such as Hermann’s leberwurst and rye sourdough. Stephan Landwehr, co-owner of the Berlin institution **Grill Royal** (grillroyal.com; \$\$\$) and my favorite bistro, **Pauly Saal** (paulyaal.com; \$\$\$), echoes the sentiment. “For decades after World War II,” he says, “Germans adopted Italian and French cuisine as their own.” Not anymore.

Notably, Berlin chef Tim Raue—known for Asian-inspired cooking at his namesake hot spot in Prenzlauer Berg—is returning to native flavors at his new **La Soupe Populaire** (lasoupepopulaire.de; \$\$\$), in a former brewery on the fashionable edges of Mitte. On the menu: *Königsberger Klopse*—veal meatballs in a silky caper sauce—and soft-boiled “mustard eggs” served atop mashed potatoes. “My grandmother’s dishes,” Raue notes proudly.

But *Heimat* cuisine doesn’t have to be homespun. I recently dined at **Aqua** (restaurant-aqua.com; \$\$\$), a jewel box in the Ritz-Carlton, Wolfsburg, on the Volkswagen campus, where Frankfurt-born chef Sven Elverfeld is creating modern menus against a backdrop of historic smokestacks and starchitect-designed buildings. His dishes—*Gröstel*, a hash of blood sausage and foie gras; pike with Riesling-braised cabbage—mixed regional and international ingredients. Though engineered like a Porsche and plated on Plexiglas platforms, they tasted like nothing so much as childhood memories. +

RECON

This month’s need-to-know openings

Hotels **Pikaia Lodge** (pikaialodgegalapagos.com; \$\$\$) is raising the luxury stakes in the Galápagos Islands. The star attractions: a giant tortoise reserve and a private 100-foot yacht. + The first Japanese property for **Amanresorts** (amanresorts.com) debuts in Tokyo’s Otemachi Tower in Marunouchi, providing the brand’s inimitable sense of calm in the frenzied city. **Restaurants** The minds behind the Dead Rabbit, a throwback New York saloon, continue their downtown domination with new dining complex **Pier A Harbor House** (piera.com). On offer: a raw oyster bar, aperitif lounge, and terrace overlooking the Hudson River. **Cruises** *Star Pride*, formerly sailed by Seabourn, relaunches as a **Windstar** ship (windstarcruises.com) with 106 suites.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF CIRCLE GALLERY; GOTZ WRAGE, COURTESY OF RITZ-CARLTON, WOLFSBURG