

ASPECTS OF FRANCONIA

September – Horseradish Museum in Baiersdorf

The Horseradish Museum in Baiersdorf

How many of you are aware that just outside Erlangen there is a Horseradish Museum? There is, and we have organized a trip there on Sunday, 12th November (see page 4), to discover more about a very popular root plant that has been cultivated for thousands of years and used as an aphrodisiac, a treatment for rheumatism, a bitter herb for the Passover Seder feast and a flavorful accompaniment for beef, chicken and seafood.

Horseradish is a member of the mustard family and is closely related to the cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and the common radish. The “hotness” which the sauce is famous for derives from isothiocyanate, a volatile compound that, when oxidized by air and saliva, generates the “heat” that some people claim clears out their sinuses. It is, in fact, altogether a very healthy thing to eat, good for losing weight, fighting infection, lowering the risk of certain cancers, great for sinusitis...

Its name – English: horseradish, German: Meerrettich, or Kren - is also worth a thought. The German “sea radish” might indicate that it often grows near the sea, or might mean that it is of some size (“mehr”) or might be related to the German word “Mähre”, meaning a horse. In English it is, of course, the “horseradish”. Is it called that because of the influence of German? The English word “mare” is a horse after all. It is more likely, though, that the “horse” in “horseradish” actually refers to its size and coarseness, rather like its use in “horse mint” or “horse parsley”. Radish simply comes from the Latin for root. Kren, the Bavarian and Austrian word for horseradish, comes from the Slav and means “crying” - obviously the result of getting too close to the grated root!

The area between Erlangen and Forchheim has been a centre of horseradish production since the 15th century, and it is here, in Baiersdorf, that you will find the museum in question. The firm of Schamel got together with the Heimatverein in Baiersdorf and the result was a fascinating museum.

Frank Gillard

