

CASE STUDY 18 Jul 18

CODA: A BERLIN RESTAURANT REDEFINING DESSERT

Tucked between graffiti-covered apartments in Berlin's trendy Neukölln neighbourhood is one of the city's most raved-about restaurants. But rather than serving up typical fine dining fare, CODA is dedicated to dessert. How is it elevating everyday sweet treats to uncommon indulgences?

Location [Germany](#)

Featured Experts

[René Frank](#)

René Frank is the head chef and co-owner of CODA, Germany's first dessert restaurant. Named German Pastry Chef of the Year in 2013 by French restaurant guide Gault Millau, he was head pastry chef at the Michelin-starred restaurant La Vie from 2010 to 2016 and has worked in Japan, Switzerland and France.

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Barbara Woolsey is a Canadian journalist based in Berlin, regularly contributing to outlets such as Reuters, Thrillist and The Guardian on culture, travel, startups and more. Currently you can find her taking Greek classes.

Highlights & Data

- CODA's desserts are made using raw ingredients with no artificial ingredients or refined sugars, providing diners with an all-natural way to indulge themselves
- Its use of vibrant colour schemes and artistic plating taps into foodies' habit to photograph what they eat
- The artisan creations and immersive setting offered by CODA could convince health-conscious diners to overlook their daily avoidance of sugary treats
- **51%** of Germans say they prefer regional food products and **72%** claim they would pay more for high-quality food (*Nielsen, 2017*)
- Sales of organic food in Germany increased by **nearly 6%** between 2016 and 2017, accounting for **5.2%** of the overall market (*AMI, 2018*)
- **48%** of Germans claim to be actively cutting down on or avoiding sugary foods (*Mintel, 2017*)

Scope

Tucked between graffiti-covered apartments in Berlin's trendy Neukölln neighbourhood is CODA, one of the German capital's most raved-about fine dining establishments. The venue may be aiming for discretion, but inside it's buzzing as a young, international crowd devours gourmet desserts that have vibrant colour schemes and artistic plating. [1] Beyond presentation, how is the restaurant elevating after-dinner treats to appeal to high-end diners?

Launched in 2016 by pastry chef René Frank and designer Oliver Bischoff, CODA is Germany's first dessert-only restaurant. It offers customers a tasting menu with each course accompanied by its own specially paired craft cocktail. For example, a white chocolate mousse spiked with sake and coriander is enjoyed with a refreshing glass of fresh Thai pandan leaves, rowanberry and lime. [2] Tanzanian cacao mousse, mingling with tonka bean ice cream, dried plums, chicory sauce and coal dust, is served with a glass of lambrusco, spritzed tableside in peated single malt. "We see desserts and drinks as a fusion," says Frank. "The drink is always a component of the dessert." [3]

Alcohol and sweet courses have long gone hand-in-hand, but CODA's desserts deconstruct tradition. While the restaurant uses classic pastry techniques, most of the flavour profiles verge on savoury, balancing salty, sour and umami with natural sweetness. All the ingredients are raw or produced in-house, with no artificial ingredients or refined sugars, making dishes light to consume and not excessively high in calories. [4] "We didn't want to make classic patisserie, but rather a cuisine-specific patisserie," says Frank. "The desserts that we make aren't classic desserts but simply different." [3]

CODA is perfectly positioned to appeal to 'Generation Yum' – Gen Y foodies who care deeply about eating locally sourced and artisanal produce that maintains cultural authenticity. [5] And its approach has already won praise from the press, having been named the 'Best Restaurant Concept of 2016' by international gastronomy magazine *Rolling Pin* – despite opening only a few months prior. [6]



CODA strives to offer more than simple sweetness

CODA Berlin | Facebook (2018) ©

Context

A focus on natural, non-industrial products has been brought to the forefront of Berlin's fine dining scene via restaurants such as the 'brutally local' [Nobelhart & Schmutzig](#) and the foraged platings of [Ernst](#). It's a shift reflected in CODA's avant-garde and artisan-minded menu, which sees light desserts replace buttery, sugary treats that weigh you down and make you drowsy come meal's end.

In Germany, this is part of a growing trend of conscious eating driven by health and environmental awareness. According to a nationwide survey carried out in 2017, 51% of respondents said they preferred regional products and 72% claimed they would pay more for high-quality food. [7] Meanwhile, a study of German and Austrian food bloggers predicted that less refined sugar, more vegetables, and high-quality seasonal ingredients would define food trends regionally in 2018. [8]

“ *We see desserts and drinks as a fusion. The drink is always a component of the dessert*

René Frank, head chef and co-owner of CODA

Globally, however, calorific desserts have become prime fodder for social media feeds, exemplified by the ice cream museum in Los Angeles and over-the-top 'freakshakes' from Australia. [9] Indeed, sugary treats such as doughnuts and croissants with unique fillings, Thai rolled ice cream, and naked layer cakes were touted as some of the leading food trends for 2018 by online publication Insider. [10] Yet this isn't to say that desserts filled with artificial colours and flavourings are okay with consumers. American brands [Supernatural](#) and [Unreal](#) are catering to those who want all-natural alternatives to sweet treats, providing a 'cleaner' way to indulge oneself.

At restaurants around the world, dessert is becoming less of an afterthought and more the hero of gourmet experiences. The fourth season of cult Netflix documentary series *Chef's Table*, released in April 2018, focused on four pastry chefs around the world who were putting their desserts on the map. [11] Among those featured were Jordi Roca of the Michelin-starred restaurant El Celler de Can Roca, whose progressive desserts have included interpretations of famous perfumes according to their natural substances, and Will Goldfarb of [Room 4 Dessert](#) in Bali, who takes his creations into funky territory with desserts named 'Pear o' Vegans', the Wu-Tang Clan-themed 'Ghostface Keller 2: Liquid Curds' and his signature 'Plat du Jour' with eggplant, white chocolate, coffee and French brioche toast. [12][13]



Natural, local fare is of utmost importance to German foodies

CODA Berlin | Facebook (2018) ©

Insights and opportunities

The foodie revolution has cultivated a more conscious attitude towards what people eat and where their food comes from, highlighted by the fact that sales of organic food in Germany increased by nearly 6% between 2016 and 2017, accounting for 5.2% of the overall market. [14] Just as CODA carefully selects its ingredients to meet these rising consumer expectations, **Wild Things** is a Berlin-based bar that serves up organic wine, while **organic sodas** have gained a competitive edge over conventional rivals nationwide.

Of course, being a foodie is about much more than wanting wholesome, natural ingredients. It's also about showing off your cultural savvy by going to the right dining spots and snapping perfectly presented food porn. "Just as people have always sought to express who they are through the clothes they wear and possessions they own, Gen Z and Millennials will further explore and express their identity through the foods they eat," says Wanda Pogue, chief strategy officer at Saatchi & Saatchi New York. "Food has become just another platform for self-expression for both consumers and companies – a way to express creativity and even their sense of design." [15] With its desserts providing a visual treat to accompany the novel flavours, CODA lets patrons show off their good taste on social media.

Frank states that, within the gastronomy world, the art of patisserie has become regarded "in recent years as more than just sweet dishes." [3] While 48% of Germans claim to be actively cutting down on or avoiding sugary foods, this enhanced image could convince people to treat artisan desserts like gourmet meals, overlooking the nutritional value of what they're eating to enjoy the **immersive experience**. [16]

coda-berlin.com

Related behaviours

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Sources

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