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## How come Chicago comes up short on currywurst?

BY DAVID HAMMOND June 26, 2012 1:58PM

Updated: July 28, 2012 6:10AM

Berlin's currywurst is simply sliced sausage, served with a bun or French fries, dressed with tomato-y sauce, lightly sprinkled with curry powder. There are many variations. As with Quebec's poutine, once you have the basic protein-carb platform, potential sauce accompaniments are endless.

A proletarian meal-in-the-hand, currywurst in Germany (like Spam in the United States) gained popularity after World War II. And as hot dogs are to Chicago, so currywurst is to Berlin, with one major exception. Unlike the near-pathological hatred of Chicagoans for ketchup on their dogs, Berliners regularly slather their wieners with catsup-based sauce (though house-made tomato sauce seems preferred).

Herta Heuwer was a Berlin "rubble woman" who worked clearing debris from the bombed-out city. German food lore has it that she traded booze to Allied soldiers in return for curry powder, which she used to concoct currywurst. Her creation quickly became popular among Post-war street people on the fringes of Berlin's red light district.

Today, currywurst is class-defying chow, beloved by all. According to Chicago author Colleen Taylor Sen in her book, *Curry*, "a recent survey indicated that 80 percent of Germans consider the dish a central part of their diet."

"Everyone loves currywurst the way they had it in childhood," said Birgid Breloh, director at Berlin's Currywurst Museum.

Sausage casings were in short supply in the Soviet-controlled side of the city, and Breloh explains that "If you grew up in East Berlin, you like sausage without skin; if you grew up in West Berlin, you want sausage with skin. In the reunited Berlin, you have the choice."

That's democracy in eating; currywurst, anyway you want it.

Like any popular food, there are partisans on all sides. Currywurst enthusiasts from either side of the former Berlin Wall claim their version is the one true and original currywurst. According to Sen, there's even a faction that contends Hamburg, not Berlin, is where it all started. Success has many fathers.

Currywurst used to be offered at now-shuttered fRedhots in Glenview; nowadays, you sometimes find it at Daley Plaza's Christkindlemarket; for that, however, you must wait until Christmas.

Our city has strong German roots. There are currywurst vendors in New York and even Oklahoma. Why not Chicago?

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