



EXECUTIVE CHEF BOBBY BRÄUER AND ESSZIMMER BY KÄFER

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

CHEF AND ROOM PHOTOS COURTESY OF BMW AG

EssZimmer by Käfer is a 2-star Michelin restaurant inside BMW Welt in Munich, Germany. Executive Chef Bobby Bräuer opened and now oversees all aspects of EssZimmer, The Bavarie by Käfer, the Biker's Lodge Bistro, Cooper's Garden, and all catering events at BMW Welt.

EssZimmer diners enjoy delicious cuisine, tasty cocktails, and fabulous wine. Guests also have a first-class view of the BMW Welt, especially of the "Premiere" at BMW Welt, where customers pick up their new BMW during the day. On a recent visit to Munich, I met Chef Bräuer and asked him about his culinary journey before dining at EssZimmer.

So, do you think the people come to taste your food or to view the cars?

Of course, they come for the food; at least, I hope so.

How long have you worked at this incredible venue?

Although BMW Welt has been open for more than 15 years, a company out of Vienna, Austria, ran the gastronomic program when it opened. However, when the Käfer Company put in a bid to run the program about 11 years ago, they asked me to join in with them, and I did.

We have four culinary outlets in the BMW Welt building alone. I opened all of them, but now I am concentrating on EssZimmer, and I have fabulous chefs who manage the other restaurants.

Where and why did you begin cooking?

I wanted to start in a bar. But a good friend told me to start in the kitchen, and then you can always move into a bar. I began in Munich at age 20. I studied under several chefs and did

my apprenticeship in Munich, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria, and I traveled all over Europe. I loved it, so I am still in the kitchen.

Do you have a favorite cuisine?

Italian is my favorite. However, at EssZimmer, we serve classic French cuisine at the base and look for products from all over our local region and from France. Unfortunately, you do not typically hear that a place serves German-influenced cuisine, and it is a little sad as we have a lot of great chefs in this country and are trying to make our own style.

Do you use any interesting ingredients?

During the last five years, we have used more local sweet water fish from Bavaria and nearby rather than importing fish from France or the ocean.

Is it difficult to get fresh products?



It depends on your region, but we are close to the border of Austria, Switzerland, and Italy, and we can get everything. The Mediterranean is also not far away.

Do you have a favorite restaurant here at BMW Welt?

I like Restaurant Bavarie and the Bavarian products we use there. This style works best with us being in Munich and working with BMW. The products are simple but delicious and satisfy our variety of guests.

Tell me about EssZimmer.

EssZimmer opened in February 2013, and we were successful very quickly. The first Michelin Star came after half a year, and the second came a year later.

Does BMW Welt management direct what you can serve?

No, I decide what we make. After 11 years, I believe that they are pleased with the restaurant's results at the end of the day.

How do you feel about working at BMW Welt?

I think the architecture here is the most exciting in all of Munich. You could bring this building to New York, Paris, or anywhere in the world, and it would be magnificent. We

have a fantastic location. The steel and glass of the building make for a cold environment, so we had to make the interior of the restaurants warmer and more inviting.

Tell me about the events at BMW Welt.

Most events have 200-400 guests, but we also host 1000 to 1200 guests twice a year. The event space is incredible when it is all lit up and decorated. Those planning the events can choose whatever kind of food they want and opt for a buffet, a regular dinner, or a lunch.

How often do you change the menu at EssZimmer?

I change it every two and a half months.

Who visits the restaurant?

We have a mixture of locals and visitors who dine with us.

How many employees are in the restaurant?

I have eight employees, one apprentice, and seven servers.

What kind of wines are on the menu?

We serve old-world wines from Germany, Austria, France, Italy, and Spain.

What is the focus of your menu at EssZimmer?

Seafood and vegetables make up a good part of the menu, and we have a maximum of eight courses.

There is a small bar just inside when you enter the restaurant. Is it special?

Yes, this is "your bar." We let people rent the bar area, and they can spend their entire evening there with exceptional bar food and a choice of Champagne, white wine, or whatever they would like, and self-serve it to their group. Although this is a new idea for the restaurant, Chef Bräuer anticipates that this bar will be a lively part of the restaurant.

OUR DINNER AT ESSZIMMER

My husband Steve and I finished the interview and headed to our "private bar" to begin the evening. We started with a glass of Billecart-Salmon Brut Rose Champagne followed by four amuse-bouchées: a citrusy lemongrass soup, a creamy banana taco with tomato salsa and lemon gel, a shell filled with fish tartare and a crunchy beet tart with trout caviar. Each dish was an explosion of flavor with a variety of textures.

The bread service arrived at the table. It consisted of homemade sourdough focaccia with sunflower and pumpkin seeds, Sardinian bread, and chervil potato spread made with cream

cheese and cooked potato. The spread had a very fluffy, warm texture.

After our bar experience, we moved into the dining room to continue our dinner. The first course was mackerel wrapped in thin slices of peach with wasabi mayonnaise and peanuts in a sesame vinaigrette bath. The mackerel was mild, the peach added a unique texture, and the vinaigrette brought excellent acidity. Our first official course was blue lobster in a shiso beurre blanc au jus and parsley cream with a caramelized shiso leaf and a tempura baked shiso leaf with a tartare of the lobster. The shiso leaves added a hint of lime flavor to the dish. The lobster paired brilliantly with a 2021 Gruner Veltliner from “Der Ott” Winery Bernhard Ott, Wagram made from the best every cuvee at the winery. The low acidity of the wine went beautifully with the sweet, tender lobster and did not overpower the delicate crustacean.

Our next course, Quail from the Bresse, arrived with a 2020 Weissburgunder from the “Praesulis” Winery Gumphof in Süd-Tirol. These pinot blanc grapes were picked by hand as the vineyard grows on a hillside with a 6% grade. The dish comprised quail meat with white and green asparagus, a morel mushroom stuffed with quail mousse, a truffle vinaigrette, and an egg yolk. The acidity in the wine cut through the fattiness of the mousse and yolk.

The pollock fish, topped with caviar, was served with young peas and carrots in chive butter. This dish was paired with a beautifully balanced 2018 Chablis 1^{er} Cru from the “Montée de Tonnérre” winery from Domaine Williams Fèvre, Burgundy. The acidity in the wine brightened the dish.

The sommelier served us a delicious glass of Malterdinger 2020 to go with our add-on dish of sweetbreads. The sweetbreads were fried in rice flour, with foie gras, a tomato, cauliflower puree, a little radish, and veal sauce. The sweetbreads were tender, and the veal sauce poured over top was delicious.

The palate cleanser was one of the most unusual I have ever tasted. It was ginger sorbet wrapped in nori and pickled cucumber with soy sauce and rice. This dish was the chef’s take on sushi and was simply delicious.

The next course, lamb on a glazed kohlrabi slice with artichokes, fennel, and saffron, with a potato terrine with lamb sausage, paired well with the 2017 “Marquis de Calon-Ségur” from Château Calon-Ségur from Saint-Estéphe. The lush, smooth, deep purple wine made with 40% merlot and 60% cabernet sauvignon stood up but did not overshadow the lamb.

The final official dish in this culinary journey was dessert. Rhubarb with poached egg white balls, “snow eggs,” cherry blossom sorbet, and wood sorrel served with a 2019 Moscato d’Asti from “La Caliera” from Borgo Maragliano, Piedmont. The wine was ever so sweet and went lovingly with the tart rhubarb.

Of course, the final dish at a Michelin-starred restaurant is never truly the end of the journey. A trio of tasty bites serving as dessert included a caramelized banana on top of chocolate cake with hazelnut and Chantilly cream with vanilla, a pistachio macaron, and a cone filled with strawberries, sweet basil pesto, and almonds.

Executive Chef Bobby Bräuer and his staff make dining at BMW Welt a truly magnificent experience. The dishes are creative, tasty, and Instagram-worthy, the wines are well-paired and decadent, and the staff is professional and engaging. On your next trip to Munich, Germany, book dinner at EssZimmer, enjoy the spectacular ambiance, and appreciate the beautiful cars at BMW Welt. ❖

