

# New Deutsches Haus opens by Bayou St. John, creating a different kind of social space

Beer is flowing from the taps, bratwurst is cooking in the kitchen and [Deutsches Haus](#) is back in a permanent home again, this time on Bayou St. John.

The new facility [debuts on Sunday](#) at 1700 Moss St., marking a new chapter for a German cultural group with deep local roots.

It also represents something of a full circle for the convivial spirit that has always held the group together.

“Gemütlichkeit is what we call it,” said Jack Gonzales, president of the nonprofit Deutsches Haus. “Good feelings, togetherness, camaraderie.”

The gist of this German word is easily grasped in this ever-social city. The new Deutsches Haus is adding a different way to pursue it.

The Haus is the home for a private club, but it’s open to the public. There’s plenty to drink, but it’s not a bar. German food is served daily, but it’s not a restaurant.

“We want to be a social organization that welcomes people, a cultural group with a social element,” Gonzales said.

Deutsches Haus now sits on a 4½-acre property between the curving green banks of Bayou St. John and the gray crosses of [St. Louis Cemetery No. 3](#).

The Haus was built for gatherings, and its focal point is the Great Hall, a long, high-peaked room with open rafters and a view of the bayou. It looks like it would fit in at a Bavarian village.

“We tried to design it in a way that people feel reflects Deutsches Haus,” said architect Ed Mathes, whose firm, Mathes Brierre, took on the project.

Already [on its calendar](#), the Haus has a wine tasting event, a trivia night and the annual Winterfest for the Crescent City Homebrewers Club.

The Haus kitchen is run by Fresh Fork, a local catering company from the same family that once operated Café Latte in Metairie. The regular menu has casual food like bratwurst and bratburgers on pretzel buns, and flammkuchen, a pizza-like tart (look for one topped with brats and bacon).

The club also has two bars: a main bar up front and the smaller Bierstube, where one wall is lined with small lockers for members to keep their steins between visits. These are full bars, with spirits and wine, though beer is clearly the focus. Each bar sports 20 taps, both German beers and American beers made in German styles, plus a bit of Irish stout from a single Guinness tap.

From Germany, beer lovers will find various brews from Paulaner, Warsteiner, Bitburger, Spaten, Ayinger, Köstritzer and Franziskaner. Local breweries Urban South and NOLA Brewing are represented, along with Sierra Nevada and Yuengling.

The group ultimately plans to build a beer garden under a clutch of live oaks just outside the hall. It will have beer service, seating for different-sized groups, lights above and a bandstand for live music. Fundraising for the project will begin soon, Gonzales said.

The Bayou St. John location is significant. Deutsches Haus acquired it as part of a deal with the state after its [original Mid-City property on South Galvez Street](#) was taken for construction of the new University Medical Center and Veterans Affairs hospital.

Since 2011, Deutsches Haus has leased temporary space at an American Legion hall in Metairie, and it relocated its Oktoberfest celebration to Kenner's Rivertown district for several years.

This year marks the group's 90th anniversary. However, its history goes back further, to a variety of German cultural organizations established in the 19th century, when the New Orleans region was a major hub for German immigrants. In 1928, they unified to form Deutsches Haus.

Those groups and their members had an important influence on, among other things, the way New Orleans socialized, as Daniel Hammer, vice president of the [Historic New Orleans Collection](#), documented in [a 2009 study of German heritage](#).

It was early German immigrants who established a true brewing industry in the city. Eventually, they also developed a number of beer gardens, including one called Nationalgarten. It was located at St. Peter Street and Bayou St. John, around the present location of an Ideal Discount gas station and about a mile down the bayou from Deutsches Haus.

“These German social gatherings of the past always seemed to have a dual purpose,” Hammer said. “The German-Americans wanted to have a place to do their German-American things, but they always wanted their expression of culture to appeal to others. The idea was, 'If we just do this, they'll love this and want to join us.' That actually might start happening with this new Deutsches Haus, with that location they have. After all these years, maybe the dream will come true.”

The club has relocated to the bayou at the same time that the waterway is itself seeing a rebirth. The [removal of a dysfunctional dam](#) at its juncture with Lake Pontchartrain in 2013 has [improved water quality](#), and the bayou has been embraced for recreation in ways rarely seen a generation ago. Flotillas of kayaks and canoes are regular sights along its calm waters.

City Park, just across the bayou from the new Deutsches Haus, has been booming with events and has [new attractions underway](#), including a new home for the Louisiana Children's Museum. Club leaders hope a visit to the Haus will become part of the itinerary when people visit the area.

For now though, many of the Deutsches Haus faithful have been taking a long, appreciative look around at how far the club has come.

At a preview event last week, many stepped outside the hall to admire a path made up of personalized bricks as part of a fundraising campaign. Among them was Rob Norton, a River Ridge resident and longtime club member. He found the brick dedicated to his late mother, Audrey Gros Norton.

“My mom grew up on Bayou St. John, and she always connected to her heritage through Deutsches Haus,” Norton said. “If she was here to see this place now, right here on the bayou, she'd be glowing.”

## [Deutsches Haus](#)

*1700 Moss St., (504) 522-8014*

*Open to the public (all ages) Mon.-Thur. 3 p.m.-midnight; Fri.-Sat. 11 a.m.-midnight; Sun. 11 a.m.-10 p.m.*

### **Upcoming events**

***Grand opening***, Sunday, Nov. 18

*Opening day brunch, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. \$50 (tickets required)*

*Ribbon cutting, 1:30-2:30 p.m., free (followed by Saints-Eagles game showing)*

***Trivia Night***, Nov. 23, 7:30 p.m., free. Food service starts at 6:30 p.m.

***Wine Tasting***, Nov. 30, 7:30 p.m. Sparkling wines from around the world, with cheese pairings. \$50, [tickets required](#)

***Winterfest***, Dec. 1, 6-11 p.m. [Crescent City Homebrewers Club](#) presents 50 home-brewed and commercial beers, food included, \$30 (\$35 at the door)