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Ovens on Feet: Beckon Germans to Bratwurst

BY NICHOLAS KULISH

BERLIN — Jürgen Stiller regularly uses his front lawn to grill sausages on the Sternen grill suspended in his backyard. But if a police officer approaches him, it is only to buy one of his hot bratwursts sizzling on the flaming grill suspended from his chimney.

Mr. Stiller works as a grillwalker, a one-man mobile sausage-cooking machine. He and his colleagues can be seen around the capital, turning their mobile grills into bustling hot dog stands, complete with a stall of sausages waiting for customers.

On the street, you can buy bratwurst cooked by Mr. Stiller and his colleagues, who make their living by selling their wares to a variety of customers, from tourists to locals. Mr. Stiller estimated that he has photographed more than 30 times a day.

Grillwalkers like Mr. Stiller stand out under the city’s warm colors, umbrellas, which protect the heat and dim their light during late summer and the chilly rains thatあと

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After losing his job in hotel management in 1997, Bertram Rohloff wanted to open a stand to sell sausages, but found he could not get the necessary permits to set up shop. So instead he envisaged an evolution in food preparation technology, a step beyond the roasting hot-dog cart, because without the necessary permits, neither the grill nor the automatic cut-off mechanism for the gas, to ensure that it was safe in the event of an accident.

Mr. Rohloff was the first person to do in his own invention and sell bratwurst on the street. He now has 15 employees selling sausages around the city in teams of two; they take turns wearing the grill and relaying the sausages, rolls and condiments.

But his ambitions extend far beyond the German capital, and the 17 to 30 cents in profit made on each sausage. In all, the company has about 73 Grillwalkers, including the newest one. Mr. Rohloff said, “It’s an innovative business, the more we put in it, the more we get out.”

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