



27 Steps to a Frankfurter Kranz

by Kim Wood

Live audio recording: <http://berlinstories.org/2010/04/15/kim-wood-on-how-to-make-frankfurter-kranz/>

1. Move to New York. Begin online dating when it still has a stigma. Mortify your Mother. After ten years of shacking up, marry your favorite German.
2. Move to Europe. Leave all belongings in New York. Begin life as a vagabond in your honey's hometown, Berlin.
3. When he asks you to make the birthday cake his mother used to make for him, a traditional German Frankfurter Kranz, or Crown Cake, do not hesitate. Say yes.
4. Look up recipe online. Discover it has twenty-seven steps. Twenty-seven steps, either in a language you speak or in measurements your local cookware will comprehend. Look up US/Metric conversion tool. Convert recipe.
5. Is Speisestärke cornstarch? Or Maisstärke? Buy both. Who puts cornstarch in anything anyway?
6. Go to three shops in search of a Bundt pan. Forget to buy measuring cup.
7. While cake cools, watch husband flick through channels on the TV. Discreetly veil the mania already flickering in the corner of your eyes.
8. Over his shoulder, scan the vast studio stage where people with candy-colored coiffure huddle together on a sectional couch and—from what you can gather—bet on something having to do with a blindfolded man and a row of cows.
9. Nod when husband says, “He says he can identify them just by the sound each one makes chewing apples.”
10. Ask, “Is that Nicole Kidman?”
11. Begin Pâte à Bombe—French buttercream frosting that involves beating a “thread-thin” stream of boiling sugar water into nine egg yolks without cooking them. With a whisk. In your newly-appointed apartment there is certainly no candy thermometer, but also, no electric beater.
12. Listen as a man on television sings Tie a Yellow Ribbon ‘Round the Ole Oak Tree without a trace of irony. Consider explaining to your husband that the 70s band “Tony Orlando and Dawn” was a man with two female back-up singers, collectively known as Dawn. Switch whisk arm.

13. Miss your home state of California. Identify the funky, groovy, hippie element as what is seemingly absent from your new country. Also, the ocean.
14. Think: the year you were born, Joni Mitchell sang of Europe, *It's too old, and cold, and settled in its ways here, oh but California!* Think: though you love living in a place where you are not told at the flea market, "it's very old" about something made in your grandmother's lifetime, Joni may have a point.
15. Chop hazelnuts, caramelize butter and sugar for the Krokant candied topping. Consult recipe. Discover you are still on page one. Glance at the clock. Think: Ms. Kidman was smiling because she will never make a Frankfurter Kranz.
16. Remind yourself of the honor you feel, carrying on the tradition of your husband's mother who you never had the chance to meet.
17. When your husband changes the channel, turn in disbelief to catch Ruth Gordon offering a Tannis Root-filled medallion to Mia Farrow. It's Rosemary's Baby. In German.
18. Think: before you moved here, when asked about his background your husband answered, "I am a Berliner," not quoting Kennedy, but distancing himself from the whole rest of Germany.
19. Wonder if you will ever see Berlin not through a foreigner's eyes. Think: am I a Californian, a New Yorker, a European?
20. As the camera pans the exterior of The Dakota on the Westside of Central Park, feel a pang of longing. Think: for a piece of *that* real estate I would gladly hatch the Devil's spawn.
21. Think: which is precisely what my cake is beginning to resemble.
22. Notice it is past midnight.
23. Try not to disassemble.
24. As your husband blithely licks the whisk, slice the cake into three layers, slather with frosting and stack back into some kind of cake shape.
25. Cover in Krokant. Add blobs of additional frosting and top with chocolate-covered almonds.
26. Crown everything with candles.
27. When husband takes his first bite and says, "It tastes just like my childhood," think: after making a Frankfurter Kranz, finding my inner-Berliner will be a piece of cake.