

Typically Franconian – What's that?

Seen from a merely administrative political perspective, Franconia is divided into three parts. Three of the seven Bavarian districts are Franconian: Lower Franconia, Upper Franconia and Middle Franconia. The Franconians have a lot in common, for example the fact that their love for the Bavarian capital is not boundless. Traditions differ too much between, for example, the former workers' city of Nuremberg and the old residential city of Munich. And Franconians are completely unfamiliar with the (Upper Bavarian) notion of "Mir san mir" ("We are who we are").

Franconians are reluctant to concede that they are part of the Free State of Bavaria. However, it is said that it is mainly Franconians holding the reins of power in the Munich ministerial bureaucracy. Besides, the "Liberalitas Bavariae" was at home in Protestant Franconia long before it belonged to Bavaria. "Live and let live" is a thoroughly Franconian attitude.

Franconians have many facets. Any "Franconian is like a dice", so says the title of a collection of essays in which Hans Max von Aufseß ingeniously tries to shed light on the characteristics of Franconians. They are inventive and innovative. "Nuremberg wit" is proverbial. Franconians are open-minded and liberal, not least due to the international trade they maintained over centuries: "Nuremberg wares go all over the world" – another well-known saying. At the same time, Franconians are modest. More substance, less hype. They don't even boast about their successes. Rather they tend to hide their light under a bushel. Franconians are not really euphoric by nature. Their highest praise and satisfaction is expressed in the phrase "Bassd scho" /(that's all right). A typical conversation at one of the vegetable stalls at Nuremberg farmers' market might start with the sceptical question: "You won't have any celeriac?" rather than with the customer demanding: "Two pounds of celeriac, please."

As a rule, Franconians are honest and loyal. The football fans' love of "their" 1 FC Nürnberg, called simply "the Club", even outside Nuremberg, is legendary – in good and in bad times. And since the last time "the Club" was German Champions was in 1968, times have been rather bad. Winning the heart of a Franconian might take time, but then you have won it forever. And Franconians also have a dry, often quite coarse sense of humour.

Franconian dialects are very different from region to region. But there is one basic rule for all of them: there is no difference in the pronunciation of the consonants "p" and "b", or between "t" and "d". In dialect they are all voiced – this is why Franconians are easily spotted far from

home when they try to speak High German. Then it can happen that in trying to be linguistically correct they overcompensate a bit and sharpen even voiced consonants. Maybe this is a subtle attempt at evoking sympathy?