



When he first started telling people about his plans, says Christian Gierstorfer, many thought that his ideas were totally crazy. It was the British capital, of all places, where he wanted to import something as profoundly German as the Bavarian salt pretzel. "My university friends were somewhat

bemused," remembers Gierstorfer. "Many of them were starting out on careers with major companies or in industry." But he just ignored all the scepticism. As soon as he had his business degree, the former cook filled a make-shift refrigerated trailer with frozen pretzels and started a regular shuttle between Pfatter near Regensburg in Bavaria and England. During his student days he had established some contacts with the British catering

Gierstorfer was convinced that his pretzels would find their niche in the rich and diverse food market of the British capital. "There was, after all, nothing quite like it", says Gierstorfer. His approach is simple: "If the Bavarians enjoy it, then so will the British."

**The "German Pretzels"** were the door-opener. In spite of the humble beginnings, Gierstorfer could soon count such prestigious names as that of Selfridges on Oxford Street amongst his clients. In April 2000, the department store allowed him to set up a table and an oven in its Food Halls where he could bake his pretzels in front of the customers. They loved it!



restaurant on the third floor of the store. Gierstorfer did not hesitate and set up a soup bar where he also served his range of fresh pretzel products. In 2001 this was followed by a juice bar just opposite the soup bar where Selfridges customers could enjoy freshly squeezed juices.

**Feel Good food.** These individual components – the pretzel variations, soups and juices, supplemented by fresh salads – provided the basis for the Energy Kitchen concept which is part of a company called Creativity and Food Ltd (C & F Ltd.). Christian Gierstorfer and his wife Petra want to serve "feel good food" to their

**Fashionable, noticeable, fresh.** You can't help but notice the Energy Kitchen with its round counter in bright colours on the ground floor of Selfridges in London. The latest music sets the scene. Although today the pretzel is not the item generating most of the revenue, it and all its variations have remained a constant on the menu. A Wiesheu Minimat oven in the middle of the counter bakes regular batches which are then displayed in a part of the counter where they can be kept warm. The bulk of the revenue is now generated with fresh salads, sandwiches and juices prepared individually for every client. A traditional offering within a product group is complemented by a specialty and a gourmet creation. If we take hot ciabattas, for example, there is a basic version with dressing, cheese, salad and Bavarian meat paté,

# Energy Kitchen

The core product was soon

trade. A hotel on Piccadilly Circus allowed him

to use its kitchen to bake the pretzels. Ready-

made pretzels in hand, Gierstorfer went from pub to pub and from department store to department store to talk them into buying his pretzels. To start with, many only agreed under the condition that he would return the next day and take back all those pretzels which had not been sold. Nevertheless,

supplemented by a number of refined variations. Next to

the plain salt pretzel Gierstorfer soon sold pretzel with cheese, roast onions, sesame, sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds. The pretzel business went from strength to strength. During the winter of the same year, a space became available in the Food Garden Café, the self-service

customers. Food provides a high-quality and

## juice smoothie pretzel soup

healthy alternative within the existing snack market. This approach has paid off: The pretzel success has been replicated at other locations and a whole new food concept has evolved around the original pretzel product. Today, Christian and Petra are running four Energy Kitchen units as a "shop in a shop" in the Selfridges Stores in London, Birmingham and Manchester. As of this year there is an additional Energy Kitchen at the pilot convenience store of luxury department store Harrods.

cucumbers and sweet mustard turn it into a Bavarian ciabatta. Tuna, cheddar, mayonnaise, cucumber and red onions turn the ciabatta into a special "Tuna delight", whereas the chicken sandwich with roast chicken, mozzarella, peppers and sun-dried tomatoes is a real "Gourmet Heaven". If these don't take the clients fancy, he can ask for his very own snack to be created from further dressings, cheeses and other ingredients. With salads and juices Energy Kitchen follows the same principle. The all-important factor: all ingredients have to be absolutely fresh. Fruit, vegetables and salads are supplied locally,

