



Dining at a Historic Venue

The History of the Restaurant Zur Sonne

The **Restaurant Zur Sonne** is, after the Hotel Krone (1434), the second-oldest existing inn in Winterthur - and certainly one of the coziest. Archaeological excavations in 1981 revealed that as early as the 11th century, people used the site as so-called earth cellars. Already in the late Middle Ages, the house served as an inn with accommodation (a tavern) and was first mentioned in 1483 in the council records in connection with a family dispute. The oldest deed of sale dates from 1495.

The house was probably rebuilt in 1557, when the innkeeper, Hans Rieter, was granted a window as a gift from the council. The name Sonne ("Sun") has been documented since 1600. In 1670, the council awarded the innkeeper Heinrich Künzli six pounds for a window, suggesting a major renovation. Later, the front and rear houses Zum blauen Trauben (Marktgasse 13) and Zur Sonne (Marktgasse 15) were further expanded and decorated with wall paintings, painted ceiling beams, and stone window columns - most of which are still preserved today. The late Gothic wooden ceiling of the guest room was uncovered in 1945; like the stone window columns (around 1600), it had long been covered with thick layers of paint facing the Marktgasse. The magnificent wrought-iron inn sign likely dates from the late 18th century.

In 1800, the Sonne passed to Tobias Ziegler "zur Geduld" and remained in his family until 1875, when it was sold together with the neighboring house No. 13 for a total of 124,000 Swiss francs to the Konsumverein Winterthur, a cooperative society founded in 1868. The driving force behind this acquisition was Salomon Bleuler - national councillor, mayor, and editor of the Landbote newspaper - who also presided over the cooperative. His vision extended beyond reducing the cost of living by operating a dining hall, butcher, and bakery; he also wanted to promote public education through a library. For decades, the back house of the Sonne housed the cooperative's warehouses, coffee roasting facility, petroleum cellar, dairy, bakery, fish market, and offices.

From 1925 to 1975, the ground floor of the Sonne was home to the cooperative bookshop. For the cooperative (later Coop), the Sonne represented not only an idea but also something special as its very first property. In 1981/82, the building was thoroughly and carefully renovated. On December 1, 1999, as part of Coop's strategic realignment, the Sonne was sold to the association Vito-Haus zur Sonne.

This fulfilled a long-standing dream of the *Gymnasialverbindung Vitodurania* (Vito for short), founded in 1863, whose colors are blue-white-blue and whose name derives from Vitodurum, the old name for Winterthur. Since 1892, with only a brief interruption between June 1896 and January 1898, the Sonne has been the meeting place and home of the Vito. It is not only a traditional dining venue but also a place of conviviality, where members and alumni (the *Alte Herren* of the *Alt-Vitodurania*) gather and often sing together. The alumni, though formally organized separately, remain closely connected with the active members and together founded the association Vito-Haus zur Sonne to purchase the building.

Together with the long-standing innkeepers, the Benz family, and their team, we warmly welcome our guests to the Vito-Haus zur Sonne.

Verein Vito-Haus zur Sonne

