

Food-Staging





Hiltl Sihlpost, Zurich:

The hip state of the art Hiltl eatery in the old main post office from the 1930s

The Hiltl Sihlpost restaurant on Europaallee in Zurich's new urban quarter directly behind the main railway station, opened in 2016, is simply breath-taking. Its "grab & go" concept perfectly suits the motley clientele you encounter in the neighbourhood. The furnishings venerate the old site of the city's main post office, and the food presentation, conceived and planned in close cooperation with Beer Grill AG, presents the mouth-watering selection of dishes in seductive illumination, and surprises with a unique special function.

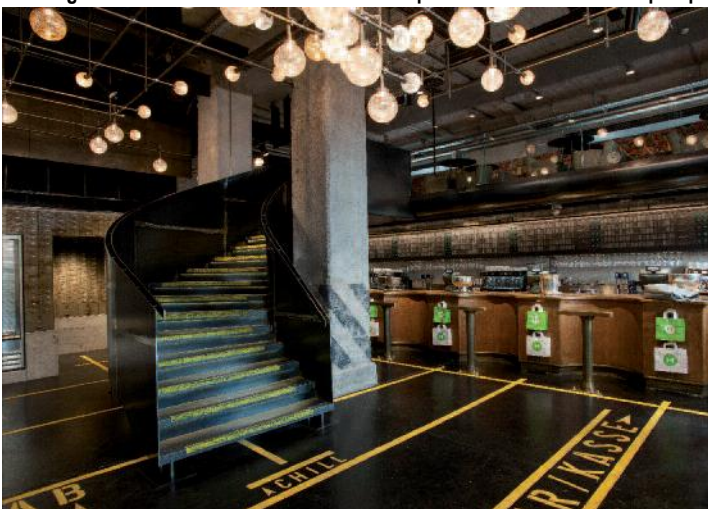
Text: Katia Corino, Photos: Rolf Neeser,

Restaurant, bar, café, buffet to "grab & go" – the trendy Sihlpost location of Zurich's venerable vegetarian restaurant "Hiltl" is as eclectic and diverse as its guests, and its concept of healthy indulgence that Hiltl lives fits perfectly in the up-and-coming district with its urban shopping attractions, where companies like Google and several educational institutions with thousands of students reside, health-minded people who prefer light and fresh food to traditional sustaining fare.

Food-Staging



The original 1930s counters from the old main post office. Above it the flip-flap display from the terminal of the Cologne-Bonn airport in Germany, and the lounge.



The people who live, work, study in and around Europaallee cultivate and enjoy a modern style of life. The motley clientele of Hiltl Sihlpost fits into the picture: people from all over the world, of all ages. The opening hours, like at the original Hiltl location, suit modern around-the-clock availability: from 6:30 a.m. to late evening on 365 days a year.

In-house, take away – and now «grab & go»!

Due to the heavy pedestrian traffic, the guest frequency is very high during the whole opening hours. Hiltl are using their newest concept at the Sihlpost location: an eclectic selection of grab & go items caters to people who are in a hurry, so that healthy snacks are available at any time to be eaten in the classroom, at your desk or on the way. Those who have more time can sit down and relax on one of the 100 seats of the restaurant with its 250 square metres. In the sunny season, additional 100 seats are available in the outdoor area. From coffee and breakfast buffet from 6:30 to 10:00 a.m. and the popular lunchtime buffet with its grab & go selection to the dinner buffet and subsequent bar service until midnight – the selection leaves nothing to desire. In addition, two baristas offer innovative coffee and tea specialties and also complement the house's selection with creative cocktails, vegan house wine and regional beers until late in the evening.

Due to the favourable city location in the lively neighbourhood, the takeaway business amounts to more than 50 percent of total sales. The boxes for the to go customers are placed right behind the entrance, and the guests serve themselves from the pantagruelic Hiltl buffet with its more than 100 hot and cold treats. The additional grab & go selection with sandwiches, fresh salads, sweet temptations, freshly squeezed juices, homemade lemonades and ice teas offers everything you might want quick in takeaway food & drink. Availability, quality and the right temperature of the dishes and beverages must be assured at any time. The 40-member team cares for continuous replenishment, and at the self-service counter from Beer Grill AG, temperature control and attractive presentation are assured. The distances between kitchen and buffet must be covered quickly, always with respect and consideration for the guests. «The continuous replenishment of the self-service counter is a demanding task. The full food trays are heavy, some of them also very hot, and our employees have to make their way through the crowd of guests to replenish the trays in counter», Shyama Rathore, the circumspect manageress of Hiltl Sihlpost says.

The Sihl Post Office – a very special place

Past and present merge into a unique, novel entity. Around the year 2000, owner Rolf Hiltl in wise foresight and sure instinct for future trends bought the furnishings of the main hall of Zurich's old main post office – counters, PO boxes and a lot more, and had them put in storage, hoping to use them for a new Hiltl restaurant in some future day. But he would have never even dreamed that this idea should actually come true in the original post office building.



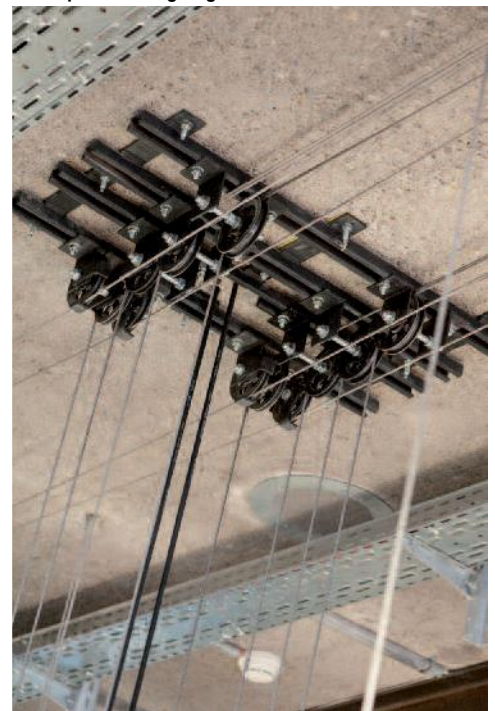
The original PO boxes from the 1930s serve as smartphone charging stations, flank the self-service counter for cold drinks and hide the lift shaft with all its machinery.

The old main counter dates from the 1930s and serves as the main bar. Up above it, the ten-metre-long split-flap display from the terminal of the Cologne-Bonn airport in Germany gently clickers, informing about self-service and takeaway dishes and beverages.

Food-Inszenierung



Impressive special construction of the main buffet counter with hoist, located in the former vehicle entrance to the post office garage.



The mechanical antique has been modernised and made compatible with the digital world, so that changes in the display can be posted quickly and efficiently. The hanging elevated gallery is connected to the ground floor by a stairs converted from the old parcel slide. The original PO boxes from the 1930s serve as smartphone charging stations for the guests, frame the self-service counter for cold dishes and hide the elevator shaft with all its equipment. The innovative lighting concept with its 200 hand-blown glass globes casts a warm comforting glow on the bare concrete walls and the poured asphalt floor.

Food presentation and dispensing

The Hiltl buffet is definitely the heart and centrepiece of restaurant. It is located in the former vehicle entrance of the post office garage and invitingly visible from the street through the “gate window”. Just as the premises, their appointments and the sophisticated grab & go concept are very special, as are the two buffet counters, which are both specially made to measure by Beer Grill AG. The company is a long-time partner of Hiltl’s and specialised in electro-thermal equipment for preparing and presenting food in gastronomy. The main requirements for the self-service buffet counter are to maintain the constant temperature for keeping the presented food warm or cold, easy accessibility for refilling and simple and easy cleaning. The cooled dishes are displayed at the main buffet counter. The lower main container holds about 100 kilos of ice, which needs to be regularly replenished by the Hiltl service team.

The warm dishes are located at the upper level, and also in the separate section at the window. They are kept warm by the lamps in the overhead heating bridge and/or by hotplates from below. Benjamin Bihr, head of technology and responsible for the Sihlpost project at Beer Grill AG: «Besides supplying the optimum equipment for keeping the food warm or cool, we support our customers with an attractive and sales-enhancing illumination concept for the presented food – true to our motto ‘Food perfectly presented’.»

The very special self-service counter

The main counter at Hiltl Sihlpost has the same measurements as its counterpart at the original Hiltl site in Sihlstrasse. Besides the normal functional requirements, the Sihlpost version needed a very special design and a most unusual extra function. The main buffet counter was conceived as a mobile design element of the furnishing and can be raised up underneath the ceiling by a specially built hoist. Lifting the counter away makes its floor space available for special events. The counter may only be hoisted when its main lower tray is empty – the tray alone weighs 750 kilos.

Raum kann bei Bedarf als zusätzliche Gäste-Fläche genutzt werden. Die Zugvorrichtung darf nur bei leerer Unterwanne eingesetzt werden, welche ungefüllt alleine schon ein Gewicht von 750 Kilogramm ausweist. Daniel Gutt, Leiter der Aussenstellen der Hiltl AG: «Die erreichte Leichtigkeit der Konstruktion begeistert



Strong partners (from left to right): Beat H. Akermann, Beer Grill AG distribution manager, Lucien Denier, Beer Grill AG marketing, Shyama Rathore, manageress of Hiltl Sihlpost, Daniel Gutt, head of the Hiltl AG branch locations, Benjamin Bihr, head of technology and projects at Beer Grill AG.

Daniel Gutt, head of the Hiltl AG branches: «I am always amazed by the optical lightness of the design.» Hiltl, Beer Grill and the shop fitters from Glaeser Wogg closely cooperated in planning and designing the lower tray in its “stainless steel look” and also the hoist mechanism. The three partners were happy to meet this challenge, and are now jointly proud of the achieved result.