

# The Salzkammergut Reinanke

The origin of the Reinanke whitefish (Coregonus) lies in the Ice Age. It is assumed that they reached the Alps from the north with the meltwater streams at the end of the last ice age. However, further migration to the south was prevented by the Alps. As the ice receded, large lake basins carved out by glaciers remained. These freshwater-filled lake basins most likely formed the original habitat of the Coregonians.

Fishing was already practiced by people in pile-dwelling settlements around 3000 BC. The oldest historical document that refers to fishing on Lake Attersee, where the Reinanke is still widespread today, was probably written around 894 AD by Emperor Arnulf of Carinthia (850 to 899 AD). The oldest systematic descriptions of fish from Salzkammergut lakes, which were assigned to the genus *Coregonus*, can be found in the archives of the Natural History Museum in Vienna from the years 1842 to 1890.

Reinanken or Renken is a common name in Austria for fish of the genus *Coregonus* from the trout fish family (Salmonidea). The genus is considered to be one of the most diverse among salmonids, whose forms and names are varied and differ from region to region. Today, numerous species of the Reinanken whitefish are considered extinct or presumed extinct, endangered, critically endangered or threatened with extinction.

Salzkammergut Reinanken are native to the alpine lakes Attersee (46 square kilometers), Traunsee (24.5 square kilometers), Mondsee (14.2 square kilometers), Fuschlsee (2.7 square kilometers), Wolfgangsee (12.84 square kilometers) and Hallstättersee (8.55 square kilometers). The water quality and oxygen content of the Salzkammergut lakes are excellent and particularly suitable for Reinanken. In addition to Austria, southern Germany (Lake Constance) and Switzerland are the main areas of distribution for whitefish.

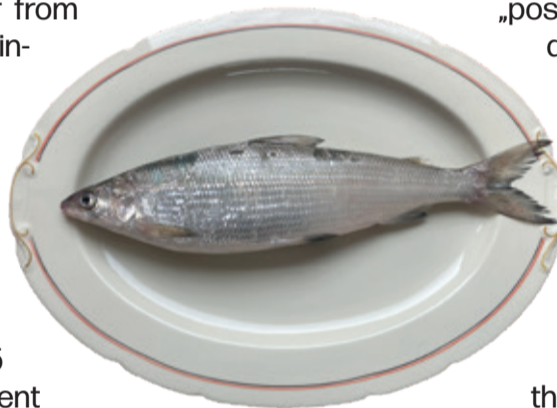
Reinanken have an elongated and often laterally compressed body with a deeply incised tail fin and small mouth cleft. The back of the fish is blue-green in color. The scales are relatively large and shiny silver. Salzkammergut Reinanken reach a size of between 35 and 40 centimetres.

Reinanken are cold-water fish that require oxygen and live in shoals in cold, deep alpine lakes. Their diet consists of plankton, small bottom-dwelling animals and aquatic insect larvae, worms and occasionally small fish and fish spawn.

Spawning takes place in the winter months and begins when water temperatures fall below 7 degrees Celsius. Spawning usually takes place on sandy or gravel bottoms. The eggs can be laid both in open water and near the shore. They sink to the bottom or remain attached to aquatic plants. The egg count is around 30,000 eggs per kilogram of roe and the egg diameter is around 2.5 millimetres. The larvae hatch after two to four months, depending on the water temperature.

In the past, Reinanken whitefish were found in large quantities in the Austrian Alpine lakes. In Lake Zell, for example, whitefish were so common in the 14th century that fishermen were able to deliver 27,000 whitefish a year in addition to their own consumption. Even back then, smoked Reinanke was considered a delicacy and sold well.

A fish regulation from 1486 reports that Lake Zell was extremely rich in Reinanke whitefish. In order to make better use of the lake, lake fishermen who used a Seegen were even brought in from Chiemsee (Germany). This type of fishing was very popular with the local fishermen and soon everyone was buying a Seegen and fishing with it. As a result, the population of whitefish declined. The owners of the Seegen then decided to let the lake



rest for three years and only resume fishing after this time. From then on, fishing was to be done collectively and only from November 25th until the lake froze over around Epiphany. As a result, the population of whitefish increased again, but in the 19th and 20th centuries, the stocks were again heavily overfished. Eventually, the stocks collapsed over time due to competition with alien fish species and water pollution.

Now, in the 21st century, fishing takes place from April to October. The fish are caught using floating or bottom nets, which are set in the evening and retrieved in the morning. The mesh size of the nets is chosen so that only whitefish that are between 3 and 4 years old (spawned at least once or twice) and have a live weight of around 3 kilograms are caught. Salzkammergut Reinanken have a closed season in winter (November 1 to January 31) and are therefore not available all year round.

The „Salzkammergut“ region is located on the northern edge of the Alps, in three Austrian provinces (Upper Austria, Salzburg and Styria) and comprises 54 municipalities. The name „Salzkammergut“ means „possession of the salt chamber“. It was first mentioned in a document in 1656 and refers to the rich salt deposits in a „Kammergut“, which meant direct ownership by the sovereign, in this case the House of Habsburg.

In the past, fish from the Salzkammergut lakes were mainly sold to the clergy, the nobility and wealthy citizens. Reinanken were offered for sale at Vienna's "Hoher Markt" (High Market), alongside other fish, such as hen, carp, trout, char and perch. The common people could hardly afford fish due to its high price. Fish that were not sold directly were transferred to holding ponds („Kalterne“) for longer storage. Dead fish were also stored in „ice cellars“. For this purpose, blocks of ice were cut from special ponds in winter and stored in cellars. This enabled cooling until the following August.

The Salzkammergut Reinanken fishery is the result of traditional knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation. Traditional knowledge and experience of lake fishing with nets, slaughtering and further processing.

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 Alles fischt  
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 Die Fischerin vom Attersee  
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 Autoren: Mag.a Doris Reinthaler, Mag.a Eva Sommer, Dr. Erhard Höbaus  
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