



Chef Maik's restaurant in Dongshe about 50 kilometers away from downtown Shanghai — Maik Juengst

Rural bliss: German chef embraces the roots of culinary food chain



German chef Maik Juengst has got used to the simpler life in the rural Dongshe village, and the simpler transportation — his favorite tricycle. — Yao Minji

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German chef Maik Juengst used to wake up late and work into the night, as most culinary maestros who serve up haute cuisine do. But nowadays, he's up at 5:30am and in bed by 9pm.

What caused such a drastic change in his workday? A shift from the city to the Shanghai rural village of Dongshe in early April.

"It may sound like a cliché when people say you wake up early and really enjoy a healthy lifestyle in a village," he told Shanghai Daily in the two-story farmhouse he rented on the main road through the village.

"But it's so true," he said. "No need for an alarm. I just wake up at 5:30 every morning and am the first customer at the village café. By 6am, locals in their 80s and 90s are drinking tea in front of the café, and they greet me by yelling out 'Maik!'"

Juengst, who has worked in restaurants with a Michelin star in five-star hotels and on luxury cruise ships, spend his last 10 years in Shenzhen and Shanghai, as both chef and entrepreneur.

"After so many different things, I wanted a simpler life — cooking for people away from urban pressures," he explained. "A friend of mine knew about this village, and I

came here with plans to open a restaurant on the first floor and live on the second."

He certainly has landed in a simpler life. On the day of the interview, he was having a shower room installed in a barely refurbished bedroom, after bathing at a neighbor's house down the road for a month.

Another neighbor came by in the morning to kill a chicken for him for the lunch, while a third swung past asking, "When is the restaurant open?"

Chef Maik, as he is more commonly known on social media and by his business partners, said there is no official launch date yet, no set menu and no clear goal on profit.