

# LEITNER LEINEN

— DAS ORIGINAL SEIT 1853 —

## LEITNER LINEN

### Committed to the art of weaving linen since 1853

When we think of linen, we think of grandmother's bed linen, old looms, the delicate, light blue flowers of the flax plant, thick cloths from Ireland, elegant table linen from France, fashion from Italy and, for the past twenty years or so, we would also have had in mind, LEITNER's distinctive linen collections from their weaving mill in the Muehlviertel of Upper-Austria.

### About the charm of the unusual

Seen in the eyes of the outside world, it's an otherworldly region, remote, hardly known at all – even today. Gentle hills, rich pastures and the Bohemian Forest shape the landscape around Ulrichsberg, a tiny place in the border triangle of Bavaria, Upper Austria and Bohemia, where remarkably, a material is created that is the stuff that dreams are made of. For centuries the flowering flax fields have stained the bare countryside of the Muehlviertel with delicate blue patches. It is difficult to understand how, in the past fifty years, flax, a crop that was so ubiquitous in the cultural history of the area, has disappeared. The Muehlviertel was weavers' land until finally a creeping morbidity as good as put paid to that flourishing industry. The remaining weaving mills with their everyday products such as tea towels and hand towels met some fearsome competition from the East, and that was one of the reasons why entrepreneur, Friedrich Leitner, and his family business had to find a new path to follow.

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## **New ideas with linen in the Muehlviertel**

Since 1853 Leitner's have earned their living with linen. First of all the work was outsourced – that is, weavers from the immediate area produced linen for the trade – then later, woven in our own weaving mill. When Friedrich LEITNER took over the company from his father in 1986, LEITNER's was the largest producer of tea towels in Austria. Then in addition, cloth for tailoring was made in Leitner's weaving mill, blouse and apron fabrics, hand towels and tea towels made of linen and cotton and cotton piqué. In fact, the real change came with piqué, that classic hand towel material with Mediterranean chic. Leitner's were the first company in the German-speaking area to manufacture piqué in colour and their bathrobes and towels in select colours were the beginning of their success story. Up till the beginning of the 90s all the collections were designed in Ulrichsberg, but Friedrich LEITNER had a seed of an idea; he wanted to try something new and that gave him the idea of entrusting a designer with their new collections.

## **Quality is our top priority**

Since 1995 LEITNER Linen Collections have included bed and table linen, high quality terry towelling for the bathroom and elegant clothing from dressing gowns and pyjamas to slippers. And the world marvelled. At the sheer elegance of the collections, the diversity of colours and excellent quality. LEITNER was different from other European weaving mills that were also reviving traditional patterns – not only for their new, uniquely beautiful pattern designs based on a distinctive combination of the historic and truly contemporary, but also on account of their very particular colour choices and superb fabric quality in manufacture,

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workmanship and finish. “We manufacture a unique and high quality product here”, says Friedrich Leitner, “it’s traditional but also timeless, a product created under unique conditions from yarns from the best producers in Europe.”

## Haute couture for living, sleeping and bathing

Wet-spun, long-fibred linen yarns from European flax, cotton yarn spun from super combed, extra-long-staple cotton go through many processes – they are woven, checked and finished – before they go to our own sewing workshops to be turned into fine table and bed linen and decorative pieces such as covers and curtains, into bath towels, accessories and elegant home wear including night dresses, pyjamas, kimonos and shawls. Every year our basic collection is supplemented with new designs and colours that all have one thing in common – LEITNER’s characteristic hallmark.

For the past three years, LEITNER Linen has presented a special, small collection of extremely hard-wearing furnishing and decorative fabrics. Aside from quality and beauty, the other special features of LEITNER’s linen products are Jacquard weaving techniques and Austrian handwork. Under best-possible ecological conditions, technology, design and expertise are all home-grown in Austria. In addition, LEITNER Linen *is woven to a width of 320 cm*. All the patterns are woven in colour, in a thickness of up to 40 warp threads per centimetre; no other linen weaver in the world today can do this.

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Moreover, LEITNER Linen can manufacture according to customers' wishes; tailor-make to order, much as they do in couture tailoring workshops. A unique combination of traditional handwork and modern technology, highest quality yarns woven by Jacquard technology into a distinctive weave, and special production processes, allowed a troubled family business in the Muehlviertel to become a player on the international scene.

So it would really not be an exaggeration to say that Friedrich Leitner is a plucky man; he saw that he needed to create some kind of sustainable lifestyle with his long-lasting, quality products in these economically transient times – a lifestyle that makes life especially worth living.

These distinguished products made of linen and cotton, silk, wool and cashmere are sent out into the world from this remote spot on the map.

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## **LINEN – A FABRIC FOR ALL SEASONS**

It is and always has been a long haul from the delicate blue flower to finished linen cloth. No other textile raw material requires such long-winded and complicated preparation as flax. Linseed plant, flax, hair – the flax plant has been given many names. It is sown from the middle of March; when in bloom it has delicate sky-blue flowers and is fully mature after 100 days.

At the flax harvest – in the Muehlviertel this is called „catching hair“ or „pulling hair“ – machines drag great bundles of flax plants out of the ground, roots and all, and leave them to dry. While drying, the epidermis is ruptured so that micro organisms can penetrate and the process of field retting begins.

### **Dew retting – an environmentally friendly flax treatment**

The predominating retting method today is dew retting. Flax straw is laid down in the fields. This important process in flax preparation allows bacteria and fungi to break down the plant glue that makes the fibres and other plant tissue stick together. Dew retting is an environmentally friendly procedure as nutrients are taken back into the soil during the process. Before or after retting, the flax is rippled, that is, the stem is separated from the seed pod. Afterwards the flax straw has to be dried once again so that through further treatments such as ginning, breaking, scutching and heckling, the woody parts of the stem may be broken more easily and the last impurities can be removed. Only when this whole process is complete can the flax fibres, or long fibre as it is called, be processed in the spinning mill to make yarn. Long-fibre yarns are relatively smooth and very strong. Short-fibre yarn is either a waste-product of the long-fibre yarn process or is

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produced from an entirely short-fibre process. Short fibres are not so strong and are mostly used for technical purposes.

Probably the oldest textile type in the world, flax is difficult to cultivate; it needs good soil, an ideal climate and lime-poor water for retting. When the flax has been treated it is processed into yarn: the long fibres used for linen fabric are usually wet-spun into quality threads through a number of different flattening processes.

## **Linen fabric requires the highest quality yarns**

For thousands of years, the weaving process (the crossing of threads) has remained the same. Only the equipment used to manufacture the fabric has undergone constant development. In weaving, two thread systems are woven one into the other. The vertically placed threads are called the warp (warp threads) and the threads that are inserted (taken up) successively at right-angles are the weft. When weaving linen, the warp requires very smooth and high quality linen yarn. LEITNER Linen uses only the best yarns available on the market.

## **Weaving – more complicated than it looks**

Generally, when we talk about weaving, we differentiate between two different looms – dobby and Jacquard. Dobby weaving techniques are simpler and these looms are the ones that are used the most. In dobby shaft technology, at least two or more shafts are used, the warp threads run through them and they are raised and lowered simultaneously to allow the weft threads to pass through. Depending on the number of shafts – and in plain weaving there must be at least two and a maximum of 21 – the

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possibilities for manufacturing complicated pattern designs and repeats are limited.

Jacquard weaving technology is more involved and also costlier than dobby weaving, but it is possible to create more variety. Jacquard technology is the only one that enables you to create complicated patterns as it allows single warp threads to be raised and lowered. In the case of intricate, extensive patterns, every warp thread is tied individually into the whole weaving width. Jacquard technology was invented as early as 1805. Today there are only a few linen weaving mills left that have mastery over this technique.

## **Finishing the linen fabric – the “final polishing”**

The woven fabric, what we call “grey cloth”, gets its final polishing through finishing or dressing. Different processes such as scorching, de-sizing, washing out, drying and doubling or bleaching are used to give the fabric its final optical appearance and particular characteristics. Proper dressing and finishing processes enhance the quality, look and functionality of the material. Finishing can retroactively alter the feel of the fabric, its outward form, its surface character and behaviour under particular external conditions. Only then is the linen fit for sale or further processing.

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Linen is the oldest textile in the world. Flax was being processed for linen 6,000 to 7,000 years ago in places like Mesopotamia, Egypt and Phoenicia. It has never lost its popularity.

## **Linen – naturally valuable**

Linen fabric has lots of natural, positive characteristics. Linen is anti-bacterial; it repels dirt and is almost antistatic. This is because of its smooth fibre surface that also keeps the fabric lint-free. Linen thread is tear-proof and extremely inelastic and therefore hardwearing and long-lasting. Where there are so many advantages there is bound to be a tiny disadvantage. The rigidity of linen means that it is prone to crease. Linen should not be starched because the fibre is naturally rigid. And linen has a natural lustre because of its coating of wax. Through the process of calendaring, mercerising and bleaching its natural sheen can be enhanced. And linen has to be ironed damp so that it keeps its wonderful lustre and its rigidity. Linen is a good insulation material. It is cool to wear but also creates drying warmth. This is on account of linen's special absorbency and ability to circulate air. The fibres take in 35% humidity from the atmosphere whereby an active exchange between the ambient air and fibres takes place. Therefore linen is the ideal material to wear in summer, but is also comfortable in winter.