A group of five men aspiring to James Cook’s fame and successes left Vienna on a botanical expedition in 1783. They crossed Europe and then the Atlantic, to amass seeds, living plants, animals, and natural history objects to augment the collections of Holy Roman Emperor and Habsburg Monarch Joseph II. While this trip was a failure, the problems encountered along the way tell us much about how travelers functioned on extensive journeys and about the limits, real and imagined, of eighteenth-century hospitality. For this failed botanical expedition did produce multiple travelogues, including two volumes (never published) in which Dr. Matthias Stupicz recorded boring details in his stilted German. Dr. Stupid, as a group of American sailors called him, recorded nothing but his personal experience of travel and the details other eighteenth-century writers (and readers) would find unremarkable. Yet precisely because of his ineptitude as a scientific writer, his journals provide a rich basis for direct comparison between Central European and Mid-Atlantic American hospitality in 1783.