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GASTRONOMY ON THE DOWN-TURN ?

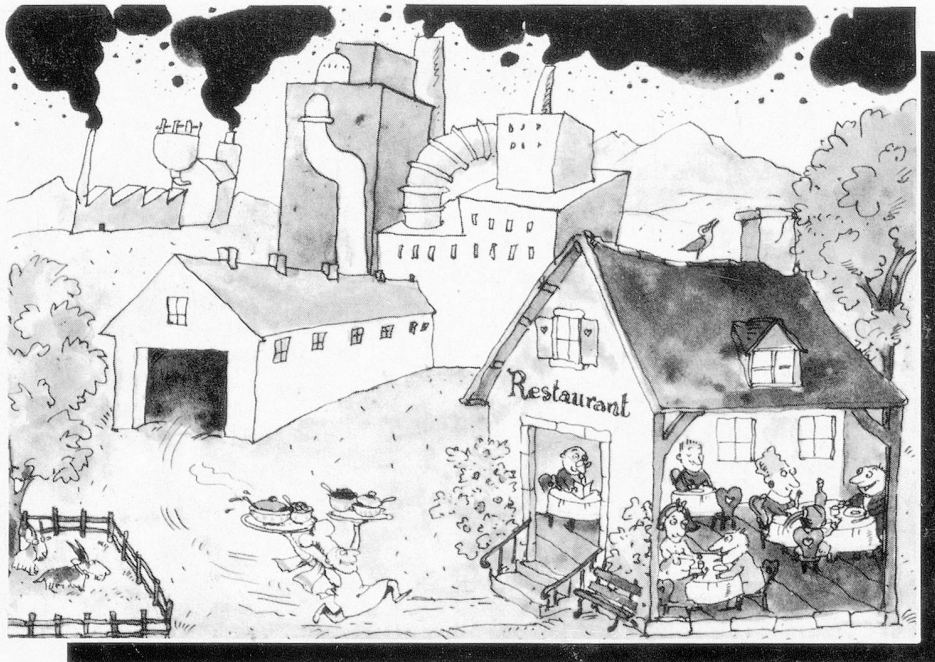
Lack of apprentices, down-turn in business, new cooking technics, fast food craze, all contribute to push aside the old traditional Swiss restaurants and "Fress-beizli". Are therefore the cooks and kitchen chefs of the old tradition likely to disappear forever? The latest statistics seem to indicate so. As the graphic shows, in 1972 the traditional Swiss "Beiz" represented some 40% of the overall patronage. By the year 2000, it will only attract a mere 4% of the market. The winners in this race are the speciality restaurants, the bars and pubs (yes, pubs in Switzerland!) and the fast food outlets.

Fewer and fewer people are interested in learning the job of an all-round cook. From 1313 apprentices in 1981, the number has fallen to 693 in 1991. Apart from the top class restaurants and hotels, most restaurants can no longer offer a large menu card with on the spot cooking requiring highly qualified kitchen personnel. The trend is for a few specialities which do not require all-round cooking skills. As anyone can learn to cook over and over again just a few speciality dishes, there is no need anymore for the traditional kitchen chef.

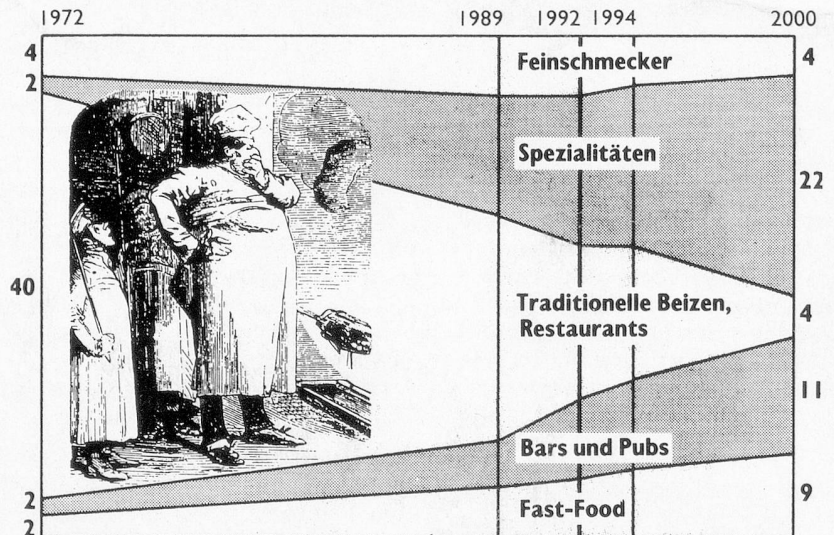
Moreover, several speciality restaurants can be run from one central kitchen which reduces even further the need for kitchen staff, but makes the food even more impersonal.

So next time you go to Switzerland, enjoy your meals in your favourite "Fressbeizli" while you can. They probably will not be around for very much longer.

The graph shows clearly the upsurge of speciality restaurants plus bars and pubs and the drastic decline of the old fashioned "Beiz".



The cartoon brilliantly illustrates the new gastronomical trend: traditional country restaurant serviced by some huge central kitchen.



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DRUNKEN DRIVING

Whether you are considered fit to drive or not after a drink or two seems to have nothing to do with your personal capability to absorb alcohol, but with the country you happen to live in at the time.

You may be fairly drunk in Ireland and still be considered fit to drive whilst a mere sniff at a bottle of wine may disqualify you in Eastern Europe. See for yourself.

Blood-alcohol limits in Europe above which you are not supposed to be driving a vehicle anymore:

- 1.0 per mil: Ireland
- 0.8 per mil: Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria & Spain.
- 0.5 per mil: Finland, The Netherlands, Norway and Portugal.
- 0.2 per mil: Poland and Sweden.
- 0.0 per mil: Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovakia, the Tschech Republic & Hungary.

NEW FAST TRAINS TO SWITZERLAND

Japan has its Shinkansen (bullet train), France its TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse), Germany its Panda, so Italy has its Pendolino, a train that can travel at 200 Km per hour. Although not as fast as its competitors from other countries, what sets the Pendolino apart from the other fast trains is that by means of some special hydraulic suspension, it leans into the curves which gives it a very smooth ride.

Following an agreement with Switzerland, Pendolino trains will be operating by 1995 from Italy through the Simplon tunnel to Basle and Geneva. By avoiding the need to change engines in Domodossola as at present and through its higher speed, the Pendolino will cut travelling times between Milan and Basle by 65 minutes and between Geneva and Milan by 40 minutes.