

Turnip Festival in Richterswil

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Turnip Festival in Richterswil

In the Canton of Zurich, and more recently in other regions of German speaking Switzerland, processions which feature decorated, hollowed out turnips containing a lighted candle have become customary.

This custom can be traced back to the early 1920s. A very special form of this celebration has developed in Richterswil, situated on Lake Zurich. On the second Saturday evening in November, approximately one thousand children and adults proceed through the darkened streets with individual lanterns or huge structures made up of hundreds of turnip lanterns portraying houses, people, and objects. The facades of the houses are also decorated with lights and lanterns.

The procession, which moves along a predetermined route, is led by a group of women dressed in black. They represent "the churchgoers of Richterswilerberg". Tradition says that around 1850 they lit the way to the evening service in the village church with their turnip lanterns. Though research has shown that this lovely legend may not be true, this does not in the least dampen the enthusiasm of the participants, or the general harmony of the evening.

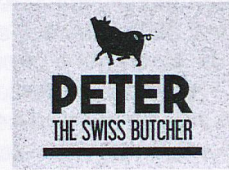
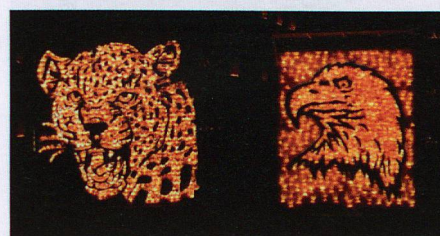
The Råbechilbi Richterswil, is Europe's largest turnip festival, where approximately 26 tonnes of the humble root vegetables are hollowed out and etched with striking designs, then turned into turnip lanterns with candles inside. A parade of illuminated floats – animals, politicians, musicians, temples and more – makes its way through the streets after nightfall, each made with the glowing vegetable. Planning for this begins in late July, early August when the turnips are planted in Furttal, a valley between Lägern and Altberg in the Dielsdorf district of the canton of Zurich region.

The turnips are grown under the sun until the protruding part of the turnip turns purple while the part hidden in the ground stays white. They are then pulled from the ground by their leaves, taken to the farmyards where the leaves are removed and washed in the farmyard troughs. The rotten turnips are removed and the rest sorted for size and cleanliness before being loaded onto trucks. Finally, the large trucks are weighed before departing for Richterswil, ready for the festival.

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