

In Switzerland with a Car [Conclusion]

Autor(en): **Ernst, H. O.**

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IN SWITZERLAND WITH A CAR.

By H. O. Ernst.

(Conclusion)

Glorious mountains, placid lakes, glistening snow fields, centres of Art, Music and Learning are very well in themselves, but only prove attractive if the visitor is "looked after", in other words if his bodily comfort is assured. This is where Switzerland shines. It is perfectly true to say that there is no other Country where catering and hotel keeping have reached a similar pitch of efficiency. It has of course not developed in one day, but is the result of long experience and a traditional sense of hospitality, for which Swiss Hotel Keepers and Restaurateurs are famous.

There is no uniform Swiss cuisine; it is international. What is on the menus in Restaurants and Hotels are, as a rule, French, Italian, German or Austrian dishes or a happy combination of them. American and English specialities, the latter especially around Christmas, also enter into the picture. Preparation, cooking and serving meals is an art which the Swiss excel in. The food is often inclined to be rather rich and in quantity more than enough, at least for people whose digestive capacity has been somewhat disciplined by years of rationing. However, in most catering establishments the menu shows two prices, one for the full meal, and the other, lower, without a first or fish course. Mealtimes vary slightly, but roughly breakfast is served until 9.00 a.m., lunch from 12.00 to 2.00 and dinner from 7.00 to 9.00 p.m. Motorists and others who arrive late at night are almost everywhere sure to obtain a hot meal. Most Continentals drink wine or beer with their meals. You can, too, and your host will appreciate it. On the other hand do not be afraid to ask for water or other soft drinks. Vegetarians and people on a special diet are looked after quite as well as those who take the normal menus. Prices of meals vary, of course, a great deal. At one of the many roadside Inns or cheaper Town Restaurants, a three course lunch or dinner, without drinks, should roughly be between 3 and 5 Sfr. per person. Country Inns, whose colourful signs invite you along the Highway, are an excellent proposition for meals en route. Mine Host is often also the local butcher. He will serve you well and cheaply. Try an "assiette anglaise" (cold meats, ham, sliced sausages of several kinds, etc.) with a green salad and "Bauernbrot" (farmers' wholemeal bread) and perhaps a glass of wine or local cider. Now and again enjoy one of the local dishes. Each region has its speciality. There is hardly room to mention them all, but here is a selection of the better known ones:

French Switzerland: (Lake of Geneva Region, Rhône Valley, Neuchâtel)

Fondue: A dish of Gruyère cheese, melted in white wine, laced with Kirsch. This is a social meal which should be shared with your friends.

Râclette: Produced by holding the cut side of a whole cheese to a wood fire and scraping off a portion when the cheese begins to run. Excellent served very hot with potatoes "en robe de chambre".

Saucisson, saucisse au foie, saucisse aux choux: cooked together with various kinds of vegetables and served with them. This is an excellent meal.

German Switzerland: (Grisons, Zurich, Berne, Central Switzerland, etc.)

Buendnerfleisch: air-dried meat, cut into paper-thin slices.

Roesti: made from potatoes, boiled, sliced, formed into a cake and fried both sides in butter with onions until a golden brown.

Leberspiessli: Calf's liver cut into dice, wrapped in sageleaves, then speared onto a wooden skewer alternatively with pieces of bacon. The whole is then fried, with onions, in butter. A roesti goes well with this.

Geschnetzeltes Kalbfleisch: Veal cut into bits, broiled quickly and served with cream or wine sauce.

Italian Switzerland: (Bellinzona, Locarno, Lugano)

Spaghetti: served with melted butter and Parmesan cheese.

Risotto: rice, fried in butter for 5 to 7 minutes. Stock or water is then added and the rice cooked until the liquid is absorbed. Served hot with Parmesan cheese and Saffron.

Capretto: Kid, served around Easter is a great delicacy.

Mortadella con Polenta: a large round local sausage of which slices are served with maize cooked in salted water until cakey.

Two words should perhaps be said about that indispensable adjunct to a good meal, namely cheese. Switzerland produces many different kinds, and imports some from France and Italy. Best known is no doubt the Swiss "Gruyère". This is the variety

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with the small holes. It is rather strong. The "Emmentaler", which is often mistakenly referred to as "Gruyère", is a milder version, with larger holes. English Cheddar or Cheshire and probably the best of all cheeses, Stilton, are rarely seen in Switzerland.

Tips in all Restaurants, as in the Hotels, are added to the Bill, and one should leave it at that, unless some special service has been rendered.

As to liquid refreshments, good beer, invariably served very cold, is obtainable everywhere. It is mainly of the "Lager" type and has a lower alcoholic content than English beer. There are two versions, light and dark (in German "hell" or "dunkel", in French "blonde" or "brune", in Italian "chiara" or "scura").

From its many Spas and Mineral Springs, Switzerland produces a large variety of mineral waters which are very palatable.

Especially in French and Italian Switzerland, and to some extent north of the Alps, wine growing is widely practised and the produce is extremely good, although the Reds do not come up to the best "vins fins" of France which are, of course, also obtainable in Switzerland. The wines of the Rhone Valley and the northern shores of Lake Geneva, as well as those grown around the western shores of Lake Neuchâtel, are excellent. Wine is served either bottled or, cheaper, "open" by the decilitre. Ask for "two décis" or "three décis" or "half a litre", etc. Probably the best Swiss red, "Dôle", comes from the Rhone Valley. It is rather lighter than "Burgundy" but more full-bodied than Claret. Its quality

varies somewhat. The best Dôle is bottled "Pinot noir". Do not ask for a special vintage. Swiss wines are generally speaking at their best when two or three years old and do not improve by keeping longer. There are so many different wines in Switzerland that the most useful purpose is perhaps served by giving a short list of the types which should agree best with the average taste.

Name	Origin	White	Red	Type
Dôle	Rhone Valley		X	Burgundy
Fendant	" "	X		sweet to medium dry
Dezaley	Lake of Geneva (Lavaux)	X		dry or medium dry
Neuchâtel	Neuchâtel	X		dry
Cortaillot	" "		X	dry, Claret
Veltliner	Grisons		X	dry, Burgundy
Maienfelder	" "		X	medium dry
Schaffiser	Lake Bienne	X		medium dry
Spiezer	Lake Thun	X		medium to dry
Nostrano Rosso	Tessin	X		dry
Nostrano Bianco (Merlot)	" "		X	Burgundy

As a tailpiece, let us refer in a few short words to human relations.

The Swiss are a friendly people. You will get on well with them. Most inhabitants speak, or at least understand English, especially in the larger towns and holiday resorts. You will find them sociable, open-minded with a good sense of humour. In Hotels, Restaurants and shops prices are firm and honest. No more than in England will you be able to "haggle" without "losing face". Cleanliness indoors and out is almost a passion with the Swiss.

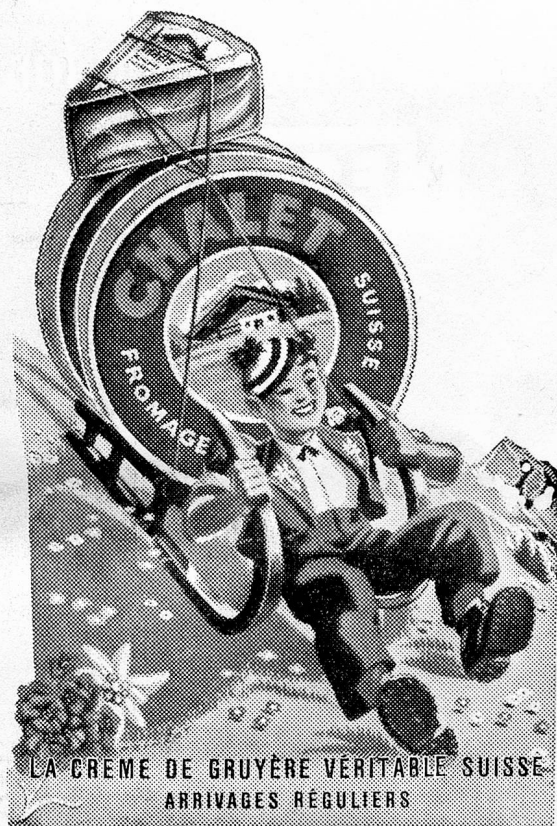
It is rather difficult to generalise about national characteristics and traits in a Country whose people are so mixed in race and outlook on life. We will therefore not attempt it. To the visitor from abroad who travels with an open mind and heart this diversity is as much an attraction as the ever-changing landscape.

May 11th, 1955.

ERRATA.

In our issue of the 12th of August (page 7960) regarding the appointment as Gérant of the Station Buffet, Zurich, in the person of Mr. Rudolf Candrian, we mentioned "he was at one time, Manager of Brown's Hotel, London".

This is incorrect. It was Mr. Rudolf Candrian's brother, Mr. Albert Candrian, who was at Brown's Hotel at one time, and is now at Suvretta Haus, St. Moritz.



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