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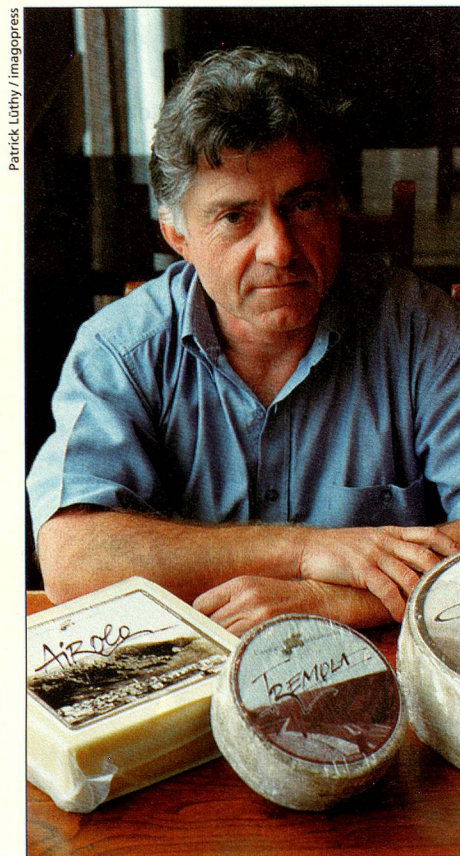
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First-class cheese

Although only a small company with some 30 employees, the Airolo-based Gotthard showcase dairy (with affiliated restaurant and own sales outlet) won international acclaim when German airline operator Lufthansa decided to include its "Gottardo" cheese – originally from the Ticinese Alps – in its in-flight menu. "Although the contract was limited to six months, this order proved invaluable in terms of advertising and raising awareness of our name abroad," says Aramis Andreazzi, the showcase dairy's business consultant. Such major success is the product of patient, ongoing marketing efforts and a smattering of good luck. Says Andreazzi, "Roughly four years ago, we started to look for a market niche and decided that the catering sector of-


Aramis Andreazzi,
business consultant to
the Gotthard showcase
dairy in Airolo.

fered good business development opportunities." By chance, after knocking on several airline doors (including that of the now defunct Swissair), "we got to know the Head of Catering at Lufthansa, and that's when our adventure began." Lufthansa had very special requirements: "Instead of the conventional round shape, we had to deliver the cheese in rectangular form without any rind, exactly to the customer's specifications." This solution made the cheese ideal for catering purposes, since there was nothing left over, and the rectangular form made it much easier to slice. Andreazzi firmly believes that Switzerland should produce less in terms of quantity and concentrate on innovative, high-quality products in order to survive in an increasingly competitive market. "The dairy farms which deliver the raw ingredients to us have to comply with rigorous quality criteria. Ultimately this is in their interest, because the better the milk, the higher the revenue for farmers." PC 

Innovation is their credo

LLAMAS AND ALPACAS from South America, African ostriches, bison from the USA, Tibetan yaks: these are just some of the exotic animals to be encountered in various Swiss alpine valleys in recent years. Often these creatures are raised by farmers who have given up traditional farming practices to devote themselves to biological production. Their motto is innovation, and they provide high-quality produce for the regional market. Bison meat is processed for salami or steaks, while yak meat, which is richer in protein

and lower in fat, is sold to Tibetan and other speciality restaurants. Llamas and alpacas provide valuable wool, while ostrich meat is similar to tender cuts of beef.

Some farmers and breeders also offer accommodation and act as tourist guides. Such additional sources of income are becoming increasingly common. PC 



Patrick Lüthy / Imagopress

Llama farm in the Berne region. Some inventive breeders now offer llama trekking holidays.

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