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This and That Corner

Canton Valais (or Wallis)



Those who have never seen a typical Valais village have not seen the most original and strange thing in the whole world! I mean, a village built in the old architectural style of this canton, not the modern buildings of today. All those houses are of wood, blackened with age with a white church among them.

Valais is a canton of big contrast... from the cold temperature of the glaciers, to the heat down in the Rhone Valley!!! Forests of pine trees are beside big orchards; one doesn't have to travel far to be, on the one hand, on very poor soil and then, on the other hand, on good growing countryside. Valais is the best provider of electricity from its nine big dams all built between 1947 and 1967. During those twenty years, development of the canton of Valais was huge with new roads, buildings etc. A lot of tradition was lost through that evolution, but tourism has brought a lot back, especially in skiing areas. Fasnacht (Carnaval) and all religious manifestations are very intimate to the people of canton Valais.

The mountain village of Zermatt is the leading climbing and winter sports capital in the Valais and one of Switzerland's great international resorts. Nestled in a green valley enclosed between steeply scaped mountains, it is dominated by the "mountain of mountains", the huge and gracefully curved pyramid of the Matterhorn. This 4478m pyramid of ancient rock stands on the border of Italy and has held a special fascination for climbers ever since the first dramatic ascent in 1865.

What would the Swiss Alps be without glaciers? Desolate piles of rocks towering high above the tree-line seem of little interest to visitors. However, as well as being a tourist attraction, the "eternal ice" of the glaciers is also a valuable source of water, even in the driest summers. Mountainous canton Valais in particular relies heavily on thawing glaciers to irrigate its fields and drive its many hydroelectric power stations.

As the first snowflakes fall, the canton of Valais is transformed into a vast ski field. Many ski resorts like Verbier, Saas-Fee, Mt Gebe etc transport skiers up to 3000m!!! Even in late spring they can enjoy skiing on those high slopes. Canton Valais has a big geographic and cultural diversity and it is the same in gastronomy!!! Every valley, and even some villages, have their own speciality. The canton of Valais boasts several orchards and vineyards and also grows many vegetables.



Here are some culinary delights!!!

Tomato from Valais.

Cut the top off a big tomato and empty the inside. Fill with a raw egg, some bacon or ham pieces, and sprinkle with cheese. Bake in a hot oven for 20 minutes.

Pomme de Terre au fromage du Valais (Potato with cheese from Canton Valais) for four persons.

Boil potatoes in their jackets the previous day.

Fry one onion in 2 tbsp of butter

Peel and cut six potatoes in small squares and add to onions. Fry for three minutes.

Add 20 mls of white wine and cook gently for 20 minutes.

Mix 10 mls of white wine with 1 tsp of flour and add to potatoes. Add salt and nutmeg.

Cut thin slices of mature cheese (approx 150 gr) and spread over potatoes. Serve when cheese has melted.

Fraise au Pinot (Strawberries in Pinot Noir wine).

For four persons

500 gr strawberries - wash and cut in 2 or 4 depending on size.

Mix with 3 tbsp of sugar and 2 tbsp of lemon juice. Leave in juice for one hour. Serve in dessert dishes and pour 25mls of Pinot noir wine. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

I would love to write the recipe of "Raclette", a speciality of canton Valais, but to make a "Raclette" you need a special oven. It is a very old recipe of this canton, as they were able to keep cheese a long time in cellars up the mountains.

The wine of Canton Valais is delicious. As an unknown writer

in 1888 said "The vineyards are generous, the vineyards open the heart of mankind and make him happy. The vines in Canton Valais stand triumphant from Sierre to Martigny and let flow, beside the other flow of the river, a large amount of wine to quench the thirst of many Swiss".

*Bon Appétit et Sante
Lisette*

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