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Zibelemärit in Bern

On the fourth Monday in November, the upper part of the Old City of Bern between the railway station and the Bundesplatz, the square facing the Parliament buildings, is transformed into a huge market.

Stalls are set up and vendors start to do takeoffs on events which have occurred during the past year. Satirical leaflets also appear on the streets at this time.

The Zibelemärit, or onion market, is all that remains of a 14-day autumn market (Martin-Mas) held

built from the farming areas into the city.

Whatever the historical truth may be – if you happen to be in Bern on the fourth Monday in November you will enjoy the atmosphere and the little works of art created with humble onions. For the less traditionally minded punters, there are also peppermint onions and marzipan onions for sale...

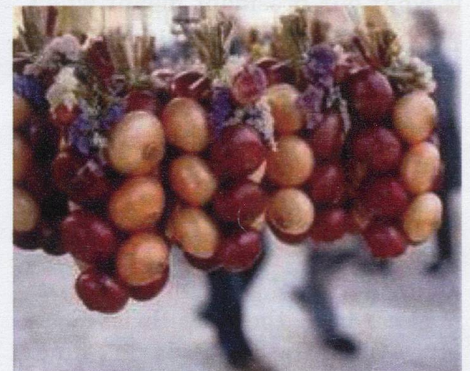


Market stalls in front of the Bundeshaus in Bern

At hundreds of stalls, farmers from roundabout, especially from the lake region of Canton Fribourg, sell their plaited strings of onions, over 100 tons worth, along with other winter vegetables, fruit and nuts. The market vendors also offer their usual merchandise for sale. In the afternoon and evening, after school is out and working hours are over, the carnival spirit enters into the proceedings: There are confetti battles, people dressed in disguise, and small groups who appear as jesters in the restau-

as far back as the fifteenth century. A frequently heard tale dates the Zibelemärit back to the city fire in 1405. The farmers from the region who helped with the tidying up were given the right to sell their products in the city. The first autumn market, however, was held only in 1439, and in any case vegetables were already offered for sale at the weekly market.

The first documented mention of onions appeared only in the middle of the nineteenth century, at the time a railway line was being



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