

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 73 (2007)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: Federer hometown refuses to take centre court
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944388>

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Federer hometown refuses to take centre court

There are few signs of Roger, big or small, in Basel. Why does Switzerland's greatest sports hero take a back seat in his hometown to a converted warehouse and a park?

The question is not easy to answer, but most locals associate Münchenstein – the Basel suburb where Roger Federer grew up – with a large park and a warehouse that has been turned into an art gallery.

It may be that the Swiss like to keep a low profile; they stay out of wars, keep bank accounts secret and even refused to make themselves heard at the United Nations until a few years ago when they finally applied for and were granted membership.

This may explain why the rather non-descript suburb with a name only the Swiss can pronounce with any competency is not making more of its most famous son. There is no Federer monument or sign devoted to the tennis player on any of the roads leading into the community, no plaque on the wall of the terraced house where he grew up or any evidence of even the smallest of tributes at his primary school just across the road.

In fact, just asking directions to the part of town where he grew up leads to the shaking of heads and shrugging of shoulders. Not so for the Schaulager. The former warehouse was put on the map when it was transformed into an art gallery by Basel's – and Switzerland's – best known architects, Herzog and de Meuron. The same goes for the Park im Grünen. If Münchenstein were to have a centre court, it would be this popular recreational area, complete with idyllic ponds, larger-than-life sculptures and playgrounds.

"We should do more to honour Federer but I think Switzerland is too small to know how to deal with such a superstar," reflects Nick von Vary, president of Tennis Club Old Boys Basel, where Federer first learned the tricks of his trade. "The Swiss like to keep their distance from celebrities. We are not the kind of people who celebrate their stars like Americans do."

But if there is a shrine to Federer, it's his club in a leafy Basel neighbourhood. Blown-up photographs of the champion in action line the walls of the clubhouse. And one of the courts has been named after him.

On this day, a couple of young players queue to get the autograph of Marco Chiudinelli, an Old Boys club member who is 135 places below Federer in the ATP rankings. The two grew up together in Münchenstein. Chiudinelli says Roger is an inspiration for the people of the area, despite their reluctance to display their pride outwardly. It has manifested itself in twice as many new juniors as usual joining the club – around 30. Some of them believe if they start here they can learn to play like Roger.

from swissinfo



Dresdener Christstollen

Dough:

500g flour
1½ tsp salt
Grated rind of 1 lemon
½ tsp cardamom
¼ tsp nutmeg
80g sugar
125g butter, soft



Put it all into a large bowl

4 tsp dried yeast
250ml milk, lukewarm

Mix and let stand until frothy.
Add to bowl of dry ingredients

Knead dough well until smooth, moisten slightly and cover with a cloth and let it rise in a warm place for about 2-3 hours.

Soak:

50g slivered almonds
150g sultanas
100g orange peel
in 2 Tbs rum for 2 hours

Roll out the risen dough into a square, sprinkle the fruit and nuts over it and press them into the dough with the rolling pin. Roll up the dough, put into a large plastic bag and let it rest over night in the fridge.

Next day roll out the dough into a thick oval about 30x40cm. If you want to fill it with a roll of marzipan, form a sausage of marzipan and lay along the centre of the dough lengthwise. Fold one side over the other and press down along the ends a little.

Let it rise again at room temperature for about 2 hours.

Bake at 180°C for about 35 minutes.

Brush when still hot with lots of melted butter and drizzle over a mixture of cinnamon and sugar. Cover in icing sugar just before serving.

Marzipan

150g ground almonds
150g icing sugar
1 Tbs rose water (or water)
2 drops of almond oil (optional)

Mix all together and knead.
Form into a sausage the length of the dough.

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