

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [9]

Artikel: Swiss Halloween retailers get a shock
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943698>

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Swiss Halloween retailers get a shock

After a short but sweet dabble with Halloween, Switzerland has started to lose interest in the originally Pagan custom. This year Migros and Coop, the country's largest retailers, are hardly stocking any Halloween-related goodies and even specialist suppliers are feeling the pinch.

Demand for Halloween products had fallen sharply in the past two to three years.

Theories for the rise and subsequent fall of Halloween in Switzerland range from the obvious - problems identifying with an imported and increasingly commercialised custom - to the less obvious - does the fact that many Swiss live in flats make trick or treating less lucrative? It has also been speculated that Halloween is a victim of geopolitical fallout.

There could also be an element of costume fatigue creeping in. The Swiss already rarely miss

a chance to slip into something more traditional.



Fewer Swiss are interested in Halloween, although some people still have skeletons in their closet.

Barely a month after Halloween, on December 6, is Samichlaus - a warm-up for Christmas - which also has similarities with Halloween in that children are rewarded with tangerines, nuts, gingerbread and other treats.

The main carnival season in Switzerland, however, is in February, in the run-up to Lent, when costumed and masked revellers come out in force in the coun-

try's traditionally Catholic regions and process through the streets to the sounds of brass bands.

In the past, the authorities in many Swiss towns tried to ban the wearing of costumes, as on at least three occasions carnival led to open rebellion.

Not all gloom and doom

Whereas Halloween has lost its appeal, the humble pumpkin continues to go from strength to strength. Once traditionally eaten by paupers, pumpkins now find themselves on many haute cuisine menus - thanks in a large part to Halloween.

In 1985, 2.2 tonnes of pumpkin - botanically classed as a fruit - were harvested in Switzerland, according to the Swiss Vegetable Producers Association. In recent years however this figure has rocketed to more than 1,000 tonnes. *from swissinfo*

Wine makers raise glasses to a good vintage

This year's stable weather conditions should lead to an excellent, healthy grape crop, wine producers in western Switzerland are predicting.



Wine grower in western Switzerland

Over the last two weeks in September, cool evenings and sunny days have encouraged the conservation of aromas and helped the grapes ripen well.

They have also prevented the possible development of fungal diseases such as grey mould. Wine makers are hoping that similar conditions will prevail during the harvesting period. The vines are in a very healthy condition. 2008 looks like it'll be a good vintage.

The canton Valais is the main wine-producing region of Switzerland with vines covering 5,136 hectares. Vaud is in second place with grapes over 3,851 hectares, followed by Geneva with 1,288 hectares.

The quantity of grapes harvested in French-speaking regions should be slightly up on last year. According to the Valais winegrowers' association, three per cent more should be gathered in the canton, all grape varieties included.

In canton Vaud winemakers are announcing a healthy, golden harvest, expecting to produce about 23.5 million litres of white wine and 8.5 million litres of red wine.

In Geneva picking the grapes for local sparkling wines started back in mid September, but the main crop should be harvested from October 8.

After a drop in consumption over the past few years, the Swiss have begun drinking more wine again.

Foreign wines, mainly those from France, Italy and Spain, are still favoured over local production.

But indigenous wines sales grew by 5.7 per cent last year, representing some 108 million litres.

from swissinfo