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A Swiss apple a day keeps wrinkles at bay

A rare Swiss apple is being hailed in the cosmetic and fashion world as an exciting anti-ageing breakthrough - even Michelle Obama is rumoured to be a fan.

Used in creams and serums, stem cells from the Uttwiler Spätauber apple are said to protect skin cell regeneration and so delay the onset of wrinkles. The discovery was made by a Swiss company.

The November edition of the United States Vogue magazine went as far as to call the variety "the super-apple", and asked if the tree could be "the new fountain of youth".

The Uttwiler Spätauber, which was first recorded in the 18th century, comes from canton Thurgau. It is well known for its excellent storability; it can stay fresh for up to four months after being harvested, long after other varieties have become wrinkled. However, it has not been widely cultivated of late because of its sour taste, and the number of trees have dwindled.

Swiss researchers set to work and found that the apple's amazing longevity lies in the apple's stem cells. Humans have skin

stem cells, which replenish and maintain the balance of cells within the skin tissue and regenerate tissue which has been damaged. But with age, the number of skin stem cells decreases and their ability to repair the skin becomes less efficient. The result is - with added environmental damage like UV rays - a loss of skin vitality and wrinkles. The researchers found that the apple stem cells could protect the skin stem cells from ageing.



Typical apple growing country in Thurgau

The apple ingredient has been snapped up by cosmetics companies in Europe, Asia, and the United States, including Lancôme and Chantecaille.

The Uttwiler Spätauber was found in one of the collections belonging to ProSpecieRara, a foundation aiming to preserve traditional breeds of animals and plants in Switzerland. There are only 20 Uttwiler Spätauber trees left at present.

Overall, ProSpecieRara has managed to preserve 1,800 varieties on 8,000 trees during its 25 years in operation, through collecting samples, growing them and then distributing them to people willing to look after them.

ProSpecieRara never dreamed that the Uttwiler Spätauber would be successfully used in cosmetic production. This is not the aim of ProSpecieRara, but the case has served to highlight a cornerstone of the foundation's work, namely showing that old varieties house a genetic pool which could be harvested for new uses.

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Cyclists' and Skaters' Paradise



Thurgau is always worth the trip, whether for a relaxing holiday, a bike tour, a gastronomic journey or - a novelty in Switzerland - a skaters' route. The gentle, largely intact natural landscape is particularly well-suited to bike riding and walking. And in summer Lake Constance with over 62km of shoreline is ideal for water sports or a boat ride over to Germany or Austria.

Thurgau has successfully positioned itself as bike tour country in recent years. The canton can be discovered on many interesting routes away from traffic and without too much pedalling up and down hills. Thurgau has a well-developed network of signed bike routes covering some 900 kilometres. The 13 signposted routes can easily be linked up to create a tour of several days.

In 2003 the first official signposted inline-skating routes were inaugurated on the southern shore of Lake Constance under the heading of 'Skaters' Paradise': follow the 'Lake Trail' or the 'Apple Trail'. Thurgau has already been a popular destination for inline-skating fans for some time, especially because of the well-prepared, tarmac-surfaced network of routes. The 'Lake Trail' extends over 37 kilometres along Lake Constance from Kreuzlingen to Rorschach. The 'Apple Trail' is a circular tour and slightly hillier, running past old granges, half-timbered houses and orchards through classic cider country. *from the internet*

April Fools Day

I'm sure you found the April Fools Day article in the last *Helvetia*. Yes, it was the Felsenputzer. Although Switzerland is still famous for its obsession with orderliness and cleanliness, the Felsenputzer are really only cleaning all the rocks in the April *Helvetia* Fools Day article and not in Switzerland. *tb*