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## Gun politics in Switzerland

Gun politics in Switzerland are unique in Europe. Switzerland has one of the highest militia gun ownership rates in the world. In recent times political opposition has expressed a desire for tighter gun regulations, but a referendum in February 2011 rejected stricter gun control.

The Swiss army has long been a militia trained and structured to rapidly respond against foreign aggression. Swiss males grow up expecting to undergo basic military training, usually at age 20 in the Rekrutenschule ("recruit school"), the initial boot camp, after which Swiss men remain part of the "militia" in reserve capacity until age 30 (age 34 for officers). Each such individual is required to keep his army-issued personal weapon at home. Most active soldiers are not allowed to keep munitions at home, since a ban on the practice was agreed by parliament in December 2008. Ammunition is now mainly stored in central arsenals.

When their period of service has ended, militiamen have the choice of keeping their personal weapon and other selected items of their equipment. In the case of retention, the rifle is sent to the weapons factory where the fully automatic function is removed; the rifle is then returned to the discharged owner. The rifle is then a semi-automatic or self-loading rifle.

The sale of ammunition is subsidized by the Swiss government and made available at the many shooting ranges patronized by both private citizens and members of the militia. There is a regulatory requirement that ammunition sold at ranges must be used there.

There are about 420,000 assault rifles stored at private homes. Additionally, there are some 320,000 assault rifles and military pistols exempted from military service in private possession, all selective-fire weapons having been converted to semi-automatic operation only. In addition, there are several hundred thousand other semi-automatic small arms classified as carbines. The total number of firearms in private homes is estimated minimally at 1.2 million to 3 million.

Recreational shooting is widespread in Switzerland. Practice with guns is a popular recreation, and is encouraged by the government, particularly for the members of the militia. 200,000 people attend the annual Feldschiessen weekend, which is the largest rifle shooting competition in the world.

### HEIMWEH, STATISTISCH ERFASST

*Jene Sehnsucht nach der alten Heimat  
ist (wer hätte das nicht schon erfahren!)  
nur ein Drittel Heimweh nach dem Lande  
und zwei Drittel nach vergangenen Jahren.*

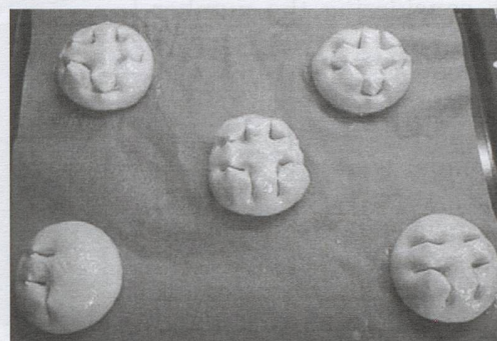
Mascha Kaléko

Do you remember the tomatoes and radishes that had a white cross for 1st August, on the traditional cheese board? Well, like Christmas, 1st August is in the wrong season, down under; tomatoes are expensive and don't taste like tomatoes; tomato soup with a white cross of whipped cream might be more appropriate.

However, my favourites are the

## 1st August-Weggen

Simply make a regular Zopf dough; if you like, add some sugar.



Instead of plaiting a Zopf, form little buns and cut the cross with scissors, three superficial snips for each arm of the cross after you painted them with a mixture of egg yolk and a drop of milk. Bake at about 200° for about 15 minutes or until golden. If you have a little Swiss flag to plant into the middle, they look just like in Switzerland - and make a great decoration for the table!

*En quote!*

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