

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 80 (2014)
Heft: [6]

Artikel: Grittibenz and its history : Grittibenz - the pastry (wo)man that sweetens St. Nicholas Day
Autor: Sauer, Luzia
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943971>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 13.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Grittibenz and its history

Grittibenz – the pastry (wo)man that sweetens St. Nicholas Day

By Luzia Sauer



<http://www.kulinarischesterbe.ch/product.aspx?id=156>

No matter how nervous we would suddenly become when we heard Samichlaus's bell ring in the dark outside our cosy house on the evening of 6 December, none of us kids ever wanted to miss him. Samichlaus's arrival brought fear of scolding yet always also promises of sweetness in the form of peanuts, mandarins, dates and most importantly my favourite pastry Grittibenz; all tucked neatly in his huge linen bag.

Later in life I realised of course that Samichlaus was not the only one making these delicious pastry (wo)men but that I could buy them in bakeries and supermarkets and even bake them myself.

Only recently though did I wonder: What exactly is a 'Grittibenz' and how long have the Swiss been making this treat?

The name 'Grittibenz' means 'the man ('Benz' – widely used male name) with splayed legs' ('gritten'). Making Grittibenz has become part of the tradition that surrounds the worshipping of St. Nicholas (Bishop of Myra, died 6 December 343). First reports of Grittibenz are from the 14th century. Basler children are reported to have paraded through their villages on 6 December behind a child dressed as a bishop, after which they received a white sweet bread roll. Over time different regions in Switzerland have continued making the

pastry and developed slightly different ingredients and looks for their Grittibenz on St. Nicholas day. Apparently, up until some 60 years ago the pastry figure often also appeared in the form of a 'Frowli' (woman), which is rarely the case today. Today, the typical Grittibenz is either a sweet pastry or a buttery pastry. Here is the recipe for the sweet pastry Grittibenz:

Grittibenz recipe (makes four)

500g white flour
15-20g fresh yeast (5-7 g dry yeast)
50g sugar
80g butter
1 tbsp salt
2 ½ dl milk
1 egg yolk

1) put flour in bowl and make a hole **2)** activate yeast with sugar and luke-warm water **3)** melt butter slightly (add milk if you wish) **4)** add all ingredients to the flour hole and mix. Knead the dough until shiny and elastic. **5)** Put aside to rise to twice the size **6)** Make four pieces of dough, cut legs and arms with scissors and fold them slightly outward. Pull out the head. Decorate the Grittibenz with ties, beards, belts, skirts, shoes etc. using almonds, raisins etc. **7)** Brush the Grittibenz with egg yolk and let rise for another 20 minutes **8)** bake for 25 minutes at 180 degrees **9)** enjoy !

SWISS CAFÉ & BAKERY

5 Milford Rd, Milford, Auckland • Phone 489-9737

The Swiss Cafe and Bakery has been in operation since 1993 and specializes in all things Swiss. All our products are baked fresh daily without the use of premixes. We have a range of traditional **Swiss Christmas sweets** in store this December such as Christmas konfekt, gingerbread houses, christstollen as well as kiwi favourites Christmas fruit mince tarts and traditional fruit cake. We recommend ordering in advance and are taking orders now. The team at the Swiss Bakery wish all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please note, we will be closed from the 25th of December until the 8th of January.



Opening hours:

Monday to Friday: 7am – 4:30pm
Saturday & Sunday: 7am – 2:30pm



DAWSON FALLS
MOUNTAIN LODGE & CAFE

Mt. Taranaki Egmont National Park

We offer:

- 10 unique 'Swiss Style' guestrooms (with ensuites)
- large lounges with cosy wood fires
- Dinner, Bed and Breakfast packages
- Variety of walks and tramps at the door step

For bookings, please call:
06 765 5457

www.dawsonfallsmountainlodge.kiwi.nz