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Autor: Ruedi, Marcel
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Crossroads of Cheese and Chocolate



Cailler chocolate

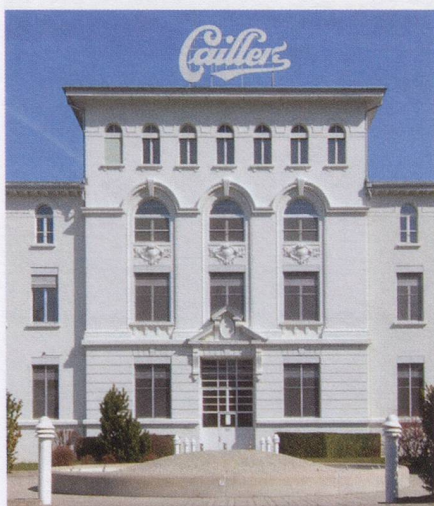
Surely everyone knows Cailler chocolate – remember Rayon chocolate melting away in bubbles on your tongue? Or biting into a crunchy piece of hazelnut chocolate broken from the slab in the blue and white wrapping - delicious!

Of course, you might have another favorite Cailler chocolate. But most importantly, Gruyère is the region where the chocolate is made, fortified with the same milk as the Gruyère cheese.

Maison Cailler in Broc, looking like an apparition straight from a Walt Disney movie, is the factory where these chocolates are made. On a guided tour, you are allowed to uncover the secrets of chocolate making and its history. This tour culminates, of course most importantly, in a chocolate tasting session. If you are in the mood, you can take the Swiss Chocolate train from Montreux to Gruyères and Broc, riding in a “Belle Epoque” Pullman car, vintage 1915.

François-Louis Cailler (1796–1852) was the first Swiss producer of chocolate. He first tasted Italian chocolate at a local fair and spent four years in Turin (Italy) learning the art of chocolate making, before returning to Switzerland, where he set up the first Swiss chocolate factory in Corsier, near Vevey in 1819. His great innovation was the development of a smooth chocolate that could be formed into bars. This was a worldwide sensation at the time.

www.la-gruyere.ch Photo © Le Maison Cailler



La Maison Cailler in Broc

Gruyère cheese

Did you know that Gruyère cheese (pronunciation: groo-yair) has been produced in the region of Gruyère since the year 1115?

Gruyère is one of the best known Swiss cheeses made from whole cows' milk and is generally cured for six months or longer. Named for the town of Gruyères in Switzerland where it was originally made, Gruyère cheese is a firm cheese with a pale yellow color and a rich, creamy, slightly nutty taste. Gruyère cheese features a few small holes or “eyes,” but they are fewer, and smaller, than in the Emmentaler cheese. The holes are formed by gas bubbles released by the bacteria that are used in making the cheese. Gruyère cheese is a great table cheese and also an excellent melting cheese. Because Gruyère has a distinctive but not overpowering flavor, it is an excellent addition to quiches, soups, salads, and pastas. It can be sliced or grated, depending on the desired effect.

The cheese is made from unpasteurized milk that is heated to 93°F (34°C) before being curdled with liquid rennet. The mixture is stirred until the curd has begun to firm, and then it is quickly cut to release the whey before being heated further, until the curd begins to shrivel slightly. These pieces of curd are pressed into molds to be cured, and then salted in brine for eight days. After being pulled from the brine, the cheese is ripened for two months at room temperature. Once the cheese has been ripened, it is aged for three months to one year, with more aged cheese having a more developed and intense flavor. It is generally agreed that the more the cheese is aged, the better the flavor will be, with young Gruyère having a slightly sharp raw flavor that will temper with age.

Cheeses in other parts of the world, including France, are very similar to Gruyère and considered to be “Gruyère-type” cheeses. However, only cheese made in the Gruyère region of Switzerland can be labeled as such. The cheese gained its protected origin designation in 2001, and has been hotly defended ever since, with some detractors arguing that it is not Swiss alone, but made all over the world. Protected origin designations are designed to protect the culinary heritage of many European countries and to allow consumers to clearly understand what they are buying. In the case of this product, some critics felt that the Swiss were trying to monopolize the popular cheese. Switzerland makes some 29,000 tonnes of Gruyère cheese annually.

I'm currently working in a small artisan Cheese Factory (Grinning Gecko Cheese Co.) in Whangarei and our cheese made of certified organic milk is sold at the Farro Fresh stores in Auckland.

By Marcel Ruedi

www.la-gruyere.ch Photo © Le Maison Gruyère



Gruyère cheese curing away in large quantities