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Autor: [s.n.]
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Swiss Chocolate – 6 Reasons for Success

Exemplifying Switzerland's capacity for innovation as well as its sense of tradition, chocolate is a source of pride for the country and contributes to its image throughout the world. But why is it such a success? Here are six reasons why.

1) A pioneering country in chocolate

Switzerland is one of the first countries to have produced chocolate, thanks to a number of pioneers. In 1819, François-Louis Cailler opened a mechanised production facility in Corsier-sur-Vevey above Lake Geneva. In 1826, it was the turn of Philippe Suchard to set up a chocolate factory in Serrières, in the canton of Neuchâtel. The number of chocolatiers continued to multiply until the end of the 19th century – not only making chocolate popular in Switzerland, but helping to develop know-how in this field.

2) Chocolate plus milk: a winning combo

In 1875, Daniel Peter thought about combining milk with chocolate. After numerous attempts in his Vevey factory, he discovered the perfect mix, which quickly became a huge success – and one that would link Switzerland to chocolate forever.

3) It melts in your mouth, thanks to a technique patented in 1879

The texture of Swiss chocolate has another element that guarantees its success. Its smooth and creamy character is the result of an innovative technique known as 'conching', which homogenises the product and helps create flavour. We have Rodolphe Lindt to thank for this method, which he used to create the first ever melt-in-the-mouth chocolate. He filed a patent for this process in 1879, when he was running a manufacturing company in Bern.

4) A creative industry always on the lookout for innovation

The Swiss chocolate industry is founded on tradition but is always looking to break new ground. It's one of the secrets of its success. New recipes and techniques are developed on a regular basis. These are often small changes that improve the manufacturing process. Scientists also play their part in the quest for new methods, sharing their findings with the industry – such as the chocolate working group led by Erich Windhab, professor at the ETH Zurich Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health.

5) A high standard of quality, typically Swiss

Swiss products are generally renowned

for their quality, and chocolate is no exception. In fact, this quality is not only reflected in the selected raw materials but is also linked to the expertise in this sector. According to Chocosuisse, good-quality chocolate should melt on the tongue without becoming hard or leaving a sandy feeling in the mouth. A person should be able to savour the well-orchestrated, subtle and delicate flavour of the chocolate, without any aftertaste. The mission of the Chocosuisse association – made up of 18 companies – is to ensure quality....

6) Swiss people themselves consume a great deal of chocolate

The Swiss are experts and do not need any encouragement to support their national industry. With per capita annual consumption averaging between 11 and 12 kilos, Swiss people rank among the top chocolate lovers in the world. <http://houseofswitzerland.org>



Towards the end of the 19th century, advertising also began to appear, mainly in the form of posters advertising the sales outlets. One of the earliest 'consumer situations' (around 1890).

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Curiosity sparks a life-long passion for Noeline Shaw of Makarewa, Southland.

Noeline Shaw's mother was the late Lucy Hamblyn (nee Chamberlain) and Noeline's grandfather Donald Chamberlain, from Steinen canton Schwyz, immigrated to New Zealand in 1901. He went back to Switzerland to marry Frances Trawziska Ehrler in 1914, and they returned to New Zealand to commence farming together. Four Chamberlain brothers immigrated and years later Noeline, upon travelling to Switzerland, found her grandfather's name etched on a building where the family had farmed.

Noeline first became interested in historical and genealogical research while still in her teens, when her grandfather, Percy Hamblyn, came to stay with her family in the small Taranaki township of Patea, back in the early 1950s. She found this visit very exciting, with many of her grandfather's friends and family coming to visit her parents' home. This is how her interest in researching began. Noeline is a member of several genealogy and historical societies and says one of the best things about the hobby was the people you connected with. She has had several books published on the history of various families. Noeline undertook the big job of compiling the history of the Chamberlain family of Taranaki and produced a book in 1994. Research into the Chamberlain family in Switzerland down the years and the generations was interesting and full of surprises; she found out that the name Chamberlain was spelt differently in the family in Switzerland where it was known as Tschuemperlin!!! Noeline has made three trips to Switzerland where she got a paid researcher and family members to help with further investigations. She enjoys gathering and going through information which takes quite a lot of time, but well worth the effort.

Noeline is a member of the Taranaki Swiss Club and enjoys reading the Helvetia magazine. A copy of her "The History of the Chamberlain Family of Taranaki" is in the Taranaki Swiss Club library. If anyone would like to borrow the book, please see a committee member. Thank you, Noeline, for sharing your love of genealogy and some of your experiences.

