

# The Swiss Chocolate Industry

Autor(en): **R. A. Heiz**

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## THE SWISS CHOCOLATE INDUSTRY.

By Dr. R. A. HEIZ,

General Secretary of the Chocosuisse, Union of Swiss Chocolate Manufacturers.

Chocolate is the best known Swiss product in the world. It is eaten by almost every Swiss citizen from his very earliest days and the Swiss Army gives it regularly as a food to its soldiers. Skiers and mountain-climbers, schoolboys and children's nurses always carry it in their pockets.

The secret of chocolate is theobromine, the scientific name for an active constituent of the cocoa bean, which stimulates the brain and nervous system. A cup of cocoa contains on an average about 0.15 grms of theobromine, and a 100 grm bar of chocolate exactly 0.6 grms. Although this active ingredient is only present in very small quantities in the cocoa bean, in 1949 the Swiss people absorbed 290,000 lbs. of it.

Theobromine, which is so extraordinarily active in small quantities, is combined in the chocolate with other substances of great nutritive value. The value in calories (per 100 grms) is 75 for eggs, 147 for meat, 398 for cheese, 528 for chocolate and 720 for butter. Only pure butter exceeds the nutritive value of chocolate in its percentage of fat. In 1949, the people of Switzerland (4.5 million inhabitants) consumed 48 million lbs. of chocolate. This quantity of chocolate contains more than 26 million pints of milk, more than 22 million lbs. of sugar and more than 7.7 million lbs. of pure cocoa butter. Every inhabitant of Switzerland ate on an average fifty 100 grm bars of chocolate last year, making a total of 300 grms of theobromine. Chocolate manufactured by 40 Swiss factories employing more than 5,000 workers and employees — is one of the most important food-stuffs in Switzerland.

What is the export position of this world famous Swiss chocolate? People abroad want Swiss chocolate, but unfortunately they cannot buy it! Last year exports sank to a level of less than 6% of the total Swiss production; 48 million lbs. were consumed in the country and 2.8 million lbs. sold abroad. This precious and invigorating food stayed in Switzerland. The history of these strange contradictions begins with a journey that started in Mexico.

Before Columbus landed in America and the Spaniard Fernando Cortez in Mexico, the Mexicans had already discovered two things: 1) that cocoa beans can be eaten — and they gave the name of "chocolatl" to this food for the goods that they made with them, and 2) that this food "chocolatl" was brown gold — the precious cocoa beans being a sort of gold for them which enabled them to settle their purchases. In 1520, the first cocoa beans were brought to Europe. Exactly 400 years later, the Swiss chocolate exported over the whole world in one year was converted into 100 million Swiss francs. Switzerland used this "brown gold" to pay for a large part of her purchases abroad.

It was a triumph of Swiss endeavour. In 1819 Alexander Cailler of the canton of Vaud founded a chocolate works at Corsier near Vevey. Seven years later, at Serrières near Neuchâtel, Philippe Suchard constructed a water-wheel which drove the first mixer in his small chocolate factory. Then R. Lindt of Berne discovered a method of making fondant chocolate, and Daniel Peter made the first milk chocolate. Jean

Tobler finally had the idea of adding honey and other ingredients to chocolate. As early as 1889, other countries were buying this chocolate of superlative quality from Switzerland to the value of 1.8 million francs. Up to 1919 the value of annual exports of chocolate increased a hundredfold. But from that time on exports were no longer so active and began to decrease inexorably year by year until during the world crisis they fell below the level of 1889. In the course of the last year of peace before the second world war, they had almost reached their lowest level. It had become almost impossible to sell the "brown gold" any more.

The passion of the Swiss for good quality is a national characteristic which cannot be exported just like that: it is one of the causes of the sensational fall in exports. Quality can sometimes be a disadvantage. Abroad people ask the price first, in Switzerland they enquire about the quality. Whereas abroad the mass of chocolate is rolled and mixed for a shorter period of time, in Switzerland it is left in the conches and mills for anything up to 100 hours and in this way a very fine product is obtained with quite a special taste of its own. This superior Swiss quality, which is worth the higher price, has been styled abroad as a "luxury product" or "non-essential", and foreign competition has succeeded in protecting itself very effectively by imposing prohibitive customs duties.

Consequently the Swiss chocolate industry has been prevented from exporting its products. So instead of exporting chocolate, it exported factories. After the first World War it set up branches in Europe and America. Again it came up against the same experiences with regard to quality, which in some cases can be a handicap. However it adapted itself to foreign prices and tastes, and in this way was able to meet competition and acquire markets for its products. The original good quality remained the monopoly of the home chocolate industry which lost almost all its foreign markets.

Catastrophe might have been expected but none came. As other countries hid behind customs barriers, people in Switzerland discovered the great value of good quality chocolate as a popular foodstuff. During the last twenty years home consumption has increased fourfold. Although exports have been reduced from a value of 100 million francs to 1 million francs, production has had to be increased to meet home demands. During the last war the choco-

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late industry delivered 7 million 50 grm bars of chocolate to the Swiss armed forces. Theobromine increased the physical endurance and raised the morale of our soldiers.

As in other fields, our industry also had its worries. Raw materials restricted by quotas could no longer be obtained in sufficient quantities. Skilled workers left to go into other industries. These difficulties did not last long however. International restrictions on cocoa beans were lifted a little over a year ago and the home industry was able to continue its successful progress. It is expected that in 1950 exports will amount to a value of about 10 million francs. Home consumption has settled down somewhere in the neighbourhood of 48 million lbs. Swiss chocolate is in such demand nowadays that our industry could again export about 100 million francs worth of chocolate every year if there were no difficulties such as customs barriers and currency restrictions in the way. But unfortunately these difficulties still exist. Exports of chocolate will very probably undergo a further appreciable reduction in the course of the years to come once the industries of countries touched by the war have recovered. Nevertheless a healthy optimism reigns throughout the Swiss chocolate industry.

*(Swiss Industry and Trade.)*

### KOREA.

Unhappy land, laid waste and desolate,  
Its towns in ruins, homesteads set alight,  
The highways thronged with families in flight,  
Terror, despair and misery their fate.

No alien enemy stood at the gate  
That threatened them and brought about their plight,  
But brother facing brother, in a fight  
Provoked by ignorance and senseless hate.

Theirs was no war for glory and for fame,  
They were involved in a far deeper game,  
Misguided pawns on Asia's checkerboard.  
Whatever be the end, this tragedy  
May prove once more the ancient truth that he  
Who draws the sword shall perish by the sword.

*J.J.F.S.*

## Xmas Greetings

Following former years' practice we propose to publish again in our December issue a collective greeting.

The scarcity of paper and the costs of Xmas cards, should induce many of our subscribers to make use of this facility to extend to their friends the compliments of the season.

Those of our readers and friends wishing to be included should forward name and address to our office not later than Tuesday, December 5th, 1950, together with remittance for 6/-.

## TALKING ABOUT HIS HOBBY.

FROM DEREK MEAKIN.

Every week-end for five years Mr. George Dixon, a business representative in Berne, Switzerland, took his camera into the mountains. He travelled hundreds of miles by mountain railways and by postal coaches along snake-like Alpine passes, and he climbed to spots inaccessible to the ordinary English tourist.

Now he has turned his one-time hobby into a full-time business. With the thousands of coloured slides he took on his week-ends before the war he has become a lecturer on Swiss life and scenery.

At his home in Arden Street, New Mills, Mr. Dixon, who is now 43, told me he has received invitations to give his 80-minute lecture "The Alpine Mirror" in most of the big towns in the North-west. Already he has a bookful of engagements from photographic, literary and philosophic societies, libraries and educational authorities who want him to visit this winter.

"I have been interested in photography since I was a schoolboy", he said. "Now I only take natural colour photos. To my mind that is the only way of truly expressing the subject."

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