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CHEESE DELICACIES FROM SWITZERLAND

The development of the Swiss dairy-products industry goes back to the invention of Emmental cheese at the beginning of the 19th century, which is a sufficient justification for our dealing with this world-famous export commodity here.

Emmental cheese is now made in practically the whole of German Switzerland, but it was first made in the wide and fruitful valley of the Emme in the Canton of Berne. This type of cheese, which is in the shape of a large round loaf, is the largest and heaviest cheese in the world and is for this reason frequently referred to as the "King of Cheeses". Each cheese weighs 80 to 100 kilogrammes. The unmistakable characteristics of "Emmental" from the point of view of the consumer are its distinctive sweet taste and the holes, also called "eyes". These holes are produced by the fermentation of the cheese in warm cellars. It is part of the art of the cheese-maker to be able to control the number and size of the holes while the milk is being treated and afterwards in the fermentation cellar. After about six months, the cheese is ready for consumption, when it will, if properly looked after, remain in perfect condition for a further period of several months. The relatively solid cheese dough, which is protected by a thick rind, makes it possible to ship "Emmental" to all parts of the world. In other countries, genuine Emmental can be recognized by the red trademark "SWITZERLAND".

Another cheese that is no less suitable for export is "Gruyère", but this has a larger market in Switzerland than abroad. It is made almost exclusively in French Switzerland. It has a slightly sharper taste than Emmental, the eyes are considerably smaller and it weighs 30 to 40 kg. With Gruyère, as with Emmental, a number of tasty cheese dishes can be prepared; the most famous of these is "fondue", which originated in Gruyère; indeed, in French Switzerland, this had become a national dish.



A typical cheese "festival"

(Photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)



Switzerland's
Chalet Cheese



delicious



nutritious

A typical cheese for grating, called "Sbrinz", has been made in Central Switzerland for centuries. As a result of the method of manufacture and the long period — 2 years — during which it is left to ripen and dry, Sbrinz is a hard, compact, dry cheese. Sbrinz is ideal as a seasoning for soups, alimentary pastes, rice and vegetables done "au gratin".

* * *

From the Alps of Glaris, we get the "Sap-Sago", which is manufactured in two stages: in the Alpine hut or chalet in the form of ordinary whey cheese, and then in the valley, where it is mixed with an aromatic herb powder, which gives it its distinctive taste and its green colour. Sap-Sago is a tasty cheese that keeps very well.

In conclusion, we would mention a comparatively recent Swiss invention (it is not yet forty years old), namely, the "Process-cheese" (melted-cheese) which is

sold in portions boxes or blocks. This cheese is produced by treating ripe Emmental and Gruyère cheeses by heat; it keeps for a long time and is thus eminently suitable for export. Many kinds of Swiss cheese in boxes are world-famous and have greatly contributed to the fame of high quality Swiss cheese by enabling cheese lovers in all latitudes to enjoy it.

Fifty years ago, Gerber Ltd., of Thun, Switzerland, produced the first processed cheese in the world. In this connection it is interesting to note that the ten Swiss processed cheese factories use yearly in the production of this delicious Swiss speciality over 6,200 tons of Emmental and Gruyère cheese and over 1,200 tons of other dairy products; in 1960 the total output amounted to 10,000 tons, approximately 33 per cent of which was consumed in Switzerland and 67 per cent abroad.

SPECIALITIES AND CURIOSITIES

Everybody knows the Emmental and the Gruyère, of firm smooth texture and delicate nutty taste. "Big Wheels" in every respect and Switzerland's pride.

But Switzerland produces a multitude of other cheese delicacies, multishaped and multilingual like her many Cantons. Hards and softs, milds and sharps, delicious specialities and interesting curiosities.

One such curiosity comes to us from the Abbey of Bellelay in the Jura Bernois, namely the Tête-de-Moine or Monks-Head, from which the Jurassiens scrape their cheese like a cold Raclette. As to the real Raclette, the



hot Raclette Valaisanne of social function, we get right from the Valais the real thing for it, the reputed Bagne cheese from the Vallee-de-Bagne near the Great St. Bernard Pass with its famous Bernhardiner rescuing dogs. (Raclette comes from "racler" — scrape; as Fondue comes from "fondre" — melt.)

A famous speciality comes from the high Vallee-de-Joux in the Jura Vaudois, namely the extra-soft Vacherin Mont d'Or, of refined nutty taste with a slightly bitter touch. The small wheels in wooden boxes are much exchanged as a good-wish token around Christmas-time in the cities along Lake Geneva and Lake Neuchâtel. The extra-soft Vacherin Mont d'Or must not be confused with the white semi-firm Vacherin-à-Fondue which comes from Fribourg, where it is used for making a special variety of Fondue.

Must we believe the Ticinesi when they claim that their Piora cheese from the Gotthard is the best cheese of the world? In any case, we get none of it, because all goes down south of the Alps, right from the fall auction on Alp-Piora, where the buyers fight for a small allotment. Nor do we get their small formaggini, over which they pour a little olive oil, and which you get in every Grotto, while in the families, they offer them to you as a welcome token with a boccalino of their red Nostrano wine. But the Ticino sends us its semisoft Bel-Lago cheese.

Other semisofts we get are the St. Moritz from the Engadin, the Tilsiter from Thurgau, the Mountain from the Appenzells.

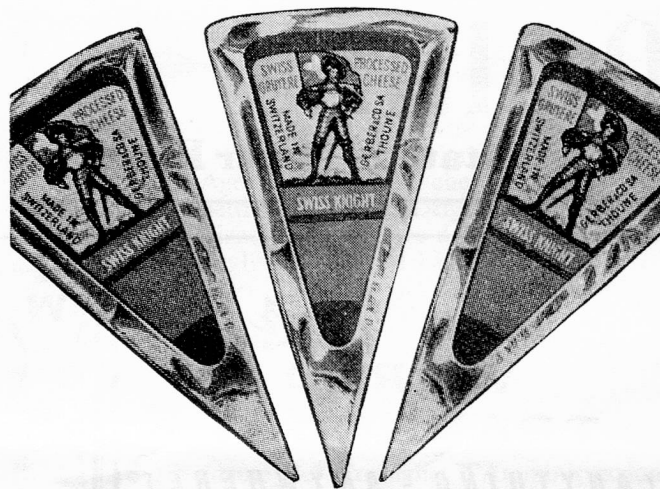
The Rigi amidst Lake Lucerne sends us soft Mountain Brie and Mountain Camembert of distinguished flavour, and Neuchâtel its soft Romadours, so popular in French-speaking Switzerland, where they eat them, like the small Tommes vaudoises, with a glass of Neuchâtel or Dézaley or Fendant wine according to the area.

And the famous Schabziger or Sapsago — that hard-grating herb and health cheese in small cones from Glaris? In olden times it was peddled in the cities and villages by the Schabzieger-Mannli with his crate on the back. To-day it has become famous all the world over.

And last not least the hardgrating Sbrinz from the Old Cantons north of the Gotthard. It takes many years to age and it was exported to the Imperial Cities on the Rhine and the Courts of Italy already in the Middle Ages. A similar hardgrating cheese of repute is the Saanen from the Bernese Oberland.

So, every Canton contributes its part to Switzerland's rich cheese assortment. And there are many, many more.

WALTER J. SIGWALD.



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