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Filed under 'Tea'

I AM one of those rare English women who went to Switzerland to work, met her Swiss husband in his own environment and subsequently returned to England with him to live, writes **Sylvia Schmocker** from Tunbridge Wells.

As an English girl, my first shock was being told that my working day, as a secretary, would begin at 6.55am and finish at 5.40pm. My second shock was that I was expected to work from 6.55am to noon with no coffee or tea.

I must admit that the Swiss girl I shared an office with – who had been an au pair in England – showed me how she made tea in the drawer of the filing cabinet. However, we were stopped when the boss saw the steam from the cups rising behind the typewriters.

Why didn't someone warn me that the German spoken in Switzerland was so different from high German? At first my attempts to practise what I had learned at my German lessons were interspersed with such jewels as "ich habe einen Brief überkommen."

When I became more fluent I had to be rather rude sometimes to colleagues who insisted on answering me in English and saying: "I'm fed up with hearing how bad the English are at foreign languages. Give us a chance and we will learn."

I have proved that. Today I am completely fluent both in high German and in Swiss German. I am told my Swiss German is without accent but that I speak high

An English girl discovers the odd ways of a Swiss office . . .

German with a Swiss accent.

I spent nine years in Switzerland, in Schaffhausen and Zurich. I still cannot get used to calling contemporaries Mr, Mrs or Miss or having elderly people in my husband's home village call him by his first name and me "Mrs."

To live in a block of flats was agony for me, as it was to be told when I could do my washing, have a bath or keep quiet.

I never thought I would get used to the huge portions at meal times in Switzerland. Unfortunately for my figure I did, and have never reverted to English helpings.

I am most grateful for my stay in Switzerland which taught me the Swiss ways of cooking, managing money (which so often combine) and appreciation of quality.

When we came to England to live almost 15 years ago, my Swiss husband, Walter began to value the much more relaxed way of life and to put up with all the accompanying inefficiencies.

At home we always speak Swiss German, and our two sons are bi-lingual. We have plenty of Swiss German friends over a wide

area who come to our house once a month on a Sunday afternoon.

The Minister of the Swiss Church in London comes down and we have a service in Swiss German followed by a couple of hours of incessant chatter in Swiss German over a very informal tea.

For the past two years we have

organised an August 1 celebration, to which we invite all members of the families (last year there were over 60 people), and we have just started a monthly coffee morning for the Swiss ladies in the area.

Anyone interested in joining us is most welcome. Please telephone Tunbridge Wells 43153 for details.



ASPARAGUS SNACK

NOW that asparagus is enjoying its short season, you may care to adapt this recipe to use the fresh vegetable.

Ingredients:

8 fillets of lemon sole
Butter and oil
Salt and pepper
4 tablespoons chopped shallots
Fennel sprigs
1 x 1lb 13oz can asparagus 850g
3oz grated Gruyere 75g
About ½pt very dry still cider
(2 tablespoons for each fillet)
Lemon wedges

Method:

Place two fillets, skin side

down, in each of four well-greased shallow flameproof baking dishes (or in one big dish). Season with pepper and a little salt. Top each fillet with ½ tablespoon chopped shallot mixed with feathery green tops of fennel. Heat oven to 375°F/190°C/Gas 5, and cook for about 10 minutes until cooked through and white.

Top each fillet with an equal quantity of grated Gruyere cheese, asparagus and juice from the can, and cider. Put under the grill to melt the cheese and bring pan juices to boiling point. Serve with ¼ lemon wedges.

FEW things can bring back more memories of home than foods which we have known and loved since childhood – the real “taste of home”.

If you are a visitor to your local health food store you may have seen various familiar products – in particular Tartex vegetable patés, Biotta juices and the famous Bio-Strath herbal elixir.

The Tartex vegetable patés have been popular for many years, both as sophisticated starters and tasty snacks. Originally available plain, or with herbs, the latest development had been a “gourmet” Tartex paté which has a more spicy taste.

But perhaps the most amazing

Taste of home



thing about these Swiss patés is that they are completely vegetarian – containing nothing but vegetable oil and protein, yeast, sea salt and a dash of herbs or spices.

In fact, there are endless stories about people who amused their dinner guests by serving Tartex and then asking the diners to guess what they had eaten.

The Biotta range of fruit and vegetable juices has been available on the UK market for more

than 12 years. They are made in Taegerwilen, at the Biotta organic farm.

Until recently there were just three types of Biotta juices available in Britain – carrot juice, beetroot juice and celery juice. Now the range has been extended to include Vegetable Cocktail and Breakfast Drink.

Vegetable Cocktail is a delicious blend of beetroot, carrot, celery and tomato juice – and Breakfast Drink boasts an

even longer list of pure ingredients including orange juice, whey, banana puree, eggs, honey and malt.

The importers of these famous Swiss products, Vessen Ltd of Stockport, also import another notable Swiss product – Bio-Strath.

This herbal elixir has won a world-wide reputation for its beneficial qualities, a reputation which is now underwritten by a number of scientific reports.

BIRTH CONTROL BY COMPUTER

A NEW electronic device invented in Geneva could soon revolutionise birth control.

The electronic fertility indicator uses natural birth control techniques and takes most of the guesswork out of preventing pregnancy. Very simple to use, it combines the temperature curve method and the rhythm method

discovered by Ogino.

All the user has to do is switch on the programme each morning, take her temperature in the mouth for two minutes, then consult the microcomputer.

A system of lights gives the answer: a red light indicates a slightly fertile period; a flashing red light means that she is very

fertile; finally a green light indicates that she is infertile.

The instrument makes allowances for the individual characteristics of each user's cycle. This is its strong point. It is an “intelligent thermometer”, which only needs to be given the basic information once for its operation to remain foolproof.

Fascinating

ALL the articles which have appeared lately in “Woman's Observer” have been fascinating.

From the various letters that I have read I find that the most salient facet is the power of adaptation of Swiss women abroad. They seem to fit in pretty well, even becoming mayoress.

Congratulations for your splendid feature – Mrs E.M.L. Grout, Whimble, Exeter, Devon.

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