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The Emmenthal cheese industry

Switzerland, in addition to being an ideal holiday resort, possesses many busy industries, among which – being as she is, a land of milk and honey – the Dairy Industry plays a very important part.

I wonder how many of the thousands of tourists who visit this country yearly and enjoy the excellent Swiss cheese in the hotels, the « wagon-restaurants » and on their manifold excursions, have the vaguest idea as to how the big « cart-wheels » (« loaves » is the technical name of the enormous Emmenthal cheeses) or the dainty little wedges, in their attractive cartons, are produced ?

As regards the former, these loaves are manufactured in rural cheese factories which exist in nearly every Emmenthal village and are run by a certified cheese-maker and an assistant, both of whom have usually been trained in the Federal School of Agriculture. These factories are, as a matter of fact, merely small houses, with well-scrubbed tiled floors, spotless deal tables and enormous, polished brass vats. Contrary to what occurs in the Gruyère, the Emmenthal farmers hardly ever make the cheese themselves, but content themselves by selling all their milk to the factories, where the cheese can be produced under the most approved conditions of modern hygienic requirements. As a general rule



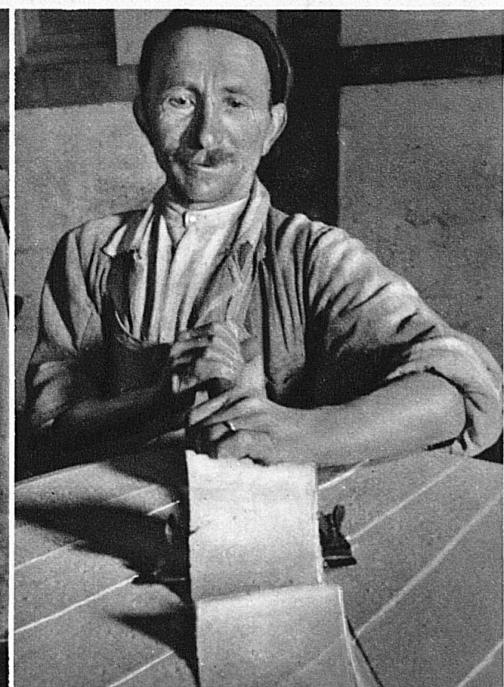
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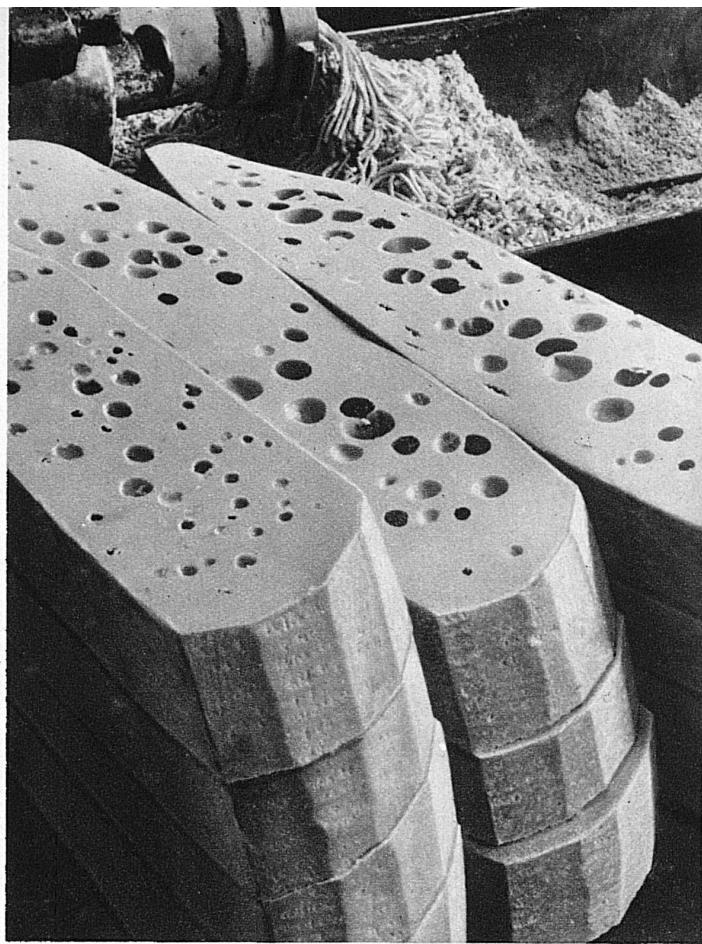
only two cheeses are made each day – one from the morning and the other from the evening milk. The milk is usually carried in flat, wooden receptacles, on the backs of men and youths, or else is transported in large tin cans, to the accompaniment of much barking and tail-wagging, on small wooden carts, drawn by big, shaggy dogs.

It is a wonderful and fascinating sight to see the cheese-maker and his assistant catch and imprison the boiling, floating curds, within the folds of enormous, white cheese-cloths and then, with a dexterous movement, lift the heavy load of some 100 kilos and place it within a wooden

Phot. Dr. Wolff

Manipulating the «loaves» in the cheese cellar





Chunks prepared for melting down

« cart-wheel » frame, under the huge press, in order that all the whey may be squeezed out. This achieved, the « loaf » is placed in a store-room where the temperature can be regulated to any desired degree and there left to mature for several months, before being placed on the market.

The process employed for the manufacture of carton cheeses is much more complicated. First of all, the big loaves are taken from the village cheese-making centres to the very modern factory, equipped with all the most perfect hygienic and labour-saving devices, which specializes in the manufacture of carton cheeses. There the loaves

Le bon fromage de l'Emmenthal

are placed in cool cellars and arranged on tiers of shelves. It may easily be imagined what a powerful « cheesy » odour is produced by this accumulated mass of several thousand cheeses, each one weighing approximately 100 kilos ! These cheeses are left for a determined period in a determined temperature and are moved and treated every so many days. Having attained the requisite degree of ripeness, they are transferred into a light and airy room where they are divested of their hard rind (which goes, together with the whey and sour milk, to feeding the numerous pigs which are always bred in cheese-making districts) « planed » and then cut up into chunks, considerable skill being exercised in the blending of various degrees of ripeness. This having been done, the chunks are then placed in a special machine for chopping and beating, from whence they emerge in a curdlike form and are then cooked until they reach the consistency of a thick, smooth, liquid. The melted cheese is then poured into little forms, and when sufficiently set is enveloped in tin-foil. Nimble fingered packers provide these small wedges with the necessary labels and then pack them into the well-known circular cartons, from where they emerge fresh, dainty and delicious, whenever required, whether this be in the home, on the mountains, in the train or when picnicking by car. Persis Brooke.

Preparation of carton cheeses

