

A Taste of Home

Sandra Knecht



“The men’s cooking club is centered around a hobby that provides an opportunity to make ever new discoveries. Hobby chefs like to spread joy through their cooking; they have fun practicing their hobby and setting their tables beautifully. A hobby chef is a gourmet, but most importantly also someone who cultivates the art of hospitality.”¹

What does cooking have to do with identity and home? And how can this be investigated? In our era of endless cultural diversity cookery and food are the smallest common denominator. They concern everyone and

1 | From: Swiss hobby chefs SCKM, http://www.sckm.ch/de/00_VEREINSTEIL/01_werwirsind/wirstellenunsvor.php, last visited February 20, 2017.

run through all strata of society like orbiters. What is the essence of food and taste? There is no vertical social hierarchy when it comes to these questions. The essence of taste, which links everything and everyone, runs horizontally. There is no surrogate for it. Diversity is not just defined through what can be individually useful or pleasant, but pertains to the appreciation of existence per se, to the appreciation of other existences, of their unique properties. Biodiversity also means preserving the pluralism of existence in itself and not fostering or curtailing it according to functional criteria.

One's place of origin as a notion and source of identity formation is now obsolete. Home is no longer a given fact. Home, the German *Heimat*, as a place must be constantly re-negotiated because it is subject to constant change. This constant change, retrospection and re-negotiation are essential cultural elements.

In the 19th century numerous Swiss communities that found themselves in financial straits tried to get rid of their poor by paying for their passage to America in return for them relinquishing their citizenship.

Home is a human construct; it is not based on natural laws. Home is also a memory, burnt into our subconscious memory and pervaded by tastes, smells and sounds.

The "Älplermagronen" are today regarded to be a traditional Swiss dish of the Sennen – the Alpine herders and dairymen. Yet pasta only came to the central Alps in 1872, during the construction of the Gotthardtunnel. At that time the Italian construction workers brought the pasta they ate at home with them. Soon this food became a staple in Alpine cooking, where eggs were added. Potatoes were used to make the dish go further and it was seasoned using onions. Cream and cheese were produced locally, and together with the pasta and the potatoes they made up a very filling dish.

"Mir Senne hei's lustig, mir Senne hei's guet
Hei Chäs und hei Anke, das git üs guets Bluet."
(We Sennen have a merry time, we Sennen have it good,
We have cheese and butter, which gives us good blood).

ÄPLERMAGRONEN

Place waxy potatoes in simmering broth, add Magronen [macaroni] 5 mins later. Use an amount of water that will be entirely absorbed by the potatoes and pasta as the Magronen are al dente. Then add cream, roughly grate cheese (Gruyère, Alpine cheese, Emmental, etc.) on top, then mix in until cheese is melted. Season to taste with nutmeg and black pepper. Flour the onion rings, then fry in hot butter until crisp. Scatter across the Magronen and serve immediately. Serve with slices of cooked pears or apples.

“Lioba, lio-o-ba ...”

When these few syllables are intoned in the right place and at the right time, then all “truly Swiss men and women” will feel as one people of sisters and brothers.

This pastoralist song of praise was first documented in the 16th century. It originally announced the time for milking, returning to the stable or the Désalpe in many rural areas.

It is said to have even driven some Swiss mercenary soldiers to desertion – that is how strongly it stirred in them the “delirium melancholicum”, the *Maladie Suisse*, in short: the longing for their home. The name “*Maladie Suisse*” is thus derived from Swiss soldiers stationed abroad and suffering from homesickness.²

RANZ DES VACHES, KUHREIHEN, LIOBA

Refrain

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Hüopa, hüopa, chämet mer na! | Hop, hop follow me! |
| Chämet doch allu, | but come all, |
| wyssu, schwarzu, | white, black, |
| rothu, tschäggetu, | red, piebald, |
| jung u altu, | young and old, |
| unter de Icha | under the oak trees |
| wull n' üöch mälche, | I want to milk you, |
| unter der Oscha | under the ash |
| tuen i chäse | I will make cheese |
| Hüopa, hüopa, chämet mer na! | Hop, hop, follow me! |
| Die mit de Schölle | Those with the bells |
| vorna ha sölle! | Shall walk in front! |
| Chalber u Ränder | calves and bulls |
| A bitz bas händler. | In the back |
| Hüopa, hüopa, chämet mer na! | hop hop follow me! |

“We have long since swallowed some of the snakes that you are now hiding in the back yard, and they will jump out from our mouths whenever we need them. Yes, we had to swallow them. In order to survive. In order to signal you our submission. In order to know you better. In order to operate your weapons with ease. In order to express ourselves fully.”³

2 | <http://www.lebendigetraditionen.ch/traditionen/00100/index.html>, last visited February 15, 2017.

3 | http://www.maiz.at/sites/default/files/anthropophagischer_protagonismus.pdf, last visited February 15, 2017.

When people eat what I have cooked they partially turn into what I am. But the products I use to create my dishes also become a part of them. The energy we absorb through our food makes us what we are. This is why we must exercise due diligence in choosing the foodstuffs we work with. In order to ensure accountability in this respect, it is important that our producers and suppliers are trustworthy.

The Tunisian greengrocer Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire on December 17, 2010 in protest of the arbitrary force exercised by the public authorities. His death triggered colossal upheaval in the Arab world.

“El Soor”

“In front of the wall/In front of those who were building it/In front of those who were erecting it/Stood a poor man/Peeing/Onto the wall, and onto those who were building and raising it.”

“I was completely taken aback by the revolution in Egypt. When the first calls to protest were circulated on Facebook we actually made fun of them. And a few days later, everyone was suddenly on the streets. We were all very nervous and thought “My God, is this really happening here?” It was magical. I believe that we discovered feelings in us that we hadn’t known existed, for example how much you love your country.”⁴

SYRIAN FLATBREAD (CHUBS)

Ingredients

| | |
|-------|-------------|
| 500 g | Rye flour |
| 42 g | Yeast |
| 500 g | Wheat flour |
| 1 Tsp | Salt |

Mix both types of flour in a bowl. Make a hole in the center and crumble the yeast into it. Add 6 deciliters of water to the yeast. Scatter the salt onto the flour sides. Dissolve the yeast in the water starting from the middle, then allow to rise for 10 minutes before kneading the ingredients to form a smooth dough. Dust lightly with flour and allow to rise for about 15 minutes. Place the dough on the floured work surface, knead and shape to form a thick roll. Cut this into 10 pieces of equal size. Shape the pieces of dough into balls and allow to rise, covered, for 10 minutes. Press the dough balls down to form round flatbreads of approximately 20 cm in diameter.

4 | Youssra El Hawary, from: <https://de.qantara.de/inhalt/interview-mit-der-saengerin-youssra-el-hawary-mit-dem-akkordeon-gegen-mauern>, last visited February 15, 2017.

Cover a baking tray with baking parchment and place the flatbreads on top. Bake in an oven pre-heated to 250 degrees for 10–12 minutes.⁵

In order to stop the rhizome-forming plant from spreading across the garden uncontrollably, a rhizome-barrier must be installed around the place where it is to be planted. Polyethylene plastic sheeting may be used as a rhizome barrier; this should be 70 cm wide and 2 mm thick. The sheeting must be flexible enough to create the desired shape for the patch. The rhizome barrier is dug approximately 65 cm deep, with 5 cm protruding above ground. This upper edge is important in order for the gardener to see the rhizomes trying to grow across the barrier and be able to remove them. The foil has to be sealed with a fastening ledge so that the plant may find no gaps.

“Forget provocation and revolution. Rise up.”

MARLENE STREERUWITZ

5 | From the blog of the Swiss hobby chefs (see note 1).

