



# 57th World Congress of Chess Composition August 23-30, 2014 in Berne

## Food and Beverage

This is about food and beverage in Switzerland in general. Tips where to eat will follow later.

### Food

Cheese and chocolate are clichés for Swiss food. Although we don't only eat those, they are good starting point.

One of our national dishes is Cheese [Fondue](#). This is melted cheese served in a common pot for up to 4 people on a portable stove. You use a long fork to stir the melted cheese with chunks of bread (or potato) and eat what sticks to them. Fondue is extremely popular during the winter months, but there are a few restaurants in town that serve it year round. These days, there are many variations, but I prefer the traditional Fondue called "moitié-moitié" (half and half) with Gruyère and Vacherin Fribourgeois cheese and with bread. Since this dish is rather rich, we usually drink black tea, white wine or even cherry brandy with it; avoid Coca Cola or water with gaz.



About as popular as Fondue is [Raclette](#). This is made from semi hard cheese from the Canton of Valais and always served with potatoes and mixed pickles. Of course, there are many variations as well, like with tomatoes or bacon or other



meat. There are two ways to serve Raclette: Many of us own a small electric stove (picture on the right) where you melt small pieces of cheese. On bigger occasions, we use stoves like in the left-hand picture. Raclette taste very good both ways.

I have to disappoint you, there is no Swiss Cheese called „Swiss Cheese“. The variety of cheese types in Switzerland is huge; the most famous ones are Emmentaler, Gruyère (Greyerzer in German), Sbrinz, Appenzeller, but when you check out a cheese shop (absolutely mandatory in Switzerland - even the cheese section in Supermarkets are worth checking out), you'll find lots more. Most Swiss cheeses are hard or semi-hard and made from cow milk. There are exceptions with goat or sheep milk, and some very few soft cheeses.

I'd like to talk about two specialties:

- [Vacherin Mont-d'Or](#) is a soft cheese from the Jura region. Because of the traditional making, it is only produced from August 20 till March 31 and sold from September 15

till April 15. The loaves are about 20cm in diameter and age in a wooden box. They are famous for their taste and melt at room temperature.

- [Tête de Moine](#) (Monk's Head) is a semi hard cheese again from the Jura region, and had its roots in the Monastery of Bellelay. This cheese is not eaten in chunks, but carefully scraped with a knife into thin slices that curl like a rose. In many Swiss households, you'll find „Girolles“ (picture on the right), the perfect tool for cutting your Tête de Moine.



There is a lot to explore if you like cheese.

It's strange that Switzerland is known for chocolate since the most important ingredient, the cocoa, comes from far away. The Belgians might disagree, but I think Switzerland has some of the best chocolate there is. We have many factories all over the country, and with 11.9 kilograms of chocolate, we have the highest consumption per capita in the world (some tourists who buy chocolate as a souvenir help as well ☺).

You'll get the best chocolate, e.g. chocolate truffles and pralines, in pastry shops in Bern, like [Eichenberger](#), [Tschirren](#) or [Beeler](#) to name a few, but watch out, they are pricey!

Talking about pastry shops, pastries and desserts are among the best, worth trying. Some of the pastry shops mentioned above have a small restaurant where you can try their pastries. Recently, [Confiserie Sprüngli](#) from Zurich has opened a branch at the Main Station in Bern: They are famous for their [Luxemburgerli](#) and believe me, they are worth trying as well.

The most famous chocolate from Berne is the Toblerone. It used to be produced very close to our home, and the quarter we live in is said to have smelled like chocolate until the factory was moved to the border of the town.



One typical Swiss dessert you will usually not find in the fancy pastry shops, but more in rural areas is [Meringue](#). It's named after the mountain village Meiringen, where Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty are told to have had their fatal struggle. Meringue is baked whipped egg whites with sugar, and you add a lot of whipped cream and sometimes ice cream. In the Gruyère area, they have "double cream", so rich that you needn't even whip it (we plan our excursion to this area, so you'll be able to try it). No calories at all ☺.

Another traditional dish is Röstli (hash browns). We eat it as a side dish or as a full meal, then usually with bacon, cheese, tomatoes or fried eggs.

Röstli as a side dish is often served to thin slices of veal (called [Züri Gschnätzletes](#)) or Bratwurst.



The variety of Bratwurst (sausage) is not as big as in Germany. There are basically two major kinds,

the veal and the pork Bratwurst.

A Swiss specialty is the [Cervelat](#), a sausage almost exclusively known to Switzerland. It is cooked so you can eat it cold or hot or as a Cervelat salad (sometimes with cheese). It was the



typical food we brought to school excursions when we were kids and tasted best grilled on a campfire.

There are not many Swiss German words that made it into other languages: Muesli is one; we call it [Bircher Müesli](#) because it was invented by physician Dr. Bircher-Benner; it's still a popular dish for breakfast, a quick lunch or dinner.



When we are abroad, the thing I miss immediately is our Swiss bread. Like Germany and Austria, we have a big variety of breads and most taste good. As a special treat, we like to eat Züpfe ("braid" - picture on the right) on Sundays. We can buy it in bakeries, but the best Züpfe is the ones we bake ourselves, with a lot of butter and milk in it. I love it.

In the sixties and seventies of the last century a lot of Italian workers immigrated into Switzerland. Many of them stayed and some opened restaurants. When you walk through Berne, almost half of the restaurants you see are Italian. We have adopted the Italian Pizza and Pasta into our local cuisine. ☺

## Beverage

Swiss wine is not the most famous in the world, but there are many specialties that are worth a try, e.g. some Fendant with cheese fondue. The best wine of Switzerland is from the Valais and from the Lake of Geneva area.

The big Swiss beer breweries belong to the big international companies, e.g. [Feldschlösschen](#) to the Carlsberg Group. Not my favorites ...

There are numerous small, local breweries that make good beer like [Felsenau](#). Their most popular beer is the „Bärner Müntschi“ (Bernese Kiss), which is one of my favorites. [Egger Beer](#) is quite good, too.

The best beer in Berne is from a micro brewery in the Restaurant Tramdepot next to the bear park. A mandatory visit for beer lovers - and the manager of the place is a cousin of Thomas ☺.



Water from the tap is good and safe to drink. Most restaurants don't like to serve tap water, though, and charge extra for it.

There is Swiss Whisky, and I have recently tried some. I still prefer Scotch. There is some brandy made out of fruit, especially cherry brandy (goes good with cheese fondue) or Williams (pear).



Among the non alcoholic beverages there is [Rivella](#), a sweet drink made from milk serum. It's hard to describe its taste, so try yourself.

And there is [Ovomaltine](#) (Ovaltine in English), a breakfast drink famous all over the world. Ovaltine was invented right here in Berne.

That's all for today. More to come.