



112

DRINK LIKE THE ALPS

HONIGMILCH

Honigmilch is a kind of cure-all in parts of Switzerland. Plenty of benefits are listed in old domestic household books and in online recipes including sleeping better, lowering blood pressure, curing a cold, or reducing anxiety.

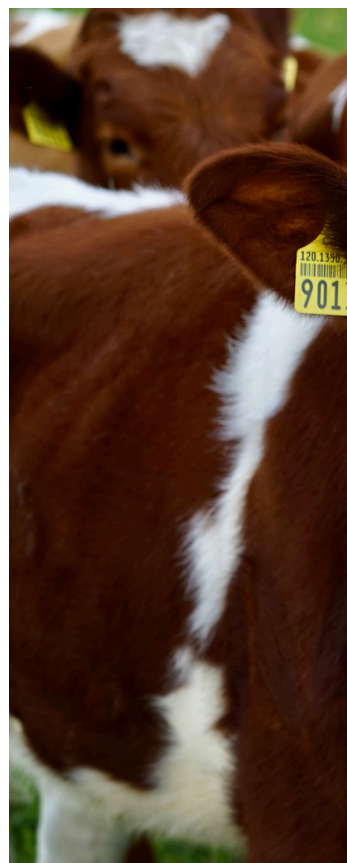
The health insurance company CSS even has a recipe online—preventative medicine perhaps? Marianne Kaltenbach's *Aus Schweizer Küchen* lists it as a January recipe, and indeed it is the perfect warming, comforting drink for cold winter nights.

Ok, I know, this is so simple to make that it hardly warrants a recipe—just stir some honey into milk. Just make sure your milk isn't boiling, warm it to barely simmering, and start with a teaspoon of honey, adding more to taste.

Honey varies greatly in colour and flavour, depending on what the bees are eating. In general *Blütenhonig* is lighter in colour and comes from flower-eating bees in the spring. *Waldhonig* is collected later in the summer and comes from bees who eat forest leaves and flowers that have been chewed by aphids.

More here:

<https://www.helvetickitchen.com/recipes/honigmilch>



Whisk a tablespoon wildflower honey

into 200 ml hot milk.





And a little on alpine milk:

Taking the cows up to the Alps in the summer and letting them graze on fresh alpine meadows has a positive influence on the flavour of Swiss milk. But that's not the only reason the milk tastes so good.

Switzerland has some of the strictest animal welfare regulations in the world, and the farms are regularly inspected. On average, each farm has only around 23 cows, making it easier to take care of those animals and to spread them over the available land.

Each day an average cow will eat about 100 kg of meadow grasses, 2 kg of feed, 200 g salt, and drink 50 litres of water and produce about 20-25 litres of milk.

Mix your milk with some wildflower honey for a taste of alpine meadows.



EIERKIRSCH

Eierkirsch is a kirsch-based drink with added eggs, cream, and sugar. Today it's especially loved at Christmas, when it can be spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg.

Produced on the same farms that would grow the cherries needed for kirsch, the addition of eggs and sugar was possibly not only to create a pleasing taste, but also to provide protein and energy for the labourers who worked the fields.

My mother-in-law Josy fondly remembers drinking cold, refreshing *Eierkirsch* during the *Heuen*, when her family would cut and dry the hay for the cows.

More on Eierkirsch, plus recipe, here:

<https://www.helvetickitchen.com/recipes/eierlikr>





150 ml
milk

How to make Eierkirsch

1. In a bowl, over a pot of simmering water, whisk together:



80 g
condensed
milk



4 egg
yolks

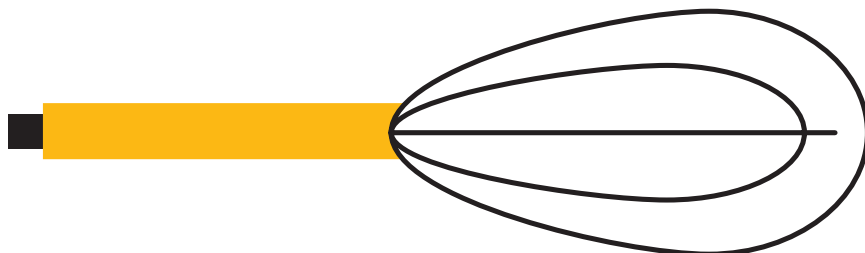


1 vanilla bean
(scraped)
or
1 tablespoon
vanilla paste
or extract

2. Keep whisking until the liquid is slightly thickened and hot to the touch.



3. Whisk in 200 ml Kirsch.



4. Strain into bottles and store in the fridge for up to a month.
Shake well before serving.



RÖTELI

I have two stories that go along with this drink—one is the origin story and the other is a personal anecdote.

Origin

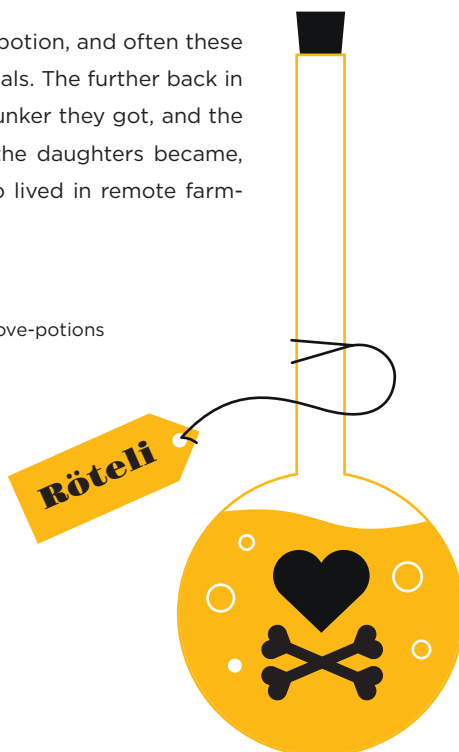
Röte- li is a liqueur made with dried cherries and spices that dates from at least the 19th century. It was traditionally made by families in Grisons, each using a different spice mixture. In the early 1900s, traditional recipes were collected and experimented with, leading to a standardized version that could be mass-produced.

It's traditional to drink *Röte- li* on New Year's Eve. In the olden days, bachelors would take this occasion to go from farmhouse to farmhouse visiting unmarried farmer's daughters. At each farm they would sample a glass of *Röte- li* that the single ladies (under the watchful eye of their mothers) had made.

Some saw the drink as a kind of love potion, and often these visits would result in marriage proposals. The further back in the valley the bachelors went, the drunker they got, and the better looking and more appealing the daughters became, giving a big advantage to those who lived in remote farmhouses.

More here:

<https://www.helvetickitchen.com/recipes/love-potions>





Anecdote

For me Röteli is synonymous with one of the most harrowing nights of my life.

It was New Year's Eve, about six months after I had moved to Switzerland. I had come from Bern to spend the holiday with my aunt, uncle, and cousins in their cozy farmhouse in Flumserberg and someone suggested fondue and tobogganing in nearby Graubünden for New Year's Eve.

Yes please!

As a Canadian, my experience with tobogganing was extensive and profound. Just beyond my backyard as a child was a large and popular hill where we would go nearly every snowy day. On the other side was a whole neighbourhood shot through with ravines begging to be sledded and GT racer-ed on. It was bliss.

I was eager to try tobogganing in Switzerland, and my cousin's girlfriend excitedly told me how you could sled down for almost a half hour. Wow! That must be some hill.

At around 6pm, we took a bus up a steep and winding road to a little chalet restaurant full of families celebrating the New Year. It was a grand time. A bunch of my cousins' friends and colleagues met us and we ate fondue and chatted for hours. At the end of the meal the server brought around a bottle and started pouring shots.

"Have you ever had Röteli before?"

I hadn't but it was delicious. I let him pour me a second. Then a third. My cousin's girlfriend turned to me, "you'd better slow down, you'll have to navigate."

I giggled, it doesn't take too much to navigate a big hill. After the drinks, and toasting the New Year, we gathered outside the chalet. Then everything changed.

People started getting out head lamps.



"What are the head lamps for?" I asked my cousin.

"To help you navigate," he said, handing me one.

"Are there no floodlights on the hill?" I asked.

He gave me a funny look. "There aren't any lights on the road."

"The road?"

Everyone was walking over to the place where the buses had come up the mountain. The families that had been in the chalet were starting to steer their sleds down along the winding, slippery road. My cousin handed me a toboggan.

"You're ok to go alone, right?"

Then I noticed that all of my cousins and their friends were in pairs—everyone had a sledding partner but me. I could taste the Röteli in my throat.

"You'll be fine," my baby cousin gave me a pat on the shoulder and jumped on her sled with her boyfriend, taking off down the road.

I gingerly got
on the sled, adjusted
my head lamp, dug my heels
into the snow, went about 5 meters
and a family with a grandmother and two
school-aged children blew past me, whooping
and hollering. This was going to be a long half hour.





As I quickly learned, navigation was indeed key. At the end of each straightaway you had to negotiate a sharp turn, otherwise you would be flung off into the forest. Then you had to contend with the wildest Swiss I have ever encountered, all flying past at break-neck speed.

Then came the buses.

Buses were carrying people back up the road, and when you saw their headlights you had to throw yourself into the side of the mountain to avoid being crushed under their wheels.

At the bottom of the hill I was white-knuckled and teary. My cousin smiled at me, "oh well, your year can only go uphill from here."

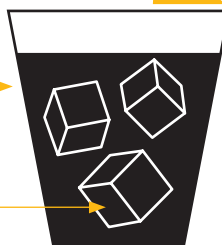
From this post (including a recipe):

<https://www.helvetickitchen.com/recipes/2017/6/27/bundnerrivella>

Bünder Rivella

2 shots
Röteli
Rivella

ice



Garnish
with lemon.



Cherry Cola Float

Top with cola.

1 scoop vanilla ice cream

1 shot Röteli