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## **Inhaltsverzeichnis**

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# HELVETIA



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## Highlights

- La Gruyère: chocolate, cheese and culture
- Meet new Ambassador David Vogelsanger
- ASO conference news
- Club fondue secrets revealed

## Inside

From the Editor	2
Letter from the Ambassador	3
Arts and culture	4-5
Crossroads of cheese and chocolate	6
Swiss news	7
ASO news	8
Society games medal winners	9
Health corner	10
Carolyn Lane	11
Kids' corner	12
Fun tips La Gruyère	13
Swiss club news	14-18
Photo Gallery	19
A difficult legacy	20
Chuchichästli and Garden diary	21
Obituaries	22-23
Swiss Snippets	23
Beyond cheese and chocolate	24

## La Gruyère: Where Cheese, Chocolate and Culture Meet



Old town of Gruyères facing towards Gruyères castle

*Fancy some cheese, chocolate and culture? Then the district of La Gruyère is the place to go, being at once the home of Gruyère cheese, Cailler chocolate and some famous cultural experiences.*

Located at the eastern corner of the canton of Fribourg, between Montreux and Berne, this pre-alpine district epitomises what we like about Switzerland. Green meadows and craggy outcrops, blue lakes, cool forests, cows dotted across the landscape and the towering mountains of the high Alps in the distance: a recipe to please our eyes and hearts.

Perhaps most well known in the region is the medieval castle village of Gruyères, rising above the plain against the foothills of the Alps. Its formidable stone castle overlooks the perfectly preserved medieval village with its cobbled streets, stone fountain and medieval houses adorned with rows of blooming geraniums.

Gruetius is said to be the legendary founder of the castle of Gruyères and its dynasty of counts. He chose the crane (in French: "grue") to inspire the name of his castle, built to control the upper Saanen Valley. The township of Gruyères developed below the castle, first mentioned as de Grueri around 1138-39. It was to evolve into a market town with a central street and city walls.

The castle was a regional seat of power, occupied from 1080 to 1554 by the nineteen counts of Gruyères. In 1493, it was completely destroyed by a fire. Later counts rebuilt the castle in lavish style, eventually bankrupting the family. Michael, the final Count of Gruyères, fled his creditors – the governments of Fribourg and Bern – leaving them to divide up his lands between them. On June 22, 1476, Gruyères participated in the Battle of Morat against Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. With the help of the Old Swiss Confederacy, they routed the Burgundian army and captured three capes of the Order of the Golden Fleece which belonged to Charles the Bold – precious to him as gold. The three capes are on display in Gruyères castle.

Wise city fathers over time had the wisdom and foresight to preserve and restore the medieval castle and village, turning them into a favourite tourist destination.

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gruyères>

<http://www.la-gruyere.ch> (© Manel Antoli)