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Die Wein-Wanderung (The wine hike)

When I lived in Switzerland the two phrases most commonly heard when the topic of the Wallis popped up in conversation were "Oh the Wallis; it's always sunny there." and "The best wine in the world comes from the Wallis".

And I have to admit, what better way is there to explore the beauty and enjoy the sunshine of the Wallis, than when hiking is combined with wine tasting? In case you have never heard of this ingenious Swiss activity let me introduce you to *Die Wein-Wanderung*, or The Wine Hike.



I was first introduced to this organised activity a few years ago, when a group of friends, slightly depressed by the miserable summer we were experiencing in Oberrargau at the time, invited me to accompany them. "Come to the Wallis with us" they said, "It's always sunny in the Wallis." This was accompanied by cries of "We need to introduce you to Walliser wine; it's the best". The Wallis boasts that it has more days of sunshine than any other canton in Switzerland. It produces 40% of Switzerland's wine and is the largest wine-producing canton in the country. Many of the vineyards are small and operated by individual families.

So we caught the train (natürlich) to Salgesch. Then proceeded to walk through the old town, following a

specified Wein Wander route, through the vineyards to our first stop, a cute boutique wine producer. Here, while sitting on the terrace in the sun we tasted Fendant. Fendant is a subtle, crisp white wine, (perfectly suited to midmorning consumption). The boys then decided that they had a big walk ahead of them and should probably fuel up with some Raclette.

With tummies full of melted cheese and white wine we made our way along the route through the vineyards, stopping only to inspect the grape varieties being grown while sharing with each other our "expert opinions" on Walliser wine and viticulture (wine making). The Wallis has a unique mix of soil types, sun exposure and microclimates and a number of grape varieties find perfect growing conditions here. In viticulture, grape vines are normally reproduced through a method that is similar to cloning. This is beneficial for wine makers as the vines are identical, however this also results in the vines becoming more susceptible to disease. Sélection Valais is a program that was put into place by the canton of Wallis approx. 20 years ago. They collected hundreds of exceptional vines, including some vines that were over 100 years old, and gave them to nurseries to ensure their varieties don't disappear. This is important, not only for biodiversity, but also for ensuring that the subtle and complex taste, unique to wine from the region, is not lost.

Following a short picnic break to rest our light heads, we headed off up and then subsequently down what felt like an incredibly tall mountain to our next stop. This winery was larger and had a more structured approach to its wine degustation. It even included a tour of the winery, showing us where and how

the wine was made and stored. When the tour was over I was well in the mood for some red wine, and was happy to sample my favourite Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir is the most widely planted grape in the Wallis and is particularly successful in the area around Salgesch because of the chalk content found in the soil. Locals refer to Salgesch, as the Pinot Noir capital of Switzerland.

This winery ended up being our last stop on the Wein Wander tour in the Wallis. I appreciate that visiting 2 wineries hardly constitutes a "tour" by most people's standards. And I also acknowledge that had we paced ourselves a little better, we probably could have managed to fit in another winery or two, but as it was, the day was perfect. The Wallis is a magnificent place, with quaint old towns, stunning vineyards and imposing mountains. Very few places in the world combine all three of these with such ease, as the Wallis. It is no wonder that tourism plays such an important role in the Wallis economy. The Wein Wanderung is only one of such tourist activities to be found in the Wallis. If, like me, you enjoy being outside and appreciate a glass (or 2) of Walliser wine then I recommend you visit the following websites for more information. <http://www.weinwanderungen.ch> <http://www.lesvinsduvalais.ch/> www.heidadorf.com

By Victoria Egli



Chuderwälsch - Walliser Tiitsch

by Tanja Latham-Zurbrugg

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. ambrüf ga ambri lüoge | to go upstairs to look down |
| 2. Botsch | boy |
| 3. Getti | godfather |
| 4. Gugsä | snow storm |
| 5. Guttra | bottle |
| 6. Mämmi | baby |
| 7. Mooru | tomorrow |
| 8. Puttitschiffra | bra |
| 9. Tschifra | basket |
| 10. us dr Guttra | to drink out of the bottle |

Consigli della Nonna

How to take no-fuss care of the family silver

Line a flat dish big enough to hold the silver to be cleaned with aluminium foil. Sprinkle a thick layer of ordinary table salt on it. Place the silver in a neat compact manner into the dish. Pour over boiling water, enough to cover all the silver, leave to cool. Your silverware will shine in an instant!

By Trudi Fill-Weidmann

