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KIRSCH — AN OLD SWISS SPECIALTY.

The cultivation of cherries occupies a prominent place in Switzerland's extensive fruit-growing industry. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in Switzerland one traditional method — many generations old — of making use of the country's excellent fruit is the production of kirsch from that, undoubtedly most noble of fruits, the cherry.

Switzerland occupies a leading position in the production of kirsch, both as to quantity and as to quality. Swiss kirsch is the *most popular* of the choice spirits. Connoisseurs highly appreciate its bouquet, its fruity and well-rounded flavour, extremely agreeable to the palate.

Thanks to the vast experience gained in the course of the centuries, a Swiss kirsch of outstanding quality is now distilled. Positively famous — and not only in Switzerland, but all over the world — is the kirsch from the "cradle region" of Switzerland (Schwyz and Zug), the Basle region, Aargau and Valais. The achievement of this superb quality calls for the exercise of meticulous care in the vating of the cherries, and for this reason only sound, well ripened and carefully selected cherries are used in the production of Swiss kirsch. These cherries are placed in fermenting vats or barrels (the "mash"), where they undergo a slow process of fermentation taking several months. Then the first distillation of the resultant "wash" begins. In this process, to which the closest attention is paid, resides the secret of producing a kirsch of faultless quality. By distillation, certain liquid and volatile substances are separated from other non-volatile constituents of the "wash", the former being first converted into vapor and then restored to a liquid state by cooling. It is in this way that the distillate is obtained, with its ethereal oils which give the final product its aroma and taste. Kirsch is distilled to an alcohol content of not more than 60 per cent by volume and is consumed at a strength between 41 and 48 per cent by volume. The storage of kirsch is another factor of importance to its quality. The longer it is stored, the more are the aromatizing and flavouring constituents refined and perfected. For this reason only old kirsch, i.e., kirsch that has been stored for many years, is released for export. And all these various factors serve to explain why Switzerland's superb kirsch is so popular abroad.

The uses of kirsch are most highly diversified, Kirsch, drunk neat, is a sheer delight. A coffee with kirsch after every meal is beneficial and a source of great enjoyment. To know this old Swiss specialty is to love it. Kirsch is an indispensable "chaser" for fondue; it is advisable to drink a small glass of it with and immediately after a fondue. Kirsch is also excellent when added to vermouth, to which it gives that bitter-sweet bouquet that is so popular. A vermouth-kirsch is an apéritif to satisfy the taste of the most fastidious. Cocktails are always mixed from a variety of liquids, and Swiss kirsch is the ingredient that determines the quality of such cocktails as cream-kirsch, omnibus, Swiss dream skiwasser, kirsch-fizz, rose, and Ostende. Kirsch is largely used in the sweet and pâtisserie trade: kirsch flans, fruit cake, kirsch-flavoured filled chocolates, kirsch-flavoured tablet chocolate, coupe au kirsch, and kirsch ices, are just a few specialties. Finally, kirsch is also used in the production of fine liqueurs such as cherry brandy, crème de kirsch, and kirsch egg-nog.

H.S.

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