



After winning top title twice in the *Armed Forces* category at the world's largest culinary exhibition - the quadrennial *Culinary Olympics* at the *Internationale Kochkunstausstellung (IKA)* in Erfurt, Germany in 2012, - the SACT team was invited by Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer to cook the winning menu for the Federal Councillors in corpore at the Bundeshaus. The *Armed Forces* cooking category has since been discontinued.

Far right is Neomi Kessler who won first rank 2013 in category *Restaurant Service* at the *Worldskills* competition in Leipzig, Germany, the largest vocational skills excellence event globally.

## Swiss Armed Forces Culinary Team wins International Civil Cooking Competitions in 2016; - issues Military Cookbook

The Swiss military cuisine has come a long way. While the famous army biscuit (a recipe developed 55 years ago by Swiss biscuit manufacturer Kambly) is still part of provisions for every member of the Swiss Armed Forces, today's mess hall offers delicious, nutritious meals that routinely include special diets such as vegetarian. "Other dietary allergy restrictions are accommodated wherever possible," states Colonel Jörg Hauri, Commandant, Armed Forces Chef's training course and Swiss Armed Forces Culinary Team.

Since 1938, the Swiss Army trains all their chefs. Today, new recruits undergo primary troop chef training at the modern barrack in Thun. Responsible for meal preparation of forty members of the armed forces, a subsequent educational course to full chef's designation including leadership training is available to those who show aptitude and interest.

Who are the educators of these training programs? Responds Colonel Hauri: "Our advantage lies in the fact that the Swiss Armed Forces have a system of repeat military service over a number of years rather than a long-term, full-time service period, or a professional army. This enables us to recruit world-class chefs who work in the Swiss hospitality industry for our training program."

This pays off for Swiss Armed Forces trained chefs. In addition to qualifying for the federal civil chef's diploma, Colonel Hauri emphasizes that by the time military chefs graduate, they have valuable leadership training under their belt in addition to proven, practical experience which is rarely offered in private-industry vocational training.

It comes as no surprise that this probably

world-wide unique system of military chef's training gave rise to another innovative idea. The stellar Swiss army chef educators, employed as executive chefs at such renown houses as five-star Jungfrau Grand Hotel Victoria in Interlaken or Schweizerhof in Bern, decided to test their skills against their international counterparts. In 1999, the Swiss Armed Forces Culinary Team (SACT) was born.

Staff Adjutant Daniel Marti, Teamleader SACT since 2011, proudly recounts the team's many international successes. Most recently, this included winning the Culinary Trophy for the years 2016 and 2014 at the bi-annual *Intergastra International Hospitality & Gastronomy Trade Fair* in Stuttgart, and winning the armed forces category in the world's largest culinary exhibition, the quadrennial *Culinary Olympics* at *Internationale Kochkunst Ausstellung (IKA)* in Erfurt in 2008 and 2012.

Clad in white cooking blouses over standard-issue army camouflage pants and black fighting boots, the SACT team not only displays their winning creations for the judges, but also sells meals to trade visitors to offset some of the costs. Smilingly, Staffadjutant Marti recounts how popular and quickly the SACT meals get swooped up, with the competing military team members first in line, having being observed to more or less stealthily abandon their own food tables!

When the armed forces category was discontinued in 2012 after SACT had won the competition twice, the team decided to compete at IKA in the private industry regional teams' category, promptly winning two gold medals: one in category *Pâtisserie*, the second in *Culinary Art Display*. This landed the team

sixth place out of 54 contestants. For an interesting and fun write-up how the team prepares for competitions within 21 days when other teams practice for months ahead of time, go to the following link in the Swiss gastro publication "*Der Goldene Fisch*": [https://www.goldenerfisch.ch/Portals/0/adam/Content/-col5vrqyka5uIjfkD\\_vEw/DocumentOrLink/zeitschrift156.pdf](https://www.goldenerfisch.ch/Portals/0/adam/Content/-col5vrqyka5uIjfkD_vEw/DocumentOrLink/zeitschrift156.pdf) (pg 18).

If you're in the Thun area, look up one of roughly eighty cooking events Colonel Hauri's Division puts on every year. You will be served what Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer - head of the Swiss Federal Department of Defence in the previous legislation - called "the best army food in the world."

Alternatively, you can purchase Staffadjutant Marti's new cook book "Das Beste aus der Schweizer Militärküche". Old favourites and creative new recipes are illustrated with fabulous photographs and augmented with insightful and funny stories, providing an entertaining look into the history and development of Swiss national as much as Swiss and international military cuisine. Overseas shipping available at [www.weberverlag.ch](http://www.weberverlag.ch).

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