

## Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri Article

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Nick Malgieri is the national spokesperson for the Switzerland Tourism Gastronomy and Wine program. After culinary school in the United States, he apprenticed in Switzerland and has maintained close ties with the country ever since through frequent visits. A frequent traveler to other destinations, he collects recipes everywhere. Below is a sample of some of the recipes from his book, *A Baker's Tour: Nick Malgieri's Favorite Baking Recipes from Around the World* (HarperCollins, October 2005).

Additional information on Nick Malgieri: [www.nickmalgieri.com](http://www.nickmalgieri.com) 

#### The City on the Rhine

Residents of Basel love their city, and with good reason. Compact, easy to negotiate by public transportation, and situated close to both the French and German borders, its luxurious shops and trendy restaurants are tempered by long tradition and a small town atmosphere that's hard to beat. Famous for its art and jewelry fairs, Basel also is the home of Europe's most distinctive carnival celebration, Fasnacht, unique because it begins on the Monday after Ash Wednesday. And if business, carnival revelry, or shopping and sightseeing ever wear thin, there's always the majestic Rhine to gaze at from a riverbank café or to walk along and look up at the city from the water's edge. The Rhine divides Basel in two with Greater Basel (Grossbasel) on the left bank and Lesser Basel (Kleinbasel) on the right. Needless to say, a friendly rivalry exists between the city's two halves, perhaps more serious in the past when the residents of Greater Basel placed the bust of the Laellekoenig (tongue king) on a building right at the edge of the middle Rhine bridge where it crosses the river into Lesser Basel. The king rudely sticks out his tongue in the direction of Lesser Basel. Rivalries notwithstanding, patrician Basel never ceases to fascinate me, and I return on almost every trip to Switzerland to soak up more of its unique ambiance.

#### Carnival Dining

The most traditional meal of Basel's Fasnacht occurs shortly after dawn on the Monday after Ash Wednesday, after the Cliques, or groups of costumed revelers, have crossed the middle Rhine bridge into a completely darkened Greater Basel, the only light coming from their lanterns. After Morgenstreich, as it is called, is over, everyone settles in for a traditional breakfast of flour (really a type of onion) soup, onion tart and cheese tart. The following is the short list of traditional places to enjoy that breakfast or other meals during Fasnacht. Many are around the Marktplatz area.

#### Brasserie Löwenzorn

Gemsburg 2/4  
Basel  
Phone: 011 4161 261 4213  
Website: [www.loewenzorn-basel.ch](http://www.loewenzorn-basel.ch)  
E-mail: [hallo@loewenzorn-basel.ch](mailto:hallo@loewenzorn-basel.ch)

#### Restaurant Schnabel

Trillengässlein 2  
Basel  
Phone: 011 4161 261 2121  
Website: [www.restaurant-schnabel.ch](http://www.restaurant-schnabel.ch)  
E-mail: [info@restaurant-schnabel.ch](mailto:info@restaurant-schnabel.ch)

#### Restaurant Gifhüttli

Schneidergasse 11  
Basel  
Phone: 011 4161 261 1656  
Website: [www.gifthuettli.ch](http://www.gifthuettli.ch)  
E-mail: [info@gifthuettli.ch](mailto:info@gifthuettli.ch)

#### Restaurant Hasenburg

Schneidergasse 20  
Basel  
Phone: 011 4161 261 3258  
No website/e-mail

#### Brasserie Steiger

Hotel Basel  
Münzgasse 12

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 264 6800

Website: [www.hotel-basel.ch](http://www.hotel-basel.ch)

E-mail: [reception@hotel-basel.ch](mailto:reception@hotel-basel.ch)

Restaurant Bierstube zum Stadtkeller

Marktgasse 11

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 261 7251

Website: [www.stadtkeller-basel.ch](http://www.stadtkeller-basel.ch)

E-mail: [stadtkeller-basel@bluewin.ch](mailto:stadtkeller-basel@bluewin.ch)

Safran Zunft

Gerbergasse 11

Basel

Phone 011 4161 269 9494

Website: [www.safran-zunft.ch](http://www.safran-zunft.ch)

E-mail: [info@safran-zunft.ch](mailto:info@safran-zunft.ch)

Schlüssel Zunft

Freiestrasse 25

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 261 2046

No website/e-mail

Basel's Other Carnival

Vogel Gryff (The Gryphon), celebrated between the middle and end of January, is an ancient festival in which the inhabitants of Lesser Basel (Kleinbasel) show their friends in Greater Basel (Grossbasel) on the other side of the Rhine that they are just as good. A strong rivalry used to exist between the two parts of the city and the craftsmen's guilds of Lesser Basel teamed up to start this impressive festival parade, mostly to collect money for the needy of Lesser Basel. You'll be treated to the sight of the lion, the gryphon and the wild man cavorting their way on the middle Rhine bridge (but never beyond the mid-point) that leads to Greater Basel, while the Uelli or jesters collect the money for charity. At the end of the dance, the gryphon bows toward lesser Basel, politely presenting his backside to the figure of the Laellekoenig on the other side. It's great fun for everyone and helps to break up the long winter a little.

The Three Kings

Long the most elegant hotel in Basel, LesTrois Rois (Dreikoenige in German) has recently undergone a complete renovation to the tune of millions of francs. Situated right at the edge of the Rhine's left bank, the hotel's rooms and restaurants have fabulous views of the river and the cityscape. Its gastronomic restaurant, the Cheval Blanc, has one Michelin star and a menu that will make you want to order at least 3 dishes from each course. For more casual dining, there's the Brasserie, also facing the river, and Chez Donati, the hotel's Italian restaurant right next door.

Les Trois Rois

Blumenrain 8

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 260 5050

Fax: 011 4161 250 5060

Website: [www.lestroisrois.com](http://www.lestroisrois.com)

E-mail: [info@lestroisrois.com](mailto:info@lestroisrois.com)

Harmony in Basel

Looking for a simple lunch or dinner in Basel? Then Restaurant zur Harmonie is your place. A 5-minute walk from the central Marktplatz or market square, the restaurant is situated on a corner in the middle of Basel's historic district. A typical neighborhood restaurant, at lunch it's filled with students, Basel matrons taking a break from shopping, friends meeting for a casual meal, and a sprinkling of tourists. I was surprised by the perfect English spoken by the staff (I always speak English when going to restaurants on my own, just to see how the language is received), but I shouldn't have been. Basel is host to so many international gatherings that English is a must for all personnel dealing with the worldwide clientele.

Food is all-important at Harmonie – and the best thing about it is that it's reasonably priced. My lunch menu consisted of a puree of vegetable soup, a sprout salad and a main course of sautéed shrimp with buttered rice – all for 19 francs, about \$17.00! There was also a daily special of deep-fried breaded prawns with tartar sauce for the same price. The menu abounds in interesting selections, and you can choose among a number of different salads, among them a Greek salad with feta and a salade nicoise; beef cheek salad with potatoes; herring in cream sauce; and marinated salmon with a horseradish cream. Warm dishes present an interesting variety, too. A few are typical bistro snails with garlic butter, spinach ravioli with pesto, all sorts of sausages with roesti or potato salad and both excellent Wienerschnitzel and choucroute, the latter garnished with smoked pork chop, bacon, boiled beef, and various sausages. Fish have not been neglected, and there are fried filets of perch, prawns with tomato and garlic and a wonderful dish of mussels in a red bell pepper broth.

Wines are a specialty of sorts and the list carries all the best Swiss and foreign selections. My placemat suggested several aperitifs, among them an inexpensive Prosecco and a fine Champagne.

The prices for a la carte dining are just as reasonable as the set menu I tried: appetizers are between 10 and 20 francs and main courses, between 16 and 38 francs, the most expensive being filet of beef and several veal dishes.

If you want to see the real Basel, Harmonie is a good place to go, and you'll be rewarded with an excellent and reasonably-priced meal at the same time.

Restaurant zur Harmonie

Petersgraben 71

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 261 0718

Website: [www.harmonie-basel.ch](http://www.harmonie-basel.ch)

Ueli Beer

This is a great Basel institution. A boutique brewery housed in a lovely old Lesser Basel building just a short walk from the Middle Rhine Bridge, it has been in operation since 1974. Named for one of the jester figures that collects money for the poor during every January's Lesser Basel Vogel Gryff pageant, the beer is made in light, dark and wheat varieties. The Restaurant Fischerstube serves grilled and roast meats and fish and simple specialties in its ground-floor dining room and outdoor terraces, weather permitting.

A fun way to try some of the specialties is the beer menu in which all the dishes – soup, main courses (choice of meat or fish) and dessert (!) all feature beer in their preparation. Of course, I HAD to try the beer menu, and I loved it. The beer soup is especially rich and creamy and the dessert is made from dark beer – already well on its way to being a dessert anyway.

Restaurant Brauerei Fischerstube

Rhiengasse 45

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 692 6635

Fax: 011 4161 692 7404

Near Basel's Cathedral

Right in Basel's Muensterplatz or Cathedral Square is a lovely traditional restaurant, just right for a quick meal or even a casual drink or a coffee when you are visiting the cathedral. The building that houses Zum Isaak faces the imposing cathedral and was once part of the series of buildings used by the bishop's entourage. For a while it was a private residence, then in 1777, became the residence of Swiss statesman Isaak Iselin, who founded a charitable trust that still manages the building and the restaurant. Started in 1980, the restaurant has a mix of modern Swiss food with some Italian and Asian touches. Little dishes such as Brie with marinated olives, pasta with a spicy tomato sauce, and truffled vegetable gratin are available all day.

Appetizers include an Asian chicken and scallion soup and a spinach and tomato timbale enlivened with ginger. The selection of main courses has such diverse offerings as saffron gnocchi with creamy asparagus sauce, red curry of halibut with noodles, and a duck breast with mango and cassis, served with couscous. Desserts are just as creative – a green tea panna cotta and a coconut sorbet with rhubarb compote both caught my eye. Of course a full range of beverages, including both Swiss and imported beers and wines, is available. I love the diversity of the menu and the fact that there are both large and small dishes depending on the time of the day you wander in and exactly what your appetite is at the time. Don't miss this one.

Zum Isaak

Muensterplatz 16

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 261 4704

Website: [www.zum-isaak.ch](http://www.zum-isaak.ch)

E-mail: [info@zum-isaak.ch](mailto:info@zum-isaak.ch)

Delicate Sandwiches in Basel

Need a quick pick-me-up in the middle of a morning or afternoon of sightseeing in Basel? Well the Broetlibar (Sandwich Bar) of the Hotel Stadthof is located in Barfuesserplatz, right in the centre of historic Basel and only steps from some of its most interesting museums and monuments. There's lots of outdoor seating right in the square in good weather, or you can take a seat inside if it's chilly. There are always about 25 open-faced sandwiches to choose from and ordering is easy – you just need to check off the ones you want on the list conveniently provided in the centre of your table. The list is written in German, but any of the friendly wait staff can help if you need translation. I tasted a few and enjoyed them as a light snack. I tried an egg sandwich, one covered with prosciutto, and another with sardines – I'm always trying to balance things when I eat.

Honestly, I could have checked off a few more, but lunch was looming in just a couple of hours and I didn't want to overdo it.

By the way, this is a great occasion to try a local beer, the perfect accompaniment to this simple fare.

Broetlibar

Hotel Stadthof

Gerbergasse 84

Barfuesserplatz

Basel

Phone from the US: 011 4161 261 8711

Fax from the US: 011 4161 261 2584

Website: [www.stadthof.ch](http://www.stadthof.ch)

E-mail: [info@stadthof.ch](mailto:info@stadthof.ch)

Laeckerli Huus

One of Basel's greatest culinary specialties, Laeckerli are more than just a cookie. Made in Basel since the late middle ages, this honeycake has spawned an enormous business with branches in Basel, Bern, Lausanne, Muenchenstein, St. Gallen and Zurich. And there are seventeen others that are concessions within other stores. If you arrive at the main store in Basel on a Friday morning you'll be able to visit the tiny upstairs museum of cookie tins from all over the world -- tins that held not only Leckerli, but British, French and even American cookies.

As far as merchandise in concerned, Leckerli are packaged in imaginative and decorative ways – my favorite is a box that resembles a giant Leckerli. Much attention is given to seasonal packaging, and there are many other confections packaged in Laeckerli Huus' whimsical way. A must-stop if you are in any of the cities that has one.

Laeckerli Huus

Gerbergasse 57

Basel

Phone: 011 4161 264 2323

Fax: 011 4161 264 2324

Website: [www.laeckerli-huus.ch](http://www.laeckerli-huus.ch)

E-mail: [mail@laeckerli-huus.ch](mailto:mail@laeckerli-huus.ch)

#### Salmon on the Rhine

The Hotel Merian's Café Spitz is my idea of the best place in Basel to taste the famous Saumon a la Baloise, or Rhine salmon cooked in the Basel style. Last Spring I tasted this specialty while sitting in the café's outdoor terrace that overlooks the Rhine and the site of the Vogel-Gryff parade, above. By the way, the hotel is the official headquarters of the group that runs the parade, so it is steeped in the traditions of Lesser Basel. Hotel manager Bodo Skrobucha joined us and described just how easy it is to duplicate this famous dish at home (see the end of the column for the recipe).

No matter what time of the year you arrive in Basel, the Hotel Merian will provide a traditional Basel meal not to be missed.

Hotel Merian

Restaurant Café Spitz

Greifengasse 2

Basel

Restaurant telephone: 011 4161 685 1100

Website: [www.merian-hotel.ch](http://www.merian-hotel.ch)

E-mail: [kontakt@merian-hotel.ch](mailto:kontakt@merian-hotel.ch)

Recipe: Saumon a la Baloise (Salmon Basel style)

This recipe is my approximation of the one served at the Hotel Merian in Basel.

Makes 4 servings.

#### Onions

1 pound large white onions

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons butter

Salt and Pepper for seasoning

#### Salmon and Sauce

4 pieces salmon filet, 5 to 6 ounces each

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 tablespoons butter

Salt and pepper for seasoning

1/2 cup white wine

1 teaspoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons butter

#### Serving

Chopped parsley

Lemon wedges

Boiled new potatoes

1. For the onions, peel and slice the onions thinly. Place in a sauté pan with the oil and butter and season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderately high heat, stirring often, until deep golden. Remove from heat but leave in pan to reheat later.
2. For the salmon, season with salt and pepper. Heat the oil and butter in a sauté pan and add the salmon pieces without crowding them. Cook over moderately high heat to color salmon lightly. Turn and cook on other side to color lightly, for a total of about 8 minutes in all. Place the salmon on a heated platter and pour off cooking fat from pan.
3. Return pan to heat and add white wine. (Start reheating the onions now.) Allow the wine to reduce by about half, then off heat, add the lemon juice and butter, swirling it in.
4. Cover the salmon filets with the onions, pour over the sauce, and sprinkle with the chopped parsley. Surround with lemon wedges and boiled potatoes.