

Article written by Nick Malgieri about one of his first choices for "real Swiss food" - the Zeughauskeller and one of his delicious pastry recipes - Swiss Chocolate Mousse

Flying to Switzerland couldn't be easier than on Swiss International Air Lines. Daily flights from gateway cities in the United States all reach my favorite Swiss city of all – Zurich. Early morning arrivals in Kloten where the airport is situated will put you in the city in no time, whether you decide to cab it or take the fast train ride from the station right under the airport. And you'll arrive in time for a full day of business or sightseeing, whichever the purpose of your visit.

Zurich has a great sentimental attachment for me – it was the first place I visited outside the United States when I went to work there in the early seventies. Though I was actually working down the lake a bit in Horgen, a charming lakeside town, my days off were all spent exploring the considerable historic and gastronomic charms of Zurich.

Early on I learned which restaurants offer great value along with excellent food. I was interested in experiencing real Swiss food and through a process of trial and error and just plain good luck, I managed to find the best of these. One of my first choices for real Swiss food then and now is the Zeughauskeller. Right near Paradeplatz, considered by all good Zurich citizens as the center of the city, the Zeughauskeller occupies the site of a former arsenal, and there are even a few cannons suspended from the ceiling in the dining room, just to prove it. Here, you'll find the best of all traditional Zurich cuisine, including excellent sausages of all kinds, usually served with a tangy potato salad or Roesti, that buttery, golden cake of home-fried potatoes. The menu also features tender and aromatic Siedfleisch, or boiled beef, served hot with root vegetables in winter or cold in a salad during warmer weather. This is also THE place for Geschnetzeltes – shredded veal in a mushroom cream sauce, always served with Roesti, Zurich's most typical dish. If you're slimming, don't miss the Salatteller (salad plate), available at both lunch and dinner – a giant selection of assorted cooked and raw vegetable salads, my favorite lunch when I have been overindulging for a few days.

But perhaps what I like best about the Zeughauskeller is its convivial atmosphere. All the tables seat 6 or 8, so that couples or solitary guests are always seated at a table with others – not what we would expect by American standards, but fun, nonetheless. It's polite to greet your fellow diners with "Gruezi" (greetings) as you sit down and to wish them "En Guete" (short for Guten Appetit, or good appetite) as their food arrives. I've had enjoyable meals seated with restaurant guests from all over the world and almost all the cantons of Switzerland during more than thirty years of visiting the Zeughauskeller. Don't miss this Zurich landmark – it's just about a 15 minute walk from the train station, plus most of the trams that stop at the front of the train station on Bahnhofstrasse also stop at Paradeplatz, a few short steps from the restaurant.

Restaurant Zeughauskeller

Bahnhofstrasse 28a (near Paradeplatz)

CH-8001 Zurich

Phone from the US: 011 411 211 2690 (from within Switzerland, the number is 01 211 2690)

Website: www.zeughauskeller.ch

E-mail: infozeughauskeller.ch

Recipe: Swiss Chocolate Mousse

Here's an easy and light take on chocolate mousse that uses a little gelatin to bind it. Make sure to use only the best Swiss bittersweet chocolate for it.

Makes about 1 1/2 quarts mousse

2 cups heavy whipping cream, very cold

1 envelope unflavored gelatin

1/4 cup cold water

1 cup egg whites (about 7 or 8 from large eggs)

1 cup sugar

8 ounces Swiss bittersweet chocolate, melted and cooled

Chocolate shavings or berries for finishing

A glass bowl or individual glasses for serving

1. Whip cream until it holds a soft peak and refrigerate.
2. Sprinkle the gelatin on the cold water and allow to soften for 5 minutes.
3. Bring a saucepan of water to a boil and lower to a simmer. Combine the egg whites and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and place over the simmering water. Whisk gently until egg whites are hot and sugar is dissolved.
4. Scrape soaked gelatin into hot egg whites mixture and whisk in. Place on mixer and whip until cooled.
5. Quickly fold the chocolate into the meringue, then rewhip the cream if it has become liquid again and quickly fold in the cream.
6. Scrape into bowl or spoon into glasses and refrigerate several hours before serving.
7. Decorate with chocolate shavings or berries.