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A meal of sausages that changed the world

By the beginning of the 16th century the Church had reached an all-time low. The pope was powerhungry and needed a lot of money for his extravagant life style, his prestigious building projects and for his army. The method of financing the Vatican were rather dubious, though, and as a reaction, the Augustine monk Martin Luther tried to reform the church. It did not work; the attempted reforms became the Reformation.

The Swiss Reformation had different, more political, roots. Ulrich Zwingli, born in 1484 in Wildhaus into a politically leading family, became a priest in Glarus. He was vehemently opposed to the mercenary system. In Glarus, the ruling families had become rich because of the pensions the foreign powers, mainly France, paid to the magistrate for the right to recruit conscripts. Families were large, land was scarce, and so it was common to sign up with foreign powers. Some made it home and told tall stories and bragged with their loot; the ones who didn't make it home didn't tell stories.

When Zwingli was offered a position in Zurich, the Glarus magistrate was more than happy to get rid of him and his sermons. Zwingli preached against mercenarism in Zurich, too. But the economic situation in Zurich was different. Thanks to the ruling guilds and the position of the city the trades and commerce thrived and offered work to many.

Zwingli was in contact with the leading lights of the time and also read Luther's publications (remember: Printing had just been invented and made books and the thoughts in them much more accessible). Zwingli preached what he read in the original biblical texts; he was fluent in Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

In medieval times, fast time was universally observed throughout Europe. When the printer Froschauer invited him to a meal of sausages in the fast period he accepted the invitation – in the full knowledge and understanding that it was a demonstration against the traditions of the church and church laws he didn't see supported by biblical texts. The incident was duly reported to the magistrate. The more conservative Kleine Rat leaned towards punishing Zwingli, but the Grosse Rat supported Zwingli, as many members of the Grosse Rat themselves were in opposition to the old church rules.

Zwingli offered to defend his views in a public disputation. More than six hundred people, ordinary people and priests, attended, and after many hours of hot argumentation the Grosse Rat decided that Zwingli had won and should be encouraged to go on preaching his views founded on the bible and not on church tradition. From then on, the Reformation in Zurich could not be halted. Zwingli was enough of a statesman to try and introduce changes gradually, but they still came as a shock to many, and it wasn't all plain sailing. More about this another time. *tb*

"Sausage task force" cannot help cervelat

Swiss sausage lovers face the bleak prospect of an inferior version of the iconic cervelat unless the ban of a key ingredient is lifted, Swiss meat producers warn.

An exhaustive search by a "cervelat task force" has failed to find a foolproof alternative to the Brazilian cows' intestines that encase the nation's favourite sausage. Brazilian skins are the only product versatile enough to provide a top quality gourmet experience when eating the sausage both raw and cooked. But im-



ports were banned last year in response to fears over Mad Cow Disease.

The industry had pinned its hopes on scientists finding an alternative source of skins, but none of the three identified back-up solutions – artificial collagen, Uruguayan cows' intestines and pigs' intestines – matched the same high quality. Other options, such as seaweed skin, were quickly discarded. Whereas some artificial skins tasted "mildly rancid", others were considered to have an unacceptable colour.

One immediate concern is that some manufacturers could run out of Brazilian cow intestine reserves before this summer's Euro 2008 football tournament, co-hosted by Switzerland and Austria. Other producers have enough to last the year but the patchy supply has driven the price up by 30 per cent in the past few months.

The Swiss eat 160 million cervelat sausages every year. Inside the skins is stuffed meat from 120'000 cows and 360'000 pigs, 90 per cent of which is Swiss. They make up around 30 per cent of the Swiss meat industry's sausage output.

The cervelat is eaten raw, fried or grilled.

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