

# Zuger Kirschtorte is 100!

By Nick Malgieri

Left to right: Café at Trichler in Zug with partition that mimics the top of the Zuger Kirschtorte; Newspaper announcement December 23, 1915 - first mention of Zuger Kirschtorte; Bruno and Hans Heini at the opening of the renovated Treichler; 1922 advertising poster for Zuger Kirschtorte (translation: "On every holiday table"); Finishing the top of the cake in the distinctive lattice pattern; Prize medals from the 1920s and 30s won by the Zuger Kirschtorte; Hans and Bruno Heini in the Kirsch tasting bar at Treichler in Zug; Salesroom at Treichler in Zug, birthplace of the Zuger Kirschtorte.





With four pastry shops in Lucerne and another in nearby Zug, brothers Bruno and Hans Heini are riding the crest of the Swiss love of all things sweet. While they both trained as confectioners, pastry chefs and bread bakers, Bruno Heini went on to study marketing at Cornell University while Hans has always been drawn to the production side. Their parents, Hans and Annelies Heini, started the business in a single shop in 1957 back when Lucerne was a much smaller and less cosmopolitan town. In 1983, they retired to sunny Ticino in the southern part of Switzerland, leaving their sons in charge of a shop that quickly grew into a small pastry empire.

Recently I had an opportunity to visit their latest venture, a full renovation of Treichler, a classic Swiss pastry shop in Zug, about 20 minutes by car northeast of Lucerne. Zug and the countryside around it are known for excellent Kirsch, while the town itself is a world center of investment banking. But Zug's most famous achievement is the Zuger Kirschtorte, a delicate cake composed of thin almond meringue layers (the Swiss refer to them as japonais), Kirsch buttercream, sponge cake soaked with Kirsch syrup, all topped with a dusting of confectioners' sugar that has a lattice pattern cut into it. Some versions leave the top layer of meringue uncovered so that the cake top reveals the spiral piping of the almond meringue, but the original one sported a dusting of confectioners' sugar and a lattice pattern etched in with the back of a knife.

Back in 1915, Zuger Kirschtorte was already being made by a Zug pastry chef called Heiri Hoehn at his shop on Alpenstrasse in the center of the town. In 1919, Hoehn moved his shop to Bundesplatz (town square) where the current Treichler shop remains. In 1943, Hoehn sold the business and the Zuger Kirschtorte name to Jacques Treichler in whose

family the business stayed until bought by the Heini brothers in 2004.

The sale brought about a 2,000,000 Swiss Franc renovation of both the original Treichler premises and the nearby production facility. Two additions are standouts: One wall of the sales room/café is a small museum of Zuger Kirschtorte lore and artifacts, while the second room behind the sales counter is dedicated to a Kirsch bar that offers over 70 different kinds of Kirsch, mostly from Zug and the nearby Rigi region also famous for the quality of its fruit brandies.

Today Treichler is a busy pastry shop and café catering to Zug residents and a smattering of tourists. Like other Heini establishments, Treichler serves an assortment of cakes; sweet pastries; cookies and petits fours; plus breakfast pastries; sandwiches; and from late morning to closing a selection of soups, salads, and other light savory dishes. Zug is part of Innerschweiz or Interior Switzerland and true to tradition Treichler also serves Zvieriplaetli, or savory snack plates named for 4 p.m. tea time, when they're meant to be consumed.

One striking feature as you enter the shop is an entire wall encased in glass with several exhibits that function as a Zuger Kirschtorte museum. Photos of the original owners and workers are exhibited with bakery tools and equipment, crockery from the then tea room, newspaper ads and posters featuring the cake, classic Kirsch bottles, and award medals won by the Kirschtorte at various international exhibitions. On the left as you enter is the pastry shop's original mixer which the manufacturer donated back to the shop after the renovation and the opening of the museum.

Bruno Heini told me the story of buying the business from Jacques Treichler's daughter-in-law: "I first stopped at Treichler in 1986 with my wife for a coffee and a taste of the famous cake because I had read that Zuger Kirschtorte had been invented here. Over the years, I went back a minimum of 25 times to taste the cake, and each time I spoke with Frau Treichler and asked her if she had any plans to sell the business. Finally in 2004, she came to my table in the café and announced that she would be happy to sell the shop to me." Heini also recounted that Frau Treichler had more than 50 offers for the business but she had decided to sell it to him because he was the only one who had ever bothered to taste the cake!

Zug's tourist organization has picked up on the sweet anniversary and until December 2015 visitors will be able to follow the "Kirschtorte Mile," a series of five illustrated kiosks throughout the train station neighborhood. First stop: Zug, or "cherry town" at the train station. Next comes Treichler, the birthplace of the cake. The three other stops illustrate the story of local Kirsch, the presentation of a Zuger Kirschtorte to Pope Francis by one of the Swiss Guards (some of them come from Zug), and finally a closing stop that looks toward the future of the legendary cake. The "mile" also includes several other Zug pastry shops that belong to the Zuger Kirschtorte Gesellschaft (Association) that also includes shops in nearby Baar and Cham, suburbs of Zug.

After the anniversary, Treichler plans to launch another exhibit dedicated to Audrey Hepburn, who lived for a time right before the filming of "Breakfast at Tiffany's" at the nearby Buergenstock resort. The story goes that the director had requested Hepburn to have some dental adjustments and found a dentist in Zug to treat her. Hepburn made about 10 visits to the Zug dentist (his son was her driver), and on every visit she brought home a Zuger Kirschtorte from Treichler. An aged Zug resident who was in domestic service in Audrey Hepburn's home was given one of her unwanted dresses that will be the centerpiece of the Zuger Kirschtorte museum's next big exhibit, "Breakfast at Treichler."

