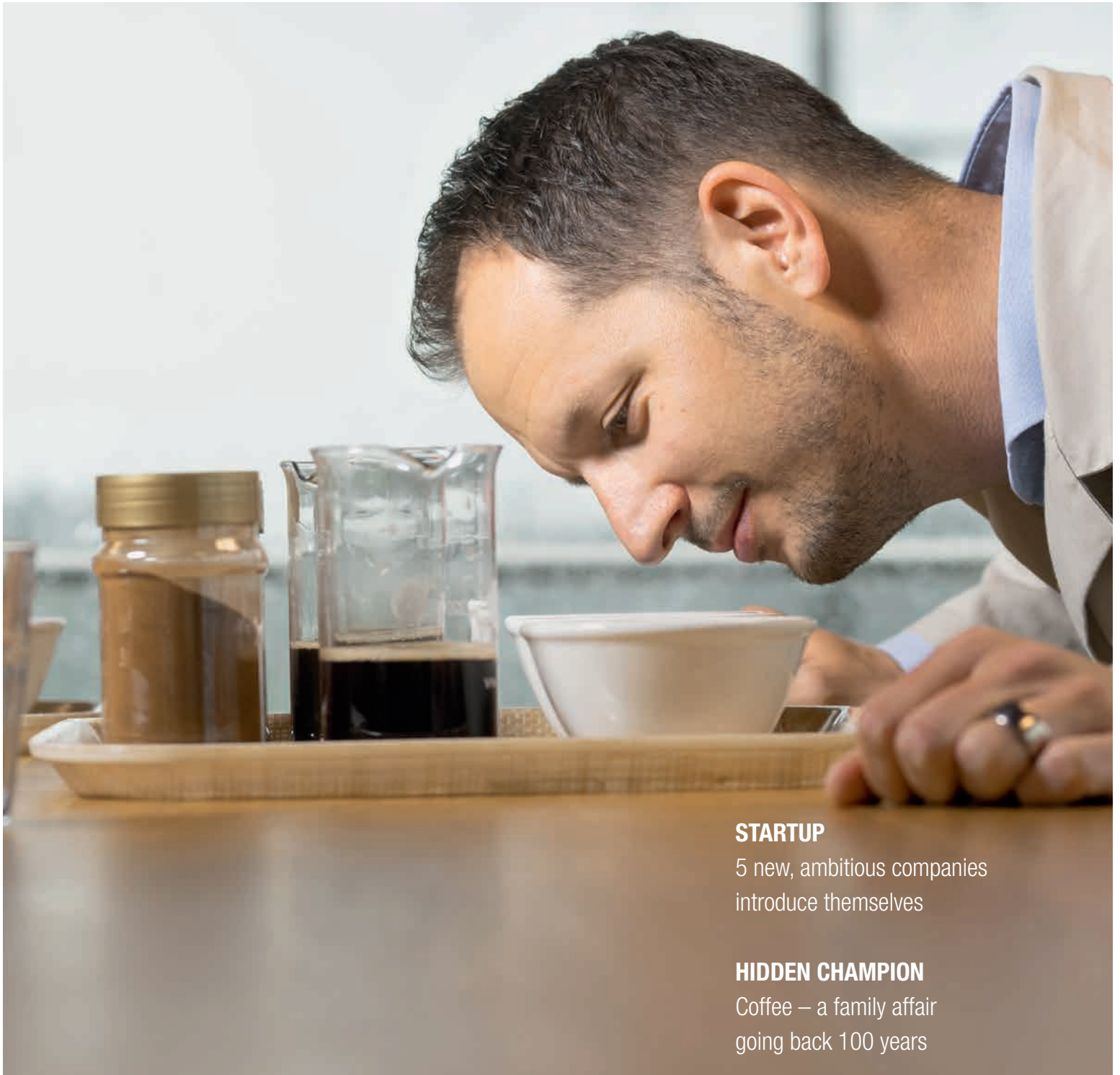




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**STARTUP**

5 new, ambitious companies  
introduce themselves

**HIDDEN CHAMPION**

Coffee – a family affair  
going back 100 years

**DIGITALIS**

The coffee business goes digital:  
smart vending machines for tastier  
food and drinks

**LIVING / CULTURE / TOURISM**

Provence blooms in the Oberaargau

# Bernese coffee companies have a good nose for business

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## Dear reader,

Are you drinking a cup of coffee while reading this? Great – because this issue is all about this popular drink! If you're wondering what the connection is between coffee and Bern, just think of companies like Rychiger AG, Alupak and Help Tec Automation, who have and still do play a key role in the success of the coffee capsule. Their successes and achievements have made them world renowned. But there are other players who have little or nothing to do with capsules. In our cover story, Bernese coffee expert Professor Chahan Yeretzian gives us an introduction to the subject and reveals areas in which other Bernese companies have written coffee history. Elsewhere, David Ingold, Head of Coffee Extracts Development at HACO, knocks the bad image of instant coffee on the head. But that's not all: this issue is brimming with plenty of other great reads.

Adrian Iten, for example, proves that the American dream can come true in Switzerland, too. This Bernese café owner has built up a small coffee empire. Find out in our CEO Portrait how his laid-back attitude has helped him.

For once, our Hidden Champion is not particularly hidden, but it is very typical of Bern. It is the family business Blasercafé, which combines a roastery with a trading company, Blaser Trading AG, and which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. We interviewed CEO Marc Käppeli and Head of Communications Michael Blaser to find out what makes Blasercafé special and why good customer service is vital.

Coffee and food vending machines – we all know and love (or hate) them! But in recent decades they have undergone a transformation from purely mechanical dispensers to sophisticated, high-tech devices. We asked Selecta AG in Kirchberg and Caffetta AG in Moosseedorf why digitalization plays such a crucial role in this transformation.

In our Startup Parade we present some exciting startups linked to the coffee bean and its preparation.

I hope you will find our magazine an inspiring read – and enjoy your coffee!

Yours truly,  
Dr. Sebastian Friess  
Head of the Office of Economic Affairs  
President, Bern Economic Development Agency

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# Bernese coffee companies have a good nose for business

Although we don't grow coffee here in Switzerland, our country has been instrumental in shaping the coffee business. Not only are we a trading hub for green coffee, but Switzerland is also the birthplace of a number of revolutionary innovations in which businesses in the Canton of Bern play an important role.

When the alarm goes off in the morning, the only glimmer of hope for many is the first cup of coffee of the day. Culture, class, or gender notwithstanding, coffee has become the most popular drink in the world right after water and tea. The average Swiss person drinks about three cups a day, putting us right up in seventh place on the global leaderboard of coffee consumption. Coffee came to Europe from its homeland, Ethiopia, via Arabia in around 1650. Despite having initially been viewed with suspicion as being a "Muslim drink," as evidenced by a German nursery rhyme at the time, its invigorating effect overrode any concerns, and it soon became a popular beverage. But given its exorbitant price tag, it was the exclusive domain of the nobility until about 1800; for many years, the general population had to make do with substitutes such as chicory "coffee." But prices began to fall after 1800, allowing ordinary people to enjoy coffee too, and its success has been unstoppable ever since.

The drink has also cast its spell over Professor Chahan Yeretzian. Born in Armenia, Prof. Yeretzian grew up in Bern and studied chemistry at the University of Bern. He got into coffee while working for Nestlé, with a fascination that has never waned. "It's like a personal resonance for me, and I'm lucky to have been able to build my career around it." According to Yeretzian, coffee reflects all areas that are important in life: "Starting with the people who grow the coffee, it encompasses subjects such as sustainability, agriculture, technology, genetics, sensory science, economy and trade, psychology, sociology, and much more besides – there's no subject that isn't also reflected in the value chain and in the everyday life of coffee."

Although he achieved great things with Nestlé and Nespresso, Prof. Yeretzian wanted to put his knowledge to even better general use and



develop it independently. He was given the opportunity to do so at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), where he set up a Coffee Excellence Center that has gone on to become the world's leading center of coffee research. Alongside that, he also runs a consultancy firm in Bern, the Swiss Coffee Alliance (see box p. 7). "My aim is to bundle my knowledge and make it available to anyone interested in coffee. This is something I find particularly important here in Switzerland, where there are so many different companies in the coffee sector."

## More coffee than chocolate

Among these coffee companies are all the green coffee traders who handle 70 to 80 percent of the world's coffee trade. In addition to the green coffee traders, the major players in the Swiss coffee business are the coffee importers, the coffee roasters, the coffee machine manufacturers, the retailers, and the food and beverage industry. This industry is estimated to account for just under one percent of Switzerland's GDP (exact figures are not available). In 2021 Switzerland imported more than 192,000 tonnes of green coffee, of which just under 109,000 tonnes were processed in Switzerland and re-exported as instant coffee, decaffeinated coffee, or roasted coffee. Domestic consumption amounted to around 78,500 tonnes of green coffee. According to the UN, Switzerland was the world's largest coffee exporter in value terms in 2021, with exports worth USD 3.6 billion. This also makes coffee – and not chocolate or cheese, for example – Switzerland's most important export commodity.

The coffee trade itself plays a very minor role in the Canton of Bern, which Prof. Yeretzian puts down to its economic structure: "Trading is a commercial business. But Bern is characterized by family businesses that are very emotionally connected to their



## ARABICA AND ROBUSTA

Two types of coffee are grown commercially: *Coffea arabica* and *Coffea canephora*, better known as Arabica and Robusta.

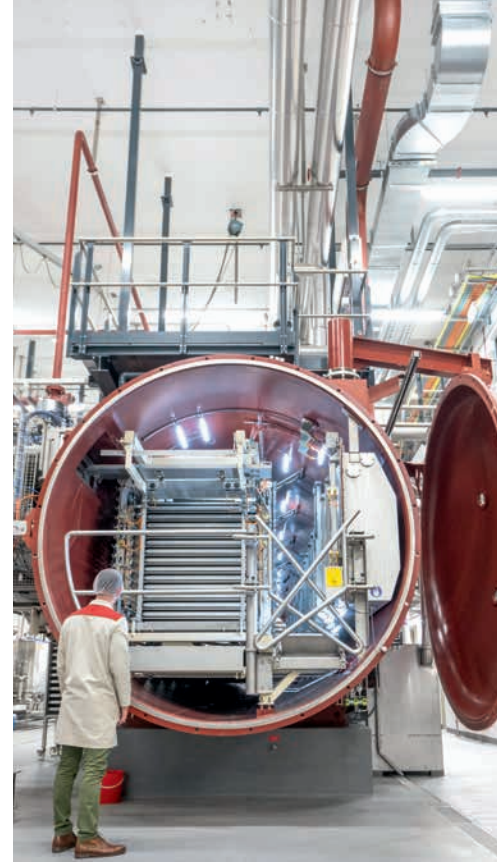
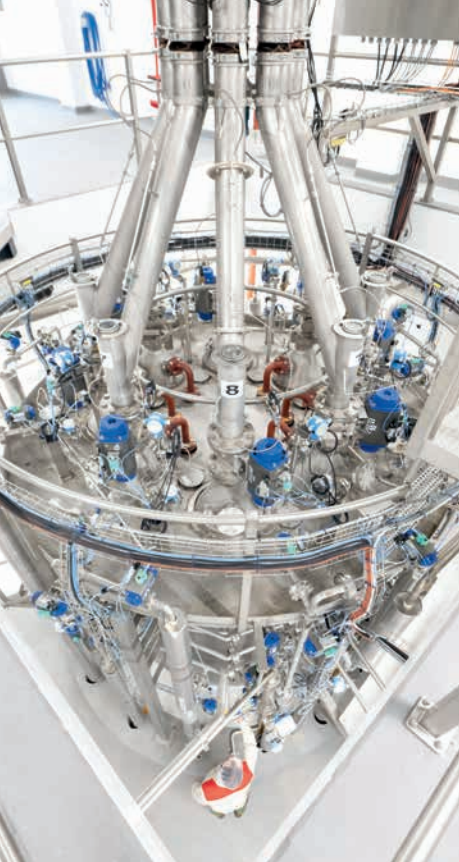


## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BLEND

The coffee experts at HACO develop the perfect blend for their customers.

"There's no subject that isn't also reflected in the value chain and in the everyday life of coffee."

Prof. Chahan Yeretzian



### FREEZE-DRYING

The brewed coffee (left) is concentrated into a thick coffee extract (center), then frozen and granulated. In a vacuum (right), the ice crystals in the frozen coffee granules "sublimate" from solid to vapor, leaving behind highly soluble, golden-brown granules. *ut hic totae magnimus moloribus.*

products." A typical example is Blasercafé which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Also typical is the part played by Bernese companies in one of the most important inventions in the history of coffee: the coffee capsule. The capsule itself was invented for Nestlé by Éric Favre, leading famously to the founding of Nespresso. To get the coffee into the capsules, Nespresso tapped into the expertise of another traditional Bernese company, Rychiger AG, a world leading manufacturer of packaging machines dating back to 1918. Besides Rychiger, other Bernese companies were also involved in the success story that is the coffee capsule: the die-cut capsules are produced by Alupak in Belp; the filling equipment comes from Help Tec Automation; and Helbling in Liebefeld develops capsule coffee machines.

### High quality instant coffee

Another innovative Bernese player in the coffee business can be found in the Bern suburb of Gümligen: HACO, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, is known first and foremost for its individual and innovative food products such as soups, sauces, ready meals, and spices. But this company is also the foremost Swiss manufacturer of high-quality instant coffee.

For a long time, high quality and instant coffee were concepts that didn't sit well together. Even today, instant coffee tends to be looked down on in Switzerland. "The Swiss associate it with camping, skiing vacations, and Carnival. Luckily, it is perceived differently in other countries," says David Ingold, head of Coffee

Extracts Development at HACO. "It is very popular in the UK and Eastern Europe, for example. In some places in Eastern Europe, people even bring a jar of instant coffee instead of a bottle of good wine when they are invited to dinner." Ingold and his six-strong team produce customized coffee extracts for their customers, which include well-known coffee companies such as Starbucks, Illy, and Lavazza. "We develop these tailor-made solutions by working closely with the customer." Proximity to its partners is a key factor for the success of HACO's B2B and co-manufacturing business models. Having restyled itself as the "House of Coffee," it plans to intensify this focus and raise its profile in the world of coffee even further.

A specialty is the unique process used by HACO AG to produce granules that are visually different from conventional instant coffee. "We are able to produce a dust-free, two-color product with well-defined, sharp edges. Of course, we could also copy market leader Nestlé's product, but our partners usually want to differentiate themselves from them," the 41-year-old says. Setting themselves apart from the competition starts with the production facilities, as Ingold explains: "Besides working with the necessary basic technologies, we can customize our customers' products using special techniques. Our engineers develop the majority of these processes in house." They mainly determine the aroma profile and the body. Another of HACO's specialties is Microgrind, in which roasted coffee is cryogenically ground to a microfine consistency with particles that are practically indiscernible.



**"Besides working with the necessary basic technologies, we can customize our customers' products using special techniques. Our engineers develop the majority of these processes in house."**

David Ingold, Head of Coffee Extracts Development at HACO



### THE ROAST

In addition to the origin and preparation of the beans, the flavor of a coffee blend is to a large extent determined by the roast.



### DISTINCTIVE

Coffee granules from HACO are two-tone, dust-free, and sharp-edged, which sets them apart visually from other coffee extracts.



HACO has been producing freeze-dried coffee extracts for its B2B customers since 1973. HACO is boosting its profile in the supplier landscape with its rebrand as the “House of Coffee”.

They are then incorporated into the soluble extracts. “When the consumer makes the coffee, they have the taste experience of freshly roasted coffee in the nose and on the palate. An absolute premium product,” Ingold enthuses.

### Two facilities to meet growing demand

The company's coffee division has a facility in Gümliigen and another in Malaysia. The Gümliigen factory produces freeze-dried coffee (see diagram), liquid coffee extracts for industrial use in ready-to-drink or mocha products, for example, and spray-dried products. But its center of excellence for spray-dried coffee is its facility in Malaysia. There, the products are mainly used in coffee premixes (3-in-1) that are very popular in Asia. The facility also has its own roastery that roasts beans for customers such as Starbucks, for use in their outlets in the Asia-Pacific region. The Swiss team has an advisory role in Malaysia, ensuring the transfer of know-how. The Swissness factor should not be underestimated, according to Ingold: “The Swiss Made label represents reliability, stability, and quality the world over. In the sensitive sector of food, it's all the more important to have a reliable partner, as our customers know.” The Swissness factor, the professional workforce, their accumulated know-how, and, not least, their good relations with the authorities were key reasons why HACO invested in its Gümliigen base when the factory reached its capacity limits in 2018. The new production facility has doubled HACO's capacity for freeze-dried coffee, enabling it to meet the growing demand for its exquisite coffee products.

### Swiss Coffee Alliance

Through his Bernese consultancy firm, Prof. Chahan Yeretzian advises customers right across the whole value chain, from farmers, traders, and roasters, to product developers, coffee producers, and machine manufacturers, right through to retailers and consumers. With its technological and scientific expertise, his team helps to optimize business processes, improves product life cycle management, and advises customers on the development and market launch of new solutions. The Swiss Coffee Alliance has first-class partnerships in research and development and a global network of multifunctional coffee experts, making it uniquely placed to initiate and support collaborations and projects from the initial idea and design to technology, manufacturing, and customer service. Current projects are focused on areas such as coffee extraction, new types of freshness management and packaging, upcycling, and new forms of trade.

[www.swisscoffeealliance.ch](http://www.swisscoffeealliance.ch)

### Instant coffee

**Soluble coffee, coffee powder, or instant coffee** refers to dried coffee extract that is dissolved in water or other liquids to make a coffee drink. Among those credited with inventing the process are Alphonse Allias, David Strang, and Satori Kato. The foundation stone for its industrial production was laid in 1938 by Nestlé, against the backdrop of a surplus of coffee beans in Brazil, when the Brazilian government asked the still young but already well-known Swiss company to develop a process to preserve the surplus. After eight years of laboratory and development work, Nestlé presented the result – Nescafé – which went on to revolutionize the instant coffee market. Today, Nescafé is available in a range of coffee flavors, and the brand has become one of the most valuable and important in Switzerland.

To produce instant coffee, green coffee is roasted, ground, extracted, and concentrated into a thick coffee extract. This is then spray or freeze dried to remove the water. Compared to spray drying, freeze drying is gentler and the final product is altogether more aromatic.

# STARTUP

# UP

## BREATH OF FRESH AIR



### Boostbar

Boostbar is set on revolutionizing the work break experience for companies of all sizes.

From good coffee, healthy snacks, and beverages to premium meals and even a virtual food truck, the startup provides sustainable, healthy solutions that appeal to everyone. Boostbar has a tailor-made solution for every situation, from top floor to shop floor and from coworking space to control room.

Boostbar modules can be combined into a kiosk, a coffee corner, or even a 24/7 cafeteria to suit every need. When developing its products, the startup listens closely to customer needs. To enable it to meet those needs, all work break solutions are tech-backed: intelligent, monitored with telemetry equipment, and with integrated payment options. In short: all staff catering bases are covered from a single source.



### Jovi's gluten-free bakery

There are far too few gluten-free bakeries in Switzerland, as Jovana Beslac, herself a sufferer of coeliac disease, discovered on her travels. As part of her bachelor's degree course she decided to work on her idea for a gluten-free bakery and turned her dream into reality – with no training in baking at all but with copious amounts of courage and enthusiasm. Based on a process of trial and error, she worked with a master baker to develop her new recipes using natural, gluten-free ingredients such as rice, corn, buckwheat, flaxseed and chestnut flours, as well as other more exotic seeds and grains like quinoa and teff. These are turned into baked goods such as baguettes, pretzels, fondue bread and carrot bread, as well as sweet pastries such as amaretti, *Russenzopf* and *Schoggibröttli*. The products are available from the bakery in Bern's Mattenhof quarter and from the online shop. Cakes, tarts and quiches are only available from the bakery.

Ideas, new technologies and inquiring minds constantly inspire new business ideas that give rise to startups. We present five examples in our startup parade.



## FACTS

### Startup stage

Up and running

### The inventors

Pascal Uffer and Johannes Lermann, two old hands in the catering industry

Zurich / Bern

[www.boostbar.ch](http://www.boostbar.ch)

### Startup stage

Up and running

### The inventors

A go-getter who has turned her weakness into her strength

Bern

[www.jovis-glutenfreiebaeckerei.ch](http://www.jovis-glutenfreiebaeckerei.ch)





**WomenCraft**

WomenCraft is a fair trade certified social startup for hand-woven home decor items based in Switzerland, Tanzania, and the USA. All products are made of natural grasses, dried banana tree bark, and upcycled threads from local grain sacks.

The stylish, sustainable baskets and home accessories are sold to over 100 partner stores around the world. Since 2020, the weavers have also been able to sell their products direct through the WomenCraft online shop in Switzerland – in other words, cutting out the middleman. By providing access to the global market, WomenCraft helps women from rural parts of the conflict-ridden tri-border area of Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania improve their economic opportunities for the long term.



**Quimbaya**

Quimbaya is a Swiss startup with a Colombian heart that produces high-quality coffee in Nariño, Colombia, and distributes it in Bern. Founder Maite Amrein-Díaz, who herself grew up on a coffee farm, is not only passionate about the quality of the coffee but, even more importantly, about the conditions in which it is produced: Quimbaya enables small farmers in conflict regions to market their coffees directly, offering them not only a fair price but also free technical assistance, training on coffee quality and organic farming, and access to micro loans. Its aim is to ensure fairer distribution of value-added through its own sustainable trade channels, thereby improving the farmers' quality of life. In other words, ensuring a better future with high-quality coffee.

The products from this fair trade partnership are available from the online shop. Besides coffee, they also sell cocoa, chocolate, panela (unrefined whole cane sugar), and aji (dried chillies from the Amazon). In addition, the company offers courses, catering and company events.



**TKM**

Thuner Kaffeemaschinenfabrik (TKM) manufactures innovative coffee machines for professional and private use – and very successfully, too. In 2021, their TONE Touch 03 coffee and tea maker was named Best New Product by the Specialty Coffee Association. The filter coffee machine is the first to automatically adjust the amount of water and the water temperature during the brewing process. This improves the extraction results, producing a better cup of coffee. What's more, with the innovative, boiler-free water heating system, energy consumption can be cut by up to 90 percent. It is this combination of smart design and innovative technical solutions that makes this startup stand out.

<b>Startup stage</b> Up and running
<b>The inventors</b> The Four Musketeers of Social Entrepreneurship, aka Kara Hook and Heidi Christ (USA), Lorenza Marzo (Tanzania) and Ueli Litscher (Switzerland)
<b>Bern, USA, Tanzania</b>
<b>www.womencraft.ch</b>

<b>Startup stage</b> Up and running
<b>The inventors</b> A coffee fan who wants to make the world a better place
<b>Bern, Nariño</b>
<b>www.quimbayacafe.ch</b>

<b>Startup stage</b> Up and running
<b>The inventors</b> Thomas Liebe and Markus Widmer, two passionate inventors with a sustainable conscience, both of them obsessed with producing the perfect cup of coffee
<b>Thun</b>
<b>www.tkm.coffee/Kaffeemaschinen</b>

# The art of doing

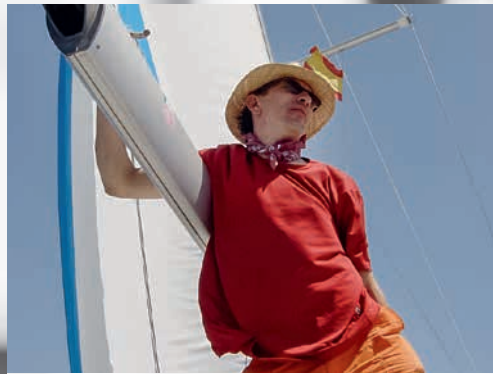
Adrian Iten has been many things: He trained as a chef, has cooked at restaurants including the Plaza Athénée in New York, and was a journalist for the food service trade magazine *Salz&Pfeffer*. But at heart he is one thing above all else: a doer, a true entrepreneur. When his brother Benno said, “Come on, let’s do something,” within the space of just two years he was serving coffee to his customers at a custom-made counter in his own coffee bar, Adrianos. Today, Adrian Iten is CEO of a small coffee empire.



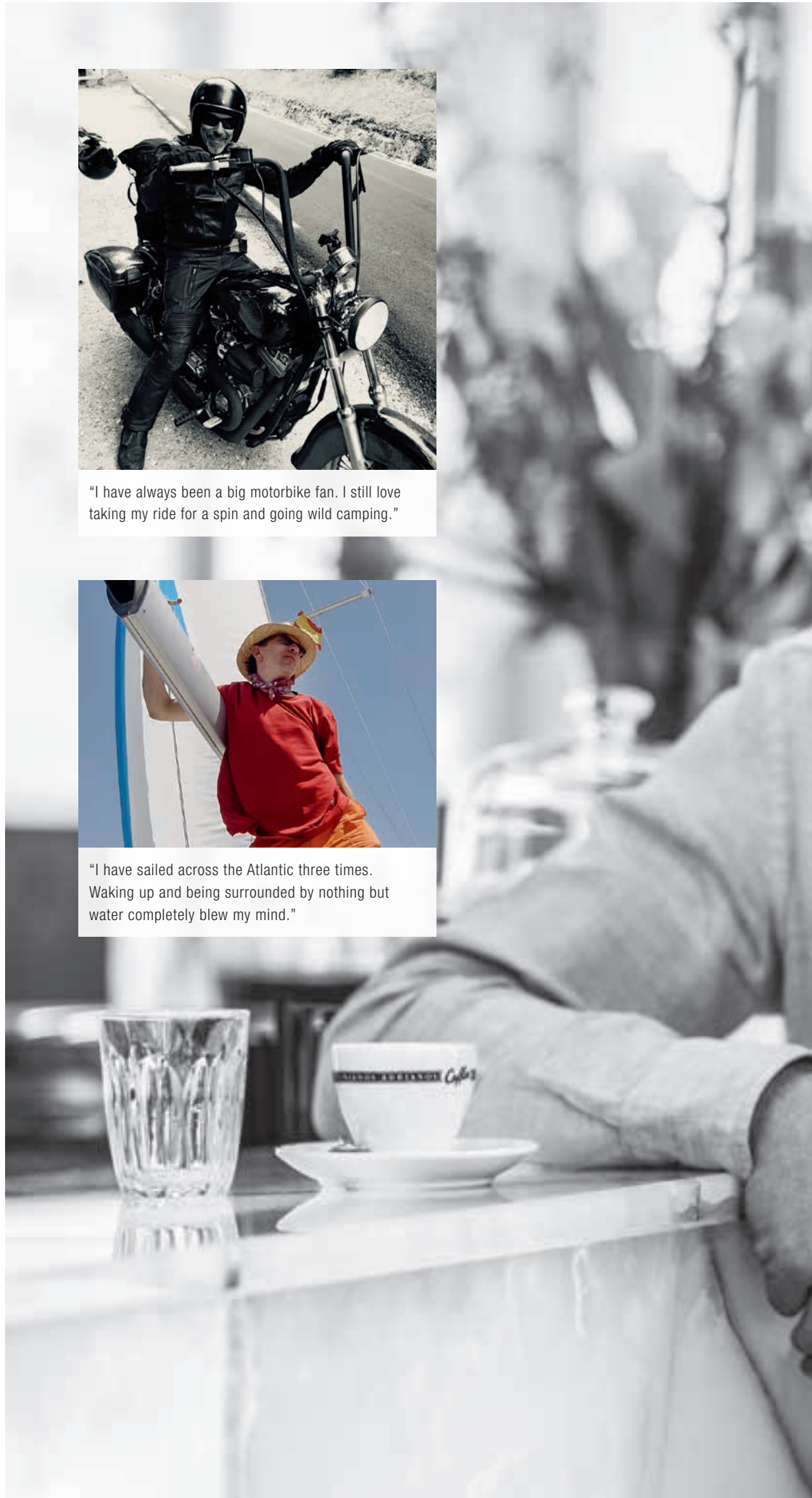
“I have always been a big motorbike fan. I still love taking my ride for a spin and going wild camping.”

## The boss’s bosses

I knew exactly what I couldn’t do. Work in a large company or institution, for instance. So I started my own business and I now have three bosses: our customers, our staff, and our shareholders. And to keep our customers and shareholders happy, I must focus on our staff. I used to want to do too much on my own – until I realized that I have people around me who can help me implement my ideas and get pleasure out of that. So it’s my job to motivate and inspire them. From my perspective, that works best if they are allowed to develop their strengths and personalities and live a healthy error culture. We have a lively discussion culture in our management, and the five of us always make decisions together. For instance, when we called one of our coffee bars the Colonial Bar, we triggered a veritable shitstorm. At first I thought the objections were small-minded, but the women on our management board told me: “Adrian, you can’t do that!” And today it’s the VERSA Bar.



“I have sailed across the Atlantic three times. Waking up and being surrounded by nothing but water completely blew my mind.”





“When I was 30, I would never have dreamt I would still be so passionate about my business at 55 and that doing it well would still give me so much pleasure. In fact, I’m living my greatest dream!”

“When I do something, it has to be different.”

## Thinking differently

Thinking differently is important. It’s a key part of who we are, especially at Adrianos. In the food service industry, we are plagued by the fact that there is far too much copying going on. Take desserts, for instance. There are 80s desserts, 90s desserts... everyone always does the same thing. When I do something, it has to be different. So no prosecco but champagne, no Coca-Cola but an alternative cola. It’s more or less drilled into me: having your own profile, standing up for what you believe in, and not getting lost in the crowd. In short: being Adrianos.

## Smoke-free smoker

Even before the smoking ban in restaurants came in, Adrianos was smoke-free – we were the first bar in Bern to go that way. Even though I smoke myself. I had no idea if it would work or whether it would spell the end of my business. I announced it as a trial, given that I’m slightly hesitant about almost every decision we make. But for me it was predictable that restaurants and cafes would go smoke-free. Fortunately, we have the arcades here in Bern, which enabled us to double our sales area. Then we publicized the fact that we had converted, and I promptly got calls from cafe and restaurant owners in Valais asking whether they too should go smoke-free. But everyone has to make their own decisions on that.

## ... and relax!

I used to work my socks off whenever we launched a new project. That would always be followed by a period of idleness. I have a tendency to be lazy and I enjoy the good things in life, which means I have to be very efficient the rest of the time. But then I went to a mindfulness seminar because that’s supposed to be healthy. That made me realize I was getting things done as quickly as possible so that I had time afterwards. Then I asked myself, time for what? Now I’m at a point where I get pleasure out of the process of doing something and taking the time to do it. Now I live more in a rhythm of making an effort and relaxing. In fact, I have discovered the art of doing.

# Coffee – a family affair going back 100 years

Today, Blasercafé is one of the most well-known coffee roasteries in Switzerland. The company, which consists of the roastery Blaser Café AG and the Blaser Trading AG, was founded by Walter and Cécile Blaser in Zurich in 1922 and moved to Bern in 1929. CEO Marc Käppeli and Head of Communications Michael Blaser tell us how Blasercafé has become a major player in the coffee business.

The development of the Blasercafé coffee trading business is a true success story. In 1922, Walter Blaser and his wife Cécile founded a coffee business in Zurich with an attached coffee bar named Cécile. By 1929 the entrepreneurial young couple were already in search of larger premises, which they found in Bern. In 1981, their green coffee department became Blaser Trading AG and the roastery became Blaser Café AG. The family business is currently run by the fourth generation. Besides coffee trading, Blasercafé is heavily focused on catering, providing a comprehensive customer service. Quality and sustainability are the key criteria for the coffees it buys.

**In 2019 Blasercafé won the coveted accolade of Swiss Roaster of the Year, an award presented by the well-known *Crema* magazine. What makes Blasercafé special in comparison with other coffee roasters?**

Marc Käppeli: “We are personally involved in the coffee market on a daily basis and cultivate long-standing relationships. So we have our finger firmly on the pulse of developments in the market, and we also share our knowledge with international and national specialists. All this enables us to constantly develop new products and applications. We are also able to offer our catering customers custom blends, and we know and look after our customers personally.”



“We know the route the beans take from plantation to cup. Mainly because we trade green coffee ourselves.”

Marc Käppeli, CEO Blasercafé



Giuliano Bartoli roasting a batch: “It’s not just the controllable parameters such as time and temperature that determine the success of a good roast; it also takes sensitivity and the ability to pick precisely the right moment.”



For a cappuccino, the type of milk you use is important.



To ensure a perfect-tasting cup of coffee, the coffee machine must be properly adjusted.

Michael Blaser: "Unlike small roasteries that may have only been around for ten years or so, our expertise is based on 100 years of experience. That starts with buying the right product and roasting and blending the coffee, and goes right through to our baristas and coffee courses and, last but not least, serving the coffee in our Rösterei Kaffee und Bar outlets."

#### So how do you become a coffee roaster?

MK: "You learn on the job. As a founding member of the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe, we use their training program, which includes modules such as Barista – coffee preparation – Green Coffee and Roasting. But roasting machines are all very different: no two machines are the same, and there are many different roasting methods. Roasting is an art in itself and requires a lot of attention and precision. At Blaser, every roasting profile is individually tailored and the quality is constantly monitored throughout the entire process, from green coffee bean to cup."

#### What are your sales markets and who are your customers?

MK: "We operate right across Switzerland, but we are increasingly becoming more regional and local – not least because there are new roasters everywhere. But our main focus is still on catering, which accounts for 40 percent of our business. Around 30 percent of our coffee is exported abroad. We received a boost in our online business as a result of the pandemic: it brought us new private customers, as has our trendy Rösterei Kaffee und Bar which we opened in Bern 2014 and now has three outlets in the city. We also offer customers co-labeling with Blasercafé."

MB: "Blasercafé can also be enjoyed on board SWISS flights or on the train. Airline caterers account for around 15 percent of our sales."



"Unlike small roasters that may have only been around for ten years or so, our expertise is based on 100 years of experience."

Michael Blaser,  
Head of Communications Blasercafé

#### Coffee courses

Blaser's coffee courses are tailored primarily to catering professionals and coffee experts. But they also run a range of coffee courses for individual coffee lovers, such as their Home Barista course. The course program is a combination of specially developed Blasercafé courses and courses from the SCA Coffee Skills Program, covering four categories: Introduction, Barista, Green Coffee and Sensory. The coffee courses are held at the Blaser training center at Güterstrasse 6 in Bern.

[www.blasercafe.ch/en/coffee-courses](http://www.blasercafe.ch/en/coffee-courses)

#### You trade green coffee through Blaser Trading AG.

##### Do you buy directly from the producers?

MK: "We know the route our beans take from plantation to cup – mainly because we trade green coffee ourselves through Blaser Trading and roast around 1,500 tonnes at our Güterstrasse site in Bern. We buy the coffee from our exporters, many of whom are also the producers or cooperatives of anything up to several hundred small coffee farmers. We buy the coffee pre-washed or dried and graded by size, packed in 60 to 70 kg jute sacks, or in big bags that can fill an 18 to 20 tonne container."

MB: "We source our green coffee from long-standing suppliers who sell certified sustainable coffee. Brazil is our biggest supplier, and we have a lot of roastery customers in Italy."

#### You are committed to providing good customer service.

##### How does that manifest itself?

MK: "We have an excellent team of sales representatives who provide comprehensive support for our catering customers. They don't only need the product itself but also support in many areas. For example, they might want to know how to adjust the grinder. Or they ask for advice on how to serve coffee to 40 indoor and 30 outdoor customers. And if the foam collapses, they call on our experience to find out whether it's down to the cup or the machine. This need for advice has grown enormously, and this is where our unique expertise and experienced personnel really come into their own. In addition, we also offer coffee courses at various levels for the catering industry. These are extremely popular, and in fact increasingly with private individuals, too."

# The coffee business goes digital: smart vending machines for tastier food and drinks

Selecta AG in Kirchberg (BE) and Caffetta AG in Moosseedorf (BE) specialize in superior quality coffee and vending machine catering for people on the go. The two companies have similar business models but different strategies: Selecta operates across Europe, while Caffetta focuses on the Bern region.

## Selecta: from garage-based business to billion euro group

Selecta was founded in 1957 by Basel-born Joseph Jeger. Having originally started out as a one-man business, it has grown over the decades into a group of companies with a total of 7,000 employees. Today Selecta is seen as Europe's leading provider of high-quality vending machine food solutions and coffee services. It has around 27,000 vending machines in operation in Switzerland alone, of which 16,000 are coffee and drinks machines serving 220 million hot drinks per year.

### The latest innovations

Selecta sees itself primarily as a system integrator. The machines are purchased from specialist manufacturers and then adapted for Selecta's own operations. The strands of this integration process come together in the engineering department at the factory in Murten, one of seven field operations in Switzerland. Since 2012, Selecta's headquarters and distribution center have been based in the centrally located Kirchberg (BE).

Driven by market demand and technical progress, the group is undergoing a constant process of change. One innovation launched in 2021 is the Smart Fridge. This innovative vending machine is equipped with a weighted shelf system and algorithms that enable it to detect when a product is removed.

## Smarter and more independent

Coffee vending machines used to be almost entirely mechanical. But today these machines are sophisticated, high-tech devices packed with electronic components and sensors. "Every vending machine is now networked and connected to the cloud with a SIM card and sends the operating data to the control center," explains Patrick Stirnimann, Head of Technology and Manufacturing, the department responsible for digitalization. The algorithms work out when a machine needs replenishing, allowing operator deployments in the field to be planned and coordinated efficiently. Thanks to the smart technology, the machines can identify if a product has not been selling well. They also raise the alarm if a product is put back in the wrong place.

Digitalization thus plays a key role in the management and operation of the machines. Selecta has developed a whole range of innovations in recent years, reflecting the ever-increasing product range and the various payment methods available. With the help of an app, customers can find out where the nearest vending machine is and make cashless payments. It's probably only a matter of time before coins in vending machines become a thing of the past.

## Digital and human

For Selecta, digitalization is not a project but an ongoing process. The company sees the technical advances it brings as a way of improving quality and personalizing its offerings even further. In future, they



"Every vending machine is now networked and connected to the cloud with a SIM card and sends the operating data to the control center."

Patrick Stirnimann, Head of Technology and Manufacturing Selecta

want each customer to be able to have their coffee and mixed drinks prepared exactly the way they want them. What's more, the vending machine could soon be a collaborative robot that recognizes consumers individually and identifies what they want from their faces based on the data stored in it.



Left image: full Selecta range, from ready meals to soft drinks and coffee.

Right image: when they're outdoors – at an S-Bahn stop, for example – Selecta vending machines have to withstand all weathers.



“All our employees have a certain affinity for IT; on top of that, there’s the highly specialized expertise of our eight engineers.”

Jürg Scheidegger, CEO and co-owner Caffetta Automaten AG

### **Caffetta AG: full-service coffee break**

Caffetta AG operates around 1,200 coffee machines, hot drinks vending machines, refrigerated vending machines and snacks vending machines in the Bern region. Depending on the contract model, Caffetta can operate the machines on behalf of the customer or they can be purchased or leased. The equipment infrastructure is maintained by a team of more than 50 staff. The full-operating package has been the most popular variant for many years. “With this system, there are no running costs for the customer,” says CEO and co-owner Jürg Scheidegger, who founded the company 32 years ago. For some customers, Caffetta also runs cafeterias complete with serving personnel.

### **Affinity for IT**

“Our target audience is diverse and includes all companies and enterprises that want to provide good quality snacks for their staff,” Scheidegger says. Specializing in indoor catering, Caffetta’s true strength lies in tailor-made solutions, whether for small customers with just a few employees or for larger companies and institutions employing hundreds of people. Caffetta customers consume around 15,000 cups of coffee, beverages, and specialty snacks every day, including 1,000 fresh baked goods.

The company has around 30 field service staff who are on the road ready to fulfill customer orders promptly. They are supported by the head office, where the engineering department has largely digitalized their work processes over the past few years, with resource scheduling now taking place via ERP software. The machines themselves are premium versions complete with sensor technology and electronics. Features include user-friendly touchscreens and, of course, cashless payment options. In addition, machines in the same company are networked so that they can all be operated with a staff badge. The latest generation of machines are also connected to Caffetta’s head office via the cloud and the IoT, enabling them to upload all the data needed for servicing and maintenance in real time. Commenting on the digital fitness of his staff, Scheidegger notes: “All our employees have a certain affinity for IT; on top of that, there’s the highly specialized expertise of our eight engineers.”

### **Keeping things regional**

This advanced level of digitalization has enabled Caffetta to achieve high vertical integration. “We are able to do almost everything ourselves. The only things we buy in are the vending machines, food, and beverages, and we always buy from regional manufacturers and producers,” says Scheidegger, who is keen to support regional businesses wherever he can. Caffetta sources its coffee from the roasting company Blaser Café AG, among others, and for baked goods it only works with local bakeries. Fresh products such as salads and Bircher muesli also come from local suppliers. The coffee machines are from close by: these high-tech machines are made by Schaerer-WMF in Zuchwil (Solothurn).

The CEO emphasizes that digitalization is not used to save on staff, for example, but to optimize quality.



Coffee the Italian way – with a cappuccino or a latte macchiato.



A choice of coffee from the smart Caffetta machines.

# Provence blooms in the Oberaargau



Since 2007, the [suissessences®](#) farmers have been growing true lavender in Oberaargau and extracting the first Swiss lavender oil from it.



With a pioneering spirit and a passion for nature, a group of farmers in the Oberaargau region have created a new line of business. They produce and sell valuable essential oils and hydrolates from their own organic cultivation under the brand name *suissessences*<sup>®</sup>. Made by distilling conifer branches and aromatic herbs, these fragrant oils are not only used in aromatherapy but are also sold in a specially created body care line.

It all started in the sauna on the Hess family's farm in Wangen an der Aare. As they sprinkled a pine infusion on the hot coals, farmer Frith Hess and his colleagues wondered why these essential oils came all the way from Finland. After all, they all owned forests themselves, and whatever was left over after the tree trunks had been delimbed was generally seen as being of little value. They went in search of essential oils from Switzerland but were amazed to find that no-one was making them here. Even Swiss natural body care products contained oils from abroad. This sparked their innovative spirit, and the idea of producing these oils themselves began to take shape. They started learning how to distill, they experimented, they persevered, they invested time, heart, and soul – until they had a marketable product on the table. And that's how the story of *suissessences*<sup>®</sup> began 17 years ago.

#### **Planting lavender and rose-scented bergamot**

As a sideline, a cooperative of nine farmers began to plant several fields with lavender, clary sage, lemon balm, lemon thyme, and peppermint. They also grow the slightly more exclusive, sophisticated rose-scented bergamot, a newcomer that only came on the market ten years ago. An added bonus: the Oberaargau became richer in butterflies and bees, bursting into a floral blaze of color and scents reminiscent of the south, of vacations, of Provence. The narrow-leaved true lavender with its delicate, fresh, floral fragrance and purple flowers is a particular treat

for our senses that makes us leave worries and stress behind. Perhaps this newly emerging landscape was what motivated the pioneers to roll up their sleeves and look after the crops themselves.

Most of the fields are in bloom towards the end of June and can be seen and enjoyed on a cycling route available from myOberaargau. But a key part has always been the coniferous forest with trees such as spruce, silver fir, and Douglas fir.

#### **Steam distilled to make essential oil**

There are two steam distilleries on the farm of managing director Christoph Hess, who has taken over the business from his father. The valuable essential oil is produced there immediately after harvesting. The plant material goes into the chrome steel tanks in a certain density structure. Steam flows up through the perforated base and through the plants, opening up their oil glands and taking the essential oil with it. The oil is then separated off in an oil separator. Around 600 kg of lavender panicles are needed to produce one liter of oil, although yields vary. Extracting oil from the highly sought-after lemon balm is very expensive and is done on a far smaller scale.

In summer they run guided group tours of the show distillery, combined with an optional aperitif – perfect for team outings.



The flowering fields provide abundant food for insects.



Essential oils are extracted by steam distillation. Guided tours are available for groups of 15 or more.



Rose-scented bergamot, which smells of damask rose, is a rare bergamot cultivar.



“Our spruce needle oil is extracted from the branches left over after forest maintenance work. You need around 1,000 kg of crushed needles to produce one liter of essential oil.”

Christoph Hess,  
Managing Director suissessences®

#### More than just producers

The concept behind suissessences® has always been not to simply remain a producer, as is often the case in agriculture. To be able to determine their pricing and payment policy themselves, they wanted to keep the entire value chain in their own hands: from cultivation and production to product development and marketing.

A stroke of luck came when they met biologist Dr. Brigitte Schulthess, an expert in aromatherapy, authorization procedures, and perfumery. Impressed by the project, she became a member of the cooperative and has been a cornerstone of suissessences® ever since. The oils go to her lab along with full details of their provenance. The recipes for the natural body care products are also produced there.

#### 100% Swissness from field to natural body care products

In the lab, the oils are filtered and sampled to ensure the body care line smells the same every year. In addition to essential oils, the suissessences® product line also contains shower gel, shampoo, body lotion, creams, room sprays, body oils, and hydro-lates. The products fall under the Swiss cosmetics ordinance. They are bottled and labeled by Phytomed in Oberburg, which also handles sales to

resellers such as aromatherapists. End customers can obtain the natural body care products direct from the suissessences® online shop, during guided tours, and from some local farm shops.

suissessences® also handles its own advertising and customer acquisition. Its biggest success story to date has been its collaboration with Swissôtel, which uses suissessences® products in its hotel rooms across the world under its own Pürovel label. In general, the demand for natural fragrances and regional products reflects the zeitgeist and has lots of potential.

suissessences® is Switzerland's first body care line made of 100% pure essential oils grown and distilled on the farm. The products can be purchased in the online shop at [www.suissessences.ch](http://www.suissessences.ch).

To book a team outing with a visit to the show distillery in Wangen an der Aare, contact Christoph Hess: [christoph.hess@suissessences.ch](mailto:christoph.hess@suissessences.ch)

# Competition: Win an Italian espresso machine with 20 pods

The E.S.E. FlyTek ZIP pod machine impresses with its high-precision technology, elegant design, and ease of use. It produces espresso coffee with a pronounced crema.

The starter kit consists of the espresso machine and a tasting set of 20 E.S.E. pods. Blasercafé offers a coffee for every taste in pod format, with around 18 different full-bodied espresso variants including Lilla e Rose, popular with restaurants and cafes, as well as various organic fair trade variants and pods with Bernese names like Marzili, Lorraine, and Elfenau.

[www.blasercafe.ch](http://www.blasercafe.ch)



**1** Competition question 1:  
Who said: "Besides working with the necessary basic technologies, we can customize our customers' products using special techniques. Our engineers develop the majority of these processes in house."

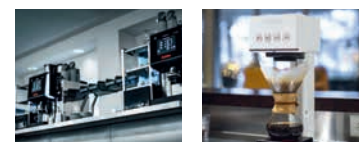
- Patrick Stirnimann, Selecta AG
- Adrian Iten, Adrianos
- David Ingold, HACO

**2** Competition question 2:  
In which year was the Blasercafé founded?

- 1932
- 1922
- 1902

**3** Competition question 3:  
Which image detail shows the smart Caffetta vending machine?

- Image A
- Image B



The winner will be drawn by lots and notified in writing. Employees of the Office of Economic Affairs are excluded from entering the competition. The judges' decision is final. There is no cash alternative to the prize.

Enter the draw at [www.berninvest.be.ch/chance](http://www.berninvest.be.ch/chance): The closing date for entries is **5 August 2022**.

Many congratulations to the winner of our competition in *berncapitalarea 2/2021*: Stefan Zingg, Münchenbuchsee.

# Feel free to ask the Quality and Sales Promotion Unit

To promote and strengthen Bernese agriculture and regional products, the Office of Agriculture can provide financial support for sales promotion measures and innovation and value creation projects under the Ordinance on Production and Marketing in Agriculture (PVLV). The Quality and Sales Promotion Unit (QAF) is responsible for implementing the ordinance.

**Question:** How does the QAF support innovative ideas?

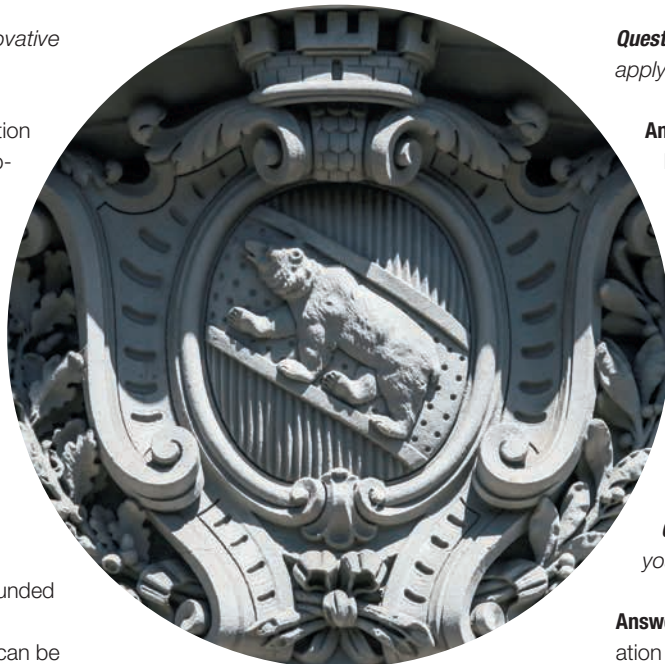
**Answer:** In order to tap into regional value creation potential, the QAF not only offers financial support but can also support innovative individuals and groups in the challenging startup phase, right through to the actual innovation and value creation initiative. This funding and support helps to increase value added in rural regions and strengthen value chains as well as supporting regional products from the Canton of Bern.

**Question:** What kinds of projects are supported under the PVLV?

**Answer:** Two different types of projects can be funded under the PVLV:

**1. Innovation and value creation projects.** These can be supported for a maximum of five years. The condition is that the project must be self-supporting after the project planning, startup, and consolidation phases. Eligible costs are expenses for planning, development (excluding infrastructure) and coordination as well as marketing communication measures.

**2. Sales promotion measures.** Sales promotion measures can be supported with grants for an indefinite period. Marketing communication expenses are accepted as eligible costs.



## PREDIGERGASSE 5

The building was built in 1905-1907 by the city as the police headquarters.

**Question:** What requirements must my project meet in order to receive support?

**Answer:** There are two key requirements. Firstly, the project must have cross-sector ownership, i.e., it must involve actors from at least two sectors, for example from agriculture and commerce, or services and agriculture. Secondly, there must be clear evidence of how the projects will maintain or increase value added in agriculture.

**Question:** Do you also support measures by individual businesses?

**Answer:** No, the project must benefit a group of multiple producers.

**Question:** I would like to submit a project idea or apply for support. Where and how do I do this?

**Answer:** You can submit an application to us. However, you can also contact us first and we will check informally whether your project idea meets all the requirements and let you know which, if any, requirements are not (yet) met. Once you submit your application, we will assess it in accordance with the requirements of the ordinance.

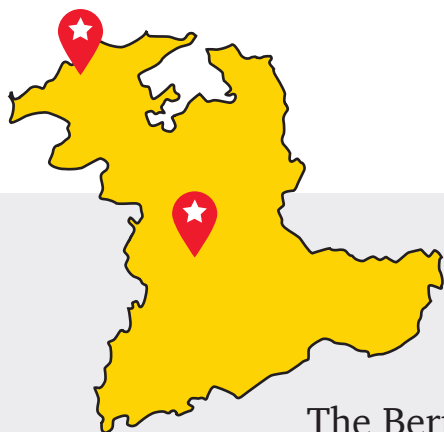
You can find our contact details on the website:



**Question:** Can you give an example of a project you are currently funding or supporting?

**Answer:** One example of an innovation and value creation project is the "Natural Fiber as an Opportunity" project. The project aims to promote flax cultivation in Switzerland, particularly in Emmental, and to strengthen and develop the entire value chain.

In addition to projects supported under the Ordinance on Production and Marketing in Agriculture, the Quality and Sales Promotion Unit also supports regional development projects (RDPs) located in the Canton of Bern. An RDP encompasses coordinated measures between different actors. The core objective of this regional cooperation is to create value added in agriculture, with a view to exploiting the potential in the region and improving incomes in the agricultural sector. In addition to supporting regional marketing projects, the Quality and Sales Promotion Unit is also responsible for promoting sales of animals for slaughter and other livestock products.



## New arrivals in the Canton of Bern

The Bern Economic Development Agency (BEDA) helps innovative international companies and undertakings to relocate and settle in the Canton of Bern – such as Gentic Software AG and Power Integrations. BEDA works on this with the intercantal partner Greater Geneva Bern area which has a network in selected target markets abroad.



### Gentic Software AG

The Viennese software house Gentic develops content management systems (CMS) and e-portal solutions for public authorities, businesses, insurance companies, and banks in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Its Acta Nova dialog portal provides citizens with a convenient way of completing a range of administrative transactions online, making interaction between the public and the authorities more efficient, more transparent, and more cost-effective. The solution has so far met with considerable success in the Swiss market. Most of its customers in Switzerland are public authorities such as the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC).

The new subsidiary in Bern is Gentic's first foreign branch. It will act as a sales, consulting, and project management company and in doing so will boost Gentic's internationalization efforts.

With its central location and multilingualism, and being the seat of the federal authorities, Bern provides Gentic with the ideal base from which to offer its services throughout Switzerland. Gentic received further support for opening its Swiss subsidiary from the intercantal partner Greater Geneva Bern area.



### Power Integrations

In March, the American technology company Power Integrations opened its new building in Biel/Bienne. The company is the market leader in semiconductor technology for high-voltage power conversion. Its unique process enables the generation, transportation, and consumption of renewable energy.

Power Integrations has been active in Biel/Bienne for ten years, its presence dating back to its acquisition of CT-Concept Technologie AG, the market leader in medium- to high-power IGBT drivers. Power Integrations bought the land on which the 4,600 square meter, \$20 million building was built from Biel/Bienne council in 2019. The building is home to around 60 engineers and other technology professionals – a number that is expected to increase over the next few years. Besides modern office and laboratory space, the facility also features a 25 kW rooftop solar array.

# #cantonofbern

## Coffee houses: revolution and Enlightenment

Since their early days cafés have been a resounding success – wherever and in whatever cultural context they are found. While we see them today as places of warmth, relaxation, and *Gemütlichkeit*, in their early days they fostered an explosive mood. Here we take a peek at the eventful history of the café and share our recommendations for cafés in Bern.

“Coffee houses are hotbeds of sedition,” wrote the American author William H. Ukers in 1935 in his classic, *All About Coffee*. Coffee is the most radical drink in the world, he said, as it encourages people to think about what makes them dangerous to tyrants. This pronouncement wasn’t plucked out of thin air: even the first coffee houses of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th and 16th centuries were home to argument, debate, and politicizing. The authorities in Cairo and Constantinople tried to put a stop to the movement by introducing prohibitions, but with little success. The same thing happened to Charles II of Great Britain, Frederick the Great of Prussia, and other rulers across Europe, who wanted to ban the consumption of coffee, coffee houses, and their revolution-hungry patrons. What was probably the most famous revolution of all times started in the Café le Foy in Paris: a plucky Camille Desmoulins leaped onto a table on July 12, 1789, and delivered a call to arms to his audience. The result was the storming of the Bastille, one of the defining moments of the French Revolution – and the reason why coffee is seen as the drink of the Enlightenment.

But it wasn’t only revolutions that were born in the coffee houses: they were the places where the first mailboxes were set up, newspapers and literature were promoted, and knowledge was popularized, all of which had a profound impact on the development of society. Gambling took place there, too, of course, and many establishments soon gained a shady reputation. But in general they led to greater sobriety in European society, most people having previously quenched their thirst with alcoholic beverages.

Even if the gossip in today’s cafés is less revolutionary and their impact on society has generally lessened, cafés are still popular places for reading and meeting people.



### Jusq'à: fashion and coffee, Bern

This café in Bern's Old City not only serves coffee but also tea – and sometimes even a combination of the two. With his innovative coffee/tea creations, Jusq'à owner and barista Dany Affolter invites his customers to savor the moment. The coffee blends are also available for sale, along with coffee tumblers and “have fun” fashions. Jusq'à sources their coffee from AROMAWERK and tea from Länggass-Tea.

[www.jusqa.ch](http://www.jusqa.ch)

### Kafoj, coffee roasters, Biel/Bienne

What do you call a café in a bilingual city like Biel/Bienne? Quite simply “Kafoj,” the Esperanto word for coffee specialties, say its owners Guy Perrenoud and Fernanda Bergmann. In their roastery they turn small quantities of high-quality coffee beans from sustainable and fair trade farms into their own special range of products, which they offer at Kafoj on Thursday mornings and Saturdays. They also sell fine cakes, tea made from coffee leaves, and small homeware items such as Bialetti and vases.

[www.kafoj.ch](http://www.kafoj.ch)

**Barista Roman, Biel/Bienne**

You don't find the Barista Roman, the coffee bar with a difference – it finds you. So how does that work? It's housed in a stylish Fiat Cinquecento and goes wherever it's summoned. All it needs is a power connection. The driver and barista is Roman from Biel/Bienne, who serves tasty cappuccinos and flat whites decorated with beautiful designs. The master of latte art also offers at-home courses for anyone wanting to perfect their home barista skills.

[www.thebaristaroman.ch](http://www.thebaristaroman.ch)

**Emma & Paul, Bern**

Emma & Paul and Tele – three names that together make up a little piece of Italian caffè culture. Emma is a picture-perfect Piaggio APE made in Italy in 1966. Paul is a trusty Faema E61 espresso machine that produces delicious coffee, from espresso to cappuccino. Tele is the barista that knows how to get the most out of Emma and Paul. The three are available for hire, or find them at different places in Bern – providing the weather's good! Fans of Tele's special roast can take it home in the form of beans and tabs.

[www.caffemobil.ch](http://www.caffemobil.ch)

**Kaffeekutsche, Thun**

At the FrachtRaum coworking space in Thun, coffee is served from the Kaffeekutsche, a converted vintage caravan named Graziella. Besides all the usual coffee specialties and decaf alternatives, boss Anja also sells homemade seasonal cakes. The Kaffeekutsche and its crew are also available for hire, with extras such as aperitifs, glühwein, and dessert buffets served on request.

[www.kaffeekutsche.ch](http://www.kaffeekutsche.ch)



**What does it take to make an outstanding cup of coffee?**  
Coffee guru Prof. Chahan Yeretjian (see title story on page 5) lifts the lid:

**1. Origin**

First you need excellent green coffee beans of the right origin. Because if you don't start off with good materials, you can do everything right but you'll never get a really great cup of coffee.

**2. Knowledge**

After that, every subsequent step along the value chain plays a crucial role: the roast, the grind and the extraction. And this is where a good knowledge and understanding of coffee comes in. The more knowledge we have, the better quality the coffee will be.

**3. Freshness**

Once it is roasted, coffee should be made and drunk as soon as possible.

**4. Matter of taste**

As is so often the case, the ideal cup of coffee is a matter of taste. My favorite coffees: an espresso from a portafilter machine made with a darker roast from a Central American country like Guatemala, and freshly ground and brewed filter coffee from light, roasted African beans.



# Your success is launched here!

In the Canton of Bern, innovative businesses deliver top performances, especially in medical, energy and environmental technologies, in the precision engineering industry, in ICT and in services. Our efforts to develop the Canton of Bern as a business location are also intended to pave the way to your success. If you are looking for a site or have financing questions, we are happy to help you. Are you planning a project? Contact us!

[www.berninvest.be.ch](http://www.berninvest.be.ch)

  
**Bern Economic**  
Development Agency 