

Visionary Entrepreneurship creates a unique petrol station shop in Stans, Switzerland:

# Innovative selection - innovative presentation



One might think the petrol station and the attached Guetli Shop in Stans, the main town in the Canton of Nidwalden, is the hub of Switzerland. There is a continuous hustle and bustle of customers – who come to fuel, to shop, to feed. When you enter the Guetli Shop, you realise why: the shop offers a lot more than an ordinary petrol station shop: the choice selection of wines and regional specialties, the multitude of home-made treats leave nothing to desire. The wide variety of snacks, sandwiches and freshly prepared dishes are optimally staged in the sales and presentation showcases from Beer Grill AG in Villmergen and simply make your mouth water.

Text: Katia Corino, Photos: Rolf Neeser

The small town of Stans is in the heart of Switzerland. If you see all the vehicles entering and leaving the Avia roadhouse area at the Stans motorway access, you might think it is the hub of the country. The success story began in 1996 when Josef Gut in wise foresight of the future development decided to open a petrol station with attached shop as a second mainstay. The Guts' family history began with the great-grandfather who sold firewood. His son continued with coal, his grandson with fuel oil. Today, the brothers Patrick and Christoph Gut run the family business Josef Gut AG in the fourth generation.

In their father's day, the property where the petrol station and the Guetli shop now stand was outside the Stans city limits. Today, it has become the



# Gastronomy



The spacious shop offers a comprehensive selection of regional foods, hygiene and pet items, choice wines, gifts and accessories presented on various islands. The gastronomic area was enlarged in March 2018.

centre of a busy residential neighbourhood with industry and commerce. The motorway access brings additional clientele. Patrick Gut was an elementary school teacher when his father made his visionary decision and opened the petrol station with its attached little shop in 1996. When his parents needed help two years later, he opted to join the company. He enjoyed the new job and dealing with the customers. Soon, he was managing the business and expanding the range of goods. In 2003, Patrick's brother Christoph took over the management of the fuel oil business.

Today, the Josef Gut AG has about 55 employees, with 35 working at the shop, 15 in the fuel oil department, and five for technical work and facility management. Patrick's wife Michèle proactively supports her husband in the shop. Besides the Guetli Shop, the couple publishes the annual picture collecting album "Der Schwingerkönig" ("Schwingen" is a special Swiss wrestling discipline) with pictures of the 180 contesters for the national championship, similar to the popular Panini football albums.

## A feeling for partners and innovations

Until 2008, the Guetli Shop was the only retail in the area store open on Sundays. If you want to stand your ground against the established grocery stores and other competitors, you need an innovative and flexible selection – not just "emergency items", but a large, high quality line of goods – notably in the food sector. Already Patrick's father recognised the importance of working with local producers. Today, the Guetli Shop is an important outlet for more than 47 local and regional food producers. Goat sausages, egg cherry brandy liqueur, dandelion wine and Stanserfladä (a local variety of flat bread) are available here. The large selection of sandwiches – an important item – comes from Christen Beck in Stans.

## Everything you need – and always something new

Patrick regularly goes to the regional farmers' markets looking for new fine products, and innovative start-up producers approach him, so that the selection at the shop grows and changes continuously. The region's buying power is high, and the shop's selection is very popular with the locals. 2000 regular customers hold the Guetli Premiumcard and benefit from special offers and extra discounts – at the shop, when filling the tank or washing the car. The location on the A2 north-south motorway brings a broad mix of customers: craftspeople, bank clerks, singles, couples, families, truckers and travellers stop to refuel, shop, wash their cars and get food at the "Guetlis".

A continuous flow of new ideas provides the customers with variety. All the cooking is done in four combi steamers.





Patrick Gut had laid an eye on the Beer Grill AG food showcases for a long time. The shop remodelling project at the beginning of 2018 brought about the successful cooperation. A custom-made Beer Hot Rack GN 4/1 and a Culinario Duplex GN 4/1 are finished in a special colour tone and fitted with warm white 3000 Kelvin lighting.

Fine wines, a gift idea, sanitary necessities and pet food, accessories like caps, scarfs and headbands with a heraldic bull's head or the big weekend shopping spree – you'll find all this and more at the Guetli Shop – open seven days a week from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm.

### Homemade items sharpen your profile

When in 2007 an increasing number of competitors extended their opening hours and their selection of snacks, Patrick Gut and his team decided to set themselves apart. They bought a combi steamer and started experimenting.

The pizza roll is a classic and a must in the selection. The have been embraced by the Guetli team since their introduction.



Today, three cooks on the Guetli team make the special treats – e.g. hamburgers, open cheese fondue sandwiches, various salads, warm lunch dishes and desserts. The team and Patrick's brother Christoph Gut always come up with new ideas for food items. One result of this experimenting was the pizza roll that is now a regular in the food selection. All experimenting is focused. The team tinkers until an idea is perfect – if not, it's discarded. Everything is cooked in four combi steamers. All lunch items are sold packaged – it's the only way to manage the noontime rush of up to 180 meals per hour.

### Effective product presentation maintains quality

The Guetli team knows how to attractively present their culinary selection. At the beginning of 2018, the shop was completely remodelled and modernised. Various wooden elements now give the shop warmth and authenticity. The food selection that proved successful the past years was to get more space for an attractive presentation. Innovative shelf solutions, open cooled showcases with cooling veil and adjoining rear cooling cabinets and also new warm showcases were procured. For a long time, Patrick Gut had laid an eye on Beer Grill AG's sales and presentation concepts for an optimal product display. During the remodelling project, purchasing high quality equipment got priority. From his visits to Swiss and international trade fairs, Patrick Gut knew Jean Rodolphe Hofstetter, Beer Grill's chief representative for central Switzerland. Hofstetter: «We met at the petrol station early in the morning to discuss the

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The Beer Hot Rack was designed with a mirrored sliding door back wall so that the shelves can be filled from behind, directly from the kitchen. The GN 4/1 size creates the desired product pressure, the shelves can be adjusted in height and inclined and their temperature set individually, for maximum flexibility of the display.

project, Patrick Gut had clear ideas, and, thanks to our production at our own facilities in Villmergen, we were able to respond to individual wishes.» The requirements of the shop operator were clear:

- simple handling,
- refilling from the rear,
- individual upper and lower heat setting as well as per unit,
- improved food presentation as well as more product pressure,
- and the mandatory cough shield.

Specialties were the finish of the chassis in a harmonised colour tone and the light temperature of 3000 Kelvin for an optimal food presentation. Already before the contact to Beer Grill, a GN 2/1 Hot Rack was in test use at Guetli Shop. The rack's technology proved ideal, but it was too small to create the desired product pressure.

Together with Jean-Rodolphe Hofstetter, Beer chief representative for central Switzerland, Patrick Gut defined a GN 4/1 Hot Rack plus a Beer Culinario Duplex as optimum sizes and as an eye catcher. «The Beer Grill team are highly professional and responded comprehensively to our wishes. Our dishes keep their high quality and freshness for up to two hours. Thanks to the individual temperature control per unit, we even manage to keep fillets of lamb and entrecôtes pink, tender and juicy for two hours», Patrick Gut declared enthusiastically after installing Hot Rack and Culinario Duplex.

## Hot Rack and Culinario Duplex

The components of the Beer Grill showcases are manufactured at the company's own workshops and are 100% Swiss made. Configurations and assembly follow the customers' specifications, after the Beer Grill team have checked the feasibility. Thanks to the direct line to the production, most customer wishes can be fulfilled – as at the Guetli Shop. The Beer Hot Rack is a classy piece of equipment with shelves that can be tilted and fixed at different levels. Each level is illuminated and able to maintain the desired core temperature of meat cuts for a prolonged period. For the Guetli Shop, the mirrored rear panel was made as a sliding door, so that the Hot Rack can be filled directly from the kitchen where the dishes are prepared.

Another custom feature is the lighting with a warm colour temperature of 3000 Kelvin, and the chassis was finished in a custom colour tone. The Culinario Duplex with GN 4/1 units offers a hot zone with four climate options: hot & steamy, hot & dry, neutral or, if required, as a cold display. The warming cabinet in the base can be heated to 90°C to keep the reserve trays hot. The potential of the Culinario Duplex is not yet fully utilised at the Guetli Shop.



Patrick Gut (foreground) and Jean-Rodolphe Hofstetter, Beer Grill AG chief representative for central Switzerland, discuss the individual controlling options of the areas of the Beer Culinario Duplex.



The hot and cold dishes are specially packaged and attractively staged in the showcases from Beer Grill AG.

«With the Culinario Duplex, we can assure quality, colour and freshness of the products also in self-service. We could increase capacity while minimising packaging expense», Patrick Gut told GOURMET. «The individual menu composition suits the customers' requirements, but also requires an increased cleaning effort due to the self-service from open, warm GN trays», Beer representative Jean-Rodolphe Hofstetter told his customer.

### The bar is set high – also for the future

The whole remodelling took three months – during continued operation. All the equipment was set on casters, so that it could simply be rolled aside for the night work. Everyone involved felt the time pressure. When the project was completed, the Guetli team thanked the Beer workers with a grill party on the roof terrace. But there was no still-stand for Patrick Gut and his team. They work continuously to optimise the shop, with the clear goal to improve the quality of the selection. "Zero Waste" is part of the programme: unsold vegetables and fruit are processed further, yesterday's sandwiches and menus are sold at reduced prices. Jean-Rodolphe Hofstetter, himself a professional in food presentation, sees that the Guetli shop sets the bar very high in this sector: «I drop in at the Guetli Shop every now and then», he says, «for me, they are exemplary regarding innovative development of their selection and in product presentation.» At the Guetli Shop. By the way, all appliances can be digitally controlled and adjusted via the central building automation system to simplify replenishing of the shelves, the product level will be monitored from the store room by video cameras.

The Guetli Shop will stay innovative and have their finger on the pulse of the trends. Customers have already expressed interest in buying the food products to finalise them at home, and there are inquiries for catering services.

### Get more information

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Inspiring shop and gastronomic concept with the showcases from Beer Grill AG  
(from left to right): Patrick and Michèle Gut, Jean-Rodolphe Hofstetter, chief representative of Beer Grill AG and project chief Ulyssé Delea of Guetli Shop.

