



FOOD & DRINK

A VEGETARIAN'S GUIDE TO SWITZERLAND

Today, it's easier than ever to find plant-based meals in the Alpine country, says **Prachi Joshi**

When a certain Ambrosius Hiltl took over the Vegetarierheim and Abstinence-Café in Zurich, and gave it his name, little did he know that he was creating history. As the Guinness-certified oldest, continuously operating vegetarian restaurant in the world, Haus Hiltl may have been an anomaly in Swiss gastronomy in the late 19th century. But, in today's health-conscious world, it is on point.

Across Switzerland, from casual bistros to fine dines and even Michelin-starred restaurants, Swiss chefs have stepped up to the plate and are pushing the envelope with vegetarian dining. According to a recent report by The Eco Experts, a London-based consultancy that advises consumers on the most cost- and energy-efficient ways of going green, Switzerland has the highest density of vegetarian-friendly restaurants in Europe,

with 165.94 places per 1,00,000 people. Here's our pick of 11 restaurants where vegetables are the stars of the show.

CHESA STÜVA COLANI, MADULAIN

For chef Paolo Casanova, foraging in the Engadin valley is a daily ritual. At this one-Michelin-starred restaurant, the day's pickings make an appearance on your plate, whether it's wild mushrooms or herbs. Housed in a 17th-century building, the restaurant's ambience is as rustic-chic as its eight-course vegan or nine-course vegetarian menu. The cuisine leans Italian but with unusual twists, so you might be served chestnut ravioli with walnut cheese and salted peanut foam; or chef Casanova's take on breakfast—a savoury croissant with green tomato jam, pumpkin cappuccino, and a fermented vegetable salad. Note that the restaurant opens in early June for the summer season. hotelchesacolani.com





From top: **a dish at Chesa Stüva Colani;** **chef Damien Germanier** (Previous pages, clockwise, from top left: **chef Jeroen Achtien** at **Restaurant Sens;** **the food, vibe, interiors and a drink at Chesa Stüva Colani**)



MAGDALENA, SCHWYZ

A 40-minute drive from Lucerne will take you to the two-Michelin-starred Magdalena, which serves gourmet vegetarian cuisine in a minimalist wood-panelled space. Helmed by chef Dominik Hartmann, the restaurant has been completely vegetarian since the beginning of 2022. Located in a house that was built in 1326, Magdalena is very much rooted in the region, its floor-to-ceiling windows giving great views of the Schwyz valley basin. True to its mantra of 'raw, rugged, regional', the restaurant offers five to seven courses of imaginative vegetable-focused menus with local and seasonal produce. Note that the restaurant is closed for service through most of July. restaurant-magdalena.ch

HAUS HILTL, ZURICH

No list of vegetarian restaurants in Switzerland can be complete without Haus Hiltl, a Zurich institution. Opened in 1898, Hiltl remains a firm favourite among locals and tourists, who flock to its signature buffet where you make your choice from more than 100 dishes and pay by weight. If you're missing the taste of home, try their sumptuous Indian thali or other favourites like pakodas, palak paneer, or the signature Banana Madras (a rich banana curry served with rice). Right next to Haus Hiltl is Vegimetzg, Switzerland's first vegetarian butcher, where you can pick up meat alternatives and vegetarian/vegan delicatessen products to take away. hiltl.ch

LA FLEUR DE SEL, COSSONAY

Easily accessible from Montreux and Lausanne, La Fleur de Sel in Cossonay is an elegant bistro serving up regional fare with a focus on vegetables. Choose the Journey to Unknown Land menu and let yourself be surprised by Chef Romain Dercile's

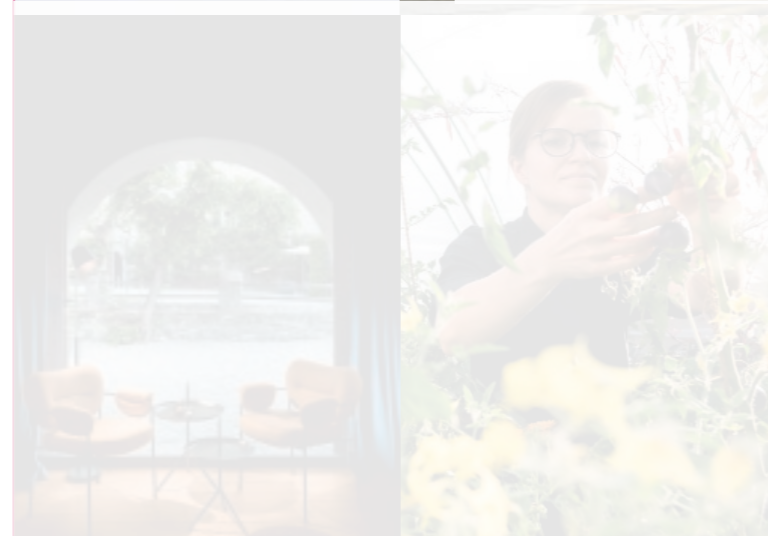
imagination (veteran chef Carlo Crisci is a consultant for the restaurant). You will find humble vegetables like celery ball treated in unexpected ways, such as roasted celery ball in a casserole flambéed with calvados (apple or pear brandy), and pithiviers (a type of puff pastry) of celery ball and black truffle. lafeurdesel.ch

OZ, FÜRSTENAU

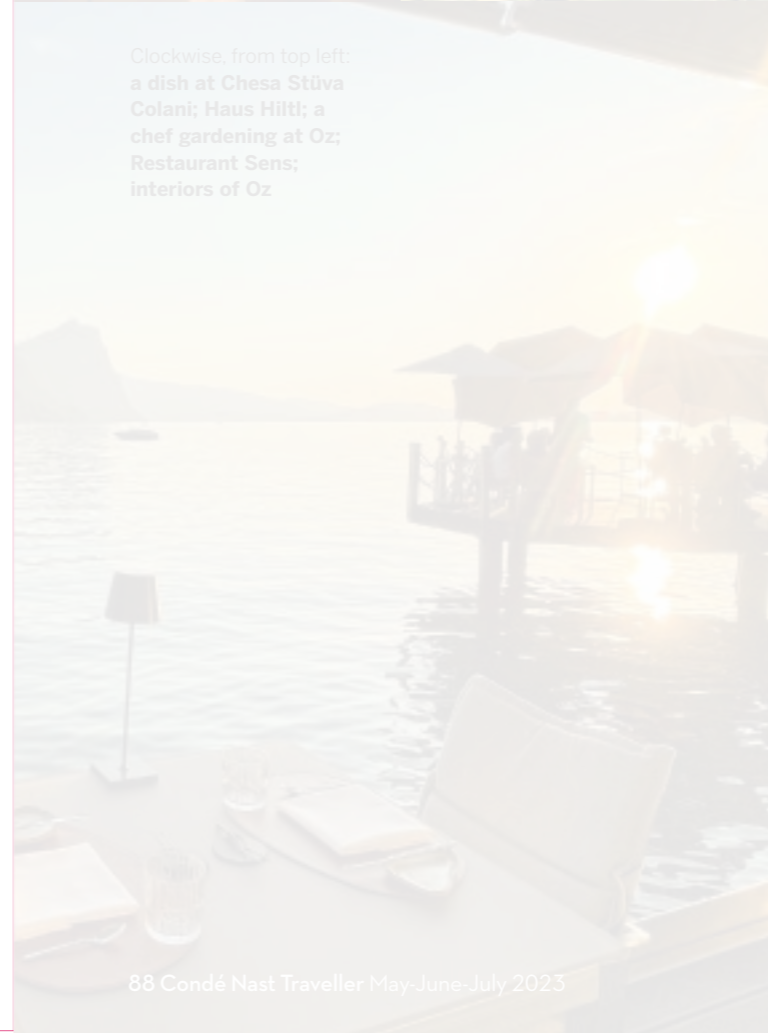
Located in the expansive grounds of Schloss Schauenstein (an hour northwest of St Moritz), Oz opened in 2021 and has already earned a Michelin star. Oz, which translates as 'today' in Romansh, showcases whatever grows in the estate's permaculture gardens and greenhouse that day, whether it's juicy tomatoes, tender spinach, or green strawberries. In a sumptuous leather and velvet accented space, not more than 12 diners gather around a counter that wraps around the open kitchen. Here, chef Timo Fritsche presents colourful, textured plates like kimchi gazpacho with kohlrabi or artichoke with smoked plum, and mole. oz-restaurant.com

RESTAURANT SENS, VITZNAU

Scenically located on the shores of Lake Lucerne, the two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Sens in Vitznau is housed in what was once the boathouse of Hotel Vitznauerhof. Dutch chef Jeroen Achtien brings his unpretentious but technically sophisticated approach to present creative plates with intense flavours. Consider the amuse-bouche "Croque Jeroen", a fake sandwich of grilled tomato foam with a 4-year-old Alp Sbrinz cheese or the Kimchi roll, a fermented cabbage crisp with green olive and grilled chervil root cream. Book a table for dinner service to catch the magical sunset on the breathtaking Lake Lucerne. vitznauerhof.ch



Clockwise, from top left: **a dish at Chesa Stüva Colani;** **Haus Hiltl;** **a chef gardening at Oz;** **Restaurant Sens;** **interiors of Oz**



ROOTS, BASEL

Perched on the banks of the Rhine River with sweeping views of Basel's old town, roots offers an ever-changing menu that responds to the seasons with food that is cooked with primarily regional ingredients. Traditional dishes get a contemporary makeover at this two-Michelin-starred restaurant where you can choose a tasting menu of five, six, seven, or nine courses and pick from a range of wines—classics to the relatively new ones—all served in a relaxing "living room" ambience. On chef Pascal Steffen's menu, vegetables take centre stage—his signature "roots garden" features more than two dozen different vegetables and multiple techniques. The restaurant also has a semi-private section with a plush walnut table that can seat groups of 10 to 16. roots-basel.ch

LE CHAT-BOTTÉ, GENEVA

Ensnconed inside the iconic five-star luxury hotel Beau Rivage on the shore of Lake Geneva, Le Chat-Botté has been chef Dominique Gauthier's domain for more than two decades. Here, you can experience his signature style that blends French gastronomy with Asian flavours. The stuffed morel with peas and hazelnut is somewhat of his signature, with textures and colours blending together, "reminiscent of a walk in the woods". It also has a four- or six-course vegetarian spread which is served at lunch and dinner, and can be tailored to suit the vegan palette. Several times a year, the restaurant offers themed menus that showcase a star product such as asparagus, cep mushroom, or a citrus fruit. beau-rivage.com

DAMIEN GERMANIER, SION

At his eponymous restaurant in Sion, Chef Damien Germanier's philosophy is simple—the origin of produce must be as close

as possible. So, vegetables and fruits come from local, seasonal producers or via their market gardener, and are used in their entirety, from leaf to skin. The restaurant also uses ancestral and natural preservation techniques such as lacto-fermentation, pickling, and drying to offer fruits and vegetables all year long. Expect to see one vegetable as a hero of every dish, but presented in different preparations. damiengermanier.ch

RESTAURANT PINOT, FLÄSCH

Don't let its location in the side wing of the modern Klinik Gut private hospital deter you from Restaurant Pinot in Fläsch. This fashionable, minimalist-style restaurant with an open kitchen and a great mountain view has been awarded the Bib Gourmand by the Michelin Guide three years in a row. Here, chef Roland Schmid serves daily-changing regional dishes with a contemporary flair. The food is complemented by an extensive wine list (250+), including an excellent selection of Pinot Noir from the Bündner Herrschaft wine-growing region. restaurant-pinot.ch

7132 SILVER, VALS

At the design-forward 7132 Hotel in Vals, the stylishly elegant, two-Michelin-starred 7132 Silver restaurant is all about excellent ingredients and sophisticated techniques. Chef Mitja Birlo enhances premium local produce with freshly picked wild herbs, mushrooms, or berries from the region. What appears on your plate are unexpected culinary delights like roasted cabbage with pickled truffle or kohlrabi with shiso and sesame. Join chef Birlo inside the kitchen for the appetisers and then move to the swish dining room with stunning views of the Hörnli and Tomli mountains. 7132silver.com