



The Food of the Future

A revolutionary like Zwingli before him: Christian Bärtsch of Essento develops products made from edible insects. Economist Christian Bärtsch was one of the founding members of startup company, Essento, in 2013. He now intends to introduce Switzerland to the lifestyle of the future.

→ zuerich.com/reformation

Christian Bärtsch, with your company, Essento, you are striving to revolutionize our eating behavior. Why do you think this is necessary?

Our eating habits are very resource-intensive. We need to change how we think – and insects are a fascinating alternative.

What was your personal motivation?

If something tastes good, can be produced sustainably, and contains valuable nutrients, it should be available to a broad public.

Why will products made of edible insects be so important in future?

Insects offer a fascinating array of delicious flavors, valuable nutrients, and resource-efficient production.

Many people are put off eating grasshoppers or mealworms. Did you feel like that, too?

Yes, it is rather strange to begin with. But the taste helps you to overcome that obstacle.

In the video, you say that people in the West have not yet got used to the idea of eating insects.

How do you intend to change that?

We are currently doing a lot of work to give as many people as possible the chance to try edible insects.

Have you also managed to convince your own family and friends?

Yes, I have. Insects have become a normal and popular part of our diet.

How exactly is your work at Essento divided up? How much is lobbying, how much marketing, and how much developing products?

Our current concern is with making the products available to as many people as possible, and naturally also developing other delicious foods.

For centuries, Zurich has been the birthplace of significant ideas and approaches that are relevant to society. What is it that makes Zurich an attractive location for you?

The natural curiosity and diversity that is apparent in the city: This is a place where you can make contacts, that has educational institutions with an international profile, and is home to people from many different cultural backgrounds.

Do you think that you can also make an impact outside Switzerland?

That is our firm intention – and I believe we have the best possible conditions to do so from our base here in Zurich.

What exactly does the “lifestyle of the future” mean?

It means that in future we will have to think more about where our food comes from, and how and where the products that end up on our plates are made. And that – together with the taste component – will lead to insects becoming a perfectly normal foodstuff.

Are Zurich and Switzerland advanced in terms of nutrition and legislation when it comes to edible insects?

Most definitely. The Swiss authorities have taken a huge step in legalizing the first three types of insects. The trend over the past few years shows that the Swiss are ready for edible insects.

Various products from Essento are now available in retail stores. What happens next?

We are working on developing other insect-based products. Some made from processed insects, some from whole ones.

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