

# **Symbolic Understanding of the Milk in Swiss Gastronomy**

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## **Abstract**

In the 21st century, in a context where milk and dairy products are at the centre of many debates, this work wonders how doubts about these products are perceived in a gastronomic context where they are particularly appreciated and used. This work focuses on a Swiss context, since milk and dairy products are an integral part of Swiss culture. The literature review explores the history of milk in the Western world and highlights the fact that milk has an ambiguous position throughout the centuries. In fact, whether from a medical, natural or cultural aspects, milk and dairy products are sometimes appreciated, sometimes unloved. Some studies make it possible to question the consumption of such products, while in Switzerland there is no doubt that they are products strongly rooted in the country's heritage, whether from a historical, economic or cultural point of view. A qualitative study was conducted to develop answers to the questions raised by the potential questioning of milk and dairy products in Swiss gastronomy. 18 interviews with chefs working on a western Switzerland gastronomic context were carried out. The results highlight the fact that the reflections about dairy do not impact the gastronomic field, and that chefs are inclined to keep these products, as long as a moderate use is made of them. In a Swiss context, the results show that milk and dairy products are untouchable and that it is important to defend the cultural heritage of the country. These results involve new research questions about the extent to which certain products are protected and defended on behalf of gastronomy and culture. Further research should also be conducted on the different perceptions between milk and milk-derived products in order to identify potential implications arising from a clear distinction between milk and other dairy products.