

Learning to cook – without meat



“Tip Topf” is considered the definitive work for teaching teenagers in Switzerland how to cook. Since spring 2019, a new book has found its way onto Swiss bookshelves – “Green Topf”. This work is pretty much the vegetarian counterpart of “Tip Topf”.

The book was created by secondary-school teacher Franziska Stöckli from Wil. She developed “Green Topf” as a project with pupils – and with support from the Hiltl Academy in Zurich. It contains not only simple, everyday recipes but also brief portraits of pupils that provide an insight into their personal culinary preferences, often influenced by their cultural and family backgrounds. The book also explains the basics of vegetarian cooking, and shows readers how to make their own tofu and seitan, for example.

Some cantons have already recognized the book as a teaching resource and included it in the curriculum. After just six months, a second edition has been published. We asked the book’s creator Franziska Stöckli a few questions.

Lots of children and young people want to be vegetarians but don’t really know where to

begin. What recipes would you recommend to beginners?

Recipes that are quick and simple yet tasty, which they can relate to and identify with.

Why is meat still so popular, particularly with teenagers? How can parents go about changing that?

I am increasingly seeing an awful lot more different preferences. But what they all have in common is a desire for good quality and preparation. Eating should be fun and enjoyable, teenagers want to enjoy their mealtimes and feel relaxed.

As parents, is it possible to influence young people when it comes to food? Or is food a way of breaking free for them?

I firmly believe that children's food preferences are established at home when they are little, and these preferences manifest themselves over the years with and through their parents and caregivers. Even if some teenagers may manage to feed themselves perfectly well with just a few widely known recipes, there is hope that efforts to educate them in cooking will gain the upper hand.

So this means that for the teenage years, what's important is that children are given an understanding of what good food is at an early age? Or is it still possible to give them creative inputs later on?

This is definitely beneficial, and most certainly encourages them to enjoy trying out new recipes and ingredients. But I also believe that tastes change and develop. For example, communal cooking at school or cooking with friends presents opportunities to respond to new culinary experiences and absorb new inputs in an environment outside the home.

How aware are your pupils with regard to meat?

At the moment, their awareness is growing, mostly due to the topical nature of the issue and the increasing interest people are taking in it. This automatically flows into their own realm of experience, where their individual life stories and personal circumstances are also significant. My pupils are then in a position to form their own views on the subject.

And last but not least, what is your favourite recipe from the book?

Actually, I have more than one favourite... but if I had to choose, it would definitely be "Crispy tofu" with "Thai cucumber salad", which is also the favourite of a lot of my pupils.

"Green Topf", Schulverlag plus AG