



At Katharina Pircher's Hotel Paradies, the menu is dictated by the season. In January, for example, there are no strawberries at the breakfast buffet.

—INTERVIEW

Nature sets the menu

Hotel Paradies, Tiers am Rosengarten.

Local products are woven into the very fabric of Katharina Pircher and Alex Andreis's business. They explain why the journey towards a cuisine that focuses on locally sourced ingredients will never truly end, and how that journey involves both the kitchen and the guests.

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From our farms.
For our tables.



In the kitchen at Hotel Paradies, the menu is created using whatever nature and the season have to offer.



Buying local and thinking seasonally isn't a marketing decision for you, but rather an ideological stance. How did this come about?

Alex: We're very keen to use high-quality local produce, ideally sourced from the local area. Since the supply is naturally limited, we have launched the 'Bergler Acker' joint project in collaboration with other tourism businesses in Tiers. This is how we keep ourselves supplied with a wide range of locally grown vegetables.

Katharina: Our menu is determined by both the nature at our doorstep and the season. We don't actually need strawberries in January, or mangoes and papayas at the breakfast buffet. With some products, there's no going back. We source our bread exclusively from

the bakery of Tiers, which also uses Tierser Korn grain. The coffee is organic, 100% Arabica, and roasted in nearby Völs. It's harder when it comes to meat; there aren't that many producers in Tiers.

The biggest challenge often lies not in purchasing, but in the kitchen. How have you involved your chef in this journey?

Alex: Our chef wasn't too enthusiastic at the start – we needed to do a little persuasion.

Katharina: Of course, it's a challenge. When three crates of Swiss chard arrive from Bergler Acker in July, the kitchen then needs to decide what to do with them. But creativity is also what defines the profession. You can easily use Swiss chard instead of spinach for the local *Schlutzkrapfen* dish, for example. We're

putting kale in the dumplings and making pesto from radish leaves.

Alex: The great thing is that our chef now really enjoys constantly trying out new things. He has the experience required: he can butcher whole animals, he's been on hunting trips, he enjoys growing his own produce, and he also finds it difficult to throw things away.

A kitchen that makes do with what's available works differently from one with a set shopping list. How is that reflected in everyday life and in the price?

Katharina: First and foremost, it means extra work. If I get the meat and onions for the goulash delivered pre-cut, it's ready in no time. But if, like we do, I need to prepare everything myself, it takes an extra two or three hours. At busy times, when the house is full or the harvest is in full swing in the Bergler fields and in our orchards, the whole family pitches in to prepare or process the food for the kitchen. In autumn, we preserve food, ferment ingredients and make dumplings in advance. That way, we always have something from Bergler Acker on the menu, even in winter.

Alex: Our philosophy is reflected in our prices. The kitchen needs a specific budget to be able to operate in this way. When we

switched to working with smaller suppliers, we increased our room rates – partly so that we could maintain a profit margin on top quality products.

—All it takes is four or five brilliant ingredients to make a great menu.

Along with you, the waiting staff are the most important link between the kitchen and the guests. How's communication going?

Katharina: Our people come from the area and know which products come from Tiers. Nevertheless, we remind them to let guests know when homemade or home-grown food is being served. When we use locally sourced ingredients, we do mention this on the menu, but the story behind it also needs to be told for it to truly resonate.

Alex: We consciously take the time to chat with the guests. We're on first-name terms with them, as is customary in the mountains and in the huts. It helps you stay grounded and makes communication easier.



Head chef Alexander Tonina preparing a dish: Only the very best makes it into the kitchen at the Hotel Paradies.

You pay close attention to portion sizes and make sure the menu stays manageable.

Why?

Alex: For us, there's nothing worse than throwing food away. That's why we make sure the portions aren't too big. We're happy to give a second helping to anyone wanting more, which is also what we tell the hotel guests.

Katharina: If there are any leftovers, the waiting staff will ask "Would you like a smaller portion tomorrow?". Many people are happy to take us up on that.

Looking back on your journey – what advice would you give to other businesses just starting out?

Katharina: We don't see ourselves as role models; in fact, we'll never reach our goal just ourselves. Year after year, season after season, we strive to streamline our range and make more conscious choices. A good menu only needs four or five fantastic products, and the more manageable the selection, the more effectively you can work with what is produced on site.

Alex: Another point is that you have to do it for yourself. Not for anyone else, not for a label. If you do it for other people, you lose the perspective on what it's all about. The conviction has to come from within. Everything else will follow.

Three things the Hotel Paradies can pass on

Take your time. Replacing familiar foods with local produce doesn't need to happen overnight; it can be done step by step. And if you don't manage it one week, things will go better the next.

Small businesses hold a real advantage. They can respond flexibly to seasonal products. When you harvest a large number of courgettes, they take centre stage for a week – perhaps as an antipasto, in a soup, or even as a sorbet.

Local products gain credibility when the local community is behind them. Joint projects such as the Bergler Acker work precisely for this reason: because businesses seek to collaborate and present a united front.



Behind each of these portraits is the **alma** network. The food that ends up on plates in the Seiser Alm region of the Dolomites doesn't happen by chance - it's the result of a close collaboration between farmers and restaurateurs. They discuss quantities, adjust logistics, and decide together what can be grown and how it makes its way from the farm to the table. This creates a local economic cycle in which supply and demand come together - underpinned by trust and reliability.

alma is neither a label nor a campaign, but a network that makes this collaboration visible: specific and closely tied to the daily lives of the people who work and do business here.

—seiseralm.it/alma