

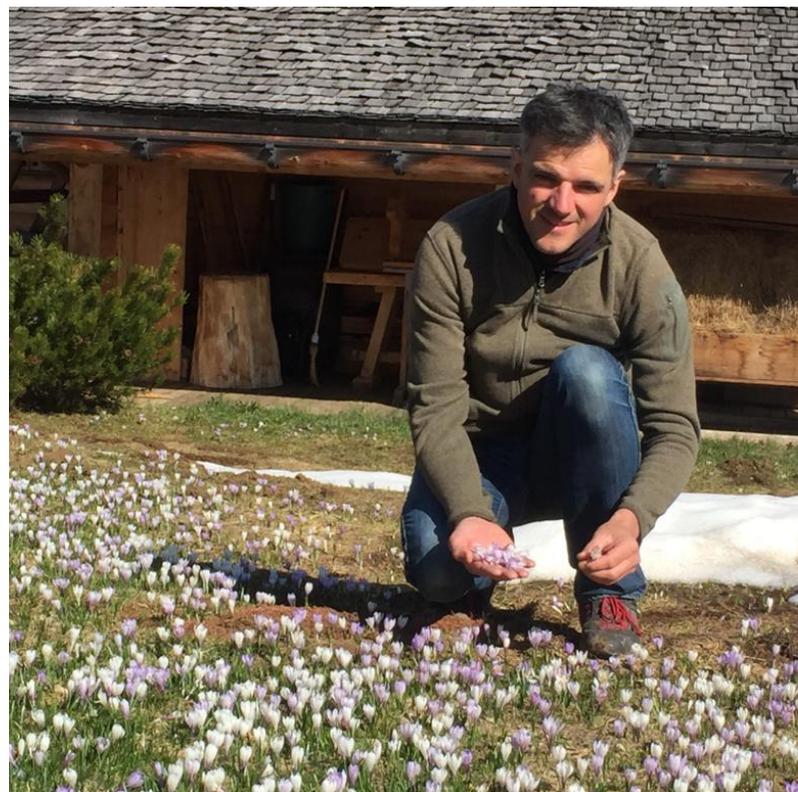


Recipe

# Delicacy Crocus

In the late morning hours, Franz Mulser is roaming around on the meadows next to his Alpine hut "Gostner Schwaige" on the Seiser Alm. "The crocus blossoms are open around this time and the sun didn't harm the essential oils yet.", he explains and gets to work. This is not a job for people with a weak back, bending forward while picking is tedious and it takes a while to collect a decent amount of the flower. "But the fresh air, the songs of the birds and the view on the Schlern makes up for the troubles", says Franz with a wink.

With the harvest in hand, Franz makes his way back to his hut, because his work only just began: every single crocus is taken individually and the strings, similar to saffron, are carefully extracted. Those who tried doing this before understand, why saffron is that expensive. Now the strings have to dry.



„It gets exciting the next day: "Almgold", a soft cheese, will be made out of the saffron. "The saffron strings and lactic acid bacteria is put into fresh milk. The milk is kept on a temperature of 34° for half an hour, then the strings of the wild saffron are filtered out and the rennet, a complex set of enzymes produced in the stomachs of calves that thickens the milk, is added.", reveals Franz. The mass is now gelatinous and is separated into pieces that are as big as a thumb with a cheese harp. The so called "cheese break" is now being "cheesed", the whey is being stirred out of the cheese. "This task demands a lot of finesse, if you stir out too much whey, the cheese gets too firm, if you too little is stirred out, the cheese stays too soft." Finally, the cheese break gets transferred into perforated round forms, from which the remaining whey can slowly trickle out. The room has to remain at a constant temperature of 23°, that's the only way for the milk sugar to be dismantled and for the fresh cheese to acidify. Otherwise the cheese won't ripen later in the cheese cellar. The cheese is being turned several times, the whey is still trickling out.

Around midday the cheese bodies are put into saltwater with a salt ratio of 20%. The cheese remains in the water for about an hour, the saltwater disinfects and serves as a flavor development. Then the cheese comes from the bath to the drainage where it can leak out until the evening. Now it's time for the cheese cellar with a constant humidity of 90% at about 13° room temperature. "The cheese stays in here for about 5-6 weeks", explains Franz and treats the loaves with a solution of water, salt and something special: gentian schnapps. Every cheese body is being covered with the mixture daily, it makes for the lovely orange color and the gentian schnapps intensifies the flavor. " My "Almgold" is arguably unique and can be tasted in the summer at the Gostner Schwaige", Franz, the proud cheesemaker, beams. With his "Almgold" he even managed to reach the first ranks at the cheese olympics in Galtür.

**For everyone who wants to experiment with the crocus strings, Franz reveals a recipe for crocus-ice-cream, which can easily be done at home:**





# *Ice cream Almgold"*



## *Ingredients 4 people*

- 1 tb crocus strings
- 1 pinch real Siusi saffron
- 120 g fresh cream
- 8 g gentian schnapps
- 120 g if possible farmer's butter with sour cream otherwise fresh butter
- 300 g light white wine
- 200 g sugar
- 8 egg yolks

## *Preparation*

Soak the crocus strings and the Siusi saffron for about 3 hours in the white wine, then heat it with the gentian schnapps and the cream. Filter the mixture and let it steep for 30 minutes. Whip the egg yolks and sugar in a bain-marie, slowly mix in the white wine-cream mixture with a hand blender and finally incorporate the cold butter cubes. Pour into the ice cream machine and let it freeze. Garnish as desired with more crocus threads. Franz added oat crumbs.

***AND THEN....  
JUST ENJOY!***

