

Press release, Zermatt, November 2017

**Lauded by guests and GaultMillau alike**

## **Heinz Rufibach, Chef de Cuisine at the Zermatterhof, wants to make guests happy**

**Heinz Rufibach's return as Chef de Cuisine attracted many new guests to the Alpine Gourmet Prato Borni in the Zermatterhof during the 2017 summer season. It also prompted a visit from the GaultMillau restaurant testers, who heaped praise on his dishes and awarded the restaurant 15 points. Rufibach's comeback at the Grand Hotel in Zermatt was thus nothing short of a triumph.**

Heinz Rufibach was Chef de Cuisine at the Zermatterhof once before, from 1996 to 2002. As of the 2017/2018 winter season, he will be assuming overall responsibility for the Grand Hotel Zermatterhof's culinary offering. So what is it that motivates Rufibach, and what can guests expect at the Alpine Gourmet Prato Borni as of December? The Chef de Cuisine himself was on hand to provide the answers.

### **What is it that drives Heinz Rufibach?**

Making guests happy is what is most important to me. And for this, I also need happy staff. We are going into this winter season with a brand new, top-quality team. Naturally, our cooking will be different to that of my predecessor Ralph Busch. I have my own ideas. At the end of the day, though, we are there to serve our guests and treat them to something special, something exciting.

### **That sounds intriguing. What will be on the menu at the Alpine Gourmet Prato Borni?**

My next menu will include a terrine of duck liver as well as typical regional culinary delights such as rye bread and mulled wine. From that phrasing, guests probably won't be able to deduce that the dish is actually a duck-liver terrine in a rye-bread crust served with mulled-wine jelly. Our menu is subtle, using just three or four key words to describe each dish. This also makes things interesting for our service staff. They can tell stories, engage with guests and have fun with them. And that's the way it should be.

### **Does your cuisine revolve around the Valais region?**

The idea is that we have at least one product from the canton of Valais in each dish. We have a "Heimat" menu, the ingredients for which are all sourced from the Valais region. And we have a "Fernweh" menu with dishes from around the world, where I want at least one ingredient, one side dish, to be of Valaisan origin. My philosophy is as follows: I want my guests – whether they come from Zermatt, from elsewhere in Switzerland or from another country entirely – to experience the taste of Zermatt, the taste of "home".

### **Will the menu change as the season goes on?**

Of course it will. I don't want guests who come in December to find the same dishes on the menu when they visit us again in April. Gingerbread, for example, is on the menu at the beginning of the winter, but will disappear shortly thereafter. I will be adapting the menu according to the season. Indeed, I'm already looking forward to getting our first batch of wild garlic in the spring. It won't come from Zermatt, however, but from a place where the snow has already melted. Another thing about spring I'm looking forward to is the asparagus. And I can't wait for the morels to come, or for the first rhubarb, which is very intense in taste. The menu at the end of the season is sure to feature these products. I also want to incorporate the ideas of the kitchen's other

chefs. I don't want the menu to bear the Chef de Cuisine's signature alone, but to be a sort of playground.

**What are typical features of a Heinz Rufibach menu?**

One distinguishing feature of my menus is their simplicity. I am not the type of person who likes to offer 20 different tastes on one plate. Rather, I like to focus on one excellent product, a product that gives the dish its name, which I then refine with a few select ingredients.

**What type of atmosphere can guests expect at the Alpine Gourmet Prato Borni?**

The Prato Borni is my creative centre at the Zermatterhof. It is important to me to greet guests personally. I also try to say goodbye to them all. Sometimes I'll go up to their table to explain the various courses and tell a story or two. As I said earlier, we want to give our guests a real, lasting taste of Valais. And sometimes, if I get too carried away with my storytelling, I'll hear my chefs knocking on the window to call me back into the kitchen (*laughs*).

**Heinz Rufibach and Zermatt – is that a special relationship?**

I'm a native of Bern and first came to Zermatt in 1988. I can remember staring up at the Matterhorn, surrounded by deep snow, and feeling deeply inspired. This is where I wanted to be. Back in 1988, I only stayed for one year. But in 1996 I moved here for good and have now lived in Zermatt with my family for 21 years. It's a place that has so much to give. There's the landscape – feeling close to nature is very important to me – and there are the people. Zermatt really is enchanting. It is also very multicultural, which is exciting. Guests come from all over the world. And you meet new people every day. There's this constant coming and going, which I personally like a lot. I feel extremely privileged to be able to live here.

**New as of 16 December 2017**

For all gourmets wanting to experience Heinz Rufibach's winter season creations at the Zermatterhof, the Alpine Gourmet Prato Borni is open from 16 December 2017 to 15 April 2018 – every evening except for Wednesdays. Visit [www.zermatterhof.ch](http://www.zermatterhof.ch) for a taste of the culinary delights that will be on the menu.

**Contact for more information:**

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