



↑ A wide range of goods are on offer at this well-organised market.



← Robert Bütler sells flowers and perennials of every colour.



↑ Lilly Deichmann from the Enikerhof farm has a stand at the market every Saturday.

move on to the next stand, manned by Louis Schifferle, who is all about olives, be they marinated whole or pressed into oil. Stop and take a look at all his other products: pesto, tsatsiki, tapenade, hummus and antipasti made of capers and artichoke hearts, and Amalfi lemons of an eye-catching bright yellow, which are particularly attractive in the morning sun. Who can resist?

We'd love to take along a bouquet of flowers from the Röbi Flowers stand – carnations, sunflowers, lilies, fragrant roses and peonies – but the basket on the bike is full up. No problem! By attaching a carrier bag to each of the handlebars we get to take along some beautiful bouquets and summer flowers after all. We'll just have to be careful biking home to make sure these precious lovelies survive the journey.

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**17 Baar Saturday market**

Held every Saturday from early March to the end of October from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., in front of the Rathaus-Schüür building. Local farmers selling their produce: vegetables, fruit, meat, fish, cheese, bread, flowers, plants & seedlings, eggs, honey, syrups, berries, spirits ... and much more. Schüür-Kafi; café open from 8:30 a.m. to noon.



**18 Cham village market**

Held every Saturday from late March to the end of October from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on the village square in front of the Lorzensaal event venue. Locally produced baked goods, cheeses, fish, meat, jams and a tremendous variety of vegetables and fruit. A market pub and performances by music groups make for a lively market atmosphere.



Markets

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# Out on the lake ... with fish in the net

**Verena Merz, a professional fisher on Lake Ägeri, serves freshly caught rudd, pike, perch and whitefish to guests of her family's hotel and restaurant. Working in the great outdoors is a fascinating but also demanding and exhausting experience.**

Text Sabine Windlin  
Images Daniela Kienzler



Verena Merz casting nets out on Lake Ägeri.

A fresh yet gentle breeze blows across Lake Ägeri at midday, creating a ripple of little waves on its surface. A few rays of sunshine venture tentatively through the clouds, while a picturesque panorama of distant mountains and nearby hills hovers on the horizon. There is a holiday mood here, though this idyllic spot in Morgarten near Oberägeri is, for some, a workplace, as it is the launching point for the boats of professional fishers like Verena Merz. The 25-year-old fisher – the only woman doing the job professionally in the entire canton of Zug – has been casting her nets here for years to secure the catch for the Eierhals restaurant, a family operation she runs together with her mother Vreni and sisters Judith and Annette.

Verena Merz grew up surrounded by nature, the lake and its fish. She relates how she went along with her father on his fishing boat from the age of just two, watching him work with fascination, before later learning to steer the boat, use bottom nets and floating nets, and how to gut, de-scale, fillet and skin fish. This “learning by doing” education continued when she trained as a chef, after which she completed a three-year apprenticeship at the Institute for Fisheries at the Bavarian State Institute of Agriculture, earning the qualification of “fish specialist”. Now she is highly knowledgeable about traditional fishing techniques, modern propagation and hatchery methods, water ecology and the habitats of a host of aquatic creatures.

Verena sets sail once or twice a week, usually at around half five in the morning. Despite all her specialised, expert knowledge, she can never predict how big a catch of fish will turn out to be. “Fish are distributed throughout the lake, they don’t stay in any particular spot,” she explains, but experience helps her know where the chances of finding them are best. She only casts nets in the northern part of the lake, for historical reasons. Her family has lived in Oberägeri since 1744, and she now represents the fifth generation of fishers, with fishing rights record-



← Lake Ägeri is embedded within a charming landscape of wooded hills.

ed in the land register for an area amounting to roughly two thirds of the lake. The family has exclusive rights to fish commercially within that area.

**Full nets, ice-cold water**

Verena has a passion for fishing, like her ancestors before her. She enjoys the varied work in the great outdoors, and the whispering quiet of the dawn hours. She works hard, and goes out in any weather. The boat deck is slippery, the water is freezing in winter and the full nets she and her fellow fishers Lui and Pius pull out of the water are heavy. With rain pelting from the sky, the young woman goes about her tasks in waist-high rubber boots and a waterproof oilskin suit. She has to find her way around the lake on her own when dense fog sets in, limiting visibility. Every now and then a surprise comes along, like the 15 kg carp that recently swam into her net. It was no longer edible, however, probably because it was older. It had an odd after-taste to it that meant it couldn't be served.

An astoundingly large variety of species live in Lake Ägeri despite its relatively small size of just over seven square kilometres. As a commercial fisher, she is most interested in rudd, whitefish and pike. Many native fish species don't naturally spawn reliably, so Verena catches those three species on a protected basis. This means that, as a professional, she is allowed to catch fish ready for spawning during the closed season intended to ensure undisturbed reproduction, in order to then artificially hatch the eggs in a fish hatchery. She works closely with the forest and wildlife authority, agreeing in advance the timing for setting the first nets and for conducting test catches. Once she receives the go-ahead from Fisheries Control, official catching can commence. The fish then caught go into the fish hatchery, where the eggs are removed, fertilised and incubated under ideal conditions until the larvae hatch from the eggs. Once these reach 3–4 centimetres in size, they are returned to the lake as “restocking fish”.

It's quite a joy when a shoal of whitefish comes swimming along. Lake Ägeri has many such fish, which have shimmering, elongated bodies and are popular at the Eierhals restaurant, frequently ending up on guests' plates. Fisherwoman Verena is likewise fascinated by pike: a dark green predator with sharp teeth that attacks ducks and, as a cannibal, shows no mercy to its fellow pike, either. “Pike is actually my favourite fish,” Verena reveals. “You



↑ Hotel Eierhals, which has its own fishing operation, is located right on the lake.



As a matter of tradition, freshly caught fish are served here every day. →



Eierhals  
zug-tourismus.ch/en/eierhals



**20 The Ägeribad on Lake Ägeri**

Guests of this modern wellness and swimming pool facility located right on the banks of Lake Ägeri can go from inside directly out into the lake for a swim – a highly popular option in summer. The architecturally attractive facility is great for serious swimmers and families with children alike. The Ägeribad wellness offering includes sauna, steam bath, cold-water plunge pool, Kneipp hydrotherapy and massage.



zug-tourismus.ch/en/aegeribad



**21 Morgarten monument**

This historical monument commemorating the 1315 Battle of Morgarten is located on a rise near Lake Ägeri. A visit to this monument marking an event of key historical importance for Swiss independence can be combined with walks in the area and/or a boat trip.



zug-tourismus.ch/en/morgarten

see them either motionless, waiting for prey, or shooting off somewhere with great purpose, like an arrow.” She also likes rudd for their striking red colour and all the tradition associated with this fish as a delicacy. Up until the first half of the 20th century, rudd were exported alive in barrels to Zurich, by horse and cart. Verena doesn't specifically fish for lake trout, turbot or perch, so on the days they happen to be caught, they are served in the restaurant as “specials”. The family-run business is thus able to keep its advertised promise of “freshly caught fish”, even though, when properly packaged, fish keep in the refrigerator for up to five days at zero degrees.

Does Verena sometimes enjoy the lake in her free time, even though it's really her workplace? Nodding, she tells us: “When I'm off work I sometimes lie down in the grass on the shore and let the afternoon go by. And in the summer, I make sure to take the time for a swim now and then.” One thing on her bucket list is to earn a diving certification, because she would love to be able to observe the gilled creatures up close, watching them placidly swim by.