



# In the market

Heads swivel as the longhaired man pauses to peruse the glass bottles on display. Many rock stars might prefer beer or whisky, but it's the selection of fruit wines and liqueurs that have caught the eye of Chris von Rohr of Krokus. The vendors seem to hold their breath while passers-by murmur, "Is that who I think it is?"

By Susan Vogel-Misicka | That was at last year's Bio Marché festival, but I didn't hover long enough to see whether the Swiss bass player and TV celebrity actually bought a bottle of strawberry wine or not.

It was early in my visit – too early to get bogged down with heavy bottles. After all, a successful shopping spree requires a certain amount of strategy and stamina. With its diverse array of fruit, vegetables, dairy products, condiments and other organic fare, the Bio Marché annual festival is a true paradise for those who appreciate great food.

## A decade of dedication

This year will mark the festival's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Organiser Dorothee Stich has been involved with the event every step of the way.

Though the idea was born in the mid-1990s, it languished in a drawer awaiting the right opportunity. The big chance came in 2000, when the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) held its annual conference in Switzerland. Stich, who had previously coordinated a Swiss organic trade fair, was tapped to arrange the first Bio Marché in conjunction with the IFOAM convention.

"It was really difficult the first time. We had to get special permission from Swiss customs so that international vendors could import their products – many of which were labelled in foreign languages," says Stich.

Nevertheless, the event was a success worth repeating.

## The perfect setting

The Bio Marché is always held in Zofingen, Aargau (which is well worth visiting even when there's nothing going on). Its central location and good public transportation make it very accessible. As Stich points out, the beautiful old town is easy to block off for a pedestrian-friendly event like the Bio Marché. The vendors also find the Zofingen location and event highly appealing.

"Many vendors make a point of coming themselves rather than sending employees to man their stands," says Stich. For them, the Bio Marché is a unique opportunity to introduce their products to consumers who may never have discovered them otherwise. They hail from all over Switzerland, with a few coming in from neighbouring countries as well. Some have made the trip every single

year, while several more have participated six to eight times.

"I find the cooperation between the vendors especially nice. It's not a competitive atmosphere," notes Stich, "Everyone is working together to support the organic movement."

In honour of the Bio Marché's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Swiss farmers will team up to create something extraordinary this year. Using soil brought into Zofingen's old town, they will plant a large garden in the middle of the marketplace. Over the course of the weekend, visitors will be able to watch them at work and learn about organic farming techniques.

## Food's just the beginning

In addition to edibles, the festival also features cosmetics, textiles and a section devoted to organic building and living, which has grown in popularity in recent years. And there is more to the Bio Marché than shopping; the entertainment programme is packed with surprises for young and old.

Concerts fill the air with a variety of musical styles, while roaming performers delight with impromptu juggling and balloon-art shows. An old-fashioned carousel

# for everything organic



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## 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Bio Marché

June 19-21, free admission  
130-150 stands  
[www.biomarche.ch](http://www.biomarche.ch)

### Schedule:

Friday, June 19  
Market open from 14:00-21:00;  
gastro & culture until midnight

Saturday, June 20  
Market open from 10:00-21:00;  
gastro & culture until midnight

Sunday, June 21  
Market open from 10:00-18:00;  
gastro & culture until 20:00

### Getting there:

Thanks to its central location in Canton Aargau, Zofingen is easy to reach via train and the station is right at the edge of the marketplace. For more information on the town itself, check out [www.zofingen.ch](http://www.zofingen.ch).

### Helpful hints:

- There is an endless supply of free samples, as well as snacks for sale.
- The marketplace is huge, so you might get tired if you schlep too much for too long.
- Regarding wine, if you buy a case you can usually have the vendor mail it to you.
- Most vendors are eager to talk about their products, so there's no need to be shy in asking questions – even if you struggle with the language.
- Since this is a summer event, a small cooler or insulated bag is perfect for perishable items.
- The concerts and other performances are worth sticking around for.







## Switzerland's organic markets

### Brig

Saltinaplatz  
Saturday mornings  
[www.brig-belalp.ch](http://www.brig-belalp.ch)

### Geneva

Marche Saint-Jean  
Thursdays, 16:00-20:00

### Olten

Bifangstrasse  
Saturdays, 7:00-11:30  
[www.burehof.ch](http://www.burehof.ch)

### Schwyz

Brunnen, Bahnhofsmärcht  
Tuesdays, 8:00-12:00  
[www.schwyzbio-bauern.ch](http://www.schwyzbio-bauern.ch)

### Organic shops and farm stands:

**[www.knospehof.ch](http://www.knospehof.ch):** Bio Suisse, an umbrella association for 30 organic farming organisations and over 6,000 farms, has compiled a guide to farm shops, which are listed by canton. There's also a list of markets, most of which feature some organic products.

**[www.bionetz.ch](http://www.bionetz.ch):** This site offers a comprehensive list of stores that sell organic products. Organised according to canton, it indicates which ones are purely organic and which ones are partly so. Click on "Bioläden" to access the index. Where available, hyperlinks to the individual shops are provided.

### Home delivery:

**[www.bio-direct.ch](http://www.bio-direct.ch):** You can let the good stuff come straight to you through this company's "Bio box" delivery service. Prices start at SFr 34.90 for an eight-kilo carton of potatoes.

### Restaurants:

**[www.gout-mieux.ch](http://www.gout-mieux.ch):** Forget cooking altogether – this organisation supports restaurant cuisine that is humane and environmentally responsible.

prepare festival menus with the organic theme in mind. After the market closes for the evening, people linger to enjoy the festive atmosphere for a few hours.

For the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Stich hopes to welcome 35,000 visitors. Attending for the third time, I'll be one of them. My shopping list already includes blueberries, fresh ravioli, buffalo-milk yogurt and, if I can get my hands on one, a bottle of strawberry wine.



spins merrily in one square while a warm and fuzzy petting zoo beckons from the shade of nearby trees. Families appreciate the supervised children's paradise, where kids can get creative while parents explore the market.

Some years, the Bio Marché welcomes a guest region, such as Canton Graubünden in 2008. This year, the garden will be the "guest star". At some point, Stich would like to add a fair-trade section to the Bio Marché. Though not necessarily organic, the products are usually environmentally friendly and would likely appeal to festival visitors, she notes.

While there are plenty of chances to sample the wares, those who'd like a sit-down meal can enjoy one under the shade of a tent or umbrella. Various restaurants