

# UCCELIN FINAL PROJECT

by Esther Weyl

**An overview of the following places: Felchlin, No Ideas Bar, Schloss Schauenstein, Restaurant Magdalena, Thoma and Liechti Fleisch, Quique daCosta, The Chocolate Line and Quintonil between May 5th and September 2nd.**

**First, a little introduction of my personal history with food:**

**Food has always played a major role in my life growing up and it was initially a hobby. When it was time for to choose a profession, even though I worked on weekends as front of house**

and loved it I chose to go to school for law.

Law school did not stop me however to have a different life on my weekends - I would go to restaurants and tried to replicate everything at home, spending hours and hours cooking different recipes. At one point I transitioned my weekend job as front of house to back of house and I completely fell in love with the kitchen life.

On my final semester of school I had the opportunity to go stage at Maní, currently number 21 on the Latin America 50 best and it was my first time working at a fine dine kitchen. Fine dine is not for everyone, but it was it for me. The gigantic thought process that goes into creating a tasting menu and choosing each ingredient so carefully made me change careers for good.

Since then I had the opportunity to spend time in amazing kitchens, such as Minibar by Jose Andres in Washington and Blue Hill at Stone Barns in New York State. Having spent almost one year and a half working for chef Dan Barber taught me to focus on ingredient's quality and where it comes in an ethical perspective.

As for now I am back home in Brazil to launch my own restaurant, trying to tie together everything I learnt in the past 6 years of experiences. I choose to focus on tasting menus because my passion is to tell stories, specially my own, through food.

### Acknowledgments:

Uccelin was my final moment of staging anywhere before opening my restaurant, which has its opening date now in less than a year. I am so grateful for this opportunity as I would never have been able to do it by myself.

The selection of restaurants and producers are so carefully picked that any combination would be a winning one. I am very grateful for chef Caminada to give this opportunity to young chefs all over the world and not only Swiss talent, specially to see such a wonderful place like Switzerland - which I consider to be a farm to table country.

I want to give special thanks to the team of Quique daCosta that welcomed me so well and chef Carol took her time to teach me so much - I was treated almost like a visiting chef, that is how I felt. She showed me how they do their shopping, choose their producers, how every station worked. It was from all the places my best experience and being under a woman chef also made me feel inspired, as there aren't many women in the kitchen in general.

And also I would like to thank Anthea, who was a joy to work with since our first phone call. I felt my program and need were met with care and respect, and being miles away from home was made easy when you had someone to reach out to.

During my four months of this program I met amazing chefs, learnt different techniques and got inspired. Traveling is such an important part of a chef's life because we need to see what and how people eat - getting out of our own heads is a brilliant way to realize that there is so

much more to learn and in relation to food the knowledge is infinite, we just have to keep our eyes open.



Felchlin



Felchlin was my first stop at the Uccelin Program. I had gone to Switzerland before but it was my first time going near the lake region and arriving in Brunnen felt like arriving in a dream - it is one of the most beautiful places I have ever been.

The very next day after arriving I was at Felchlin Chocolate Factory as early as 8 am where our whole team was received by Erich Keller to have a tour of the factory and also

a tasting class. That day we were taught how to taste sourness, saltiness, acidity, sweetness and umami through a blind test. After learning how to look for these flavors we then tried different chocolates and how their taste related to other ingredients - if, for instance, a chocolate would have a sour earthy finish and would remind us of mushrooms. This was such a unique experience and I would recommend to every Uccelin scholar because it broadens our palate and makes us look at chocolate with potential to savory dishes as well as desserts.

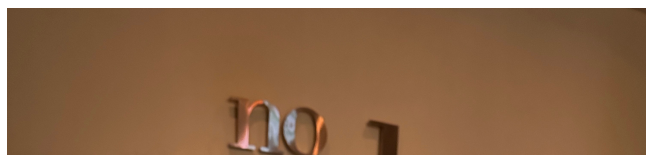
Almost as important as that we had a class on cacao origins and how it became historically a Swiss staple ingredient. As a Brazilian who sees cacao trees everywhere in my hometown it was important to learn the exchange of the cacao trade and how Felchlin chose to have an ethical relationship with the communities they receive the cacao beans from - one strong example of this was the raw cacao juice shot they are using as a sub product of chocolate.

That night Erich took us to dinner as a team and it was great to meet a little bit more of everyone - which was an essential part of the program; to meet people from different backgrounds and see their path on the program and their career with food.

The second day we had a practical class that included tempering chocolate, making pralines and ganache. It was more than I could dream of when it came as a personal class for using chocolate - it felt not as a stage, but as a university where their only goal was to make sure we learnt as much as we could. After that we visited every part of the factory to see all the processes of making chocolate.

I left Felchlin with a feeling that I had just started an amazing learning adventure.

No Ideas Bar







**As a chef I think it is important to understand every single flavor possible, but we tend to overlook certain areas of the kitchen as not as important, and in those areas lie a lot of hidden secrets.**

**Having never worked with cocktails before I was very eager to learn about mixing flavors involving alcohol and also very nervous - I had to learn a whole new vocabulary I never payed attention to before: tulips, sherbets, fat washing.**

**Luckily I was taking in by the No Ideas Bar family. Andrew, the head chef, pastry chef, owner, mixologist and everything in between showed me all I could possibly learn in just a few days. What really stood out to me was their capacity to tell stories through drinks - every single ingredient had a purpose inside the glass.**

**Julian and Telmo are the other two members of No Ideas that showed me how to pick up their drinks and mise up everything. They were very open about their recipes and how to create the ingredients and I feel like I have learnt a lot.**

**Another surprise I had was that they said I could create my own drink and taught me to understand the art process behind it: first you need to understand the DNA of the drink and then how you can replicate it with different flavors.**

**I decided to make a cacao drink with the DNA of an old fashioned. I wanted to use cacao and white chocolate inspired by my last stage at Uccelin - Felchlin, so we fat washed bourbon with white chocolate, made a shrub with cacao and also a sherbet with ulong pepper and tonka beans. For depth we also decided to add an Amaro. It was then that Andrew gave me the idea to make a drink for my final project.**

**This learning process opened my eyes to different flavors in the kitchen, specially bitter - which as a chef focused on ocidental food I don't work with enough.**

**I left the No Ideas Bar feeling inspired and decided that as soon as I open my restaurant I would make my own drinks menu.**

## **Schloss Schauenstein**



**As a Latin American participant I could only stay in chef's Caminada three Michelin stars for one week and unfortunately it was not enough. There is so much to see and learn - I was amazed by the caliber of the food and the kitchen work. It is an example of what all kitchens should be - organized, clean and friendly.**

**During my work in the kitchen I spent two days on the cold section that starts the tasting menu and learned a lot about the details that go into making a service perfect and how to give it good timing. Every flower on the dish had its place and I tasted an unforgettable fish crudo dish.**

**One day I went to help the team pick the herbs in the garden and it translated the care of the restaurant - every ingredient is hand selected before reaching the guest and dealt with a lot of care. Since it was still spring I managed to see beautiful flowers, taste them and learn how to properly use them for storage and plating.**

**Chef Caminada's team are also masters of the art of fermentation and I tried to pay close attention to how they pair the flavors in a such a beautiful form. I was personally drawn to their fermented tomatoes.**

**I had the chance to spend a day in hot section and I enjoyed throughly. The chefs are fast and I tried to take in all that I could. The sauces were very well done and the recipes had a classic background but a modern feel. The cheese cart was an amazing experience to see, just how thought out the process of choosing the ingredients were and how the producers mattered so much.**

**For one day I was in Oz and since I am very interested in vegetarian cuisine it was great to see all the different techniques for dealing with only vegetables. The pace of the tasting menu was also very unique.**

**There are so many good things I can say about Schloss Schauenstein, but I guess the best is that every single bite I ate there made perfect sense, it was like tasting food that had a purpose and the whole restaurant atmosphere transmitted that.**

## **Restaurant Magdalena**



**Magdalena restaurant was a great learning experience for me. From day one I fell in love with the flavors from chef Dominik and chef Jonathan. Everything was balanced and deliciously savory, umami was everywhere and in ingredients I never expected. For instance, I don't like carrots at all, but I am still obsessed about their first dish which was a mix of carrot textures!**

**I was also very thankful to eat all itens of the tasting menu while in the kitchen so I had a better feel of the restaurant's identity.**

**In addition to that I got to meet wonderful people who made my time there even more special. They honestly feel like a family and sitting down to eat family meal always felt fun**

and relaxing, even if a busy service was ahead of us.

One thing that made the experience even better was having an Uccelin alumni there, Theresa. Since she had already participated in the Uccelin program she was my guide; helped me get everywhere and always was there for advice. Having her there made me feel even more connected to the program.

In Magdalena I also had the opportunity to stay a few days at their bakery, which is fantastic and full of great recipes. I was amazed to see how such a small team - currently just one baker - managed to do over 10 different productions in one service! A lot of the bread and pastries were from long fermentation - 72 hours process which makes it a very complicated time management project, but Andi, the baker, makes it look easy. Not only easy, he made it look fun - which got me to wonder how often we forget to have fun in the kitchen.

As a personal critic I think we, as high end cooks, get so intense with the kitchen work we don't really enjoy the process behind it. I kept going back to memories of when food was just a delicious hobby and how much happy it made me - is it possible that we, as cooks, can have it both ways? Serious and fun at the same time?

The bakery made me truly enjoy myself. Having never worked with puff pastry before I was eager to learn how to work with this dough, and became super proud of the croissants and pain au chocolate that we made. This has been one of the most rewarding experiences of the program and made waking up at 3 am very worthy it.

## Seneerei Ander





---

One of the most special things about food is how it relates to people. The people who eat it, the ones that sell it, the ones that make it. Seneerei Ander, Martin's and Maria's cheese factory is a story about how a product is made greatly because of the people behind it.

Getting to such a small village coming from Brazil's 10th largest city - roughly 2 million people - was a culture shock. And also, since I come from the Amazon region of Brazil, I had never seen mountains like the ones in Switzerland and I was amazed to be in between such two big mountains I couldn't either see the sunset or the sunrise. However, I was received so warmly by them that even though I was miles away from Belém I felt at home.

On my first day Martin showed me where the farmers arrived with the milk and how important that connection was - to look in the eye of the person who is raising the cows and the certainty that milk came from a good place. To know the cheese you need to know the milk, and to know the milk is to know who raises the cows.

We then moved on to pasteurizing the milk to sell, making butter, yogurt, cream and other special products. The biggest quantity of milk though was saved for the cheese, and they had two main products - hard and soft cheese. The soft cheese was entirely made by hand, even pressed down with our hands. For making soft cheese we needed watery big curds, so the temperature needed to be lower and the culture was specific for that. Then we pressed it by hand for the first time and let it dry out till the perfect texture to go to the salt bath for a few minutes.

To make hard cheese the curds needed to be very small, so they reach higher temperatures before adding the culture. The hard cheese also needs to be pressed by a machine because it needs to squeeze as much water as possible as soon as possible, and it stays with the machine pressuring it for a while. Since it is bigger it stays in the salt bath for a whole day.

After around ten days the soft cheese is ready and it takes months to get the hard cheese ready to sell. Every week, around 4 times a week, they clean the cheese with salt bath water and let it dry again.

The work at the cheese shop was also very different from the kitchen, it felt quiet, and as if we had time. We first started at 6 am and then stopped around 8 for a quick yogurt, bread and cheese breakfast before going back till around 12. Martin always had us for lunch in his house and it was always cheese related - which made me so happy. Some afternoons we would go back to wash the cheese and others we would go to deliver the products.

Every process - from washing the cheese in their beautiful cheese salt bath to cutting and wrapping was done with care and so much character from the owners. What I really learnt from my week with them was how the story behind those who make our food is just as important as the taste.

**Thoma and Liechti Fleisch**





**When I chose my producers for the program was before the addition of Thoma and Liechti Fleisch to the program. So when I saw that they had joined I immediately called Anthea and asked for an opportunity to spend some time with them. They are not only a meat deli where you can find very special products but also one of the only few places where they have a direct contact with the animals they process the meat from - they are literally a street away from them.**

**I truly believe that if you eat meat you should be able to see every part of the process of making an animal food. Most people can't handle it and going to the the butchery shop first and falling in love with all different cuts and then visiting the factory was in all a very educational moment.**

**The cows and pigs are in a farm across the street from the factory and they have the minimum stress possible coming into the factory. I was shown exactly the whole process and the amount of respect for the animal shows in every process and ultimately in the flavor you get.**

**We took a lot of meat home and cooked it. The meat was very tender, I could cut my entrecote with a spoon and didn't have the harsh flavor meat tends to have in Brazil. I remember it almost tasting like veal. The veal sausage was a winner, so tender and flavorful and that goes back to seeing the veal with its mom having free access to milk - the best tasting food is always ethical food.**

**The pork was very flavorful and the different cuts was something I wanted to explore more, if I had the time. Overall I was so impressed with this experience and even though it was only**



a day it was very worth it - which made me think that for Uccelin maybe sometimes even more producers and shorter times could be a great possibility too.

## Quique daCosta



My first day arriving at Dénia, Spain I was received by one of the most beautiful sunsets I ever saw. I arrived at the house to drop off my things and went on a little walk to the restaurant to see how my daily journey would be. The restaurant is literally just across from the beach and in the hot Spanish summer it felt like paradise.

I went to work the next day at 9 am and it was the first day they were opening since the 2023 world's 50 best award, which they were given the number 20. They were full of reservations and really needed the hands so I jumped right on it with chef Daniel on meat line. It was a hot and fast service, but very organized by chef Juanfri and chef Carol. That day made me feel like I was joining the team as a cook and not only as a stage, which was great, because they awarded me chores and daily tasks that made me grow.

Chef Daniel is specially organized and made me learn a lot on how to organize my mise en place better. I learnt a lot on meat line and specially cooking with sauces - which they had amazing ones. Every moment I could I tried to check what fish line and the rice line were doing. Rice is a great passion of mine and of course there is no better place to learn than Quique daCosta.

Every Sunday we would have a big rice dish for lunch and I learned how to make the classical paella, oven rice and of course the famous banda rice. Also I learned how to make fideua with them which was simply delicious - those are recipes I will take with me forever.

Chef Quique was kind enough to invite me to have dinner at the restaurant and it was by far the best tasting menu I ever had. The dried tuna made on their salt chamber was very

interesting and then chef Daniel took me to see the chamber and explained how it worked, which is a technique I would love to try to replicate with local fish.

There are so many highlights of the meal it is different to choose just a few to talk about - the dessert was very unique and touching - they plated a lychee mousse on a jewelry box as to give you the feel of opening one - they had the jewels, the music and the glass, it really transported me to when opening a jewelry box from my mother, which was chef's idea exactly.

On the meat line we made a duck blood mousse with foie gras that had a 3D printer edible paper onion on top, plating it at the kitchen was very time consuming but sitting down to eat you understand so well the whole process of why we had to plate it so fast to preserve the textures and how different this is from any other restaurant.

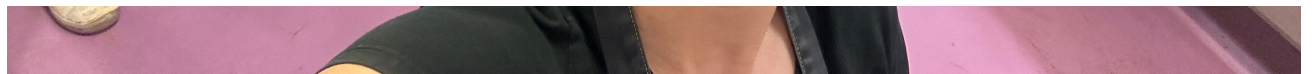
Then I had the opportunity to spend a day in a few other lines, like pastry, cold station and production. Every one took their time to explain all the recipes and processes to me which felt very rewarding. I think as Uccelins, coming with a good background of course we are eager to learn and do anything to help, but it is even better when a team gives you such a good preparation, just like you are joining the team - and that is how I felt, part of the team.

It was all in all a great experience and I took not just recipes with, but a crystal clear idea of how an imaginative restaurant works to perfection.

## The Chocolate Line







The Chocolate Line in Belgium was a place that I was very excited to go. They treat chocolate just as we as cooks would in the thought process of making a new dish - they think about savoriness, umami and acidity.

The chocolates there are groundbreaking and the best of the best, I took this opportunity to learn how to make better pralines since it is something I want to serve in my restaurant.

Also this opportunity gave me the chance to observe how a factory of quite big proportions works, which is very serious work and hard.

## Quintonil



Quintonil was my last stop at Uccelin Foundation and it was a bitter sweet one. It was at Quintonil that I processed how much I had learned during this entire time and how grateful I am for this program.

Coming to Mexico was a mix of so many different ingredients I had never thought of and getting in contact with a culture so rich was life changing for sure. Mexico breathes food - when you walk the streets you see different colors, smell the most beautiful broths and even hearing the sizzling of tacos is a constant reminder that this is a city of food.

Uccelin gives us the opportunity to go to many restaurants and producers, but also to travel to places we might not have had the opportunity if it wasn't for it. Mexico was truly a

school for me in terms of flavors, from breakfast to late night quesadilla on the street. I did learn a lot from Quintonil, but I learned just as much from Mexico city street.

At Quintonil you can see the deep care to use native ingredients and the best of it was to be able to go visit a nopal farm and learn more from this fantastic ingredient. On their tasting menu, that they kindly invited me to try during dinner, you can appreciate some of Mexico best ingredients and techniques that are very unique to Quintonil. It was a true adventure and I thank chef Vallejo so much for this opportunity.