

## From Culinary Dreams to Global Adventures: My Uccelin Journey Edgar Batsleer.



### **Introduction**

With great pleasure, I invite you to step into the captivating world of my Uccelin journey. It all began with a chance encounter that set the stage for a transformative adventure. The catalyst for this extraordinary experience was none other than Filip Word Foodie, known for his profound knowledge of gastronomy and global connections.

### **Meeting Filip Word Foodie:**

I was working at a restaurant when Filip Word Foodie, or simply Flip Dejaeghere, walked through the door. Engaging in conversation, he posed a question that would reshape my future: "What do you aspire to do?" I expressed my deep-seated desire to explore the world, even though circumstances made it feel like an unattainable dream.

### **Unveiling the Uccelin Foundation:**

In response, Flip opened the door to a world of possibilities. He introduced me to the Uccelin Foundation, an initiative helmed by the renowned culinary visionary, Andreas Caminada. It didn't take long for my excitement to reach new heights. With Flip's endorsement, my heart brimmed with the anticipation of a remarkable culinary adventure.

### **The Leap of Faith:**

Only two days later, I took a leap of faith and submitted my application to the Uccelin Foundation. The odds of securing a spot in this prestigious program were slim, given the multitude of applicants from around the world. Nevertheless, I couldn't ignore the opportunity to pursue my passion for travel and gastronomy.

### **An Unexpected Email:**

Then, one fateful day, an email notification left me in disbelief. I had been accepted into the Uccelin Foundation. The rush of emotions—surprise, joy, and a touch of apprehension was overwhelming. The world had just become my playground for culinary exploration.

### **Embracing the Unknown:**

With acceptance came a mixture of fear and boundless excitement. The prospect of traveling the globe, immersing myself in diverse culinary traditions, and connecting with inspiring individuals was both exhilarating and daunting. It marked the beginning of an incredible journey.

### **A Journey of Passion and Discovery:**

My voyage with the Uccelin Foundation opened my eyes to the global cuisine and culture. It was not just a journey of miles but a profound personal transformation, one that rekindled my love for food and expanded my horizons.

### **Conclusion:**

My Uccelin journey stands as a testament to the power of seizing opportunities and following one's passion. It is a story of dreams realized, obstacles conquered, and horizons broadened. It is an invitation to embrace the unknown, explore the world, and share one's love and passion for food with others.

On September 27th, my Uccelin journey started in the world's smallest city, Fürstenu, Switzerland. I was a bundle of nerves and excitement as I arrived in this charming location, surrounded by majestic mountains and lush forests.

Within the castle that served as the Uccelin Foundation's base, Anthea greeted me warmly. She guided me through a comprehensive tour, showcasing Casa Caminada, the wine cellar, bakery, Oz, coffee roastery, and the renowned Schloss Schauenstein restaurant.

After the tour, I had the pleasure of meeting Florian, the chef de partie of fish. With a warm smile, he introduced me to the kitchen staff, who greeted me with open arms. This was the moment when my culinary adventure truly took flight.

My Uccelin journey continued with a dive into the world of starters. Benjamin and Florian welcomed me with open arms. Right from the start, I eagerly embraced daily preparations and had the privilege of participating in plating during service. It was an experience that allowed me to dive headfirst into there party.

I joined Flo (Florian) in the fish section. This was a moment of genuine happiness for me, as I have a deep liking for working with fish. Flo generously shared his knowledge, guiding me through the intricacies of his craft.



One remarkable aspect of Schloss Schauenstein that deeply aligned with my values was its commitment to using locally sourced ingredients. This perfectly resonated with my own values and my passion for supporting local producers.

It was a day of learning, working with dedication, and embracing the beauty of locally inspired cuisine.

I had the pleasure of working on a variety of culinary delights. I started with gyozas, a task that brought me immense joy as it was something I had experience with. However, I was thrilled to observe the professionals' technique.

Next, on crafting tortellini. Despite having no prior experience, after making 150 units, I had a good grasp of the process.

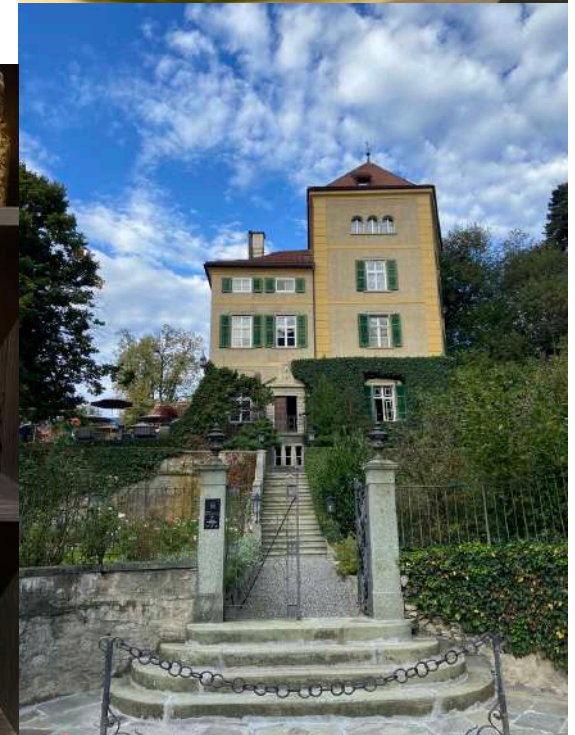


In the pastry section, My prior experience came in handy as they produced everything in-house, from ice cream to sable, even gluten-free bread etc..  
It was a joy of mastering new skills and new techniques.

Upon entering the warm section of starters with Dominik and Valentin, I was greeted with a genuine and warm welcome. Dominik, in particular, played a pivotal role in helping me open up, making my transition seamless. Their meticulous explanations ensured that I grasped every detail.

It was during this time that I learned something captivating: Andreas Caminada's favorite vegetable is beets. This insight added a personal and delightful touch to the culinary experience.

I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire team at Schloss Schauenstein and, in particular, to Head Chef Marcel. My short time here has been an amazing learning experience, and I'm genuinely grateful for the knowledge and memories I've gained.



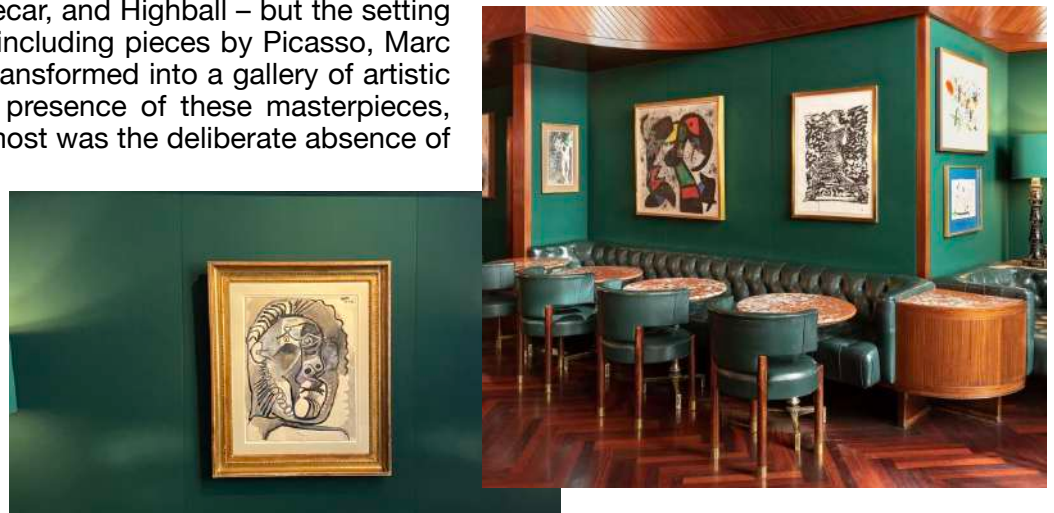




On the 7 of October I had the privilege of visiting Kronenhalle, a restaurant known for its traditional cuisine and a remarkable art collection from around the world. What struck me was the wonderful atmosphere among the staff. Incredibly, despite serving 120 to 200 people in a single service, there was no sign of stress; everything was relaxed. Seeing Switzerland's traditional cuisine for the first time was a captivating experience.

I'm genuinely thrilled to have had the opportunity to learn from the Kronenhalle team. A big thanks to Head Chef Peter Scharer and Sous Chef Philippe Schoch for giving me this incredible chance to work with the Kronenhalle team.

During my brief visit to Kronenhalle Bar, not only did the bartenders unveil the secrets of five classic cocktails in just one hour – the Old Fashioned, Martini, Daiquiri, Sidecar, and Highball – but the setting itself was a masterpiece. Surrounded by the timeless works of art, including pieces by Picasso, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, Pierre Bonnard, and Georges Braque, the bar transformed into a gallery of artistic brilliance. Each sip of the meticulously crafted cocktails was the presence of these masterpieces, adding a layer of sophistication to the experience. What struck me most was the deliberate absence of music, creating an environment where the only melody was the symphony of conversation. The lack of musical distraction allowed guests to engage in unhurried conversations, appreciating not just the carefully mixed cocktails but also the wonderful art that was on the walls. Where taste, sight, and conversation seamlessly intertwined, making Kronenhalle Bar not just a destination for drinks but a sanctuary for appreciating the finer things in life.

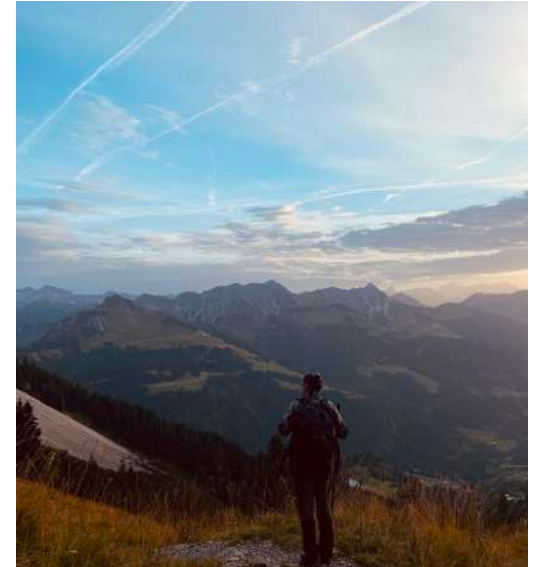


As my journey ( 9 of October ) continued from the town of Walenstadt, in a unique adventure from October 10th to the 13th. In the company of Roger, a seasoned hunter, I delved into the art of hunting in the beautiful landscapes of Austria. It was a profound lesson in patience, waking up early to the calmness of dawn, and embodying the art of stillness.

Roger generously shared his wisdom, teaching me what to look out for in the wilderness, emphasizing the importance of being patient, and instilling the discipline of waking up with the sun. In those early mornings, as nature shook to life, I discovered the profound beauty of being still and quiet, learning to appreciate the finesse of the wild.

The days spent in Austria were a blend of thrilling adventure, educational moments, and a deep connection with the natural world. These experiences, under Roger's guidance, became an integral part of my journey, imprinting the values of patience, observation, and reverence for the beauty that nature has. This part from October 10th to 13th became a treasured chapter, enriching my adventure and adding layers of understanding to my journey.

Deep gratitude to Roger for his extraordinary hospitality during my stay in Austria. His kindness and generosity added a special warmth to my journey, creating memories that will forever hold a special place in my heart. Roger's guidance, wisdom, and the genuine hospitality he extended made my time in the mountains an unforgettable and enriching experience. I sincerely appreciate his generosity, making this part of my journey truly exceptional.





On the October 15th, I landed in the heart of Calabria, on a journey in the rich world of olive culture. expectation was high as I stepped off the plane, and to my delight, I was warmly greeted by Roberto and Giada, who picked me up from the airport. As we set off, the air buzzed with excitement, and little did I know that this visit would not only unravel the secrets of olive oil production but also unfold the captivating history and gastronomic wonders of this beautiful region.

In this olive-centric journey, we explore the origins and migration of the olive tree from Asia Minor to the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on the Gioia Tauro region. We stared into the cultivation process, differentiating between integrated and organic methods.

The olive harvest becomes a hands-on experience as we join the Olearia San Giorgio Team. We delved into the olive oil production process, from tree to bottle, at the oil mill. The evening treats us to traditional dishes paired with exquisite oils at the Scaletta restaurant.





The following day, we visited the Ventra Laboratory to learn how to identify quality oil through chemical analysis. At Fattoria della Piana, we witness the circular economy in action. A microtraining session explores the olive tree's significance across the Mediterranean, emphasizing Italian olive oils' quality and nutritional value.

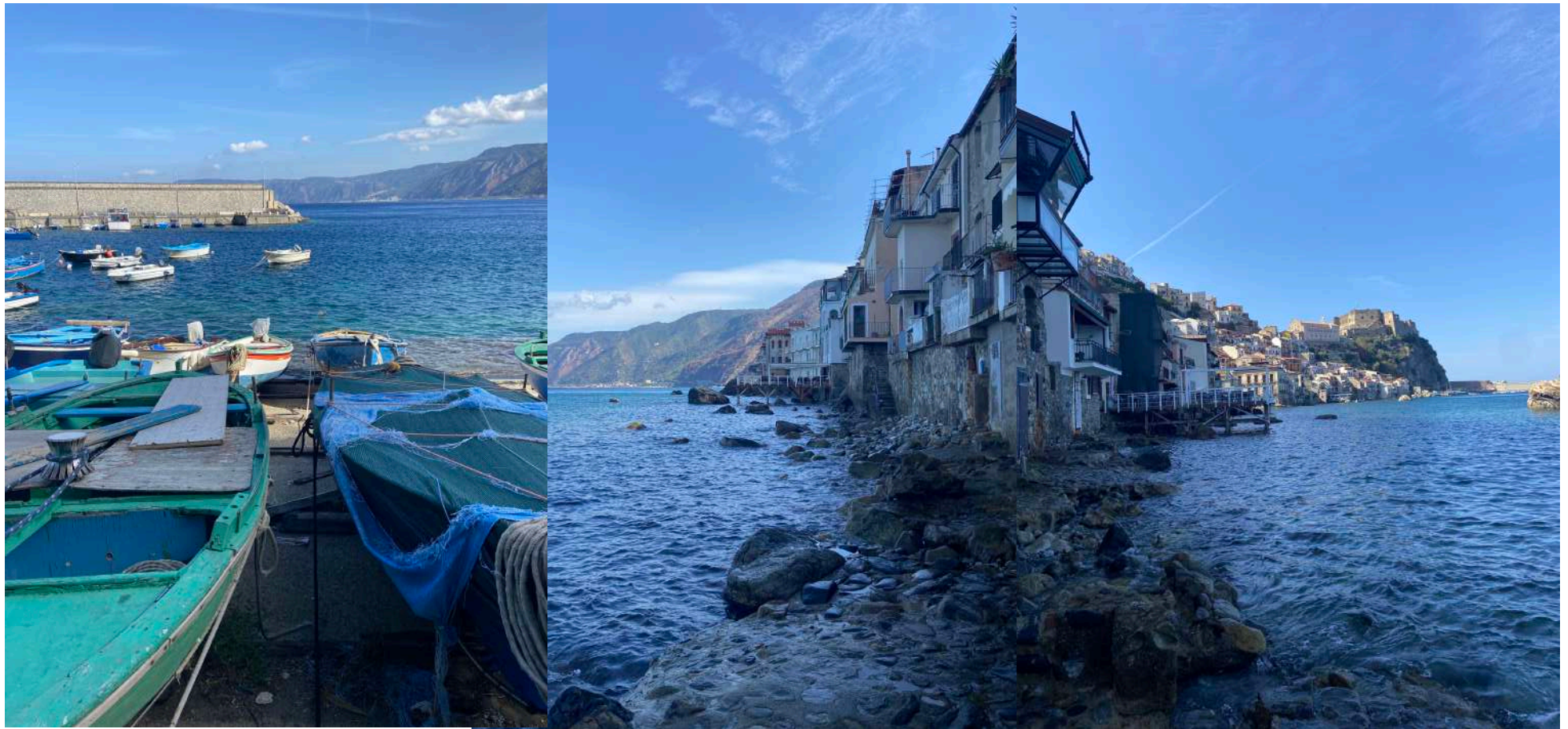
The afternoon offers a micro tasting course, led by Antonio Lauro, imparting knowledge on olive oil characteristics and defects through sensory experiences. We finished the day with a dinner at the Piro Piro restaurant, where I participated in the preparation of the dishes using local ingredients and the flavors paired with the oils.





The final leg of my journey takes us to Scylla and Reggio Calabria, exploring historical sites and delving into the significance of olive oil during the Magna Graecia period. Our adventure culminates with a visit to the National Museum of Magna Graecia, followed by an exploration of archaeological sites in Reggio Calabria, all set against the stunning backdrop of the seafront.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Claudio, Roberto, and Antonio for their unwavering dedication and effort in making this visits possible. What began as a journey to explore the art of olive oil production and the harvest turned into an enriching exploration of Calabria's history, with visits to museums, meetings with friends, and delightful culinary experiences. I genuinely appreciate and treasure this experience, as it was far more than I could have imagined. Thank you for making it an unforgettable and truly cherished journey.









As the 20th of October approached, my Calabrian adventure, filled with the aroma of olive groves, bid me farewell. Returning to Switzerland, I found myself in a village, drawn by a special bakery named Eigenbrötler. Here, Daniel, Sven Amrein and the entire team welcomed me with open arms.

Starting on a new chapter, I felt a mix of gratitude and excitement. my Swiss German struggled to find its rhythm, Yet the warmth of the team and their openness transcended verbal barriers. When fueled by a genuine desire to learn, language becomes a bridge rather than an obstacle

At Eigenbrötler, the art of baking is the symphony of flavors and craftsmanship. Country breads, sourdough breads, crispbreads, and more emerge from the oven, each bearing the imprint of Eigenbrötler's unique recipes. A touch of personalization is added by skilled hands, following meticulous instructions.

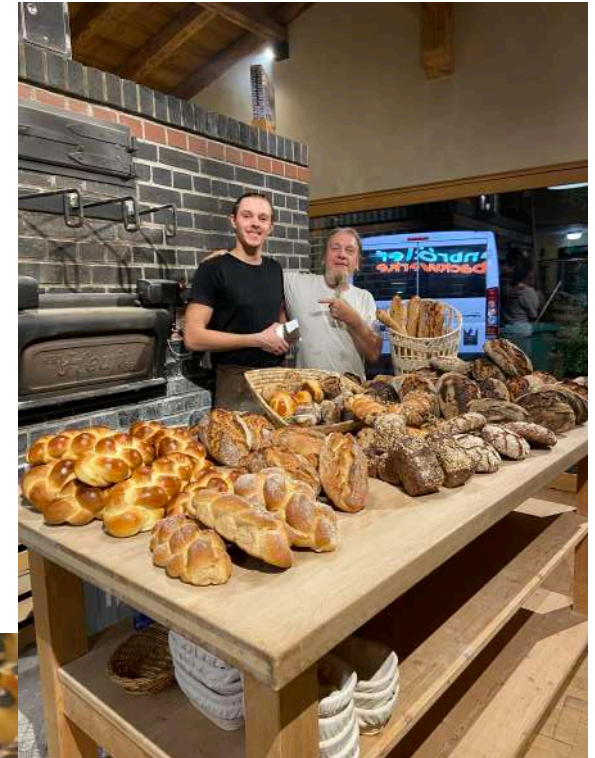




What sets Eigenbrötler apart is their commitment. Wholemeal flours are freshly ground using an in-house stone mill. Eigenbrötler's breads are made with a natural sourdough and doughs rest for up to 48 hours. Beyond the basic ingredients of water, flour, yeast, and sourdough, Eigenbrötler often introduces 'scalded pieces' cooked, swollen grains like ground rye enriching the tapestry of flavors that define their exceptional breads.

At Eigenbrötler, a commitment to excellence extends beyond the art of baking. Embracing a philosophy of wholesome living, every ingredient used is of organic quality, sourced meticulously from local producers. The bakery stands for the harmony between nature and craft, as organic producers from the surrounding area contribute the precious elements that shape each creation.

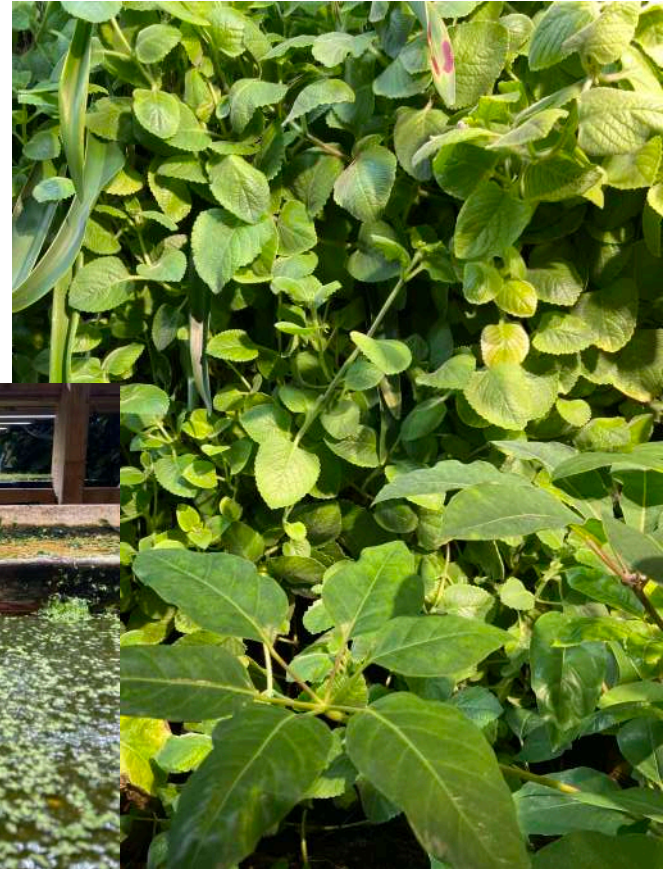
Eigenbrötler boasts a separate bakery solely for gluten-free products. This specialized space ensures meticulous attention to detail, guaranteeing a careful production process that aligns with the bakery's unwavering commitment to quality and inclusivity.





And now, standing at my final producer, I find myself in the innovative world of Umami, a unique startup dedicated to cultivating microgreens for both retail and restaurant. What sets them apart is their extensive use of Aquaponics on a grand scale.

In their food production system, fish thrive in tanks of water, coexisting harmoniously with the growing plants. It's a symbiotic relationship where the fish waste becomes nourishment for the plants, and in return, the plants purify the water. This ingenious cycle, forms the backbone of Umami's operation.





The entire infrastructure is the beauty of nature, constructed entirely from wood. From the tanks to the handmade wooden racks nurturing the greens, Umami's commitment to sustainability and craftsmanship is evident.

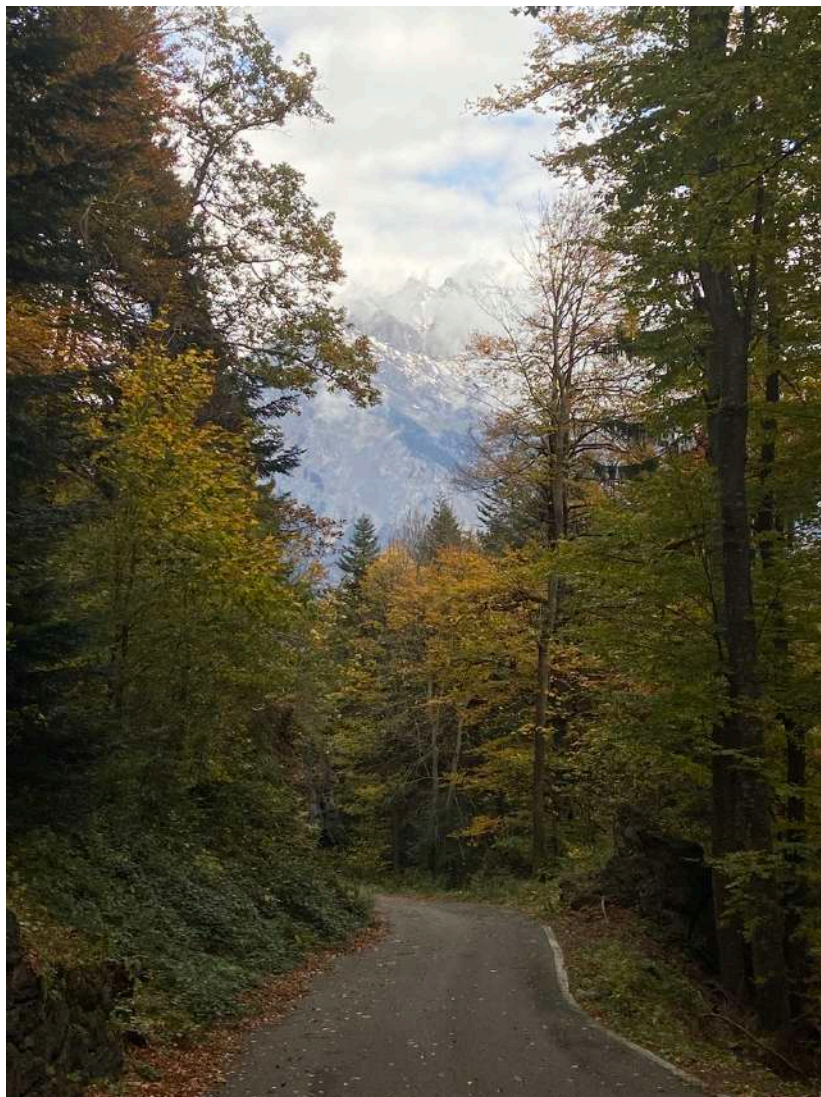
Yet, the simplicity of their product, microgreens. Each seed requires precision, each growth cycle demands finesse. Success lies in the ability to consistently the best from the seeds while minimizing setbacks a delicate to nature and skill.

At Umami, the spectrum of greens they cultivate: Daikon, Radish, Rocket, Pak Choi, Pea, Sunflower, Stem Cabbage, Thai Basil, Coriander, Caraway, and more. However, the intricacies lie beneath the surface, revealing challenges that make the process an art in itself.

My heartfelt thanks to the entire team for their warm welcome and for generously sharing insights into the entire process. Every step, from the harvest to seeding and packaging, is a labor of love a meticulous manual endeavor that speaks volumes about their dedication and passion for producing exceptional microgreens.







After leaving Zürich, my next stop was Memories, Sven Wassmer's restaurant. Nestled in the charming small town of Bad Ragaz. Memories is part of the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, the restaurant was just one of the many distinctive outlets within the impressive hotel complex.

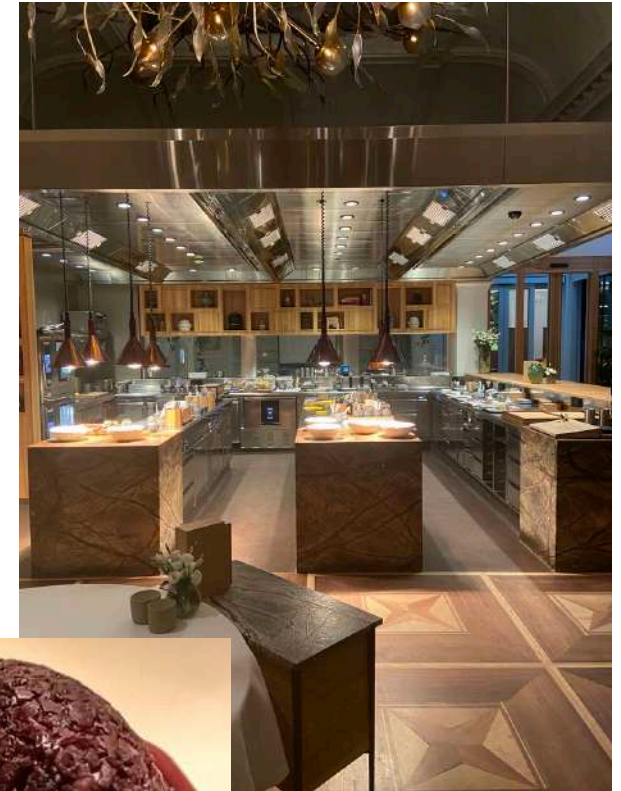
My first day commenced at 1 pm, and I was warmly greeted by Chris, the sous chef, who ushered me into a world of culinary excellence. As I met my colleagues, Chris guided me through the labyrinthine expanse of the hotel.





Working in the open kitchen was a bit familiar to me, but it was still exciting. We spent the afternoon getting ready for the evening service, making sure everything was portioned and prepared to make the service run smoothly. The kitchen was calm and organized. Sven Wassmer's cooking style is simple and focuses a lot on using products from Switzerland.

What struck me was Memories' dedication to enriching the experiences of its visitors. Throughout my four weeks, I rotated positions weekly, providing me the opportunity to explore all the courses on the current menu. This expanded my understanding of familiar ingredients, like young pine cones abundant in the region, yet ingeniously reimagined within the dishes.





One of the highlights was the restaurant's commitment to using products almost exclusively sourced from Switzerland, a dedication to local flavors and sustainability. My four weeks at Restaurant Memories were both interesting and impressive, leaving me with memories that will stay with me for a long time.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Chef Sven, Sous Chef Chris, and the entire team at Memories. Working with all of you was an incredible experience, and I want to thank each one of you for making my time at the restaurant so enjoyable. Your guidance, camaraderie, and commitment to excellence have left a lasting impact on me. It was a privilege to be a part of the Memories family, and I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to contribute and learn in such an culinary environment. Thank you all for the amazing experience!"

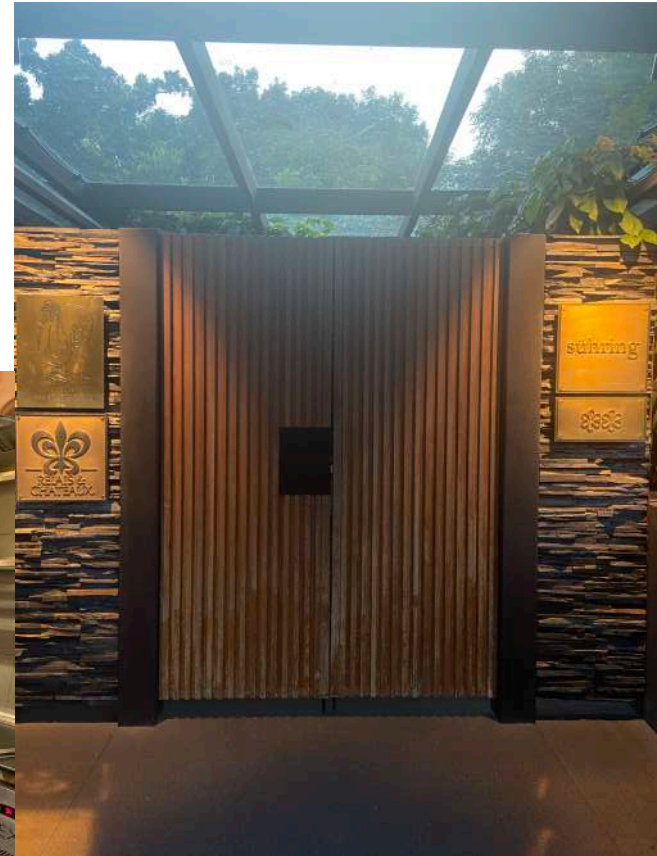




On 4 off December in the heart of Bangkok, my adventure continued over five enchanting weeks, a journey that would culminate in a spellbinding encounter at Sühring, a culinary rarity with 2 Michelin stars. It was more than just a restaurant; it was guided by the culinary maestros, Thomas & Mathias Sühring.

Their tale began in March 2016, a story of two German twins who transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary. Drawing inspiration from childhood memories and treasured family recipes, their culinary mastery breathed life into traditional German cuisine, elevating it to the realm of haute cuisine. A harmonious blend of heritage and contemporary Central European influences on the plates they presented.

As I stepped into Sühring, I wasn't just entering a kitchen space; it was an invitation into the twins' world. Their warm hospitality enveloped me in an atmosphere that felt more like a cherished family home than a restaurant. The elegant environment exuded a soothing charm, where time seemed to slow.





The roots of Thomas & Mathias Sührling's culinary journey traced back to summer breaks spent at their grandparent's farm. Here, amid the rustic landscapes, they learned the age-old techniques of German gastronomy from fermentation and pickling to smoking, drying, and curing. These were not just cooking methods; they were ancient traditions woven into their culinary fabric.

And so, in the heart of Sührling, amidst the lively kitchen and the dining areas, my culinary journey unfolded. Each space, from the cozy "Dining Room" to the dynamic "Kitchen, to the intimate "Living Room," offered a distinct chapter in the story of innovative cuisine and personalized service.

Sührling wasn't just a place; it was a living narrative, a tale told through flavors, traditions, and warm embraces. As I left, I carried not just the memory of an extraordinary experience but a piece of their story a story that now intertwined with mine, creating memories to last a lifetime.





In the heart of Sühring's vibrant kitchen, a place where culinary magic happens, my journey was enriched not only by the artistry of Thomas & Mathias Sühring but also by the incredible individuals in the cold kitchen Conney, Bjorn, Pete, and the entire team. Their expertise in crafting gastronomic wonders was matched only by their warmth and camaraderie.

With each adventure in the cold kitchen, from innovative creations to shared laughter, they not only contributed to the richness of my culinary experience but also became cherished friends. Conney, with his culinary finesse; Bjorn, with his creative flair; Pete, with his meticulous dedication each played a vital role in turning moments into memories.

So, here's a heartfelt thank you to Conney, Bjorn, Pete, and the entire cold kitchen team for not just crafting exceptional dishes but for the many adventures, experiences, and the enduring friendship that made my time at Sühring truly unforgettable.





On January 10th, My Uccelin experience was almost coming to an end I was honored to do an internship at Alchemist in Copenhagen, led by the visionary chef Rasmus Munk. The kitchen was a hive of activity, with over 30 dedicated individuals, all passionate about creating extraordinary culinary experiences.

Alchemist is no ordinary restaurant; it's housed in a former theater workshop in a shipyard. Navigating its four floors felt like exploring a labyrinth. The challenge of coordinating in such a vast kitchen was a fascinating aspect of the experience.

In my first week at Alchemist, I found myself in section two, guided by Kris and Ben. To my surprise, I discovered another Belgian, Ben, from Antwerp. It brought a sense of comfort to speak in our own language, making me feel more at comfortable. I teamed up with Richard to learn how to create the cloud for the Plastic Fantastic dish. It may have seemed easy when I watched Richard, but trying it myself was a different story. However, with practice, I eventually got the hang of it. I worked on the Foot in a Cage dish, which involved cleaning chicken feet. This was a new and exciting experience for me because I had never worked with chicken feet before. I didn't even realize that the nails of the chicken were edible. It was a unique culinary journey at Alchemist.

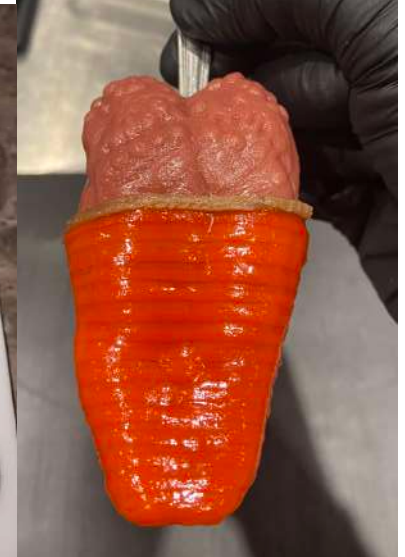
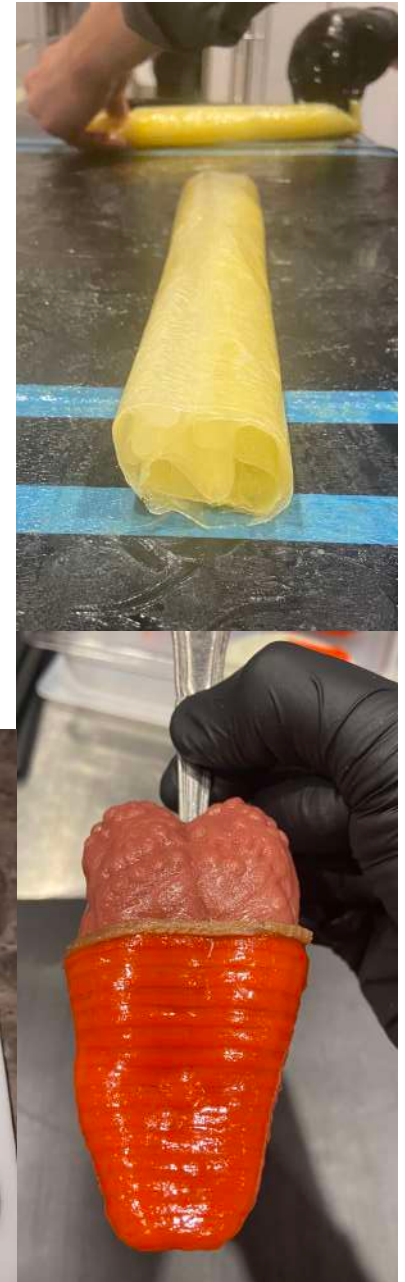




Moving into my second week, I was thrilled to be part of the mise en place team. While some may not enjoy this aspect, I love it because it allows me to work meticulously from start to finish. I had the privilege of learning from Emil, taught me how to make the air bread He took the time to show me the process and explain why we added caramelized shallots. I'm truly grateful for Emil's guidance and thank him for teaching me.

In the following week, I transitioned to section one, working alongside Magnus (sous chef), Elvin, Ivan, and Sebastian – my four pillars in this section. They were always there to answer my questions and provide valuable advice on cutting techniques and organization. Alchemist taught me the importance of details; everything must be perfected to achieve excellence. I extend my sincere thanks to Magnus and Elvin for their guidance and the lessons they shared with me. The week after I was in section one where with Magnus ( sous chef ) and Elvin Ivan and Sebastian they were my 4 Pillars in section one with any question I had I could always go to them or give me advice, how to cut or organize what I learned in alchemist is that details are everything everything has to be perfect to perfection. I wanted to thank Magnus and Elvin there advice they gave me to I really appreciate what they showed me.

I entered a world where food was more than a meal it was a story. Dishes like 'Hunger,' featuring rabbit meat, made guests contemplate beyond taste. An ice cream shaped like a blood drop, linked to organ donation, was a powerful reminder of life's fragility. Even a chicken foot in a cage, reflecting factory farmed conditions, carried a thought provoking message.





Plastic fantastic: A comment on the fact that up to one third of all cod caught in Northern Europe contain plastic. Even in the Mariana Trench at 11 kms depth there has been found microplastics in 100% of the tiny shellfish who live there.

Sunburnt Bikini The ham and cheese “Bikini toast” is a Barcelona classic, named after the Bikini Concert hall where it was first served. The Alchemist version is made with sweet and chewy mochi dough, filled with Gruyère cheese and Joselito ham. The culinary journey at Alchemist goes beyond traditional gastronomy, touching on sustainability and biodiversity. For instance, the transformation of Faroese sea urchins into an act of environmental protection showcased the restaurant’s commitment to responsible dining.

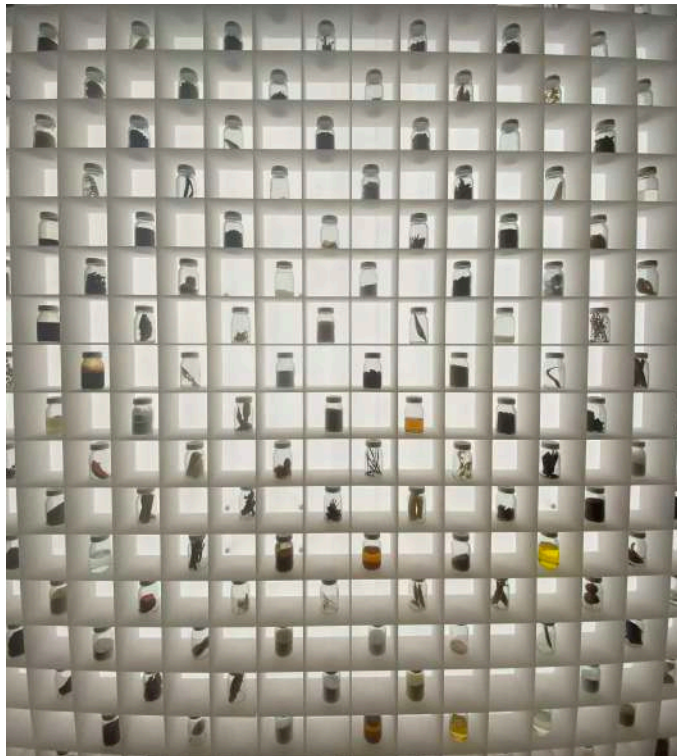
1984 The dish is inspired by the dystopian novel 1984 by George Orwell. The main character in the book, Winston Smith, works at The Ministry of Truth, and his main task is to constantly falsify historical facts to suit the present regime. The population are constantly controlled and watched by an all-knowing presence: Big Brother. The phrase “Big Brother is watching you” screams out from the posters in Orwell’s version of London in 1984. Reading the book today there are some striking and scary parallels with modern society, mainly with reference to the harvesting of information through social media. The pupil of the eye is filled with white asparagus juice, pistachios and raw hamachi, it is topped with caviar and a fish eye gel.

The final week we had an event with the Elbulli foundation an experience to never forget I was really grateful to have been a part from this also had the opportunity to meet Ferran Adria and Albert Adria and with the Elbulli team learning for these icons in the gastronomic world I was only dreaming of. but the dream came true





Alchemist isn't just a restaurant; it's an adventure into culinary artistry. Grateful for this extraordinary experience, Alchemist has truly left an unforgettable mark on my culinary journey. And I couldn't think of any better way to finish my Uccelin adventure.





### conclusion:

And that's my journey! My adventure of 20 weeks with the Uccelin program have been of learning and growth. From Switzerland to Copenhagen, this experience has been nothing short of incredible. A massive thank you to Andreas Caminada and the entire Uccelin Foundation team for making this journey possible. Thank you Anthea and Sina for your meticulous planning and support were indispensable. You've made this adventure seamless and unforgettable. From mastering the art of bread and hunting in the mountains to exploring microgreens and to explore the Calabria beauty, every moment has been a lesson and a joy. Visiting Bangkok meeting an old friend that I thought I would never see again Memories a restaurant that will always be close to my heart and Copenhagen a dream that came reality. The people I've met, the friendships forged, and the strangers turned into friends have enriched my life. It's a lot to process, but I've never had such an informative and transformative experience in such a short time.

I want to thank again the Uccelin Foundation, it was an adventure to never forget a beautiful rollercoaster. Thanks to mentors and kitchens that shaped my culinary identity. This project is a testament to the transformative power of culinary exploration, fostering self-discovery, friendship, and a love for the diverse world of gastronomy.

