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SWISS ALPS & SPA HOTELS

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WINE
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ALPINE
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ALPINE
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combining beauty, *care and functionality*

WORDS THOMAS GARMS

'Serrated knives tear the meat,' says Michael Bach, founder of the Swiss knife manufacturer Sknife. 'Only a really sharp blade will glide effortlessly through the juicy meat without wounding it.' And that is precisely what counts when it comes to getting full enjoyment out of meat. Born in Germany but now resident in the Swiss city of Biel with his family, Bach developed his knives in cooperation with top chefs. The first step in the process was to do some very intensive research into materials. His 20-year experience as a materials engineer in the watch-making industry stood him in good stead. Special alloys and the very finest steels play a key role in both sectors. Blades from Sknife are therefore made of surgical steel with a high nitrogen content. This type of steel is four times more corrosion-resistant and is particularly hard and tough. The cross-glued handles are made of Swiss wood – mainly ash but sometimes walnut. Prior to use, the wood undergoes a special stabilisation process involving immersion in acrylic resin which then soaks into the fibres. 'This stops the handle from swelling when it comes into contact with water,' Bach explains. Sknife knives are therefore ideal for the culinary industry and are also used in restaurants at the seaside and on yachts. 'Today there are seven people working in the workshop: knife smiths, knife grinders and engravers,' Bach explains. 'Each knife is unique,' he says. 'They are made by hand to an extremely high degree of precision. In total, the process of making a knife involves over forty different steps.'

'TRADITION IS AN IMPORTANT LINK WITH THE VALUES OF OUR PAST WHICH MUST BE PRESERVED AND PROTECTED.'

It's a pity that so few young people are interested in this profession,' Bach complains. The availability of skilled craftsmen is currently the biggest factor limiting the company's expansion.

The Biel businessman delivered his first steak knife in 2015. Nowadays, his knives can be found in some of the world's best restaurants with over 200 Michelin stars between them and they have also won four international design awards. Sknife cutlery was recently named best cutlery in the Tableware International Awards of Excellence 2022. The precious Sknife knives are also very popular with guests, especially at exclusive chef's tables. 'In the past, standard commercially available knives for use in kitchens were far too heavy,' he explains. Sknife knives have a flowing, perfectly balanced shape. The knives are resharpened two or three times a year, with the little section at the tip being key. Bach is always particularly pleased when guests who see his knives in a hotel restaurant order them for home on the spot. 'There could be no better compliment,' he says. ♦

