

BBC: Spaghetti-Harvest in Ticino

It isn't only in Britain that spring this year has taken everyone by surprise.

Here in Ticino on the borders of Switzerland and Italy The slopes (~mountains) overlooking lake Lagarno have already burst into flower, at least a fortnight (~14 days) earlier than usual.

But what, you may ask, has the early and welcome arrival of bees, and blossoms (new flowers) to do with food. Well it's simply that the past winter, one of the mildest (not cold) in living memory, has had it's effect in other ways as well.

Most important of all, it's resulted in an exceptionally heavy (~ very large) spaghetti crop. The last two weeks of March are an anxious time for the spaghetti farmer. There's always the chance of a late frost, which while not entirely ruining the crop, generally impairs the flavor (~make it taste bad). And makes it difficult for them to attain top prices in world markets (~to get the largest amount of money). But now these dangers are over, and the Spaghetti harvest goes forward (~begins).

Spaghetti cultivation here in Switzerland is not of course, carried out on anything like the tremendous scale of the Italian industry (~the spaghetti farming is more popular in Italy).

Many of you, I'm sure will have seen pictures of the vast (~large) spaghetti plantations in the Poe Valley. For the Swiss, however, it tends to be (~usually is) more of a family affair.

Another reason why this maybe a bumpy (~difficult) year, lies in the virtual disappearance of the Spaghetti weevil. The tiny creature whose depredations have caused much concerns in the past (~the insect who has caused many problems).

After picking, the spaghetti is layed out to dry, in the warm alpine sun. Many people are often puzzled at (~confused by) the fact that spaghetti is produced at such uniform length. But this is the result of many years of patient endeavor by plant breeders. (the result of the hard work of the farms)Who succeeded in producing the perfect spaghetti.

And now the harvest is marked by a traditional meal (~when the spaghetti is pick, people eat a special food). Toasts to the new crops are drunk in these boccalinos (~ cups). And then the waiters enter bearing (carrying) the ceremonial dish. And it is of course, spaghetti. Picked earlier in the day. Dried in the sun, and so brought fresh from garden to table.At the very peak of condition. (~only the most perfect spaghetti is eaten)For those who love this dish, there's nothing like real home-grown spaghetti.