



7.20.12 – London is limbering up for the Summer Olympics, which take place in the capital from July 27 to Aug. 12. It's estimated that some 14 million meals and snacks will be served in Olympic Park throughout the Games. Jan Matthews, head of catering at the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, or LOCOG, describes it as “the biggest peacetime catering operation in the world.”

What kind of expectations can athletes and visitors have where food is concerned? Sheila Dillon, BBC Radio 4's Food Programme presenter, describes London 2012 as “the first Olympic Games — ever — with a food policy.” Eyebrows were therefore raised when it was announced that the chief sponsors to the Games included McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble and Cadbury. Initial skepticism about such enterprises providing healthy, nourishing food and snacks has been muted to some extent. At the very least, all have signed up to the explicit aims of the food policy: to serve decent, tasty, [sustainable fare](#), and to source it from every corner of the United Kingdom.

Such is the food picture in Olympic Park. But the catering operation doesn't stop there. All over London, top chefs from around the world will be providing sustenance for VIPs in a host of different venues. London catering company Mosimann's landed the contract to cook at four distinct venues around the city, including the House of Switzerland and the House of the United States of America.

### Feeding royals and Olympians

The company, started by a Swiss family, also runs a private dining club of the same name in London's Belgravia neighborhood and is no stranger to high-end, large-scale food provision. Caterers by appointment to Prince Charles, it handled the Royal Wedding dinner at Buckingham Palace last April and provided a sit-down lunch for some 700 for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in June. As far as the company's Olympic credentials are concerned, “It definitely helped that we'd done a lot of the VIP food at both Beijing [site of the 2008 Summer Olympics] and Vancouver [2010 Winter Olympics]”, says Philipp Mosimann, who is responsible for the catering side of the business. (He is the elder son of the company's celebrated founder, bow-tied chef Anton Mosimann).

The House of Switzerland will be based at Glaziers Hall on the south bank of the Thames River. Three public restaurants will be set up within the 2,500 square meter riverside space: a Victorian-style wine bar reborn as a cozy Bernese chalet serving typical Bernese comfort food; a brasserie featuring Swiss specialties such as Zürcher Geschnetzeltes (diced veal and mushrooms in cream sauce), and a rösticceria, named for and serving one of Switzerland's much loved national dishes, Rösti (hash browns) as well as raclette and bratwurst.

### The wine list

For the VIPs — guests of the sponsors, Swiss government representatives and winning athletes — five different menus will be available along with a selection of such [Swiss](#) wines as a Sauvignon Blanc and [Pinot Noir](#) from Twann, on Lake Biel; a [Chardonnay](#) and Merlot from the Italian part of Switzerland, and a Fendant (Chasselas) and Cornalin from the Valais region above Martigny.

At the House of the United States of America, in the Royal College of Art overlooking Albert Hall and Kensington Palace Gardens, Mosimann's will take care of the high-end dining for an estimated 1,200 people

each day. The American-style menu will feature famous dishes from all over the States: Southern [fried chicken](#), barbecued spare ribs, New York-style cheesecake and key lime pie. True to the London 2012 food policy, all ingredients will be locally sourced from the British Isles.

Planning for this mammoth catering operation began in April 2010 and has occupied most of Philipp Mosimann's waking hours since. The logistical challenges are mind-boggling, from hiring the right staff (each one interviewed individually) to finding off-site prep and storage space to getting the kitchens in the different venues up to speed. To minimize waste, he says, "All the vegetables, meat and fish will be pre-trimmed."

Delivery of ingredients and equipment is proving especially challenging. "The team will only have a day and a half to set up," Mosimann notes, "and the authorities have insisted that all deliveries be undertaken during the night to keep the streets free of the vans while the Games are actually happening." His worst-case scenario? The electricity supply isn't up to the task. He's planning a test run of all the ovens, which will be left blazing for three full days before the final kickoff. "We have to be ready for anything — flexibility will be the name of the game!"

*Photo: Chef Anton Mosimann, flanked by his sons Philipp (left) and Mark. Credit: Steve Bliss*

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Elizabeth

on: 7/20/12

This sounds like such a huge challenge! The Swiss do truly seem to be the best at this in the world, though. Sounds delicious! If only I could go to London!

Sue Style

on: 7/21/12

You're right, Elizabeth - it's an astonishing task! No doubt that Swiss precision and attention to the tiniest detail helps a lot - wish you could be there too!

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