



Victorinox Swiss Army Knives Info

Charles Elsener, the fourth son of the hatmaker Balthasar Elsener-Ott decided to become a cutler. At the age of 24, after his journeyman's years in the South German district of Tuttlingen, he returned to his home and in 1884 opened his **own business** in Ibach near Schwyz in Switzerland. In those days there was hardly any industry in the district of Schwyz, and many of the young farmers were compelled to emigrate to North America, Australia or New Zealand. In order to create new employment opportunities, Karl Elsener took the initiative in 1891 to form the Swiss Cutlery Guild with the main aim of producing the soldiers' knives which the Swiss Army had up to that time purchased from Solingen in Germany. In October 1891 the first delivery to the Swiss Army was made. Thereafter Karl Elsener began producing other ingenious pocket knives which he did not identify with numbers but with names, such as Student knife, Cadet knife and Farmer's knife. The Soldier's knife was very robust and also relatively heavy. Because of this, Karl Elsener developed specifically for the officers a lighter and more elegant knife which, apart from the blade, awl, can opener and screwdriver on the Soldier's knife, also had a second small blade and a corkscrew. This new model with only two springs for the six blades he called the "Officer's knife". Its design was officially registered on June 12th 1897. Swiss officers do not receive their knives from the Army as the recruits do, but many of them purchase them privately at cutlery shops where the simple Soldier's knife is also available.

This handy multi-purpose pocket knife very soon became most popular. More and more orders started flowing in from abroad. Soon, further tools were added to the knife, for example a wood saw and scissors. Later on, a bottle opener was added to the large screwdriver, the can opener was improved and had a small screwdriver added. Subsequently a nailfile was added, toothpick and tweezers, metal saw with metal file, fish scaler with hook disgorging and ruler, Phillips screwdriver, a key ring and a magnifying glass. Today this Officer's knife is available in over 100 different combinations. The flagship of the assortment is the "**SwissChamp**" model with 31 different features. All this in a toolbox which only weighs 185 grams (6.5 ounces) and can be held comfortably in your hand. The New York Museum of Modern Art and the "Staatliches Museum für angewandte Kunst" in Munich have selected the VICTORINOX "Champion" for their collection of "Good Industrial Designs". The "SwissChamp" is made up of 64 separate parts and has over 450 processes in its production.

In 1909, after the death of his mother, grandfather Elsener chose her Christian name VICTORIA as his trade-mark. Only in 1921 did the invention of stainless steel take place. Subsequently in Ibach, when stainless steel knives were made, the word INOX was added to VICTORIA, and out of these two words the present-day trade-mark VICTORINOX was created. Today VICTORINOX has over 950 employees and is the largest industrial enterprise in the district of Schwyz and the **largest cutlery manufacturer in Europe**.

In the years 1945-1949 VICTORINOX pocket knives were sold in large quantities to the PX shops of the US Army, Navy and Air Force. It is largely due to these deliveries that the Swiss

knife became so well known throughout the world. For American officers and soldiers the word "Offiziersmesser" was too difficult and tongue twisting, so they simply called it "Swiss Army Knife". Today this name is well known throughout the whole of the English speaking world. In France it is known as the "Couteau Suisse" and in Germany and Austria as the "Schweizer Messer", which also mean "Swiss Knife".

Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States, presented 4,000 pocket knives engraved with his initials to his guests at the White House. Subsequently, Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush followed the same tradition. Swiss diplomats and senior army officers often present their hosts in other countries with the Swiss Officer's knife. The knife has special appeal for pilots. When Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the American U2 observation plane, was shot down over Russia in 1960, the Russians publicised all the secret items which were found on him, amongst them the famous small red knife. The Nigerian Air Force ordered a large quantity with the addition of a curved blade. When all seems lost one can use it to cut through a knotted parachute line. As from 1976 the German Army has also been supplied with its "Army knife" by VICTORINOX in Ibach. In place of the Swiss cross, however, the German eagle is featured on the olive-green casing of this knife.

The American Space Administration NASA has also ordered the "Swiss Army Knife" as standard equipment for its "Columbia" space shuttle program. The universal success of the VICTORINOX pocket knives is largely due to their quality and price. They represent good value for money and function extremely well. They are sold in more than 100 countries. The largest customers are the United States and surprisingly enough Germany where, although they have a very large home production, the Swiss cross is recognised as a seal of quality. The "Swiss Army Knife" is being constantly copied abroad, e.g. in Germany, France, Spain, USA, Japan, China, etc., but the original quality has never been equalled. Unfortunately, however, on some of the foreign imitations the Swiss cross was added, which could be stopped thanks to the intervention of Swiss embassies and court orders. The application of the Swiss Cross was undertaken in order to confuse the public and give the impression that they were dealing with a genuine Swiss product. The official ruling, however, gives only the two Swiss manufacturers, VICTORINOX and WENGER, the right to use the Swiss cross on their knives.

During recent years VICTORINOX pocket knives have increasingly found their way into the promotional market. They are reckoned amongst the most popular and successful **promotional gifts**.

For both blades we use chrome molydenum stainless steel with 0.52% carbon, 15% chromium, 0.5% molydenum, 0.45% manganese and 0.6% silicium. After a sophisticated hardening process at 1040°C and an annealing temperature of 160°C the blades achieve a hardness of RC 56.

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The woodsaw, scissors and nail files have a hardness of RC 53, the screwdriver, tin opener and awl a hardness of RC 52, and the corkscrew and springs RC 49.

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The metal saw and file, in addition to the special case hardening, are also subjected to a hard chromium plating process so that iron and steel can also be filed und cut.

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The separators have been made from aluminium alloy since 1951. This makes the knife lighter and easier to carry in one's pocket. Formerly these separating layers were made of nickel-silver.

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The rivets are made of brass and the outer casing of cellidor, made in the USA.

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The spring exerts a pressure of 12 kilograms on the large blade and 8 kilograms on the small blade. The combined 20 kilograms exert pressure on the corkscrew. With two springs and six pressure locations a total of 70 kilograms pressure is achieved. To close the blades high pressure is necessary since the ratio of the pressure points between the axis and the thumbnail recess is 1 to 20. In the case of the "SwissChamp" model with 8 springs and 24 pressure points a total of 300 kilograms (660 lb) is achieved.

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For sharpening the blades it is best to use a traditional carborundum stone. Do not use a sharpening steel as the steel alloy used for the blades too hard.

Some of the many advantages of VICTORINOX compared with imitators

1. Swiss quality control - over 90 people work in the final inspection department ensuring that every pocket knife leaving the factory is free from defects in both material and workmanship. After-sales service is also excellent

2. The VICTORINOX can opener - the best can opener available in a pocket knife, with a design patented by VICTORINOX in 1951. Cans can be opened easily and without using force. Also, the top of the can is smooth after opening. The tip of the can opener is a useful screwdriver suitable for small slotted screws as well as Phillips screws.

3. The VICTORINOX knife is the only one where the aluminium separator adjacent to the corkscrew is anodized. This special surface treatment makes the separator hard and wear-resistant, but also increases its cost by two and a half times.

4. Two extra processing steps are used to give the awl a sharp cutting edge. This makes it possible to use the awl to cut a hole in leather, or to drill a deep hole in wood, as well as using it for piercing, boring and sewing.

5. The rivets holding the knife together have been additionally reinforced by six metal heads.

6. The VICTORINOX screwdriver is specially designed to prevent it from tilting over when being used. It is aligned behind the main axis of the knife, the tip is positioned at 89° to it, and the spring applies extra pressure to hold it in place. It can also be used as an offset screwdriver. The combined bottle opener is ideally adapted to the bottle caps.

7. Wood saw - all the teeth on the long VICTORINOX wood saw are ground, ensuring a sharp cutting edge.

8. Metal saw / metal file - the VICTORINOX metal saw / metal file remains sharp for a longer period of time due to the surface hardening and hard chrome-plated finish.

9. Mini-screwdriver - this patented VICTORINOX invention is designed for use on tiny screws such as those found in spectacles. The mini-screwdriver is housed in the corkscrew.

10. Every part of a VICTORINOX pocket knife has been designed with its functionality in mind and not its cost.

11. The Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Staatliches Museum für angewandte Kunst in Munich, have, on their own initiative, selected the VICTORINOX Original Swiss Army Officer's Champion model (1.6783) and SwissChamp model (1.6795) for their collections of "Good Industrial Designs".

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