



VICTORINOX

The “Swiss Officer’s Knife”
from VICTORINOX

Symbol of Quality and Diversity

Worldwide presence is the distinguishing characteristic of the pocket tools from Victorinox. To stay ahead as market leader the Swiss knife maker surprises the market every year with new innovations. Over the many years since its establishment in 1884 the company has also written a turbulent history.

In the 19th century Switzerland was still one of the poorest countries in Europe. Unemployment forced many Swiss to emigrate.

Confronted with this situation, the cutler Karl Elsener, son of a hat maker, wanted to create jobs. However, since he did not wish to build a factory, he founded the Swiss Cutlers’ Association, with the objective of cooperating to produce within Switzerland the knives for the soldiers of the Swiss army. The first delivery to the Swiss army was made in 1891. Some 25 fellow cutlers participated, but gave up after only a year because a German firm could produce knives more cheaply in its industrialized plant in Solingen than was possible for Swiss craftsmen working by hand. Only the initiator, Karl Elsener, persevered, but lost all his money in the process. Relatives came to his rescue and

gained a delay with creditors to avoid bankruptcy. Later, following the success of his “Officer’s Knife”, he voluntarily repaid all his creditors with full interest. Under the circumstances prevailing at that time, for a craftsman to build up a factory using industrial methods was an adventurous undertaking, and required almost superhuman determination.

The soldier’s knife was very robust but relatively heavy. Karl Elsener therefore developed a lighter and more elegant knife for officers, which had even more functions. He called this new model of pocket knife, which had only two springs for six tools, the “Officer’s and Sports Knife”. He had it legally registered on June 12, 1897.

However, unlike the soldier’s knife, the “Officer’s Knife” did not become part of the army’s official equipment – which is why Victorinox writes the name “Officer’s Knife” in quotation marks. Nevertheless, this did not hinder its success. Army officers bought the knife themselves at cutlery stores, and this versatile pocket tool rapidly became a favorite everywhere.

More and more interest was received from abroad. After the Second World War the PX stores of the US Army, Marines, and Air Force sold large numbers of the “Swiss Army Knife” to US officers and soldiers.



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Over the years further useful features were built into the practical multi-tool, and improvements were made in their functioning.

Today, the "Officer's Knife" is available from stock in more than 100 different variations and combinations.

The flagship of the series is the "SwissChamp" with 33 features. It consists of 64 individual parts, weighs only 185 grams, and fits easily in the hand. More than 450 steps are required in its manufacture. The New York Museum of Modern Art, and the State Museum of Applied Art in Munich, have each on their own initiative selected it for inclusion in their collections of excellence in design.

Many well-known international companies use the original "Swiss Army Knife" as a symbol of quality and versatility in their own advertising. Time and again, poor-quality imitations of the Victorinox "Officer's Knife" are made abroad. These imitations have frequently even included the Swiss cross, a practice which has required intervention by Swiss embassies, or legal proceedings, to prevent.

The "Swiss Army Knife" even orbits the earth as part of the official equipment of space shuttle crews. US presidents since Lyndon B. Johnson present guests to the White House with Victorinox pocket knives. A special highlight came in 1997 when President George Bush,

and his wife Barbara, honored the factory in Ibach with a visit.

The knife has been successfully put to the test on expeditions to the arctic ice of the North Pole, on the highest peak on earth, Mount Everest, in the tropical rain forests of the Amazon, and elsewhere, and in situations of extreme danger and great need it has even proved to be a lifesaver.

For hobbies, camping, or picnicking, it is indispensable. As one American aptly described it: "Not just a knife, a friend".

A small brochure available in English, French, German, and Spanish contains a collection of adventures from around the world where the "Swiss Army Knife" has played a significant part.



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With 900 employees, Victorinox is the largest employer in the Canton of Schwyz, and the largest cutlery factory in Europe.

Approximately 28,000 “Swiss Army Knives” (100 different models) and 32,000 other pocket tools (260 different models) as well as 60,000 household, kitchen and professional knives are produced daily in Ibach. 90% of production is exported to over 100 countries.

For an unbroken period of more than 100 years Victorinox has been the supplier of soldier’s knives to the Swiss army.

After the death of his mother in 1909, founder Karl Elsener chose her first name, Victoria, as the company’s brand name. When stainless steel was introduced in Ibach following its invention in 1921, the term «Inox» (the international designation for stainless steel) was added to Victoria, and the present-day brand and company name of Victorinox was created from the combination of these two words.