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Merry Christmas

DEAR CULINARY SECRET ..

Biscuits, Christstollen or succulent gingerbread - the Christmas season is bursting with sweet nibbles. The secret behind many of the delicious temptations is the right ratio of cinnamon, sugar, butter and fresh milk. The fact that at least in Bavaria there was enough of this in recent years was also helped by "love". Liebe is the name of Bavaria's oldest dairy cow. She is 25 years old and has achieved a great deal in her long life: With more than 160,000 litres of milk, she puts many of her kind in the shade and has sweetened many a Christmas.

Even Methuselah would be envious: 25 years is half an eternity for a Fleckvieh. But Liebe is still healthy, happy and vital, even at her advanced age. She is not only Bavaria's oldest dairy cow. At times she was even the oldest productive Fleckvieh in Germany. All officially certified by the Breeders' Association for Swabian Simmental cattle in Wertingen.

At peak times, Liebe gave over 10,050 litres of milk per year. But even three years ago - at the age of 22 - it was still 8,500 litres. At that time, she was still in the good average range. With her lifetime production of over 160,000 litres, Liebe clearly outshines many of her peers. This puts Liebe in the absolute top league among German dairy cows. Even her owner, farmer Edgar Merkle, is impressed by Liebe's performance.

> *I have never experienced anything like this in all these years!*
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> **Plant manager Edgar Merkle in a television interview (2017).**

Well-deserved retirement

Today Liebe enjoys her retirement. She spends her retirement on a pasture next to the stable in her home town of Attenhausen - a district of Krumbach in Bavarian Swabia with 360 inhabitants. Just a few years ago, she stood next to the other cows in farmer Edgar Merkle's barn. At that time, she shared the feed table with daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and even great-great-granddaughters. Love also had plenty of offspring: the sprightly pensioner calved 22 times in her hard-working life.

How love became a record cow

The secret of her advanced age and impressive milk yield is still a mystery. But some clever people say it is due to the feed. And who would be surprised? Farmer Merkle is a loyal *deuka customer*. For years, Liebe's menu has included the protein supplement NG 404 EU Mehl and the milk performance feed (MLF) NG 184 Spezial. Love likes it and farmer Merkle is satisfied.

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Love is not slaughtered. The Merkle family has taken her to their hearts for that. "After all, our love has worked hard for her retirement.

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