ALL YOU NEED TO SELL CHEESE SUCCESSFULLY

CHEESE BUYER

MAGAZINE

2016

From the publishers of SPECIALITY FOOD



PRO SECRETS

The Fine Cheese Company
Paxton & Whitfield
Neal's Yard Dairy
La Fromagerie

GET IT RIGHT FIRST TIME

Selecting, Keeping, Presenting, Selling

SELLING OVERSEAS

How Cheese is Sold in New York, Madrid and Paris

GRUYÈRE

THE CHEESE COUNTER CORNERSTONE

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WELCOME TO CHEESE BUYER

Essential reading for anyone who is serious about cheese, Cheese Buyer brings you advice and opinion from those in the know





Welcome to this, the second issue of *Cheese Buyer*. Brought to you by the Speciality Food magazine team, *Cheese Buyer* talks to some of the top people in cheese today to find out what you should be stocking, how you should be looking after it, and how most effectively to sell it. We draw on decades of experience and time spent at the top of the cheese industry so that you can compare your way of operating with theirs and ensure that you too are staying ahead of the game.

In this issue we look at best practice in all its forms: how to present cheese that sells, how to introduce customers to new cheeses and how to care for cheese properly. We look at the benefits of dealing directly with cheesemakers and paying personal visits to their creameries. Is it worth your while investing in a maturing room? We examine the pros and cons, and the skills of affineuring. Are your retailing skills up to scratch? Top cheesemongers didn't get where they are without knowing a thing or two about how to sell cheese. *Cheese Buyer* asks them to share their hard-earned knowledge with you.

Cheesemaking in the UK has come along in leaps and bounds in the past two decades and its reputation is spreading. *Cheese Buyer* finds out how high is our standing abroad and looks at the export market as it stands now. You'll meet the people who make the cheese you sell and hear what's selling well for whom and why you should consider stocking it. While we acknowledge that there are, of course, some fantastic Continental cheeses which should certainly be included in your counter, we at *Cheese Buyer* are committed supporters of British cheese. We hope that you are as enthusiastic about the home-grown product as we are, but is stocking British cheeses the most remunerative use of your counter space? Well-known cheese guru Juliet Harbutt offers her own expert opinion.

> "We draw on decades of experience and time spent at the top of the cheese industry so that you can compare your way of operating with theirs and ensure that you too are staying ahead of the game"

Each month, *Cheese Buyer*'s parent magazine Speciality Food brings you the latest news from the fine food industry, with a focus on cheese that's proportionate to its importance in the delis, farm shops and food halls whose owners read our magazine. You'll find the latest news from the dairy sector, topical features of interest to cheese sellers and also to cheese producers and our Meet the Cheese Seller offers a regular insight into how other cheesemongers are faring. If you are one of the cheese industry's vendors, producers or decision makers, you will find much to inform, and we hope, to entertain.

Cheese Buyer is our annual celebration of this amazing industry, and we hope you will find something in it which will help you take cheese selling to the next level. Have a very successful year!

Ross Gilfillan

ross@aceville.com





THE EDUCATION DEBATE

Jason Hinds is sales director and co-owner of Neal's Yard Dairy, which can fairly claim to have played a pivotal role in the revival of the artisanal British cheese industry. Here, he discusses what still needs to be done to properly establish this nascent industry

30 years ago British farmhouse cheese was relatively unknown in Britain. The people making those kinds of cheeses were in steep decline; things looked very bleak. Fast forward to today, and you could say that the opposite is true. People – often young people – are going into farmhouse cheese production, which would have been unthinkable all those years ago.

Why? First of all, I think we had got to a point where everything about cheese production and cheese consumption was geared towards supplying supermarkets, so the marketplace was defining the sort of cheese that was being bought. In the late Seventies something like 70% of all cheese that was being produced in the UK was block Cheddar. As people geared up to make larger amounts in factories, there was a race to the bottom in terms of quality. All that mattered was price, and with that you saw a very rapid elimination of anyone who produced something made on a smaller scale – they simply could not compete.

This period also saw the elimination of the traditional marketplace for farmhouse cheese, which were the butchers, the grocers and the very few cheesemongers existing at the time, a direct result of people buying their meat and groceries in the supermarkets. In this way, we lost the champions of locally-made or farmhouse cheese. When this occurred, there no longer was someone who could tell the customer that 'this cheese was made by such-and-such up the road', and offer a taste of the cheese itself. With those champions gone, it became a much tougher slog for anyone looking for a marketplace for their cheese. They couldn't compete on price and they didn't have a market.



Cheese became tasteless. As you gear up to produce on such a large scale, you invariably produce something which becomes dull to taste. However, you also create a gap in the market for a product which is actually tasty. Just as the uniformly dull beer served in pubs provided a wonderful opportunity for craft brewers motivated to make something which actually has flavour, so people accustomed to bland, mild Cheddar would react with enthusiasm when they tasted something which stimulated their palates. Britain still made traditional, farmhouse cheese, albeit on a drastically-reduced scale. For Neals Yard Dairy owner Randolph Hodegeson in the early Eighties, and for me in the Nineties, it was an absolute revelation to discover world-beating, tasty cheeses in the United Kingdom, and to find that you didn't need to turn to Europe to find delicious, traditionally-made cheese. At this time, though, the few remaining dairies making such artisan cheese were facing a dangerously uncertain future.

Take a cheese like Kirkham's Lancashire. When Randolph started buying those cheeses, Mrs Kirkham was about to cease production. This was because she was paid the same price for her cheese as the factory just up the road – £1.20 per lb. There was no accommodation for the quality of her cheese, which she made traditionally with raw milk from her farm's own cows, mixing the curd for several days before binding the cheese in traditional cloth. The factory was producing several tonnes per day in wax and getting the same price. There was no motivation to make cheese the right way; it's no wonder that so many of these people went to the wall. Randolph said to Mrs Kirkham, "if you make this cheese the way I believe it was made traditionally, don't put wax on it, and butter the cloth, I will give you 50p per lb premium and I'll sell it in my shop." That would have been one of the first times in well over a generation that a cheesemaker had received any other message from a buyer than an instruction to make his product cheaper.

We have now come full circle from the early 70s, when everything was about price, not quality, and most of the cheese sold was in the hands of only a few manufacturers. Now there is a much greater proliferation of quality cheesemakers and the market is certainly there for a lot more. Now you have to march up the quality ladder, rather than race to the bottom of it. This has involved a very steep learning curve, which has sometimes involved tapping into the cheesemaking expertise which exists beyond our shores.

In France, you can spend two years learning about farmhouse cheese production. There is in this country an opportunity for someone to similarly provide cheesemakers with information, education and resources. The resurgence that we are seeing will be so more coherent and have much more direction if education and resources are made available. We have a resurgence of farmhouse cheesemaking at one end of the scale and some dynamic cheesemongers setting up at the other. In the middle there's a real need for an educational facility where cheesemakers – and cheesemongers – can learn about their craft and develop the skills they need to be successful.



BEST PRACTICE

Find out how your standards compare to those of these respected cheese sellers

Whether you have opened the doors of your first cheese shop only recently, or have been cutting and wrapping your favourite cheeses for years, it can be useful to see how other people are doing the things you do every day, particularly those people who have been long established in the business of selling cheese. See how far your experience and opinions on cheese selling agree with those of our experts.

Effective presentation

"We display our cheese in two large dairy chillers – these need to be fully stocked with whole and cut cheese and wrapped to perfection, cut side showing," says Kathy Hodgkinson, manager of Jeroboams Holland Park Avenue. "All cheeses are correctly labelled with description, and priced to help the customer choose. We have a separate presentation table for promoting cheeses. Here we might have a whole wheel of Gruyère, with another wheel cut up in various sizes for maximum effect."

Kathy likes to keep her cheese groupings simple, making it easy for customers to select their cheeses. "We group together blue cheese, washed rind, goat's and ewe's milk, hard and soft cow's milk, and these are displayed on separate shelves."

How you present cheese depends on the cheeses, says Jade Thomas, shop manager at Cambridge Cheese Company. "Obviously, they should all be clean and wrapped nicely. In our deck the cut cheeses are wrapped in cling film and I don't like to see any bunched-up cling film on the customer-side surface. They should be able to see the cheese entirely, almost as if it weren't covered at all. The way that we cut cheeses depends on the type, so quite often we will pre-portion the big soft cheeses like Brie de Meaux or Vacherin Mont d'Or in various different sizes. We will then wrap these up so that they are ready to go. That's quite quite appealing to the customer because they can immediately see the interior of the cheese as well as the exterior."

Clear grouping is important, Jade agrees, especially when there are many different types. "We can have anything up to 80 cheeses at any one time," she says. In essence, Jade likes her cheeses to look "clean, neat and orderly. I personally don't like the market stall look where everything is piled on top of each other. I quite like to have cheeses of the same size in one area, so I will have big, hard, round cheeses in one area and small, individual cheeses in another, so the effect is all pretty uniform."

Ex-cheesemonger and now retail consultant Justin Tunstall says, "carefully sized pieces indicate the cheese is being bought and ready to go. A whole, unopened cheese seldom gets selected."

"The first bite is made with the eye, so the cheese must look amazing," says Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy. "Cheese must be presentable and well-wrapped. Always look from the customer's point of view." Big displays sell cheese, Andy says. "Pile it high (full cheeses under small). This way it looks impressive and attracts a lot more notice." Labels are effective communicators, and Andy's "show the milk type, price, name, where the cheese is from and whether it is vegetarian or not. Make a big point of labelling 'local' really clearly too – this is what many people are looking for and gives them somewhere to start." Kathy Hodgekinson agrees about the value of clear labelling. "We



> "If someone comes in for Wensleydale, give them a taste of that but then offer tasters of other cheeses in that style, ones they might never pick as a comparison, such as Gorwydd Caerphilly or Anster"

print out labels for each cheese,'' she says. ''Most of our cheeses are unpasteurized and it is important that we include all necessary information; name, origin, type of milk, vegetarian and/or organic and price. With new cheese, we also like to give a brief description.'' For Claire Millner, owner of the Hartington Cheese Shop, ''the counter should look full and inviting to the customer and cheeses should be clearly labelled with names and prices. Local cheeses or speciality cheeses should be easy to spot and the cheese should be fresh and well wrapped. Above all else the counter must be clean!''

''Creating a kind of cheese landscape and presenting cheese on different tiered levels is really important,'' says Matt Kelly of Pistachio & Pickle Dairy. ''It's attractive to the eye and helps maximise space. Always unwrap cheese. Never leave the cheese in its producer wrapping. Wrapped cheese has a whiff of the supermarket about it and can discourage customers from thinking that it is actually for sale. Large hunks or whole wheels/truckles of cheese are impressive and give the customer an idea of what the cheese looks like before it becomes 100 grams. Customers get very excited about whole cheeses and it reiterates the artisan credentials. Cutting cheeses, particularly bloomy and washed-rind excites customers. Showing the customer the interior paste is part of educating the customer about what to expect from ripe, well-husbanded cheeses. Finally, abundance sells. Nothing sells a Tunworth better than a great big stack of them.''

Engaging with your customers

Suggesting new cheeses to try and encouraging customers to come back to try more is one way of establishing lasting relationships with your customers, says Claire Millner. ''Make sure the staff are friendly and knowledgeable and the counter looks presentable at all times.'' At the Hartington Cheese Shop, this is mainly done ''through tastings and talking to the customers about what's new to us or local to the area. Sampling is extremely important. It is very rare people don't buy once they have sampled.'' Claire cross-sells by offering suggestions of ''what biscuits or chutneys etc work well with certain cheeses, but we are not pushy at all and information is mostly offered if the customer asks first. We do recommend certain products for pairings and we normally pick the more unusual ones which people wouldn't ordinarily think would work. We always say 'try it – you will be pleasantly surprised.''

Tasters quickly establish what the customer likes, Kathy Hodgkinson says. ''Most of our customers are local and you soon get to know their tastes and requirements. We are always happy to source any special requests.'' Putting out a new cheese on taste is the best way to introduce it to potential buyers, she says. ''Here at Holland Park, we endeavour to have a cheese for customers to try each day. This way, not only will the customer become acquainted with the cheese, but the staff will build up their own cheese knowledge and be equipped to interact with customers about it.''



''We introduce customers to new cheeses after building up a rapport with them,'' says Jade Thomas. ''Ask if they want any help or are quite happy browsing. This way you have a good indication immediately of whether they are after recommendations, are open to suggestions, or if they are looking and deciding for themselves. Quite often, someone will say they are looking for a few cheeses and ask if we will help them with their selection.'' Jade too finds sampling an invaluable tool for selling cheese. ''Underneath all our cheeses is a short description of what they taste like,'' she says. ''We can explain ourselves, but taste is different from one person to the next. Some people will try a fresh goats cheeses and one person will get lemon, while another will get lactic acid.''

Yes, sampling is essential, Kathy Hodgekinson says, ''be it cheese, olive oil or wine. It also enables us to introduce items that work well with the cheese. For example, quince with Roquefort.'' Producer-led





tastings are also very important to our clients and staff, Kathy says. "If the weather is nice we usually take the tasting outside the shop. That way we get to meet passers-by who wouldn't always come to the shop." Introducing customers to cheeses takes more than good labelling, suggests Andy Swinscoe. As a good cheese seller, you will "know your cheese types and where different cheeses fit in. If someone comes in for Wensleydale, we give them a taste of that but then we also offer tasters of other cheeses in that style, ones they might never pick as a comparison, such as Gorwydd Caerphilly or Anster. If you feel passionate about your product you should be proud to taste it out. Sample more and you will sell more. If it doesn't move after lots of sampling, it's perhaps not right." Justin Tunstall maintains that "talking about awards and discoveries is the very best way of encouraging new choices. Be your own Amazon algorithm – if you liked 'x', how about trying 'y'?"

Choosing your cheese

"Local cheeses are always the first cheeses customers ask about and form a key part of our counter along with blue cheeses and good, strong Cheddars," says Claire Millner. "We are trying blue goat's milk and ewe's milk cheeses as more and more customers are asking for these cheeses to complement our normal range of goats and sheep cheeses. Cheese choice at Jeroboams is based on knowledge and long experience and a readiness to try the new." Jeroboams was established 1985 as a cheese and wine merchant," Kathy says. "Since then, we have sourced and refined a comprehensive cheese selection. But saying that, we are always on the lookout for new and artisan additions and we listen to suggestions from staff and customers. We couldn't be without our staples – Aged Gruyère, Brie de Meaux, Pave d'Affinois, Montgomery's Cheddar and, of course, 36 month old Parmesan."



For Jason Hinds, sales director and co-owner of Neal's Yard Dairy, cheese choice is to a large degree decided by the company's mission, which is to concentrate on selling UK and Irish cheeses. "There are one or two exceptions to that," he says, "but we are mainly looking to sell British and Irish farmhouse cheese. Those are the two primary criteria, but beyond that, there's eating quality and how it tastes. We want a cheese to have a certain level of interest, one



that is going to be comparable with the other cheeses that we've got. There are many cheeses out there that are very well made, possibly better made, even, than some of the cheeses we carry. But they don't have as much complexity or they are less consistent. Also, particularly as we have started to wholesale to restaurants and the like, we do need a suitable range. So, in the last sixteen years, we have added one or two cheeses that are from outside of the UK, such as Parmesan. We work with a fifth generation Parmesan maturer who has amazing Parmesan and we buy a Feta from Greece which is really good. But we would rather champion the British cheeses in certain categories. We won't just say, it has to be British or bust. As important as being British is that it tastes good. We wouldn't sell a substandard feta just because it was British. We wouldn't be able to get behind it and our customers would not buy it.

"Baron Bigod is a perfect example. For nearly fifteen years, the only cheese we have bought from France is Brie de Meaux from the Dongé family. We've had a great relationship and done a lot of work with them and we've been very happy with their cheese. That said, we have always been motivated to work with someone to develop a mould-ripened cows milk cheese which would fill up this category. The first cheese we helped with was the Tunworth and we worked very closely with Stacey Hedges to develop that. This cannibalised some of our Dongé Brie sales, but the category grew, and after working extremely closely with Jonny and Dulcie Crickmore on Baron Bigod, we have strengthened that category again. What will happen ultimately, I suspect, is that if Baron Bigod continues to be as good as it is now, it will slowly eat away at sales of Brie and we will have a world-class, mould-ripened cows's milk Brie-style cheese produced in the UK. This is what we ultimately look for."

For Justin Tunstall, some cheeses "choose themselves – Parmigiano,



Stilton, Brie de Meaux. If we are to compete with supermarkets, independents should look to stock the very best available. Beyond the staples, I look for a representative of different milks (unpasteurised cow, pasteurised cow, goat, ewe and buffalo) for each type of cheese, hard, blue, washed rind, soft white -rinded, fresh, aged fresh, some smoked and perhaps a carefully-chosen flavoured cheese that doesn't compromise on quality and isn't just about novelty value. I'd check that I have an organic cheese to offer and also a good variety of vegetarian offerings."

Staff

When looking for new members of staff, says Kathy Hodgekinson, "you have to make sure that working in retail and dealing with the public is what they want to do." Kathy looks for candidates who are "friendly, hard working and willing to learn. I am very lucky in that I have six staff here who have been with me for many years. Although we have different roles, we all work on the shop floor and we all serve. This way we can communicate better and everyone knows what is working well and, more importantly, what is not." Good staff product knowledge is essential for cross-selling, Kathy says. "Staff need to be able to recommend oatcakes, relish, chutney or just a good bread to complement their cheese selection, or a nice champagne or bottle of wine." Kathy keeps staff motivated by organizing "trips to our food suppliers and Champagne houses. These are good fun and informative. Also, we have the odd tickets to tennis, cricket or the rugby up for grabs. I also try to accommodate holiday requests and we are pretty flexible with the rota."

For Claire Millner, a great staff member is "someone who has a passion for the products and wants





to learn about each different cheese and pass this information on to the customers. They must always have a smile on their face, too. Our business is quite diverse as we have three retail outlets, an online shop and wholesale distribution service, so our team need to be able to multi-task. The key things are maintaining hygiene standards, knowing and understanding the products through tastings, notes on provenance etc. All of our team have worked in the cheese world for many years and have experience that they can pass on to any new starter." Claire's staff learn on the job by listening to other staff members, she says.

Staff remain motivated because they "are all kept busy. Their job is quite varied and changes all the time, so no two days are the same. We are always thinking of new ideas and things to try and our team thrives on this. We welcome suggestions from our staff on ways to improve and all work hard to provide a good service."





They are encouraged to engage with customers and do this easily "just by being themselves, personable and friendly whilst not being pushy!"

Cheese care

"In order to show off our cheeses to our customers we cut them and leave on show," says Kathy Hodgekinson. "Once a cheese has been cut it can be wrapped very tightly in cling film. We then check them and pare off any blemishes daily. We keep soft cheeses such as Chambertin and Tunworth in their boxes and we turn the blue cheeses regularly. All our cut cheese are sold wrapped in branded Jeroboams wax paper. Cheeses are left covered in our fridges overnight." Hygiene routines are let slip at owners' peril. "We all follow strict guidelines and these are set in stone and we check and double check compliance daily. No shortcuts, just diligence and daily records and then some more." Andy Swinscoe advises the cheesemonger to "clean every cheese face at least once a week (preferably twice)! Basic cheese maintenance starts there." Claire Millner of Hartington Cheese Shop checks her cheeses daily and ensures they remain chilled at all times. "We are fortunate to have very little wastage as we have a high turnover of cheese, and if anything needs to be moved on we sample and offer price reductions. There is constant monitoring of dates and condition by our knowledgeable team." Justin Tunstall suggests adding "dampened tea towels to the chiller if whole unwrapped cheeses are present," while at the Cambridge Cheese Company, "everything is wrapped in cling film at the end of the day to make sure it doesn't dry out overnight. Everything should be ready and presentable for the next day."





JULIET HARBUTT



BRITAIN VERSUS THE WORLD

Will stocking solely British cheeses lose you custom? British Cheese Awards founder and cheese consultant Juliet Harbutt weighs up the pros and the cons

When people come to me for help setting up a new deli or cheese shop, one of the first questions I ask is "have you ever worked in retail?" If the answer is no, and to my amazement it generally is, I almost insist they work in a deli before they spend money on me or any other research. Over 25 years maybe a dozen people have subsequently thanked me for saving their marriage, life savings or sanity! Most of the others have gone on to run successful businesses. The other key question new and existing retailers need to ask is "Should I be championing British cheese at the expense of foreign cheese? Is it financially viable to be selling all British? Will customers go elsewhere if I don't stock some European cheese?"

Fortunately, the answer is a resounding YES. Go local. You should do this for a myriad of reasons. Do it because you want to, and because it is something most people believe is genuinely important. You may need to cajole them as European cheeses tend to be low in price like for like, but in my experience it doesn't take much to persuade even the most hardened of Francophiles. The problem is people don't realise what's out there and the selection in many shops is still heavily weighted towards hard and blue cows' milk cheese, with most of the soft cheese simply lumped together. With little or no information available in store, unlike with wines, they don't know what to ask for.

With over 750 British cheeses available, you should be able to offer customers a new cheese every month if not every day. But when faced with a display of little-known cheeses they will resort to the old favourites. My French customers used to do this at Jeroboams, so when they asked for Cheddar or Stilton – the only British cheese they knew – I would offer them a taste of my Cheddar along with one or two other hard cow's milk cheeses, and they inevitably bought both! They were also, and still are, deeply impressed by Britain's range of blues.

Visual feast

When a new customer left with a chunk of Cheddar or Stilton, it would almost certainly be the last time we would see them. So train your staff to recognise the signs and convert an enquiry for Brie or Camembert into a sale of a British soft white cheese – I hope you have at least four or five. The other comment or criticism unjustly directed towards British cheese is that European cheeses are more flavoursome, more complex and more varied. But this is only because unless you are one of the lucky people who have judged or visited the British Cheese Awards, then you will never have seen the extraordinary diversity of cheese laid out row upon row, rack upon rack for judging – a true visual feast. If you haven't already been, take your staff off to the British Cheese Awards at the Royal Bath & West Show at the end of May.

Obviously, you can't sell all of them but you can, as you would with wine, make sure you have a wide cross-section of cheeses from the main categories and a few carefully-chosen examples of lesser-known styles, like the wrinkly-rinded, aged fresh cheeses seen in the markets in France and orange, sticky, washed rind cheese. Small and appealing in shape, lesser-known aged fresh cheeses, like Little Flea or Pablo Cabrito, look amazing on a cheeseboard. Classic washed rind cheeses like Epoisses, Vacherin or even Taleggio are outstanding examples, if not the benchmarks, of their type, and if you have room do stock them. We make over 125 semi-soft and washed rind cheeses, more than in the whole of France and Spain combined. And don't just offer the classics like Stinking Bishop, Gubbeen and Ardrahan. Try new ones – Keltic Gold, St Oswald, or the goats' milk Dutch Mistress.

Then you need a handout with such luscious photos that the people who receive it will pin it to their fridges. I recommend at the very least you that outline the seven types of cheese to help them create a great cheeseboard. A list doesn't conjure the same feast as pictures do. Last but not least, many chefs and retailers still think we don't make raw milk cheese and are amazed when I tell them there are over 200 made in Britain. So make it your mission for 2016 to spread the word that British cheese is full of flavour, character and style.

Please note although I am now living in Hawkes Bay New Zealand I will be in the UK for British Cheese Week 1st-8th October to coincide with British Food Fortnight 17th September to 2nd October. Please contact me directly if you are planning any activities or want some information.



> "With over 750 British cheeses available, you should be able to offer customers a new cheese every month if not every day"


GRUYÈRE STACKED IN THE AFFINEUR'S CAVERNS

AGE-OLD SKILLS

Becoming a maturer of cheese to take your cheese-selling to the next level.

There are people who make cheese and there people who sell cheese. And then there are the cheesesellers who blur the boundaries. These cheesemongers are keen to make their own mark on the product, to take a cheese and carefully mature it through to its various stages and in some cases to change the cheese altogether. These are what the French call affineurs. Is that what we should call them too?



It is indeed important to get the terminology right, says, Jason Hinds, sales director and co-owner of Neal's Yard Dairy. "The thing to focus on is the meaning of the word 'affinage', which literally means 'finishing'. There are celebrated companies, particularly in France, who are called affineurs and that is all they do. There are also what are called 'fromager affineurs' which are retailers who also turn their hands to a bit of finishing. I think it is legitimate to say that many people who are buying cheese in some sort of bulk and are paying attention to how those cheeses finish up on the counter are in this respect affineurs."

The affineuring process need not be sophisticated or expensive, Jason maintains. "In the very early days, we would pay great attention to the environment we put our cheese in, even if all we had was a cardboard box situated in slightly warmer conditions than a cold room. We would dampen the cardboard by spraying it lightly with water from an atomiser, we didn't have fancy rooms. I think people can finish cheese however they want. I finish cheese in a little out-building in my house or in the garage. The key thing is paying attention to what you are doing to the cheese to transform it and finish it so you can then consume it when it's at its peak. There are people doing it at home in the bottom drawer of a fridge where it is naturally humid, and not wrapping the cheeses in plastic, and they are paying attention to it and turning it at the appropriate time. There's legitimate affinage going on in the homes of consumers all the way up to large-scale businesses who are maturing thousands of cheeses."

Several routes



Rhuaridh Buchanan of London's Buchanan's Cheesemonger says that "affineuring is a term that is bandied around quite a lot and can mean many things. But really, what you are doing is maturing the cheese and the reason you might want to do this is to condition, and add value. This way you can get the cheese in the right condition for your customers." You can go one of several routes after you receive your cheese, Rhuaridh says, "from just keeping the cheese at the right temperature all the way through to changing the outcome of the cheese by maturation and anywhere in-between."

Although customers can then offer the cheese at different ages, "this can be a double-edged sword as you can ruin cheeses if you don't know what you are doing with it. You definitely have to know what you are doing. I don't mean that it is so very complicated, but it's not as simple as putting the cheese in a warmer room. There are all sorts of considerations. It's not something you would go into blind." In fact, Rhuaridh says, "the safest thing is to put the cheese in a fridge, because then at least you will get a consistent result, albeit not as exciting. That said, if you condition it properly, then you can get a really exciting outcome."

Offering cheese at the right age need not be a complicated thing to do, he says. At a basic level, "if you flip through a box of Camembert-type cheeses, you'll discover they are all a little bit different just by touching them. This means that you can immediately put them in order, ripest first. That's not 'affinage,' it's simply looking at your stock." It's also possible to discover your own best methods of keeping and bringing on your cheeses. "I have found that blue cheeses benefit from being kept in the cardboard boxes they arrive in," Rhuaridh says. "This may go against the grain for some people, who like to think they are putting more effort into looking after their cheeses if they take them out of their boxes. In fact, they quite like being in their cardboard boxes, as the cardboard retains the moisture quite nicely and stops the cheeses from drying."

Being able to improve the cheese you have bought also depends on how you buy your


MONTGOMERY'S MATURE CHEDDAR

> "Offering cheese at the right age need not be a complicated thing to do"



BERKSWELL CHEESES PROPERLY SHELVED

cheese, Rhuaridh adds. "If you just buy one week's worth, you will have little opportunity to have an effect on the product." You may, of course, neither need to, or want to mature your cheese. "A good wholesaler will provide you with cheese in the condition you want it," he says."If you are a cheesemonger and you are buying directly from producers, then you may call it affineuring but all you are really doing is preparing the cheese to be in the perfect condition to be sold to the customers."

Affineuring can give your shop a point of difference from other local cheesesellers. "There is nothing to stop a supermarket from buying artisan cheeses. I could walk across the road to my local supermarket and buy a Tunworth and it may be a little cheaper, and have the same packaging, but mine will be lovely and soft and ripe, whereas theirs will be hard and chalky in the middle," Rhuaridh says. "We have adopted the French term 'affineuring' but in practise this has a different meaning in France itself. "If you buy a truckle of Montgomery's Cheddar, the brand on it will tell you it was made by Jamie Montgomery and the team at the farm, but if you buy a Marcel Petite Comté, Marcel Petit did not make it. Instead, he selects the cheeses from different farms or chalets and then ages them. It can be the affineur's name which is on the cheese, not the maker. You would never always know where the cheeses has come from. The role of the affineur is quite different on the Continent."

Rhuaridh has "a couple of rooms in which we create sub-environments. I would like to have more rooms but we're quite a new business and we have to grow as we can afford to. One room is held below five degrees and another is held at 12 degrees. They both have very high humidity." Ideally, the next room he has will be one at about nine degrees, which would be "perfect for all the soft goat's cheeses for which our cold fridge is a little bit too cold," Rhuaridh says. "We keep the harder cheeses and some of the washed rinds in the warmer room. The goats cheeses will go onto racks in the warmer room and sometimes we will wrap the racks in cling film and sometimes we won't – it depends on the texture of the cheese when it comes in. The idea is to dry it off a bit and form a stiffer rind. We then put it into wooden crates and we wrap the wooden crates in wax paper and they go into the colder room to ripen up more slowly."

Cheese style



"A good cheesemonger does not necessarily need to age cheese," says Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy, who sounds a note of caution for those considering taking this step. "They just need to understand it, touch it and react to cheese – if it is dry, wrap it tighter, keep it in a box in the fridge, if it is wet, let it dry out. If the Brie is too hard, either buy it at a later stage of ripeness or keep it whole, examining it until you feel it is ripe. Don't just put it on the counter because you need to have Brie on there. Remember that within each batch you will get variances of ripeness in each cheese, so really do touch and examine each individual cheese."



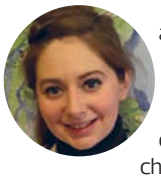
ISLE OF MULL, A NOTABLE MATURED CHEDDAR

Going into cheese- ageing properly, Andy says, requires some investment. "Each cheese style really needs different environments and conditions – from specific drying apparatus, understanding refrigeration technology to avoid drying, air flow, and understanding the right equipment and utensils to use. Then there is time invested in turning, washing and brushing as well as knowing the cheese and risks involved in ageing it yourself – if you wash cheese or keep it on spruce you need to know what you are dealing with and how to clean it properly. The best solution for most cheesemongers is to work with good cheesemakers and wholesalers who can sell you cheese at the right profile. You can then let people who concentrate on ageing and changing the product (like James's Cheese and Neal's Yard Dairy) do their job well!"

For Ann-Marie Dyas of The Fine Cheese Co, the term 'affineur' is one that might easily be corrupted by misuse. "Cheesemongers, by and large, are not affineurs," she says. "They don't have the facilities to mature different cheeses in different conditions of humidity and temperature control. I think that Neal's Yard Dairy and Paxton & Whitfield would say that, alongside the cheesemakers, that is our job. Nor can they affect transformation through brine-washing etc. That is a specialist activity." Instead, Anne-Marie says, "Cheesemongers need to make more use of the term cheesemonger and invest it with value. In France, cheesemongers take their job very seriously. They observe their cheeses, they seek information and they work toward an educated appreciation and understanding of the cheese they sell. In a nutshell, they know their cheese inside out and they treat their job as a vocation. Anyone who has even visited a



cheesecounter in a supermarket and then a good cheese shop will bear witness that there are sales people and there are cheesemongers."



Opinions vary as to whether a cheesemongers should become their own agers of cheese. "A good cheesemonger should definitely consider focusing on this activity as it can help to develop the flavour in the cheese," says Dan Bliss, affineur and cellar manager of Paxton & Whitfield's Jermyn Street shop. "In addition, it ensures that you have cheese in perfect condition for all your customers, be they trade or consumer, who quite often have different needs. By understanding the nature of the product and how to accelerate or de-accelerate its maturation,you can also better manage your stocks and ensure the best quality cheese arrives on the shop floor when you need it."

Affineuring or cheese ageing is a useful activity in a number of ways, it seems. "It's particularly useful during quiet and busy times," says Dan. "If you are quiet, being able to slow a cheese's maturation and give it some TLC will mean that you reduce wastage. At Christmas, for example, you can have a slow build up where you need to increase your levels significantly but people tend to buy at the very last moment and need the cheese to be ripe for that point. If you can manage the maturity of your cheese, you can better manage the quality of the cheese through the highs and lows of trading. Ensuring that your cheese is always in the perfect condition enables you to differentiate yourself quite clearly from other retailers who sell on price.

Full potential

"An affineur ensures cheese reaches its full potential and that the cheese is sold at the best stage of ripeness. Day to day, it is a case of caring for te cheese, playing with temperatures as well as keeping it happy. This is dependent on the style of cheese. For example, a washed-rind cheese like an Epoisses may need a further delicate brushing with brine to ensure it stays supple while a St Maure goat's log would need laying out on straw mats and rotating regularly to ensure it ages evenly. It's also a case of reacting to cheeses when they first arrive. Are they too wet, too dry, too young?" Ageing cheese yourself means that a cheeseseller "can offer cheese in absolute peak condition and advise customers on how to look after the cheese at home. It also means that we can offer a variety of age profiles. For example, we always have different ages of goat's cheeses available on our counter to appeal to customers who prefer a light, young, moussey cheese right through to a much firmer, full flavoured cheese."



For budding agers of cheese," says Jade Thomas of Cambridge Cheese company, "the first thing to consider is the quality of the cheese that you are starting with. just the experience of being in the shop and trying different cheeses will give you a good idea and a good feel for what cheeses will age well. If you have a really top quality hard cheese, it's often best to start with a couple and then monitor them, see how they go. If you really do care about your product and want to take it a stage further, it's a great little experiment, and it's exciting." Ageing cheese can give you a point of difference. Whether they call themselves agers or affineurs, cheesesellers "can then offer their customers something exceptional and particular to them. With the right conditions and skills, cheese ageing can be a profitable business, "because you end up with a product that is completely different from anything else. It will have a higher price than anything else because lots of time and care has been invested in it."

Dragon

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SELLING OVERSEAS

Do cheeseselling techniques differ around the world? Cheese Buyer speaks to three international cheesemongers to find out



AMERICA

Joe Howansky of Bedford Cheese Shop, Brooklyn, New York

WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT AS AMERICAN CHEESESELLERS?
What makes us stand out is the breadth of products that we feature while still maintaining a close and intimate relationship with producers.

HAS THE AMERICAN CHEESE MARKET CHANGED MUCH SINCE BEDFORD CHEESE SHOP BEGAN?
Dramatically – the market is much larger, the field of products available to us is much larger and the customer base is more educated.

DO SELLING TECHNIQUES IN THE US DIFFER TO THOSE IN BRITAIN?
Yes – we sell by the pound, they sell by the gram. Perhaps one day this cultural gulf can be bridged. Also, the logistics of distance is a difference between the two . A small cheesemaker in rural Britain can still get somewhat regular shipments of cheese to Neal's Yard, who have the infrastructure to facilitate further distribution, even onto the mainland and to the US. We don't have an infrastructure of aging and central distribution to the degree that Europe does, and a small cheesemaker in the US whose product we want to carry could potentially be 3,000 miles away. So there are a lot of cheesemakers whose product we simply can't feature due entirely to the difficulties and expenses incurred by the distances we have to contend with. On one hand this forces local markets to strengthen, but also seriously impedes the potential for growth of rural cheese businesses.

ARE MORE PEOPLE TRAINED IN AFFINAGE?
If you mean as opposed to the past, yes, a little bit. While that experience is something we would welcome in an employee, that knowledge is much more practically applicable among cheesemakers than cheese shops.

WHAT ARE BEDFORD CHEESE SHOP'S MOST POPULAR CHEESES?
Most popular cheeses are pretty much the classics – Mozzarella, Parmesan, Manchego, Brie, etc.

ARE THERE ANY US CHEESES YOU'RE SURPRISED AREN'T BETTER KNOWN IN THE UK?
There are thousands of American farmstead cheeses. Only a couple are exported to the UK, and many aren't even distributed outside of their neighbouring states. So I'm not surprised at all when our friends across the pond are unaware of some of my favourites.



PLEASE NAME AND DESCRIBE 10 GREAT AMERICAN CHEESES OUR READERS MAY NOT HAVE HEARD OF
I think the list would be different on another day, so I hope anyone reading I didn't include doesn't take it personally. So in no particular order:

Sugarhouse Creamery Poundcake
Almost every wheel of this pudgy washed rind is sold on-site or in the farmer's market local to the very rural town where it is made. Even I can barely get any and it's literally my job to buy cheese

Alemar Good Thunder
I would punch myself in my own face for one bite of this gooey stinkbomb

Bleu Mont Bandaged Cheddar
This cheese tastes exactly like the farm I grew up on would smell on a rainy autumn day. Eating it is like being a kid again

Sequatchie Cove Shakerag Blue
Especially good considering that it's a relatively new cheese from a relatively new cheesemaker. It's like a moldy cherry pie that gets you drunk

Jasper Hill Bayley Hazen Blue
Possibly a perfect cheese – there's nothing I can say that hasn't already been said

Uplands Dairy Rush Creek Reserve
Two years ago this cheese's season was skipped, and it wasn't clear if it was ever going to be made again. When I broke the news to my family, one person actually screamed

Vulto Creamery Miranda
Most cheeses are made with love. This one is made OUT OF love

Vermont Shepherd
You just can't go wrong with this standby – the Majors have been crushing this cheese out of the park since before a lot of today's cheesemakers were even born. Like the best Ossau Iraty you've ever had from a little slice of Vermont Eden

Many Fold Farm Condor's Ruin
Kind of like a Pouligny St Pierre but made with sheep's milk. They are always right on the money. A young supple pyramid of this would make you reevaluate all your life's priorities

Capriole Farm Sofia
A little Loire valley-style brick that is always just right, always there when you need it. Judy, the cheesemaker, is one of our most beloved stateswomen of American cheese



FRANCE

Leo Guarneri, Androuet

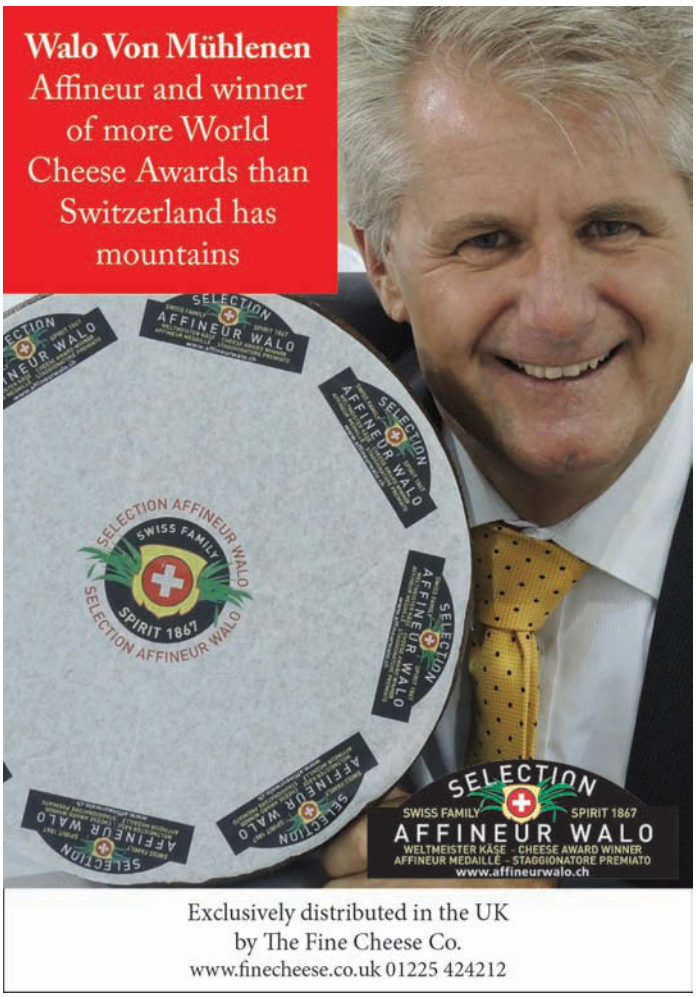
Androuet has an impressive history which goes back to 1909, and the long-term relationship that we have with our producers helps us in a big way. This relationship allows us to set ourselves apart from the competition – we meet producers and select specific cheeses with the quality and maturity we want. Both our London and Paris shops work with the same farmers so there's a continuity when it comes to the quality of our cheeses. We have nine cheese shops in Paris, one in Stockholm and one in London, but don't want to be called a chain as the link we have between us is our relationship with producers – apart from that all the shops are run individually, and have adapted according to where they are based.

When Mr Androuet started in 1909, cheesemakers weren't travelling very far to source their cheese. He was the first person to visit the producer, and to understand that cheese needs to be bought young – as soon after it has been made as possible – so that it can be aged in-store. In this way, he had more of a connection with the cheese than cheesesellers had experienced in the past. Take Camembert for example. In Normandy Camembert was consumed very fresh and white, whereas in Paris it was almost over-mature because of the time it took for the cheese to travel there. This has now changed, and no matter where you are you can get a consistent level of maturation.



> "There is a definite movement towards artisanal development in the UK, whereas France is moving towards more industrial production"





Since 2009 I've seen a far wider public interest and knowledge in artisanal cheese in the UK than there used to be. There is also a big difference in the way cheese is consumed in France and in the UK. To speak in general terms, cheese is enjoyed in the UK on occasions – parties, Christmas and Easter, for example – whereas in France it is eaten more regularly but people buy less. The British public has such an interest in discovering unknown cheeses, but in France people tend to go more for what they know.

Affinage is definitely practised more in French cheese shops, but in the past decade, due to a few very good artisanal cheese shops, the skill has been developed in Britain. Traditionally, it has not been seen so much as a necessity in the UK but in France it is simply part of the culture.

I believe that in the Sixties and Seventies there was more artisanal production in France while in the UK it was slightly more industrial, but from my understanding that is due to the Second World War. Before the war, British cheesemakers were making their cheese in small quantities, but during and after the war they had to become more uniform, produce more cheese and give their milk away, too. This destroyed a lot of the British *savoir faire* for around 20 years. In France we didn't have this issue, but industrial production has increased in the past two decades while Britain has seen a boom in artisanal production.

The best-selling cheese changes a lot both in our Paris and London shops, and this depends very much on the season. We sell different cheeses according to the season, and are known for our Comté as we have such a good relationship with the producer. We've just started the goats cheese season, and that will be an important part of our sales for the next few months. Famous French cheeses like Brie and Camembert always sell very well, but I'm surprised that hard cheeses aren't more popular – you find these cheeses in speciality retailers, but the general public doesn't have much knowledge about them.

10 FRENCH CHEESES YOU NEED TO KNOW

Rove des Garrigues
A beautiful fresh goat's cheese from Provence-Alpes Cote d'Azur with subtle thyme, rosemary and lavender flavours

Pavé d'Auge
A holey soft cow's milk washed rind cheese from Normandy with a strong spicy flavour

Délice des Cabasses
A fresh sheep's curd cheese from the Midi-Pyrénées with a tangy, sweet flavour and refreshing finish

Lou Sounal
A soft sheep's milk cheese from Lozère with a complex, earthy flavour

Brillat Savarrin
A triple cream cow's milk cheese from Ile de France or Burgundy with a rich hint of crème frâiche, originally named by Mr Androuet

Bleu du Val d'Aillons
A blue veined cow's cheese from Savoy with a melting, creamy texture

Salers
A hard, buttery cow's cheese from Auvergne with a complex grassy and peppery and citrus flavour

Bleu des Basques
A blue veined ewe's milk cheese from the south west of France (Basque country) with a hint of wild flowers and subtle flavour

A Casinca
A soft goats cheese with a washed rind. Robust, almost wild, Corsican goats roam freely over vast landscapes, infusing their milk with various herbal aromas

Charolais
A natural rind goat's cheese. The composition of the cheese varies depending on the methods of each farm. There is no one way of making this cheese, some farmers use a mix of goat's and cow's milk. It tastes slightly nutty and has an intense flavour



SPAIN

Clara Diez, Quesocultivo

EXPERIENCE & KNOWLEDGE

What makes us stand out from other cheesesellers is our background in the industry. The most important element is the fact we are producers, and sell the cheeses with knowledge, quality assurement, enthusiasm and passion. This is not only from our own businesses, but also from those we represent and know well because of the path we have walked together in the past.

CHANGING LANDSCAPE

I like to think that more people keeps artisan and farmhouse cheeses in mind since we appeared on the scene, and they are also discovering cheese technologies outside the almighty hard pressed sheep's milk cheeses (i.e. Manchego, Castellano, Zamorano, etc) that were being made and remained in their local production area. I wouldn't say that selling techniques differ between Spain and Britain; everybody likes being served with honesty, and sellers like the ability to share their expertise.

SPAIN VS UK MARKETS

Britain is well ahead due the work that companies like Neal's Yard Dairy have developed over the last few decades to encourage the consumption of artisan and farmhouse cheese. In Spain, where the industry is buying the milk below the costs of production, a traumatic but exciting scenario has been created at the moment. Many farmers are looking for a way to dignify their activity by turning into emerging cheesemakers we can help in the market.

FAVOURITE CHEESES

I guess our favourite cheeses are those we make. Granja Cantagrullas, La Jarradilla & Los Quesos de Juan are the partners that created Cultivo and, not because we are making a special effort, the public like the idea of having the cheesemaker "behind the counter." I think that rounds the buying experience out.

CHEESE CULTURE

What really surprises me is the amount of Spanish cheeses that are unknown in their own country. I think the cheese culture in the UK is higher than it is here. Although, there's a huge variety that's never reach the islands as all those who preceded us focused mainly on Manchego.



MUST-STOCK SPANISH CHEESES

Moluengo
A lactic goats cheese log made in Albacete by José Luis Abellán. Ashed rinded, creamy under the rind and denser in the core, with lactic and hazelnut flavours

40
A sheep's milk Cheddar-type cheese made by Rubén in Granja Cantagrullas. It takes its name from the weight of the first wheel ever made. This clothbound cheese develops a rich, crystallized texture with a shorter ageing than most Cheddars and sweet and toasted flavours

Pasiego
This traditional soft cow's milk cheese from the North, made by Gregoria Martínez and her team in La Jarradilla, is young, buttery and acidic and with milky and yeasty flavours

Puigpedrósw
A cow's milk, washed rind cheese from the Pyrenees made by Pere Pujol at Molí de Ger. It tastes savoury in the rind and smooth and meaty in the thick, soft paste

Iniesta Manzanaro
Cannot be called Manchego as it isn't PDO-accredited. The cheesemaker doesn't agree with many of the requirements (or the lack of these), but it is Manchego from all its sides, made in La Mancha with Manchego sheep's milk, and it offers a range of savoury and toasted notes



PERFECT PART-

Chutneys, charcuterie and crackers – all valuable additions to your cheese-selling arsenal

Charcuterie

Charcuterie and cheese make great bedfellows, not least because they both need love and attention to ensure you sell or serve them at their best. Although stable at ambient temperatures, it's important to keep the whole pieces protected from the elements, ie vacuum-packed if possible, and keep an eye on it to make sure it hasn't past its prime. Charcuterie and cheese are two sectors currently enjoying a British renaissance, so push the products' heritage if you can. Be experimental with pairings; salty Cheddars go well with a salted ham and a spicy blue could partner with a spiced sausage, but an evening spent taste-testing various cheeses with various meats would be a great pleasure – and particularly popular with customers if you'd like to make an event of it.



Three Little Pigs Spicy Chorizo
Our range of six products are all made from free-range, rare breed pork raised on our Yorkshire farm.
threelittlepigschorizo.co.uk



Good Game Coppa
This is a classic Italian-style air-dried ham from the top loin of a pig, dry cured then put into a casing and hung for at least eight weeks.
good-game.co.uk



Paxton & Whitfield Smoked Wiltshire Ham
Cooked and ready to eat. A smoked British ham. Lightly smoked to give an intense flavour. Boneless for easy carving.
paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk



5 Woodalls Royale Ham
Marinated for eight days in a liquid pickle of pale ale, molasses, vinegar, brown sugar and spices and hung then cold smoked in oak before being air-dried for at least six months.
woodallscharcuterie.com



Chutneys & Pickles

Sharp Cheddar paired with a vinegary pickle will forever be a staple of the British diet – there's a reason why this pairing has survived the ages – but there's no reason to stick to just the basic partnership when there's such a plethora of chutneys available. When it comes to chutneys, many consumers have personal preferences towards certain items; a spoonful of something fruity and sweet atop a helping of cheese will be heaven for some and hell for others, while some would never dream of serving a classic British territorial alongside a jar of spiced vegetables (although they may be missing a trick). Depending on the space you have available, offer the widest range of chutneys and pickles you can. Run the whole gamut, from a classic tomato chutney to an world food-inspired fruity number, and each cheese in your counter will have its perfect partner.



Hawkshead Relish Beetroot and Horseradish Chutney
Hand-grated beetroot with a subtle hint of horseradish. A natural partner for cheese.
hawksheadrelish.com



The Bay Tree Spicy Tomato & Caramelised Onion Chutney
A great addition to any sandwich, quick lunch with cheese or ham or hot sausages and mashed potato.
thebaytree.co.uk



Pinks Empire Chutney
Fabulous with mature Cheddar, a delight with curry and cuts of cold meat – use to coat your baked ham or as a marinade for chicken.
pinks-online.co.uk



Stokes Real Ale Chutney
A combination of apple, apricot, onion and traditionally, locally-brewed real ale.
stokessauces.co.uk



Cottage Delight Chutney for Baked Brie
Made with 45% pear, Bramley apples and walnuts, this fruity and slightly spiced chutney is perfect spooned over baked Brie when just removed from the oven.
cottagedelight.co.uk



Fosters Veg Patch Pickle
A light, sweet pickle packed full of bright vegetable patch delights, in addition to some fruity friends.
fosters-foods.co.uk



Peter's Yard Knacks Crispbread Bites
Sourdough crispbread bites made with simple, natural ingredients including organic flour, organic fresh milk and pure, hand-harvested Halen Môn sea salt.
petersyard.com



Stag Stornoway Smoked Butter Oatcakes
Made with oats and butter gently smoked over oak and beech chips in the last traditional smokehouse in Stornoway.
stagbakeries.co.uk



Nairns Super Seeded Oatcakes
Full of delicious flax, sunflower and chia seeds, which makes them even more crunchy and tasty.
nairns-oatcakes.com



Paxton & Whitfield Cracker Bakes
Deliciously crunchy, twice-baked sodabread cracker bakes with apricots, dates and sunflower seeds, and sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, linseeds and cracked black pepper.
paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk



Cradoc's Vegetable Crackers with Beetroot & Garlic
Initially a delicate flavour, which builds to well rounded, plump and earthy beetroot, good and lasting crunch with mellow garlic end notes.
cradocssavourybiscuits.co.uk



Fudges Poppy & Sesame Seed Biscuits
A delectable bake for all manner of munching. Add to a ploughman's with plenty of pickle, serve as an hors d'oeuvre topped with savoury morsels, or devour with strong cheeses and wash down with wine.
thomasjfudges.co.uk

Savoury biscuits

A freshly-baked artisanal baguette certainly has its place – especially when partnered with a gooey baked Tunworth – but ignore the popularity of savoury biscuits at your peril. Not only do they serve a practical purpose, suitable for cheese pairing at picnics, parties and packed lunches alike, but they're also ideal for snacking. Whether made with smoked butter, ancient grains or are simply a traditional oatcake, savoury biscuits are a delicious partner for all sorts of cheeses. The ideal cracker partner for cheese will not overwhelm the cheese, instead it will complement the flavour notes within it or even just act as a mild, textured vehicle. Some customers will prefer the former while others will lean towards the latter; a selection offering both a simple-flavoured biscuit as well as a few which are flavoured enough to stand alone as well as with cheese is ideal.

great taste 2015 TOP 50 FOODS

great taste 2015

"The best biscuit out there for cheese"

2015 Great Taste Awards judges

Peter's Yard hand bake their award-winning crispbread in the UK using authentic Swedish recipes, all natural ingredients and their precious, naturally fermenting sourdough starter which develops over 16 hours before each batch is made. The result is a light, crisp texture and a subtle, malty flavour that makes them the perfect partner for cheese and the natural choice for many Michelin starred chefs.

Available in several sizes and recipes to suit different usage occasions, they can be found in specialist food shops, Waitrose, Ocado, Whole Food Market, Fortnum & Mason, Selfridges and John Lewis Food Halls.

Visit www.petersyard.com to buy online and to find your local stockist.



PETER'S YARD


PHILIP STANSFIELD OF THE CORNISH CHEESE COMPANY




JANE STEWART, ST ANDREWS FARMHOUSE CHEESE

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Visiting the makers of your cheese offers opportunities not only to gather backstory but sometimes to help develop the cheese itself

For some cheesesellers, contact with the actual makers of their cheese is rare. Well-known cheese makers might be encountered briefly at busy cheese shows and paths might be crossed with local producers in the normal course of things, but that can sometimes be the extent of the connection between maker and seller. Apart from the clearly beneficial arrangement of having a producer visit the shop and demonstrate their wares, it might even be thought that there's no real need for the relationship to be any closer. But according to some cheesesellers, this is to miss out on an aspect of cheeseselling that's crucial to your ability to supply the right cheese in exactly the right condition. It can also be personally satisfying to both parties.

"Meeting the producer is of seminal importance to us," says Jason Hinds, sales director and co-owner of Neal's Yard Dairy. "A lot of people place great importance on the affinage of a cheese and it's true to say that you can make or ruin a cheese depending on the environment you put it in before you sell it. What you can't do through affinage is turn a cheese that is average, or not good, into a great cheese. This is because what makes a good cheese, or a great cheese, is what happens in the making room, not in the cheese maturing room. Even if you make a cheese with a lovely rind and finish it perfectly, it is never going to taste great, because it didn't taste great to begin with." Working hand-in-hand with the producer means that Neal's Yard Dairy is able to ensure that cheese is developed in line with the requirements of the shop. It is able to do that, Jason says, "because we operate in such a small country compared to, say, France. We are able to visit most of the cheesemakers that we work with and be back in London within a day."

A lot of factors go into the making of a cheese beyond those created by the changing of the seasons. While the flavour of a cheese will be affected by whether the cow has eaten grass out of doors in summer or been fed a different diet in winter, "there are many other factors which can lead to the cheese being different," Jason says. "For instance, it's not always the same cheesemaker making the cheeses seven days a week. Even the state of mind of the cheesemaker can make a difference. With a product as variable as a farmhouse cheese, the ability to go and taste the cheese when it is quite young and pick out the ones that we like the taste of, and decide which ones may be suitable for our market, is very important. I'm not going to say we 'pick out the best cheese'; because we have certain requirements that differ from other people's. The familiarity that we have had with those cheeses, in some cases over three decades, has given us the ability to pick out what we know is going to work for us. I think we have a much greater ability to manage the quality of the cheese through early selection and the development of the relationship with their cheesemakers than ever we can by finishing the cheese in the maturing room."


BRINKWORTH'S CERI CRYER DRIES THE CURDS

Great product

"You can get so much from visiting a cheesemaker in his creamery," agrees Rhuaridh Buchanan of Buchanan's Cheesemonger. "I think that doing this is pretty crucial. First and foremost, this is how you are going to learn more about the product, which makes selling it a bit easier. In my opinion, it adds value to the story. I think people come to independent retailers to buy cheese or wine or whatever because it's not a shelf that is serving them, it's a person. It's a person from whom they can learn both story and background. Visiting the producer gives you an appreciation of what the product actually is and what has gone into its production. You


TOM CALVER OF WESTCOMBE DAIRY

can find out what has affected it and why it may be different. It's also good from the cheesemaker's point of view, because the cheesemongers are the people that are in contact with the customers. If something is not working, the cheese seller can tell them about it. The feedback goes both ways."

A personal visit to the cheesemaker can also provide the opportunity to work with them to improve the cheese and, as Jason Hinds has said, to tailor it to the demands of your market. "One of the big problems faced by small cheesemakers is getting the product right," Rhuaridh says "Most cheesemakers these days will start with a soft cheese because they will get a return from their investment in eight weeks. If you start with making a Cheddar, you won't have anything to sell for a year and a half and you won't know if you have got it wrong for nine months." It can, of course, depend upon the relationship enjoyed with the producer, but visiting the cheesemaker can help them to get their product right sooner. "I've been able to give them feedback, telling them which batches have worked well and which less so," Rhuaridh says.

For Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy, visiting the cheesemaker in his creamery is invaluable. "Our ethos is to work very closely and have personal relationships with a small range of really good producers," he says. "It's the easiest way to learn about the cheese. No amount of reading and research is the same as meeting the person making the cheese." Also, he says, "it allows you to put a face to the name, to hear them talk about their cheese and find out what is going on at the farm. We can discuss the profile of cheese we like, the best batches, examine ways to improve the relationship together and talk about the future for the cheese and what changes (if any) we'd like to see. "

Amazing cheese

The cheeseseller can encourage new producers by offering advice and "putting them in touch with other producers." New cheesemakers can face a variety of obstacles, he says. "It is easy to make cheese, but it is hard to make an amazing cheese. We will try our best to support anyone dedicated to going down that route as much as we can." In return, Andy says, "we get a better product. We keep alive traditions, have a good relationship with producers, feel like we have contributed positively to the industry and dairy farming in general. If you can encourage a dairy farm to successfully develop and make a new cheese on their farm, with their own milk, that is a really fulfilling thing and one of the reasons I do what I do. The more farmhouse cheesemakers, the better."

Claire Millner, who runs the Hartington Cheese Shop, enjoys a closer connection with cheesemakers than many because, as she says, "we are fortunate to also be part of the Hartington Creamery team, so we have first hand knowledge about cheese making and this is invaluable. Some of our staff also help out in our dairy and so understand the complete process and can share this information with customers. As we wholesale in the area, we are often approached by new producers who want us to distribute their cheeses. We can move large volumes through our retail outlets and wholesale business and we are constantly looking for new products. We specialise in local and regional cheeses and have developed a good name for ourselves in the Midlands. We can push new products to all our customers and can work with new producers to sample their products and market them on their behalf."

"Making personal visits allows us to meet the cheesemaker face to face and see their set-up," says Jade Thomas, shop manager at Cambridge Cheese Company. "It has very definite benefits when it comes to selling the cheese, Jade says. "I think by having that background, we've then got more to give to the customer. We can tell them about the people and the place the cheese comes from and this is something which more and more people are interested in these days. Recently, I went on a trip to Bavaria to meet the producers and see the dairies where our German cheese comes from. To have that kind of reference and those anecdotes to pass on to our customers is really useful. Buyers of cheese like to know its origins, and a little bit of back story. If you can tell them first hand, so much the better."


VILLAGE MAID CHEESES CHECKED FOR QUALITY


BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR CHEESE BY SEEING IT MADE. GRUYERE IN PRODUCTION


CHEDDARING AT APPLEBY'S

> With a product as variable as a farmhouse cheese, the ability to go and taste the cheese when it is quite young and decide which ones may be suitable for our market is very important



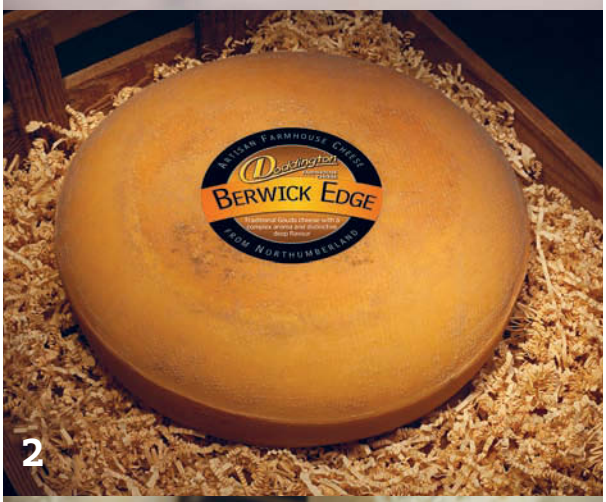
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STOCKING SUGGESTIONS

Britain is packed with interesting cheese. Why not refresh your range with one or two of these interesting British cheeses?

The recent boom in artisan cheesemaking has brought a large number of new, home-grown cheeses to market. Not so long ago – until the late 1980s, perhaps – the few cheese shops to be found in British towns tended to play it safe and a severely limited choice would rely very much upon Cheddar sales, and a Stilton to push at Christmas. The supporting cast might include tried and tested territorials, Brie, Camembert and one or two other, obvious Continentals. Cheesemongers re-ordered the same stock and sourcing new items, even if demand had existed back then, would not have been easy. Now all is changed. Traditionally-made farmhouse cheeses abound and modern styles proliferate, both from new micromakers and from larger dairies looking to catch this still quite new wave.

Most cheesesellers will have a core of cheeses they will always stock in order to satisfy known local demand. That core will still include Cheddar and most likely Stilton too, although the number of blue alternatives is enormous. The range of solid British regional, or territorial, cheeses is also much increased as new makers revive old techniques and cheese styles. The production of British fresh goat's and ewe's milk cheeses has soared in recent years as consumer taste has broadened. There are more soft and rind-washed cheeses. Another new development has been the increase in the number of British alternatives to Continental cheeses.

This means that the cheeseseller has to work harder to engage customers and also turn over steadily. Beyond that core range which satisfies regular demand, it's important to interest casual buyers too and this can be done by refreshing a small part of the range regularly and offering cheeses you don't normally stock, unusual or perhaps slightly lesser-known cheeses. With this in mind, Cheese Buyer offers a selection for your consideration.

1 STAWLEY

Type: Semi-soft goat's cheese made with unpasteurised goat's milk and animal rennet

Made by Will and Caroline Atkinson at Hill Farm Dairy in Somerset, Stawley was first produced in 2009. This is a semi-soft cheese with a geotrichum rind. When it is very young, between seven and fourteen days, "it is very fresh, creamy and lemony," Will says, "after which it tends to lose that lemony flavour and offer honey notes, but the buttermilk flavour still comes through. In addition,there are also various delicate floral flavours."

2 BERWICK EDGE

Type: Northumberland hard cheese made with unpasteurized cow's milk and animal rennet

Doddington Dairy of North Doddington Farm in Northumberland makes this hard, unpasteurized cheese with milk from their own herd of cows. A Gouda-style cheese, it is allowed to mature for 10 months to produce a characterful round cheese whose rich, yellow paste is enclosed with a hard brown rind which is punctuated by tiny holes. The flavour is strong and the taste is one that lingers in the mouth.













3 ISLE OF WIGHT BLUE

Type: Blue cheese made with unpasteurized Guernsey milk from the cheesemaker's own cows and vegetarian rennet

This round, naturally-rinded soft blue cheese is sold at four weeks. Isle of Wight Blue has a brown rind showing patches of mould and a paste with a nutty flavour and a gentle bite. The cheese is made by hand by Rich Hodgson at Queen Bower Dairy and is sold at three to five weeks.

4 DREWI SANT

Type: Pasteurized cow's milk, vegetarian rennet semi-soft cheese

Made by Pant Mawr in Pembrokeshire, Drewi Sant uses milk from a local co-operative and the cheese is sprayed with honey mead before it is wrapped. Matured for three weeks, Drewi Sant, has a pale yellow paste which offers mildly tangy, rich and fruity flavours.

5 DUNLOP BONNETT

Type: A hard goat's milk cheese made with vegetarian rennet

This hard-pressed goat's milk cheese from Dunlop Dairy in Scotland is produced with the milk from Saanen and Toggenburg goats and is named after 'The Bonnet Town' of Stewarton. Maturation time is six to ten months.

6 BOURNES BLUE CHESHIRE

Type: Blue-veined Cheshire cheese made with pasteurized cow's milk and vegetarian rennet

This Blue Cheshire is made by H.S. Bourne, a family-run business with a long history of Chshire cheese making. Milk from their own herd of cows is pressed before being pierced to produce blue veing. The cheese is then matured for six to seven months, the mature and natural rind-coated Blue Cheshire has a moist paste and a mild, tangy taste.

7 SUFFOLK GOLD

Type: A creamy semi-hard farmhouse cheese made with pasteurized cows milk and vegetarian rennet

Suffolk Gold is made by Jason and Katharine Salisbury at Suffolk Farmhouse Cheeses near Ipswich. This semi-hard cheese has a texture which is a little softer than Cheddar after being aged for 10-12 weeks. The paste has a buttery, creamy texture and a delicate flavour.

8 BROADOAK CHEDDAR

Type: Traditionally-made, raw cow's milk, cloth-wrapped Cheddar. Vegetarian rennet.

British Frisian cow's milk is used to make this farmhouse Cheddar which is matured for 12 months on wooden shelves. Made with correct balance of acidity, Broadoak Cheddar has a sharp, clean flavour. Produced by The Traditional Cheese Company of East Sussex.

9 WATERLOO

Type: A washed-curd semi-soft cheese made with vegetarian rennet and unpasteurized Guernsey milk

Made in Berkshire by Anne and Andy Wigmore of Village Maid Cheese, the Brie-style mild, semi-soft washed-curd Waterloo offers a rich, buttery creamy and slightly tangy taste.

10 COTE HILL BLUE

Type: An unpasteurized cow's milk soft blue cheese made with vegetarian rennet

Britain's first unpasteurized soft blue, Cote Hill is a soft and creamy cheese made in Lincolnshire by Michael and Mary Davenport with milk from their herd of Friesian, Holstein and Red Poll cows. Rich and soft, Cote Hill Blue has a distinctive and unusual taste .

11 ST OSWALD

Type: Small, rind-washed, semi-soft made with pasteurized cow's milk and animal rennet

Made between the Cotswold Hills and the Vale of Evesham by Gorsehill Abbey Cheese, St Oswald is matured from one to three months and has a flavour which becomes stronger with age. Produced with milk from Friesian and Montbeliard cows on a registered organic farm.



THE ART OF RETAIL



Patricia Michelson, founder of La Fromagerie

La Fromagerie started in 1991, so we are celebrating our 25th year in business! Quite an achievement since its first home was my garden shed. I'd fallen in love with Alpine cheeses while on a skiing holiday and wanted to try my hand at selling them. I had no previous experience at all in running a food business or a shop, but little by little I found my way. First with a market stall in Camden Lock on the weekends, and then a tiny shop in Highbury before moving across the road to the current shop. I wanted to have the cheeses on show so devised a simple by neat way of showcasing them in a cooled room that customers could wander in and browse, taste and then buy – this was unique at the time! In 2002 we were invited to open in Marylebone and found ourselves much more exposed to the public than before in our North London premises. This engagement spurred us on to develop the business, and the help and determination of Sarah Bilney who joined us when we opened Marylebone has been invaluable. We pride ourselves on the art of affinage, especially with younger cheeses where we also 'wash' in brines and unguents to bring out flavours and qualities of the milk. It is an art and a science.

What sets us apart is that we have a very clear and defined approach to who and what we are. Because I didn't have any retail background, although my husband (who is a partner) had his own retail business before joining me, I followed my gut instinct and desire to give my customers a glimpse of the wonderful hand made cheeses and other products that would not be seen outside their region. I want to be original but clear in my process, and want those working with me to absorb and be inspired by working in the business. It is very complex and there are many layers under that shop floor. It takes a great deal of work and dedication to achieve and be consistent.

We make our own chutneys and relishes, from Piedmontese Mostardas (fruits and vegetables in hot mustard syrup, delicious with strong hard cheeses) to quince paste. We have our own line of biscuits for cheese that are crisp and neither sweet nor too salty – they are perfect vehicles for our cheeses to be enjoyed. We have fresh fruit and vegetables in the shop direct from France, Italy and England, including crisp breakfast radishes for Gouda, Cox apples for Cheddar, sweet grapes for blue cheeses, plus celery and tomatoes for soft cheeses. We also have wonderful Piedmontese hazelnuts that have a real crunch to them, as well as Spanish almonds – both Marcona and the smaller ones with their skins on (very important to enjoy with Beaufort and Comté cheeses!) – and perfect walnuts, pecans and pine nuts. Partners for cheese should be simple and have a natural affinity rather than mask the flavours of the cheese. I am also very interested in wines and spirits, and spend an inordinate amount of time reading, tasting and visiting winemakers when I can. I love matching cheeses to wines, spirits, beers, cider, even sake – it's all possible and I expect I have a rather revolutionary palate!

I have a bit of a 'thing' about knives for cheese. We have a rather wonderful knife wall in the shop with different types of blades for different cheeses. They make great gifts, and for those wanting to cut cheese well and use the same equipment we use but on a smaller scale, they are really useful. We also have an eating area, the menu for which is created using products from the shop. We have daily-changing cheese plates which utilize all the cheese regions and styles, and customers can also go into the Cheese Room and select their own bespoke cheese plate. We have become more and more involved in the conviviality of our business and bringing the cheese into focus on many levels.

I am hopeful that we will see cheesemaking being a role model for good, honest and true understanding of transforming milk into curds and then cheese. But it has to come from the soil, pasture, additional feed, dairy and production. Only by respecting every single aspect of farming, rearing, feeding and end product will we not only be healthier but also be more aware of how we live and how we survive.



> "I want to be original but clear in my process, and want those working with me to absorb and be inspired by working in the business"



Ann-Marie Dyas, owner of The Fine Cheese Company



We started 25 years ago with a mission to support British artisan cheese. So far so good. We have also always aimed to sell the best from Europe that we could source– the best Manchego, the best Gruyère etc. Finding those cheeses is what drives us.

Comparisons with other cheese sellers are invidious, but we like to think we have a strong sense of fun and pride ourselves on making our customers feel as comfortable with cheese as we do.

We sell over 50 partners for cheese that make cheese a new experience – all made by us! Our Moscato Grape Nectar from Pantelleria to be drizzled over Gorgonzola or Pecorino is sublime.

In Tunworth we now have a cheese that not only rivals Camembert, but tops it and customers agree. Stänächäs and Red Wine Farmer are our 'wow' cheeses that have developed a hugely loyal and passionate following. Buffalo milk cheese is growing in popularity. It is easily tolerated and it is also delicious. We are selling several, including the super creamy Casatica.

The British are not so in love with washed-rind cheese which is a shame. We are trying!

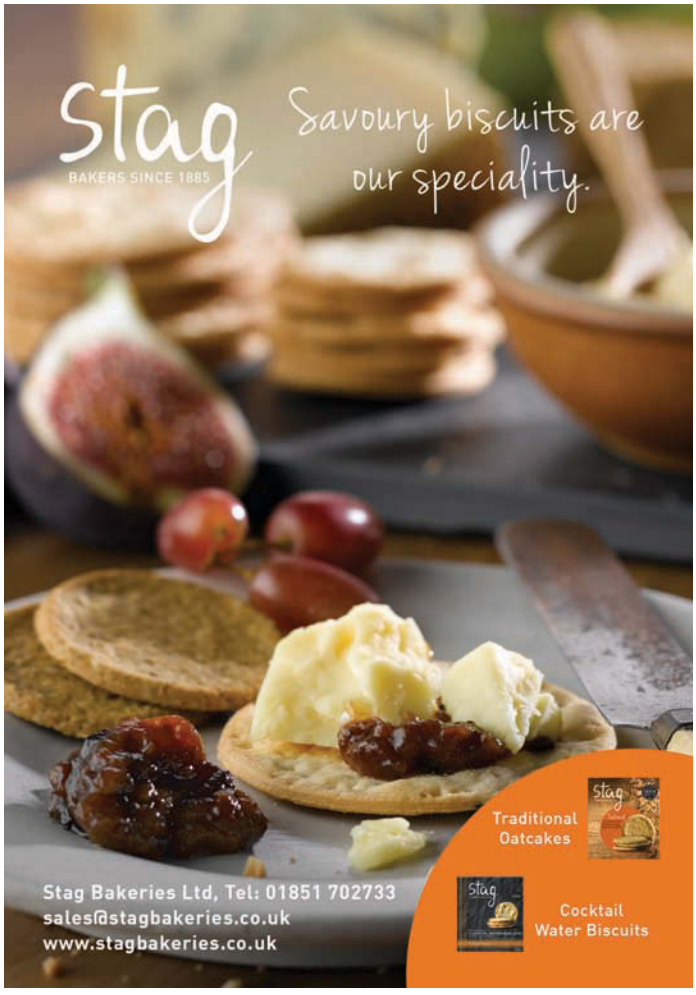
We haven't recently held any events but we should, there is so much interest. Every day we try to make our shop an event. It is important to give our customers a good time every time they visit us.

The future is looking bright: we are opening a new shop in Belgravia very soon which is both exciting and scary.



> "We pride ourselves on making our customers feel as comfortable with cheese as we do"









Andy Swinscoe, founder The Courtyard Dairy

After working in cheese for several years, my wife, Kathy and I set up in 2012 in Settle, North Yorkshire, with the idea to champion proper cheese. We have a Northern slant to our cheese range and really do try to champion farm-made, unpasteurised cheese; it's a bit limited but all made by hand and are very small production. We also pride ourselves on the knowledge of our product (all our staff have detailed training evenings, write blogs and go to visit cheesemakers) and actually maturing it in house.

We pride ourselves in doing it right; being a cheese shop that is a pleasure to shop in, knows their product inside and out, seals it in perfectly aged condition and really does champion small scale sustainable agriculture. We don't sell many accompaniments – only a few chutneys and four cracker lines – as cheese is what we're all about. Most recently, Rosebud Preserves have developed a fantastic British membrillio that is fabulous – we've switched from Spanish to it.

We have a few products where production is so small we take almost all their stock – the best being Summer Field, an unpasteurised Alpine style cheese made in Yorkshire from summer pasture. When it is on form, it's amazing. Being where we are, Kirkham's Lancashire is a big seller, but also Baron Bigod Brie has been on such good form (runny and unctuous) that it's flown out the door!

Outside the North (and NYD), I think the 'crumblies' often get overlooked: Kirkham's, Anster, Gowrydd. When they are good they are outstanding. Hafod and Barwhey's Cheddar often don't get mentioned but as Cheddars they are hard to beat. Also, St James is worth a mention – when it is good, it is enough to make anyone go 'wow'!

We hold three to four events a year. They always sell out but they have to be different – not just wine and cheese. We do events featuring cheese makers explaining their history, Cheddar making and tastings, and in-depth looks at our cheeses. For example, we held one last year which focused on Kathy and I's visit to Etivaz and what made that cheese so special.

Looking forward, we'd like to support more farms locally (and further afield) to make real quality cheese; our ultimate aim is to have a positive long-term impact on the farmhouse cheese industry (similar to that of Patrick Rance). We tend to help them currently through advice, visiting, promotion and sales of their cheeses, but we would like to do more and be there to support new starts who want to take it seriously.





> "I think people are becoming more adventurous, and sales of soft and washed rinds will continue to grow"



SWISS PERFECTION

Emmi offers a range of classic Swiss cheeses which are perfectly cave-aged

Swiss cheeses form an essential ingredient of any good cheese counter. Retailers can buy top-quality examples of Emmentaler, Le Gruyère AOP, Appenzeller and the full range of Kaltbach cheeses from Emmi, Switzerland's foremost processor of Swiss milk. Emmi's head of cheese sales in the UK is Stephen Kimber, who tells *Cheese Buyer* that Emmi's purpose is to "add value to Swiss milk by producing a range of products, from drinks and yogurts to cheese." Switzerland, he says, "has 10 AOP cheeses, which include the classics Le Gruyére AOP and Emmentaler, whose production is strictly controlled by independent consortia. What we try to do is add value to a range of cheeses by aging them, in doing so making them rather unique."

Emmi's finest cheeses are aged in the Kaltbach Caves. "These are natural, sandstone caves that have consistent temperature and humidity levels, perfect for aging cheese," Stephen says. "Not all cheeses can be aged in the caves. To create a perfectly aged cheese, there has to be the right level of moisture, the right level of humidity, but the cheeses themselves have to be suited for aging. The Le Gruyére AOP, Emmentaler and Kaltbach Creamy achieve a unique taste profile, and gain a patina to the rind which makes the cheese look different, too. A select number of dairies are chosen to put their cheeses in the caves, where they remain to mature for a full 12 months in the cases of Emmentaler and Le Gruyère AOP."

Emmi produces "a vast array of Swiss cheeses," Stephen says, "which we can bring to the UK market if required, but at this stage our largest sales come from Le Gruyère AOP, Appenzeller, Emmentaler and Tête de Moine and the Kaltbach range, and it is versions of those cheeses that we are really trying to push." The guidelines under which the cheeses are produced dictate the type of milk, the recipes, the cultures, and a traditional, copper-vat method of production which results in consistently fine product. "These are small producers making small amounts of cheese every day," Stephen says. "In the case of an Emmentaler, they may make only ten to twelve cheeses a day. The dairies contract themselves to affineurs and Emmi is essentially an affineur of AOP cheeses."

The production of Le Gruyère AOP is regulated in a similar way to Emmentaler and "the cheeses have to be stored in the French part of Switzerland for three months to qualify for an AOP. The cheese is made in the dairy and then the guys from Le Gruyère AOP come out and grade the wheel. Once this is done, those wheels which have passed go to the caves, where they sit underground for three months to qualify as Le Gruyère AOP." Emmi's chosen cheeses then go to the Kaltbach Caves for further aging.

This careful production and extra aging takes time and trouble but results in extraordinary cheese, Stephen says. "Emmental is a fantastic cheese. It's made in big wheels because in times gone by, the Swiss would tax the cheese maker on the number of cheeses, rather than the volume, so they got around this by making them large." It's an unfortunate truth that success breeds emulation and copycat cheeses from France, Germany and Austria have flooded the market. "These cheeses do not adhere to the artisanal methods of real Emmentaler," Stephen says. "They don't use raw milk and are made in square blocks in big dairies. As a result, the real raw milk Emmental has suffered, but if you do a taste comparison of a proper piece of Swiss Emmentaler and a cheaper commoditised, pasteurised version, you will quickly see what the customer is paying for. A genuine Emmentaler has a really nice, nutty flavour and characteristic holes. It's fantastic in a sandwich with ham and like other Swiss cheeses, it's very versatile.

"All Swiss cheeses have low melting points and are superb to cook with. One of the prime uses of Le Gruyère AOP is in cooking We have seen quite a lot of recipes from Mary Berry and other chefs using Le Gruyére AOP as a way of adding flavour to recipes because it maintains its flavour in cooking. Also, it doesn't leak fat as Cheddar will, because Swiss cheeses tend to be naturally low in fat." These cheeses are naturally suited to gratins and fondues, for which you need no special equipment other than a saucepan, Stephen says. All pair very well with wine. "Le Gruyère AOP works very well with a robust red wine, but something like an Emmentaler or a Kaltbach Creamy works beautifully with an Alsace wine. We promote Tête de Moine with a good craft wheat beer."



> "A select number of dairies are chosen to put their cheeses in the caves"

A BRIE TO BE PROUD OF

Godminster's Deborah Bradfield shares the story of one of its best-loved cheeses





"The Godminster Organic handmade Brie range started life as a Jersey milk soft cheese produced under the 'Daisy and Co' name," Deborah explains. "Godminster took over operations in 2010 and invested in its own production facility using milk sourced from Godminster Farm's mixed dairy herd." Each Brie is handmade by artisan cheesemakers," she says, "and having control of every aspect of production has delivered an award-winning range of Bries that have been awarded gold at both the International and Global Cheese Awards."

Godminster has a reputation for producing great tasting cheese, which Deborah puts down to the quality of the raw materials Godminster works with. "The high quality organic milk from our herd provides the first class raw material and strong provenance necessary to maintain this reputation," says Deborah. "We have invested the last two years perfecting the Brie; every aspect of production has now been refined to deliver a consistently high quality, award-winning product to be proud of."

"The soft cheese fixture is highly competitive with a wide selection for customers to choose from," says Deborah. "The Godminster traditional Organic Brie is a consistent best-seller in both the 200g and 1kg sizes, and the Godminster Organic Brie with Black Pepper and the Organic Brie with Garlic & Chive have been developed to ensure that we continue to delight shoppers with complementary flavours and to provide our retailer customers with a dynamic range."

"The Godminster signature heart-shaped Vintage Organic Cheddar sells well throughout the year with significant peaks at Valentines, Mother's Day and other special occasions. "It was a logical step," she says, "to offer the Traditional Organic Brie in a heart shape as well. With Godminster's established reputation in the gifting market, the 'Heart to Heart' gift pack which combines the Cheddar and Brie hearts has been a best-seller since it was launched in 2015."

When it comes to serving, Deborah proves Godminster's Brie is truly versatile. "It can be enjoyed throughout all of its life," she says. "When it is young it is crumbly and has a chalky tartness that tastes great on hot or cold salads. Once it is mature and the full creamy flavour and texture has developed it is a firm favourite on a cheese board. All three varieties are great when baked and when fully ripe they are perfect when enjoyed with crackers and a glass of something red."





THE GRANDFATHER OF ITALIAN FRESH CHEESE

Italy's popular Nonno Nanni range of premium soft, fresh cheeses is being launched into the UK



Italy has gifted the world with a distinctive array of gastronomic delights. Our ongoing love affair with Italian cuisine means every cheese counter carries a selection of must-stock items. That family of Italian dairy essentials is about to grow a little larger!

For the first time, Nonno Nanni ('nonno' means grandfather), one of Italy's premium, soft cheese specialists, will be available in the UK through a new distribution partnership with AJA Portfolio brands. With almost a quarter of the market share in the quality Stracchino sector, Nonno Nanni's success in its home country can be attributed to its ongoing commitment to creating genuine, delicious cheeses. With all the natural goodness of milk, Nonno Nanni's cheeses – Stracchino, Robiola, Caprino and Squaquerello – deliver the fresh taste of an age-old Italian tradition to Britain.

UK retailers will be able to sample the Nonno Nanni range at this year's Speciality & Fine Food Fair and Lunch exhibition, taking place in London this September, and Nonno Nanni will be showcasing products at Welcome Italia in October.

Rich heritage

The story begins in the heart of the Veneto region, in a rural town 40 kilometres to the northwest of Venice, in 1947. Here Giovanni Lazzarin, known to all as 'Nanni', started his own small cheesemaking business with two simple wood-burning boilers on which to heat the milk he sourced from a local farmer. From this humble start, Nonno Nanni has become one of the most recognisable dairy brands in Italy. Processing in excess of 60,000 tonnes of fresh milk each year, the business still retains close links with the region's dairy farmers. Nurturing good relationships ensures Nonno Nanni receives the highest quality ingredients to make its award-winning cheese.

In true Italian style, Nanni's passion, as a pioneer of fresh cheese production, has been handed down from father to son to grandson. Today, eight members of the third generation of the Lazzarin family are among the business' 200 employees – a genuine family affair. People are key to Nonno Nanni's success and community engagement is an important aspect of the company's CSR policy.

Socially and ecologically responsible, Nonno Nanni is committed to the welfare of the region's dairy herds and dedicated to the wellbeing of their staff. The business is also devoted to environmental sustainability. It uses electricity from renewable sources and has made concerted efforts to offset the CO_2 emissions that are generated during day-to-day operations. In fact, it has been said that Nonno Nanni produces Italy's first 'eco-friendly' Stracchino.

Over the years, the company has embraced advances in manufacturing technology to ensure it continues to create a consistent, high-quality range. Combining the cheesemaker's art with modern manufacturing techniques, Nonno Nanni maintains artisan quality, guaranteeing outstanding, authentic fresh products. An innovative, forward-looking business with one foot firmly rooted in traditional values, it's a balance that has kept this company in good stead for almost 70 years.

Stracchino – Stracchino, the best-selling deli counter product in the range, is a cows' milk cheese with a very soft, creamy texture and a mild, delicate flavour which uses no preservatives. Nonno Nanni masterfully make their cheese by combining locally-sourced, pasteurised dairy milk and cream with a unique starter culture containing two billion live milk enzymes per gram. The result is a fresh, natural product with a 24 day shelf life. As the cheese matures it gradually softens whilst retaining its freshness and flavour. It's ideal by itself, spread on bread and great combined with tomatoes and extra virgin oil. Pack size: 125g



Robiola – A classic fresh, soft, airy cheese with a light, creamy consistency and an intense, full flavour. As well as being spreadable, Robiola is also a versatile ingredient – its pleasing richness works well in everything from starters to desserts such as cheesecake. A 100% authentic Italian product, Robiola has a 45 day shelf life. This cheese was Gold medal winner at the International Cheese Awards 2014 and 2015. Also available in lactose-free – winner of 2016 Product of the Year (Cheese) – Food Awards (Italy). Pack size: 100g

Caprino made with cows' milk – This is a beautifully white, looser textured, soft fresh cows' milk cheese. Its goat-y name comes from the cheese's traditional cylinder shape that it is formed into. Creamy and intensely flavoursome, this can quickly be adapted into antipasti or summer salad dishes, as well as being great with bread or crackers. Caprino has a 45 day shelf life. Also available in lactose free. Pack size: 80g

Squaquerello – Famously smooth, with a deliciously melting consistency, Squaquerello is fresh and natural tasting, with no preservatives. Containing a higher level of starter cultures to deliver extra flavour, it can be served with vegetables or eaten from the spoon! Squaquerello also adds creaminess to risotto, pasta or can be used in a cheesecake. 24 day shelf life. Pack size: 125g.

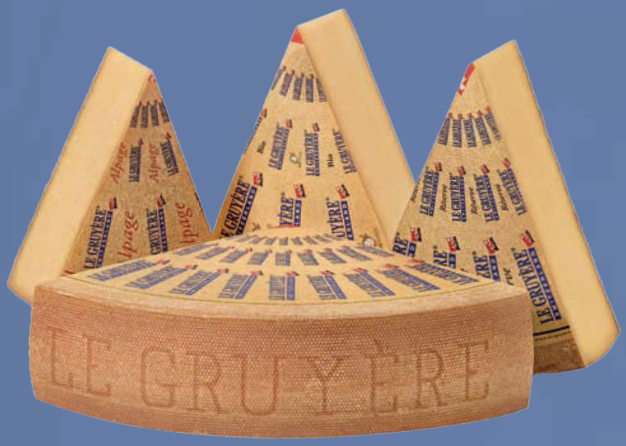
For Nonno Nanni UK enquiries, please contact James Mckeown at AJA Portfolio Brands Ltd. james@portfoliobrands.it or visit www.nonnonanni.it/en



LE GRUYÈRE AOP

THE CORNERSTONE OF A GREAT CHEESE COUNTER

The unique flavour and guaranteed traceability of Le Gruyère AOP make it the essential building block of any great cheese counter



The cornerstone of the great cheese counters are very often the Continental classics, and few can match Le Gruyère AOP in terms of quality, tradition, provenance, and, of course, taste. Cheesesellers can choose Le Gruyère AOP Classic, which is matured for between five and nine months and offer a creamy, floral taste, or Le Gruyère AOP Réserve, whose 10 month minimum maturation brings to the table deep flavours and a crystalline crunch – or they can stock both, and most do.

At a time when provenance is so important, Le Gruyère AOP's is impeccable. The 170 small dairies which produce the cheese (often making only 14 wheels daily) are governed by the PDO specifications which ensure that the cheese is consistent, made to the highest standards possible and entirely traceable, from the cows which supplied the milk, right through to the affineur who aged it and beyond.

Every step in the production of this extraordinary cheese is carefully recorded. No sooner has the milk arrived at the dairy than a sample is taken which will be held for six months so that any imperfection can be traced back to the supplier. It is very much in the producer's interest to achieve the highest standards for his wheels of Le Gruyère AOP, as each wheel is graded and the producer is paid according to how many points his cheese scored.

This is a cheese which rests on a bedrock of tradition and history. Le Gruyère AOP has been made in the Gruyère region and then in the Swiss cantons of Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Jura, Vaud and the Bern area since the twelfth century, which has allowed plenty of time for the cheese to reach its present – some would say perfect – state. But, of course, it's the taste of Le Gruyère AOP which has ensured its longevity and present fame. Ranging from delicately floral to deeply nutty, these flavours originate in the milk of the Alpine cows and this milk achieves its unique flavours because of the lush hillside grasses on which the animals are fed. The small but interesting variations in the flavours of Le Gruyère AOP are the result of cows being fed on rich grass in the summer and hay in the winter. No silage is used and nor are any preservatives or additives. Le Gruyère AOP is an entirely natural, artisanally-made product, which is made with animal rennet and which is naturally gluten and lactose free.

It is sometimes thought – quite wrongly – that such a well established and internationally-recognised cheese must be factory made. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The rules which govern the consistency and quality of this cheese ensure that the finished product has the unique and subtle flavours which lift Le Gruyère AOP above anything machine-made. During production, the paste quality, texture, aroma and appearance of every cheese are all carefully monitored. These necessary rules stipulate that milk producers may not produce any cheese and that cheesemakers may not produce any milk This allows the same highly-skilled people who produce the mountain-made Gruyère d'Alpage AOP in the summer to produce milk in the winter months.

The freshness of the milk is assured by the ruling on proximity: the small herds which produce the milk which is delivered twice daily to the dairy must be located no more than 12.4 miles from the dairy. The milk must also be poured into the cheesemaker's copper vat no more than 18 hours after milking.

British retailers interested in stocking Le Gruyère AOP can be assured not only of traceable provenance, but also of the authenticity of the product. This is achieved by the casein mark which appears on every wheel, along with the date of production. On a genuine wheel, the words Le Gruyère AOP appear, together with the number of the producing dairy. The dairy which produced the cheese can be easily identified at gruyere.com. Le Gruyère AOP is without doubt one of the world's great cheeses. Why not see what a wheel of Le Gruyère AOP can do for your cheese counter?



LE GRUYÈRE AOP*
BORN IN SWITZERLAND, 1115 A.D.

And remains the only cheese that's 100% Natural, 100% Traditional, 100% from Switzerland and 100% Le Gruyère AOP

*AOP = PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) – must be traditionally and entirely prepared and produced within the region, thus acquiring the unique properties of Gruyère AOP cheese, to bear the name Le Gruyère AOP.


Castle of Gruyères





The uniquely smooth, savory flavour you'll find only in Le Gruyère AOP is a product of its upbringing – where the cows that supply the milk are grazed **(only in the villages of Western Switzerland)**, the way the cheese is aged and cared for **(slow-aged in the region's cheese cellars and caves)**, and the recipe that's remained, unchanged, for centuries **(hand-made, in small batches)**. For a smooth and mild yet extremely satisfying taste, Le Gruyère Classic is aged 5 months minimum. Le Gruyère Reserve, which has been aged for 10 months or more, has a smooth but more robust flavour. Both varieties are great in recipes, or sliced as a snack. Either way, we're sure you'll enjoy the only cheese that can call itself Le Gruyère AOP.

LE GRUYÈRE®
SWITZERLAND AOP

Born in Switzerland in 1115.
www.gruyere.com

SCHWEIZ SUISSE SVIZZERA SWITZERLAND

Switzerland. Naturally.

AOP

Cheese from Switzerland.
www.switzerland-cheese.com

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Tim Rowcliffe, chairman of Anthony Rowcliffe & Son, looks forward to an exciting year ahead



After practically 50 years of nurturing independent food stores nationwide, Rowcliffe's is mounting a massive revamp of their sales and marketing back-up service. Thanks to a surge in business over the last five years, we are investing in more area sales managers, more telesales executives and a top drawer professional telesales supervisor. There will be a new look website for 2017 with a customer ordering facility, and a serious amount of investment in our IT ordering and stock control systems will make our service at head office even slicker.

Not only this, 2015 saw a revamp and extension take place on our warehouse. We have increased our holding capacity by 30%, and this year we are set to develop and expand our in-house, state of the art cuts facility, allowing us to offer exclusive and unique sizes of the artisanal products you love. This focused team will be reporting to Jason Fisher, commercial director, ably assisted by Clem Rowcliffe who has caught the sales bug badly! I haven't ever high fived with my youngest daughter... until recently!

So how come Rowcliffe's continues to grow from strength to strength in the independent retail sector?

I'm going to turn this question on its head. Just answer the following eight questions, and I feel you'll get the message.

1 Are you selling more or less cheese year on year?

2 Does your range accurately reflect current trends in the market place?

3 Are you confident that you are always up to speed with the latest new cheese and deli products from the UK and Europe?

4 Do you rest easy in the knowledge that you have one of the country's leading, fully-qualified technical teams a phone call away?

5 Do you know you can always top up your main order any day of the week nationwide, no matter the size of the order?

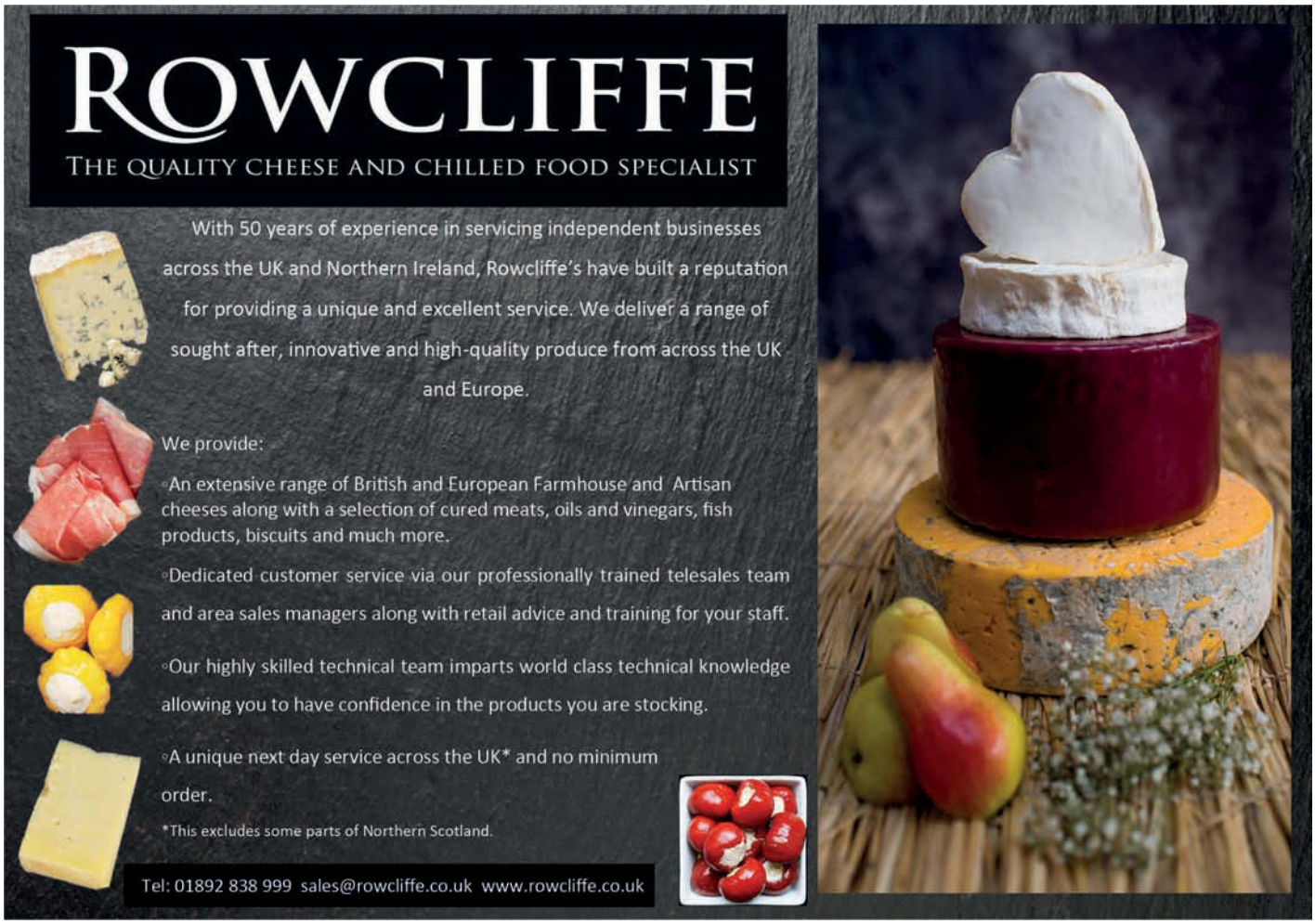
6 Do you get amazing promotional support and in-store staff training for free?

7 Do you get ongoing help and support for in-store tastings?

8 Can you buy cheese, olives, pâtés, UK charcuterie , Italian, Spanish, French and Hungarian salami, wonderful UK-produced seafood, antipasto and delicious creams, oil and vinegar on-tap, genuine Clonakilty black pudding and a Handee cheese cutter with one swift phone call (soon to be a click on the mouse 24/7)?

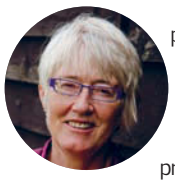
If you answered no to any of these questions, we can put that right. If you answered no to question one, you're with the wrong independent specialist wholesaler. Call us on 01892 838 999: the emergency line for service.

> "This year we are set to expand our state of the art cuts facility, allowing us to offer exclusive sizes of the artisanal products you love"



QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Cheese Buyer speaks to Mary Quicke about her award-winning, family-run dairy enterprise



Mary Quicke is the 14th generation of the Quicke family to run Home Farm at Newton St Cyres in Devon and the second generation to create multi award-winning cheese in the farm's dairy. Mary's dedication to her dairy herd and artisan cheesemaking methods make her a leading authority on traditional cheese production. Established 40 years ago by Mary's parents, Quicke's is the largest British naturally matured traditional Cheddar maker. Here, Mary shares the story of one of our industry's finest producers.

As with wine, 'terroir' – the relationship with the landscape that produces our food – has an enormous influence on the flavour of the cheese we produce. It may sound obvious but good grass produces good milk. Our 1500 acre farm has 500 cows grazing outside for 10–11 months a year using the low input New Zealand grazing system.

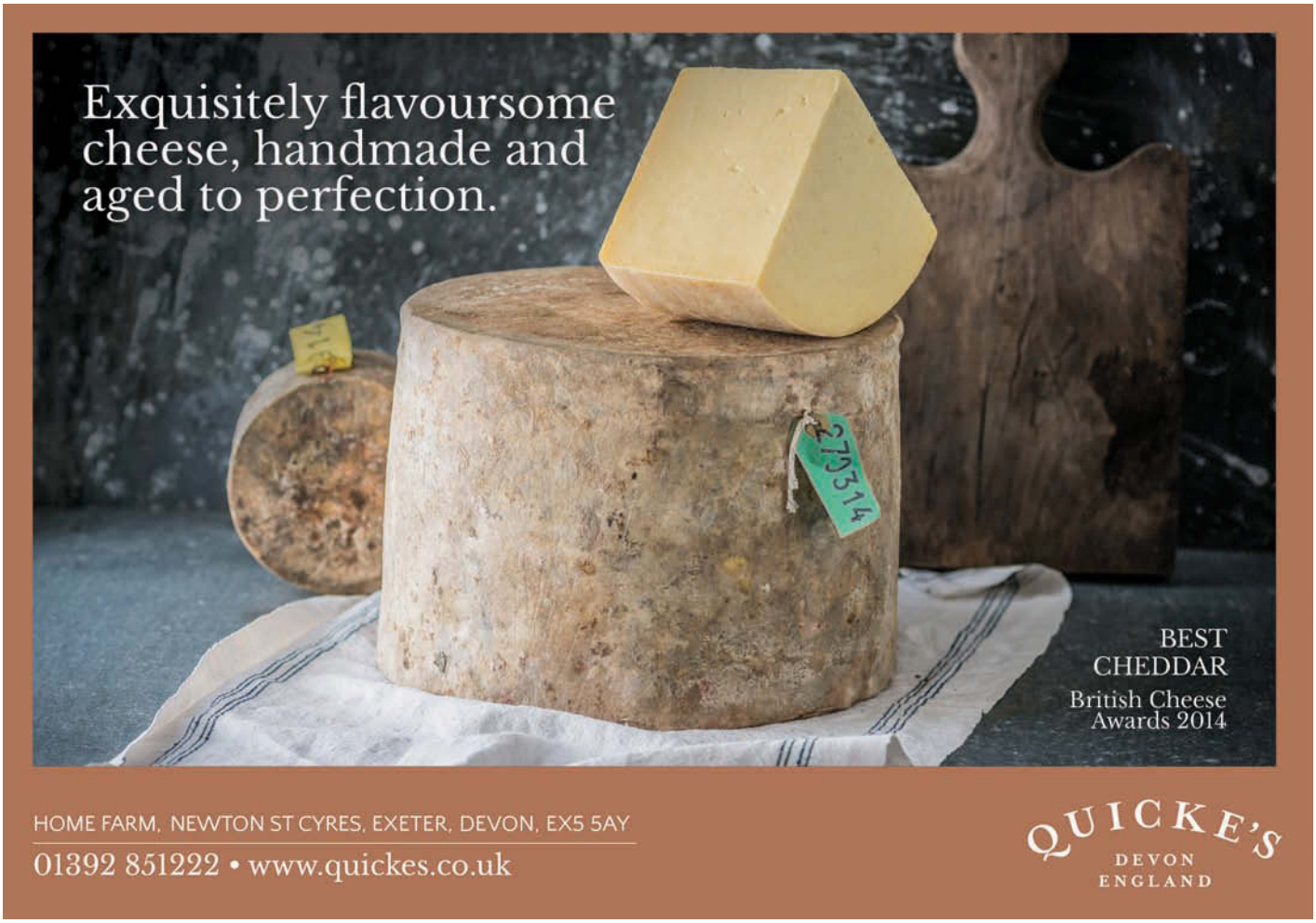
Our focus is definitely on quality, not quantity. The specially bred herd provides the perfect milk for cheesemaking. They are a Kiwi Friesian, Swedish Red, Montbeliarde and Jersey mix, which produce milk that is rich, creamy and high in milk solids. The clothbound aging process also adds complexity. We regularly assess and select certain truckles that will be matured for longer so that certain flavours can be enhanced.

I believe it's vitally important that everyone has a level of understanding about food production and farming. Everyone that works here is passionate about our story and keen to share their expertise. Fortunately, a growing number of people truly value the traditional, authentic methods of production that we employ. The tour offers a fascinating, multi-sensory insight into the art of cheesemaking.

It's also important to celebrate all of our achievements, from the birth of our new calves to receiving international awards. Each has a significant part to play. One recent achievement that stands out has been the launch of our rebrand. It was an important process that made us focus on exactly what Quicke's stands for and required commitment from everyone in the team. I was inaugurated in the Guilde Internationale des Fromagers in January which was a huge honour. This followed on from receiving 'Exceptional Contribution to Cheese' at the 2015 World Cheese Awards.

Crafting magnificent flavours is what we're famed for. Our artisanal cheesemakers strive for greatness at every stage and use all their senses to discern the subtle shifts that occur in the diary and maturation rooms. There's a Quicke's artisan cheddar to suit every palate. We offer four levels of maturity in our cows' milk Cheddar, from the young, fresh smoothness of the three month old 'Buttery', right through to the complex intensity of Vintage which is matured for 24 months. There is also an oak smoked version and our unique Elderflower recipe. We also produce our take on two territorial cheeses – Devonshire Red and Double Devonshire. The range also includes goats' and ewes' milk cheese and a range of hand-patted whey butters.





THE TASTE OF NORWAY

Versatile and delicious with a unique flavour, no wonder Norseland is proud to be celebrating the 60th birthday of Jarlsberg Cheese this year



There's a myriad of reasons why Jarlsberg is one of the world's favourite cheeses, and its unique, full-bodied taste is just one of them. Created in 1956 at a Norwegian university with an aim of combining contemporary technology with ancient cheese legends, Jarlsberg has gone on to become an international favourite for consumers and retailers alike.

The world-famous cheese, appreciated both by world class and amateur chefs, is available in multiple guises: Jarlsberg Special Reserve – aged for a minimum 12 months which gives it a delectable, full-bodied and sweet flavour with fruity overtones – as well as the classic Jarlsberg, available in wheels, wedges and slices, all contain its iconic holes which take more dedication than you might expect – the cheesemakers must check on the cheeses frequently during the ripening process to ensure the holes are just right. All options are truly versatile as Jarlsberg keeps its flavour even when melted, it is suitable for cooking and snacking as well as sandwich and burger-topping.

Yellow-coloured with a pleasant and full-bodied flavour, Jarlsberg is manufactured to a secret recipe which only a few trusted people are allowed to know, and its cheesemakers take pride in their ability to produce a consistently excellent cheese with a memorable, unique taste from only premium milk.

No wonder Norseland, the number one blended cheese supplier in the UK (claiming no less than 43% of the market) is proud to have Jarlsberg in its portfolio. With innovation at the heart of the business, based in Ilchester, Somerset, Norseland thanks its consumer and retail-orientated focus for its success.

Nigel Meadows, CEO of Norseland says, "We aim to be a dynamic and environmentally-friendly company, indispensable to our customers and their preferred supplier."





Norseland hosts a range of award-winning cheeses which have proven to be successful both within the UK and around the world, in formats from pre-packed slices and spreadables to seasonal, snacking and gifting ranges. This environmentally-friendly company prides itself on the close relationships it promotes between nature's raw materials, agriculture and the final customer.

Norseland is hitting the road this summer with a new state-of-the-art deli van. The campaign, called The Big Cheese Melt Road Trip, is a new brand initiative that seeks to drive awareness and showcase the versatility of its three leading brands, Jarlsberg, Applewood and Mexicana.

The deli van, with the brand logos fully visible to consumers comes with a fully-equipped kitchen, serving hatch and an on-the-go shop, making it the ideal vehicle to drive awareness and trial at food festivals, trade shows and delis and farm shops this summer. Wrapped in eye-catching, vibrant colours alluding to the different taste profiles of each cheese, with the tag line 'Creamy... Smoky... Spicy... Which will YOU choose', the van is set to appeal to existing brand fans as well as bringing in new customers to the category.

Lisa Harrison, UK Brand Manager for Norseland Ltd, said "It's all go for Norseland at the moment, celebrating 60 years of Jarlsberg, the launch of Jarlsberg Light earlier this month, and now The Big Cheese Melt Road Trip. We're looking forward to tempting consumers to try the tasty Norseland range, and urging them to discover their favourite, whether creamy, smoky or spicy, which we're confident will then translate into sales."

As well as Jarlsberg, Norseland has under its umbrella:

Applewood: Celebrated its 50th birthday last year, Applewood is the biggest brand in Norseland's portfolio and Britain's favourite smoky Cheddar. Applewood is equally as versatile as Jarlsberg, being suitable for both cooking and snaking – not least thanks to the various formats its available in, from half wheels, to wedges, slices, mini snacking net and spreadable. The range also includes Applewood Vintage, made with a PDO West Country Cheddar is sold through premium delis and upmarket retailers.

Mexicana: A firm and creamy Cheddar with a spicy kick from chilli, jalapeño and bell peppers, Mexicana is delicious as a burger topper or as a partner for craft ales.

Ilchester: Norseland's Ilchester brand produces blended and regional British cheeses, both sweet and savoury, such as Wensleydale with Cranberry and Five Counties, popular both at home and internationally.



JARLSBERG THROUGH THE YEARS

1956
Jarlsberg first created at the Agricultural University of Norway by a team of scientists who combined ancient cheese legends with modern technology

1960
Jarlsberg first introduced to the UK

2015
Jarlsberg Design

2016
60th birthday of Jarlsberg
Worldwide sales reach 27,000 tonnes

Norseland

innovative cheese specialists

Award Winning *Innovative* Cheese Specialists





2016 Promotion

FREE cheese sampling kit for all Speciality Food customers*. Simply email your details to: enquiries@norseland.co.uk



great taste 2015





*Until stocks last.

Applewood®
Smoky, smooth and creamy. UK's #1 Smoky Cheddar.

Vintage Applewood®
Made from 12 month matured West Country Cheddar.

Jarlsberg®
Smooth, distinctive, rounded taste. Made with Jarlsberg's secret recipe since 1956. UK's #1 Deli Cheese with Holes.

Jarlsberg® Reserve
Matured for 12 months.

Mexicana®
Add an extra kick to culinary escapades, dare you try it!... UK's #1 Spicy Cheddar.

Gudbrandsdalen
Norway's national cheese. Soft, sweet, brown cheese made from whey, goat's milk, cream and milk.

Snøfrisk®
Semi-hard ripened cheese made from pasteurised goat's milk. Easy to slice with a pure, rich, mild flavour.

Mexicana® Dare You? It Bites Back · Jarlsberg · Applewood® · Ilchester · Snøfrisk · Gudbrandsdalen®

FOR SALES ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:
Nicky Gavey: ngavey@norseland.co.uk 07554 426745
Chester Jacobs: cjacobs@norseland.co.uk 07955 036719

www.norseland.co.uk



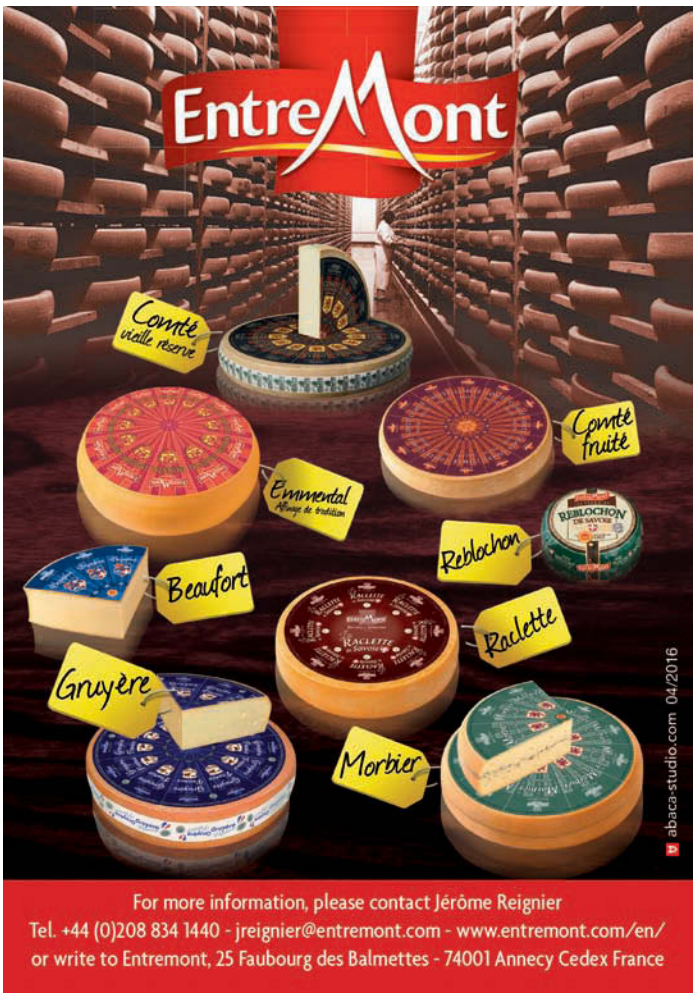
ALPINE CHEESE
THE PEAK OF PERFECTION

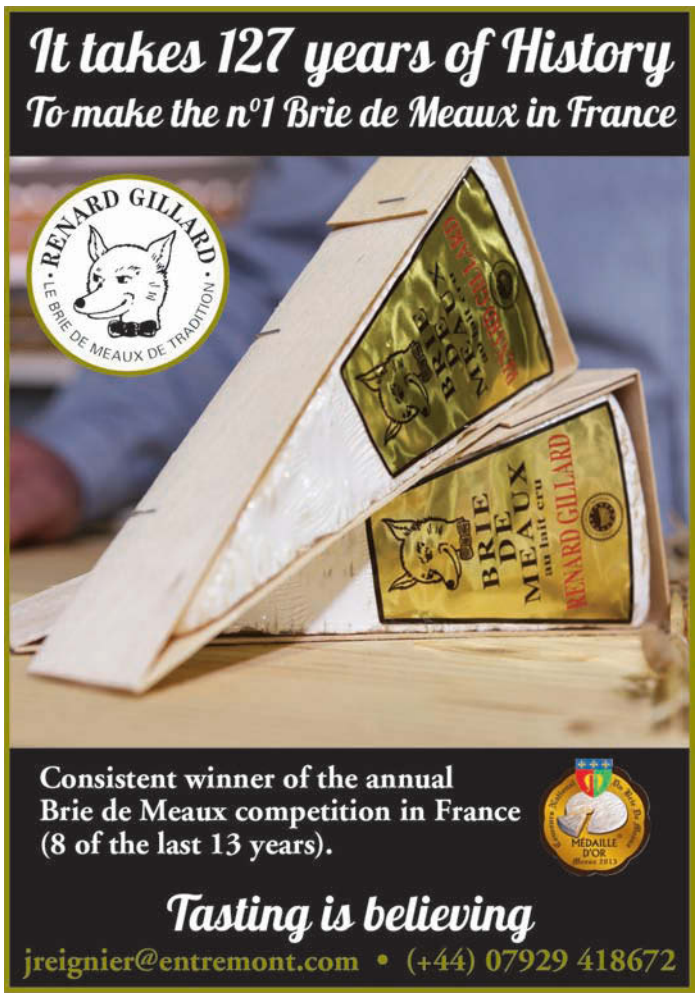
Entremont offers classic Alpine cheeses in a range of handy formats

Offering a strong range of French Alpine cheeses such as Emmental, Comté and Gruyère in a variety of formats, is Entremont, which "originally was a specialist in the hard cheeses of the Savoie region in the Alps," says sales manager, Jerome Reignier. "The number one cheese produced by Entremont is Emmental, which is really the Cheddar of the French – it's the one you will always find in our fridges. In France, this is mostly consumed in a grated format and the retail sector mostly sells it in that form. In the UK the grate of cheese is quite thick and wide, but because Emmental is less fatty and drier, the grate is very fine, making it perfect for dishes such as onion soup. While grated is the popular format in France, this is not at all the case in the UK, where it usually sells in the block format. We offer classic Emmental in portions, grated, sliced or cubes or cossettes, which are smaller cubes."

Together with Emmental and Gruyère, we have a number of hard cheeses from Savoie and also from Jura, which borders Switzerland. These cheeses have a special flavour which originates in the floral notes originating from the meadows where cows graze and where hay is collected to feed them in the barn. The deep, lasting flavours of these cheeses are the result of using this raw milk and allowing long maturation times. Gruyère, which has long been popular in the UK, is very savoury, while Comté, which has been increasing in popularity in recent years, is more sweet. Both have a complex nuttiness. We also offer Beaufort, which is not a well known cheese in the UK."

The flavours of these cheeses are quite unique, Jerome says. "When you buy an Alpine cheese you first taste the saltiness and the milkiness on the front of your tongue. Then, as the cheese spreads in your mouth, you get another flavour, which is more complex. The nuttiness, the bitterness and acidity comes in. As you swallow it, other notes emerge. Comté can have a finish that's reminiscent of roasted coffee, fudge and crusty bread. You can still taste Comté a few minutes after you have eaten it. Entremont cheese offers quality with flavour in a range of handy formats, ideal for the farm shop or delicatessen. "Once people taste these flavours, they will be hooked," Jerome says. The Emmental products will also have appeal for people looking for an affordable alternative to Cheddar.





BUXTON'S BEST

From Victorian roots, Bradburys has evolved to become one of the cheese industry's biggest players



History

Bradburys was started over 130 years ago by the Reverend William John Bradbury, and whilst the Bradbury family are no longer in the business, the legacy of the business remains as we still reside in Buxton, Derbyshire in the heart of the Peak District. Starting from humble beginnings supplying local cheese to wider markets in Manchester, Sheffield and Chesterfield, our business has changed dramatically to become a specialist cheese supplier servicing foodservice, wholesale, retail and export markets.

Evolution

Our business has always been cheese and this continues today, although we have evolved from trading in just British cheeses to sourcing cheeses from all around Europe. We don't just trade cheese any more, we're a full production, cutting and packing site and create bespoke solutions for our customers from our 300 different cheeses in multiple formats to fit the market.

Philosophy

Our business ethos is to inspire customers and consumers with our knowledge and passion for cheese. We are a modern, forward-thinking business that looks to innovate with the changing trends in the cheese and dairy industry. Quality is at the heart of everything we do, and we make sure we grade our cheeses and supply the very best to service our customers. We work very closely with the industry, sourcing the very best cheeses from our suppliers and building partnerships with cheesemakers and other distributors.

Not just a wholesaler

We are not just a traditional wholesaler any more – our investment in cutting, packing, slicing and portioning has enabled us to supply everything from Cheddar and Comté to Stilton and Brie in different formats to suit our customer base. We realised that adding value to cheese would set us apart from other businesses in the industry.

Changing world

After being around for 130 years we've seen many changes in the way food is eaten and sold, and even in the last 10–20 years this has changed rapidly. We are constantly looking at food trends around the world and adapting to fit the UK market,



whether that be in cheese types or packaging formats to meet the changing customer needs. You can't ignore the advent of technology and the way this has changed the way we buy, prepare and eat food – never has the consumer has so much information about the food they eat.

Future

We have never been afraid to invest in the future and we will continue to do so to ensure the long term security of the business. We will continue to innovate products and packing solutions in 2016 and beyond. Building closer links to our current and new suppliers is just as important to us as links to our customers.

> "Our business ethos is to inspire customers and consumers with our knowledge and passion for cheese"





THE MAN BEHIND OXFORD BLUE

Baron Robert Pouget, creator of Oxford Blue and Oxford Isis, became a cheesemaker quite by accident, he says

By rights, the creator of the soft Oxford Blue, the rind-washed Oxford Isis and also of College White with Truffles, should be a man who declares his passion for cheese at every opportunity. This isn't Baron Robert Pouget's style. The founder and owner of the Oxford Cheese Company insists he's more interested in painting and film-making and fell into cheesemongering and cheesemaking almost by accident. Odd, then, that Baron Robert Pouget became something of pioneer of the British cheese revival.

In the early 1980's, Robert says, "I was an artist and a furniture designer and my business partner, Gerry Stevens, was running a pop group." Robert was also part-owner of a retail development in Reading, where "one of our tenants was a cheese shop, which appeared to be doing rather well. When he moved, we decided to take it on ourselves. Gerry and I then decided to open another cheese shop, this one in Oxford. At



a time when the few cheese shops around then sold mainly Cheddars, we imported a selection of French and Italian cheeses.

"When we opened the shop in the covered market in Oxford, it just took off. I bought Gerry out in 1986 and formed it into a limited company. At the time I was working in Paris in the film industry and commuting between Paris and Oxford. I was working in the Oxford shop at weekends and returning to Paris on the Sunday, so I was unable to give my full time to Oxford Cheese." In 1994, things came to a head, Robert says. "I decided to throw myself into cheese. After 10 years in Paris throwing money at the film industry I decided to change course."

Despite knowing no more about cheesemaking than he had once known about cheesemongering, Robert decided to make his own cheese, which – with a nod to the colleges he would supply – he would call Oxford Blue. "We were already supplying cheese to the Oxford colleges and to surrounding pubs and restaurants," he says. "And it was clear to me that they would all be keen on having their own Oxford cheese. Because I knew nothing of cheesemaking, I went to all the Stilton dairies in turn and asked if they could make me a softish blue cheese. They all showed interest, and Hartington came up with a semi-soft blue cheese which we worked on for a couple of years to get right. We started making the cheese just for the colleges and for ourselves. Importantly, we matured it ourselves in our little warehouse. Half the secret to making good cheese lies in the affinage. English people do not seem to understand that cheese is not ready until it has been affiné, which means maturing and nurturing it, and getting it right.

"Affinage is something which retailers can and should do themselves. At the Oxford Cheese Company, we are producers and affineurs, among the first in the UK, too. We supply cheese with a 'best before,' not a sell-by date. It is then up to the judgment of the wholesaler and the retailer to extend that date if he wishes, which he can, under European law. If you consider that a cheese is not ready, you can of course change that date using your best judgment as an experienced retailer."

Success for the new Oxford Blue seemed on the cards when Robert received a phone call from a buyer at Fortnum & Mason, "who told me that one of my customers had highly recommended my Oxford Blue. Fortnums became my first customer and it all snowballed from there." The cheese is now to be found in all good independent stores but not in supermarkets. "We have had requests for our cheese from the big supermarkets," Robert says, "but we are happy with the independents. You can't supply supermarkets and expect the independents to back you up; too many people have made that mistake. Independents don't want to stock food that can be found in the supermarket, often cheaper." Staying out of the clutches of supermarkets is crucial, Robert says. "At my very busy retail shop in Oxford, we do not knowingly stock any cheese – excepting a necessary core of products including Cropwell Bishop Stilton and Cornish Yarg – that is sold in a supermarket. We much prefer to offer cheese from small French makers and high quality British farmhouse cheeses.

"Perhaps it is because he fell into cheesemaking by accident that Robert has created such an assured cheese. "Unlike every other person in the business," he says, "I am not passionate about cheese. I am passionate about painting and film making. I'm here by accident, doing it to the best of my ability and possibly because I am more creative, I have created new cheeses which all sell in huge amounts. They are sold nationwide via distributors which include Harvey & Brockless, Carron Lodge and Anthony Rowcliffe & Sons." Robert is also creator of Oxford sauce, "which has developed a cult following with chefs such as Mark Hix, and has really taken off in the last couple of years."

> "English people do not understand that cheese is not ready until it has been affiné"



Available direct from THE OXFORD BLUE CHEESE COMPANY LTD
01844 338055 www.oxfordfinefood.com

OFFICIAL SPONSORS
ouwlrc.org.uk
OUWLRC

Or From: Harvey & Brockless Limited 020 7819 6000, Anthony Rowcliffe 01892 838999, Carron Lodge 01995 640352, Turners Fine Foods 01580 212818, Hamish Johnston 01394 388127, Paxton & Whitfield 01451 823460, Fromage to Age 02476515628, Cheltenham Cheese 01242 529921, Leopard Dairy 01747 811188, New Wave Seafoods 01285 715160, Barry Gibbon 01235 812974, Abbey Cheese 01525 853040, Longman Cheese Sales 01963 441146, Wellocks 0844 499 3444, West Horsley Dairy 01483 725000

GOING DUTCH

Graafland Trading offers easy access to artisanal cheese and food from Europe



Cheese sellers will see an increasing number of interesting Continental cheeses in future as Graafland Trading expands its range of imported speciality cheeses. Owner and founder, Erik Groenewegen explains what Graafland Trading can do for the independent food retailer. "We source high quality artisanal produce worldwide that we market into the UK," Erik says. "We are specifically looking at independent shops and caterers. Graafland Trading specialises in niche, different and in some cases unique products."

Graafland offers an easy route for cheese sellers to stock two classic Dutch cheese ranges, Reypenaer and Wyngaard and buyers sourcing cheese for delis may like to know that Graafland also offers charcuterie (cured Pata Negra ham from Spain, fresh Iberico pork and Galician beef and is soon to offer delicatessen from France. "We are planning to expand the range of cheeses and are presently in talks with new producers," Erik says.

Speciality cheese

"Food had long been a passion for my wife and I before we launched Graafland," Erik says. "I used to work in the food industry before moving on to other industries. Six years ago and quite by accident, I got back in touch with the food industry. We were doing some consulting work but before we knew it, we were selling the products and founded the company on the basis of that. We have been expanding it ever since."

The couple source many of their speciality cheeses and niche products while traveling, although Erik's experience in food and knowledge of the European food market has proved invaluable. "We run into certain products which



you do not necessarily find in the UK," he says. "When this happens, we then do the research and determine whether the product would be truly viable on the UK market. We are able to pick up many high quality niche products which the larger wholesalers wouldn't because they require larger volume."

The clear business goal of Graafland is to deal with international producers who would otherwise find approaching the British market very difficult. "There is amazing food all over the world," Erik says, "and if you want to have something different on the table, we are here to help."

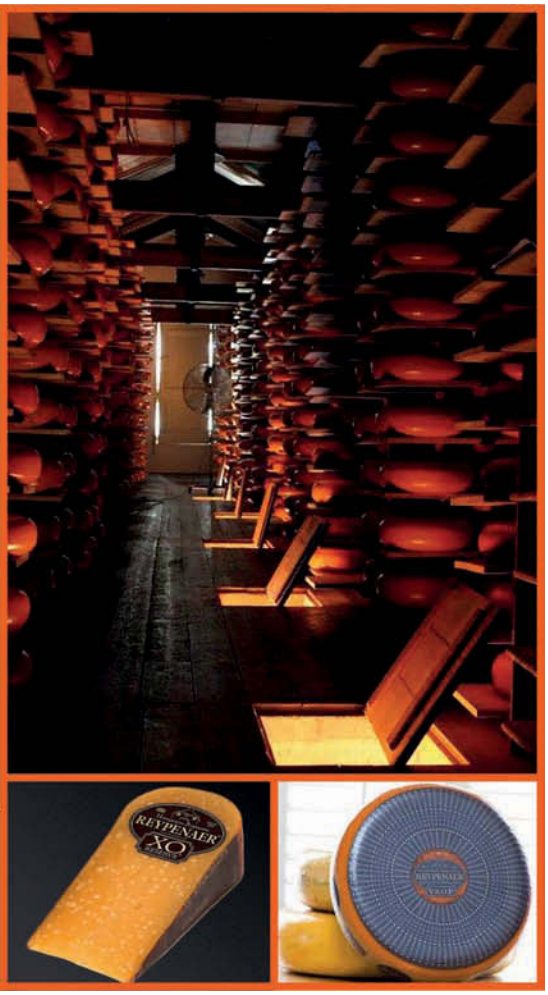
> "We source high quality artisanal produce worldwide for independent shops and caterers. We specialise in niche, different and, in some cases, unique products"

GRAAFLAND
TRADING

110 years of craftsmanship and tradition makes *Reypenaer Gouda Cheese* the world beater it is. It's no secret how *Reypenaer Gouda* has become a multi award winner at the Nantwich International Cheese awards: *it matures as nature intended... in its own time*. Just as back in 1906, the cheese is matured in the original ripening warehouse in the heart of the Netherlands using traditional techniques, allowing it to develop its world renowned rich taste and full flavour.

Contact: Graafland Trading
info@graaflandtrading.com
Tel: 020 3745 6564

NATUURLIJKE
REYPENAER
HISTORISCHE RIJPING
op houten stellingen handgekeerd



FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH

Croome Cuisine produces premium flavour-added cheeses with an innovative range of varieties

Flavour-added cheeses are core inclusions in many a good cheese counter, appealing to the general and to the seasonal cheese-buyer, as well as people who are looking for the unusual. Croome Cuisine was established by Nick Hodgetts in 2010. With his 25 years of cheese making history, he takes the business of flavouring very seriously and produces a range whose varieties and combinations are both innovative and award-winning.

"We introduce local (where possible), iconic ingredients and forge strong links with local manufacturers to create our delicious cheeses," says Leanne Hodgetts, business development manager. Croome Cuisine is based in Worcestershire, and among its 15-strong range of regular flavours are cheeses with a definite grounding in the local area, and they also produce a fantastic range of seasonal cheeses, ranging all the way from Pershore Plum to Christmas Cake!

Croome Cuisine's signature cheese, Hereford Hop, is a mature Cheddar-style rolled in roasted hops sourced from hop yards established by Nick's Great Aunt in Hereford. This cheese has won many awards, including Gold at The British Cheese Awards and was Three Counties Supreme Champion, while Worcestershire Sauce and Shallots pays homage to the county's world-famous condiment and has been a proud winner of the Three Counties People's Choice award.

Local brewer Hobsons supplies the real ale for Hobsons Ale & Wholegrain Mustard, while Westons Old Rosie Cider contributes to the flavour of the Scrumpy & Crunchy Apple cheese. Honey from Croome Cuisine's resident bees created a recent addition to their range, Worcestershire Honey & Ginger and is also used in Worcestershire Honey & Figs. Croome Cuisine also makes cheeses with Cracked Black Pepper and Hot Chilli.

Leanne says "We carefully blend the highest quality mature Cheddar with a variety of unique and wonderful flavours to make our range the very best in its class! We are strong believers in complementing the flavours of cheeses with ingredients that work, rather than with flavours that over-power the core ingredient, cheese, which is after all what any cheese-buyer is looking for. Although local ingredients are used in many of our cheeses, we have the Great British appeal!"

Croome Cuisine completes its offering to delis, farm shops and garden centres with a range of their own accompaniments, four relishes designed especially to complement the cheeses: Pershore Plum, Worcestershire Pear Relish, Apple & Caramelised Red Onion Relish and Spicy Apple & Tomato Relish. The company is pleased to offer full retail support, Leanne says. "We carry out sample days with our customers or supply any literature and samples that are needed to create an impact. We are always on the end of the phone."





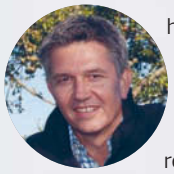
VICTORIAN VALUES MODERN TASTE

At once traditional and forward-thinking, Barber's is set to take the international market by storm

"We're very proud to be the oldest surviving Cheddar business in the world still making cheese today," says Giles Barber, a member of the sixth generation of the Barber family to produce cheese at Maryland Farm, Ditcheat, Somerset. Makers of traditional Cheddar since 1833, theirs is a heritage to shout about. "It's still in family ownership, and we're very much still linked to our farming roots," Giles explains, not an easy feat when you consider the farm is the last remaining making cheese in a village which boasted 12 cheese-makers as recently as the Fifties.

"There's a reason why this region is recognised as the home of Cheddar," he explains. "Somerset has the perfect climactic conditions for growing grass, therefore also for dairy farming, and the caves of Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole proved themselves to be the perfect storage environments for cheese when cheese-making first started in the area." Continuing the heritage of Cheddar making in its original region is clearly very important to the Barber family.

"Family businesses making cheddar are not such a common thing these days," Giles explains. "There used to be many more, over a hundred in the West Country, but there's now only a handful of historic family Cheddar-making businesses still in operation." It will come as a surprise to few that the cheese landscape has evolved dramatically within the past few decades; "A lot of artisan cheese making businesses have set up in the past 10 or 20 years which is great," he says, "but there's only a few historical family businesses remaining. Our history and the longevity of our business sets it apart, as does the fact that we've had a lot of local families helping us create the cheese for generations – in that way the business has created a kind of community. The business is very much a part of the local village and the village part of the business," says Giles. "In a way, they've grown up together."



When it comes to making Cheddar, the most important ingredient in determining the final taste and character of the cheese is its starter culture, and Barber's is "the last business in the UK producing cheese from its own set of original mother cultures," Giles explains. "Originally, the starter cultures would have been handed around cheesemakers in the locality in the form of whey from the previous day's cheesemaking. There used to be a system whereby all the local cheesemakers would help each other out by sharing their starter cultures, then in the mid-1900s it became commercially more organised and a business was set up to distribute the starter cultures across the region. This stopped in the 1980s because the business wanted to just sell freeze-dried powders and a lot of our starter cultures were too delicate to survive the freeze drying process." It was this change of direction in cheesemaking that gave Barber's the opportunity to truly stand out from the crowd. "We agreed to take care of the original liquid cultures on our site, so we now house the original set of mother cultures that most cheesemakers in the area were using generations ago – in effect, we are recreating the Cheddar that previous generations knew and loved." In keeping with the tradition, Barber's shares these starters with the artisan Cheddar makers in the region. "Most starter cultures come from Europe, America or even Australasia, and these are the last traditional Cheddar starter cultures in the UK so we're happy to be keeping the tradition alive in Cheddar's home county," says Giles.

This appreciation of Cheddar's heritage is to thank for Barber's PDO accreditation, as Giles explains: "There are now only six cheesemakers who can lay claim to making West Country Farmhouse Cheddar by producing according to traditional methodology, on a farm in the region where Cheddar originates from. All of our Cheddar is made to the PDO specification but it must be aged for a minimum of nine months and independently quality graded to carry the mark. Our flagship cheese is matured much further – for at least two years. This is branded Barber's 1833 and since its launch eight years ago has become our best-selling Cheddar in many different countries around the world. "Up until that time we'd named all our cheeses after our farm – Maryland Farm – but we wanted to draw attention to the new cheese as something different," says Giles. "We felt that using the family name gave a more personal endorsement to the consumer, and its success showed that people more readily connected with the family name rather than the name of the farm." The business is now rebranding to reinforce its family credentials and give the entire range more relevance to the brand's successful Barber's 1833-branded cheese. "All of our Cheddars are made to the same recipe," says Giles: "Mellow, four months old; Mature, 12 months old; and Vintage, 18 months old; and 24 months for the Barber's 1833 Vintage Reserve Cheddar."

The newly-uniform brand name has been partnered with a fresh new look: "We've tried to combine the key messages consumers will appreciate," Giles explains, "so we're using hand-etched illustrations of all the cows that have featured in the business since we first began to reflect our heritage." The brand's modern thinking is represented by a contemporary quality seal. "The new look demonstrates that we embrace the best of both worlds, having both the tradition, ingredients and know-how to make the best cheese we can, and the technology to do it consistently."

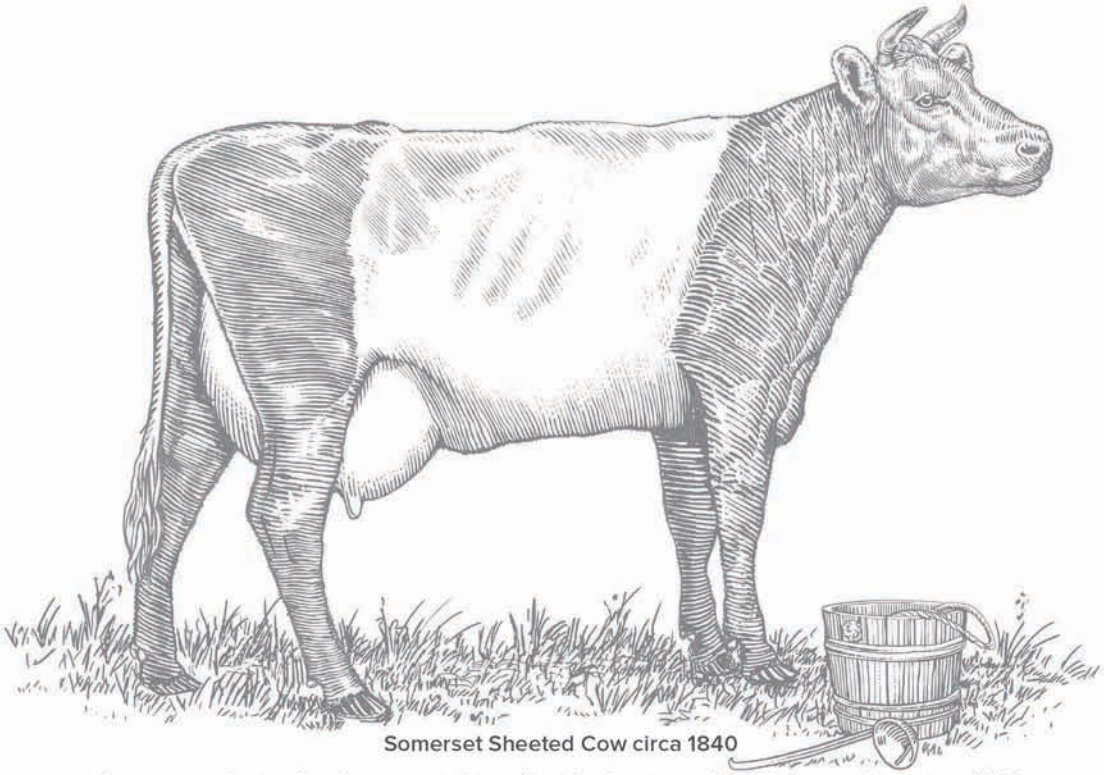
The future for Barber's looks bright, with the brand's gaze solidly on cheese loving countries across the world. "We have a mission to fly the flag for great British Cheddar far and wide, and we've made significant inroads into over thirty markets including the US, Australia, China and many European countries," says Giles. "We want people to move onwards and upwards from standard, mass-produced cheese and return traditional Cheddar to its rightful place."



BARBER'S FARMHOUSE

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BARBER'S FARMHOUSE CHEESEMAKERS, MARYLAND FARM, DITCHEAT, SOMERSET, BA4 6PR



CONTINENTAL CONNECTION

Eurilait brings independent retailers a quick and easy route to high quality Continental cheeses

James Millward has recently been appointed to the role of managing director of Eurilait. James joins Eurilait from his most recent position as chief operating officer at bakery ingredient supplier, British Bakels. Previous to this, he held a number of senior sales and operations roles within McCormick Europe, RHM and Uniq. "We have some great people who are really passionate about cheese and the market as a whole," James says,"and I am personally looking forward to being part of this great category. I am really keen to understand the needs of customers and the consumers, develop new products to grow the category and increase consumption, whilst doing our best to ensure the long term security of the farmers who supply us.

"Eurilait, the UK subsidiary of French co-operatives, Laita and Eurial, is one of the UK's leading suppliers of speciality cheese and dairy products. Offering innovative solutions to retail, wholesale and food manufacturing businesses throughout Europe, Eurilait manufactures and distributes quality cheeses with provenance. Located within the rural village of Evercreech in the heart of Somerset, Eurilait operates a cutting, packing and distribution facility, offering the flexibility to meet the specific needs of the UK marketplace."



Eurilait produces a range of Continental cheeses ideal for farm shop and deli cheese counters, which are made in 20 certified creameries owned by Laita and Eurial throughout western France. These include Brie, Camembert, goat's milk cheese, Mozzarella and Emmental, as well as butter and crème fraiche. "In addition," James says, "a vast array of cheeses are sourced throughout Europe to ensure a comprehensive range of speciality cheeses is available to all customers. Building on the breadth of our extensive product range, we are also one of the UK's leading suppliers of cheese selection packs and seasonal cheese gifts."

The company has recently relaunched its popular French goats cheese Soignon under a new name and brand, Merci Chef! This is available in both individual 120g portions and a larger 1kg deli log. "We have also recently taken on exclusive UK distribution of premium Italian cheese brand Brimi, which supplies Mozzarella, Ricotta and Mascarpone in retail and foodservice formats.

We offer a category approach with a one-stop shop for all speciality cheeses. We can source a full portfolio of authentic, quality speciality cheeses, with only one point of contact."



MAKING AN IMPACT

Michael Lee, managing director of Fine Cheeses Ltd looks back on its impressive growth

Since starting Fine Cheeses Ltd my team has always sustained a sound growth throughout the business, but after spending a good few years watching the UK independent food industry undergo the boom in growth, WOW did we notice it by 2014...

Prior to that year, we had always experienced a very steady and healthy growth of around 20% across the business, year on year. What we didn't expect to see was an overwhelmingly exceptional, 40% growth in 2014. Thankfully, we had already been in the process of implementing new procedures, structures and policies in the anticipation of really pushing the company to its fullest potential.

Well, we exceeded our expectations and more although, as great as that news sounds, it didn't come without its challenges.

We focused on incorporating more responsibility into the departments, allowing our staff to spread their wings, discuss ideas with us and really grow a passion for the job that they do. We spent time looking at what we offer and how we offer it, making sure our main focus always remained upon the customer journey. We branched into areas of marketing that we'd never really thought of before, but it soon proved a vital part of how well we now communicate to our customers. Our teams have grown, and along with this our product offering has increased and therefore our product knowledge has developed into even more specialist areas. Resources were stretched, availability of products could be limited due to weather or shortages within the market, and many man hours were spent making sure the goods arrived on time and left on time. But not once did we ever lose sight of our end goal: to keep the customer enticed by our offering.



All in all, the growth has helped us sustain our number one spot as Yorkshire's leading artisan cheese wholesaler, and plays a huge part in contributing towards various awards. One example is the nomination we received in the recent Guild of Fine Foods Best Brands 2015/16 survey, in which we came out as a Top 5 UK Wholesaler/Distributor and, most importantly, were recognised as the Best UK Cheese Wholesaler too, beating many of the other well known, larger names.

It just goes to show that, regardless of size, unless you understand the market you are working in and your customers' expectations, you will struggle to provide them with the experience that they so desperately crave. We always say, we're not happy until we're safe in the knowledge that our customers are happy and will return time and time again.

We used to be a small fish in the big sea, but thanks to our persistent hard work, knowledge and passion for working with our suppliers and customers, and of course our fantastic in-house teams, we really are making more and more of an impact to the cheese world every day.

> "Not once did we ever lose sight of our end goal: to keep the customer enticed by our offering"





MODERN CLASSIC

Family, experience and innovation are key to the success of Shropshire-based Belton Farm

"Based in the glorious Shropshire countryside, family-owned Belton Farm has been producing award-winning cheese since the early 1800s, ceasing only for a short time during the Second World War," explains Alison Taylor, marketing manager of Belton Farm. "The Beckett family have been in residence since 1922, when traditional farmhouse Cheshire Cheese was made at one end of the farmhouse from milk produced on the farm. Today, Justin Beckett and his team carry on the tradition of excellence in cheesemaking, producing a range of prize-winning British territorial cheese."

Expert cheesemakers

"Belton cheese is special as its cheesemakers have over 100 years' experience between them and follow a traditional handmade process using bespoke starter cultures," Alison says. These expert cheesemakers produce a total of 14 different varieties of British regional cheese to individual recipes, including a range of vat-made cheese with additives. "Plus," Alison says, "one of the many things that makes Belton Cheese unique is its passion to innovate and develop new products and recipes. By listening to feedback from customers and consumers, this has helped to differentiate the Belton cheese range." Confidence in the business has developed as the years have passed, as Alison explains: "Belton know where their strengths lie, and the importance of product consistency is key to carrying on the tradition of excellence in cheesemaking, new product development and producing a range of prize-winning British territorial cheeses."

85 conventional and organic farms, all Red Tractor-accredited and located within 25 miles of the dairy, are paramount to the success of Belton Farm's cheeses. "Milk is collected daily from grass-fed, free-range herds as quality and freshness are key," says Alison. "Keeping a watchful eye on the entire process is vital as Belton's award-winning cheeses rely on fresh milk of the highest compositional quality. Some milk producers have even altered their breeding schemes to breeds including Shorthorn, Brown Swiss and Jersey crossed with Holstein-Friesian, which gives the cheese an additional point of difference.

Belton Farm takes its organic credentials seriously, having been organic since 2002, producing feed and milling wheat and protein crops which are sold to some of their milk producers. "The farm also grows clover for cattle and sheep grazing," says Alison.

Traditional recipes

Handmade on the farm using the combined skill and experience of its cheesemakers, Belton's cheese range is made to traditional recipes passed down through the generations. "It all starts with fresh top quality milk," Alison says, "which is collected daily from small local family farms where the cows are free to graze in the lush pastures surrounding the dairy. Once made, the cheese is matured to perfection on-site and carefully selected to customer specifications by Belton's experienced graders and always delivered with good service."

Belton is passionate about the quality and consistency of its cheese, and constantly strives to work with its customers in order to meet expectations in terms of taste, flavour, texture and presentation. These cheeses continue to win regular accolades and championships at major international cheese shows, reinforcing Belton's name as a high quality cheesemaker; in 2015 alone, the company won 136 awards including 14 trophies including at the International Cheese Awards, where Belton won The National Westminster Trophy for the most points in show for the fourth year in a row – a demonstration of consistently high quality cheese.

Modern British cheese

The Belton Fox family is a range of new to market cheeses, and includes Red Fox, Red Fox Vintage, White Fox and White Fox Vintage. Since its launch in 2012, Red Fox has won a plethora of awards. "It's a unique, modern British classic," says Alison. "The cheese uses a unique recipe developed over many years, and combines carefully selected cultures with the skill of the cheesemaker to produce an intense and complex blend of sweet and savoury distinctive flavours." Red Fox Vintage is made using the same unique recipe, matured longer for an increased depth of flavour in a traditional cylindrical shape.

Following the success of Red Fox, Belton developed White Fox which Alison describes as "rich, nutty and intensely creamy. Slowly matured for around 18 months, the cheese develops a hint of 'crunch' which gives a rugged mouth feel and depth of flavour" – a taste which, along with Red Fox, has been hugely successful both in the UK and overseas. So much so that the Belton cheesemakers are currently developing White Fox Vintage to complement the range.



THE RANGE

Belton Cheese makes a wide variety of British territorial conventional and organic cheese, including Cheshire, Wensleydale, Caerphilly, Lancashire, Double Gloucester, Sage Derby, Port Wine Derby, Double Gloucester Chive and Onion, Cheddar and Red Leicester, in 20kg blocks, 12kg traditional 6kg top hats and 4kg wheels.



"The Belton Farm brand continues to grow, with provenance playing a major role in its success"

Belton Farm

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BRITISH CHEESE AWARDS 2015 GOLD

MADE IN YORKSHIRE

Cheese Buyer speaks to Caroline Bell, second generation cheese maker at Shepherds Purse

Warm reception

Shepherds Purse Artisan Cheeses was born in the 1980s on the family farm in North Yorkshire after farmer's wife, Judy Bell, discovered her passion and talent for cheesemaking after she had set out on a mission to create quality, tasty alternatives for those who suffer from cow's milk allergies.

Judy discovered that ewe's milk was a tasty alternative for cow's milk allergy sufferers, and she set about researching different breeds of sheep and experimenting with a variety of traditional methods of artisan cheese making. She was mentored by the wonderful Les Lambert of Fountains Dairy, and even purchased her own flock of milking sheep to ensure a quality supply of ewe's milk.

After another year of hard work, running the family farm, bringing up a young family and late nights spent experimenting and perfecting recipes, Judy was ready to tentatively launch Shepherds Purse Cheeses at the Great Yorkshire Show in 1989. Shepherds Purse launched with Olde York and Yorkshire Feta (now called Yorkshire Fettle) and a ewe's milk Wensleydale. Any doubts Judy harboured were soon swept aside with the warm reception from the public, and Shepherds Purse went on to win the first of many awards at the prestigious Nantwich International Cheese Show that same year with a Gold Medal for Olde York.

Family business

Shepherds Purse is now a second generation family with Judy's daughters, Katie and Caroline, having taken on the leadership of Shepherds Purse in 2012. "Passion and dedication epitomise any family business," Caroline says, "and this extends to our whole team, who have become like an extended family. We are all dedicated to continuing the culture of excellence that has been developed at Shepherds Purse, with people and great taste forming the foundation of excellence."



Artisan processes

Today, Shepherds Purse Cheeses makes a range of artisan ewe's milk and cow's milk cheeses, including four ewe's milk cheeses and four cow's milk cheeses which can be found in farm shops, deli counters and retailers across the country. "We have made Yorkshire Fettle (formerly Yorkshire Feta) and Olde York since 1989, and Yorkshire Blue and Mrs Bell's Blue were added to the range in 1995, Katy's White Lavender was launched in 2003 and the Bluemin White in 2010," explains Caroline.

Harrogate Blue joined the fold in 2012 as Katie and Caroline took on the business, and then in 2013, after having been approached by Alex James in 2012, "we launched Blue Monday at the Big Feastival. Whilst we have grown as a company, we have retained the artisanal processes that are crucial to maintaining the quality of our specialist cheeses."

Culture of excellence

"Yorkshire is brimming with quality food and drink, thanks to our rich and bountiful farmland and coastline," Caroline says. "Shepherds Purse has benefited in many ways from this, from the quality of our Yorkshire milk, to the help and support available through our cheese and food industry colleagues in Yorkshire." This food culture is celebrated each year at the Deliciously Yorkshire awards and "is increasingly being recognised outside of Yorkshire, too," she says.

Recognition and confidence

Two important themes in the development of Shepherds Purse have been the support of networks, and the recognition and confidence achieved by winning awards. From Judy winning her first award back in 1989 with Olde York, awards have played a key role in the development of Shepherds Purse. "Awards are important to recognise and promote quality," explains Caroline. "Whilst we have an obsessive nature with regards the quality of our cheeses, the other elements of building a business can, at times, risk distracting you from this focus. In the early days of Shepherds Purse, the Yorkshire Food and Drink network (now Deliciously Yorkshire) was crucial to our development as a business. We had access to training sessions and demonstrations from companies who specialised in the elements involved in running a business that we did not. Access to this expertise enabled us to develop our business," she says, "and has supported our mission to focus on making top quality artisan cheese. We are now part of many networks, happy to share our experiences and give back as we also continue to learn and grow in the ever changing landscape of the speciality food industry."



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CORNISH PRIDE

Falling milk prices and a gap in the market are to thank for Cornish Blue, one of the UK's best-loved cheeses

Cornish Blue has been produced on the Stansfield's farm on Bodmin Moor since 2001. At that time milk prices had collapsed and dairy farmers were facing a struggle to survive, so in the search for a new revenue stream Phillip and Carol Stansfield starting thinking about making cheese. They noticed there was no blue cheese being made in Cornwall, so Phillip enrolled on a cheesemaking course at Cheshire College of Agriculture before turning a former bottling plant at the end of the milking parlour into a cheese production facility. Cornish Blue was on its way.

A full fat, creamy, soft blue cheese made from cows milk, Cornish Blue is created using milk from the herd on the family farm. "This means," Philip explains, "that as soon as the cows are milked each day the milk immediately goes into the cheese production cycle." This conscientiousness continues throughout the cheesemaking process. "Once the cheeses are made they enter the maturing room, where they stay for 12 to 14 weeks to enable them to achieve their full character and flavour. They are checked daily and turned weekly to ensure moisture is evenly distributed throughout the cheese, before being cut and packed by hand ready for distribution across the UK and overseas," says Philip.

Winning awards has played a key part in the success of Cornish Blue. "It started with the Tesco cheese challenge in 2004, which was followed by being Supreme Champion at the Bath & West show in 2006," explains Philip. "The real breakthrough came in 2010 when Cornish Blue was named World Champion at the World Cheese Awards, followed in 2011 with the award for Best British Cheese at the World Cheese awards." The awards continued to flow with a Super Gold award at the 2015 World Cheese Championships.

With the business going from strength to strength and demand steadily rising from delis, cafés, restaurants and supermarkets, in 2015 the company completed its production facility expansion to cope. "The dairy expansion was necessary," Philip says, "as, due to the success of Cornish Blue, our existing facility was unable to produce any more cheese so we needed more production, maturing and packing space." The expansion has allowed for production to be doubled, and will enable the company to embark on a marketing campaign to expand sales of Cornish Blue through existing wholesalers as well as to source new wholesalers in parts of the country it currently doesn't trade in. As a result, the distribution of Cornish Blue will increase across the UK and overseas. "The company is currently looking to form partnerships with wholesalers," Philip says, "to expand our market throughout the UK."

The additional production capacity means that more independents will be able to offer their customers a world champion cheese – great news for Speciality Food readers across Britain and beyond.



Cornish Blue

sweet, creamy and artisan

"I'm looking to increase trade with existing wholesalers and make contact with new customers"





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Find out about stocking our cheese for your Deli or Shop. Sample packs available with your first order, contact us to find out more 07813 703933.



WELSH WONDERS

Bodnant Dairy is enjoying success with its range of traditionally-made Welsh cheeses

An integral part of Bodnant Welsh Food is Bodnant Dairy, which has established itself as a name to watch in Welsh cheesemaking. "The dairy was built to establish artisan cow's milk cheese production in North Wales," says dairy sales manager Deborah Leviseur. Since it opened just over three years ago, Bodnant Dairy has produced a small but award-winning range of Welsh cheeses. "Currently we produce four artisan cheeses," says Deborah. "The first to be produced at Bodnant Dairy was Aberwen. This is a clothbound, farmhouse-style cow's milk cheese which is aged in the cheese shed for three to five months. Abergoch is a three-month old traditional, mild and creamy, clothbound coloured cheese, while Abermwg is our traditional Welsh beechwood-smoked cheese.

"First made last May, our Traditional Welsh Caerphilly is made to an original recipe, and won Bronze at the International Cheese Awards 2015, the only Welsh Caerphilly to win." It's an indication of the progressive nature of this forward-thinking dairy that "other cheeses are for sale only in our own farm shop deli, which is our testing ground for new products." The cheeses, which enjoy full traceability back to the cows, are handmade with vegetarian rennet.

Bodnant Dairy is perfectly placed for making tasty cheese. The rain-fed mountains of Snowdonia provide lush grass which is grazed by a family-owned, closed herd of Welsh Friesian cows. The herd provides fresh milk for Bodnant Dairy's range of cheeses. "The milk has a high butter fat content and we leave all the cream in the milk to achieve the creamy flavour," Deborah says. "Small batches of 1500l of the evening and morning milk are carefully handled during cheese making to retain the natural taste of the milk." This results in cheeses filled with flavour, she says. "Aberwen is creamy with full, rounded flavour, while Abergoch is milder and creamy, with a slightly nutty flavour. Abermwg has a moreish smoked flavour and is very addictive. The Traditional Welsh Caerphilly offers a young, fresh, lactic taste."

This young range of Welsh cheeses enjoys strong local sales but is proving popular too with independent food retailers. There is also "ongoing interest in regional wholesale," Deborah says. "Aberwen, a perfect example of a regional farmhouse cheese, has a loyal and growing following, and the rest of the range are hot on its heels."







MASTERS OF CHEESE

Maker and distributor of fine cheeses, Harvey & Brockless has been satisfying discerning retailers for 45 years

Harvey & Brockless are a producer and distributor of speciality foods, who have been working with artisan food makers from across the globe for more than 45 years. From the smallest delis, farm shops and restaurants to the largest food manufacturers, Harvey & Brockless are committed to always delivering the finest products to their customers. With multiple sites in the UK, and a fleet of over 70 vehicles, Harvey & Brockless offer nationwide, chilled, daily delivery everywhere – from the Highlands of Scotland to the beaches of Cornwall.

Harvey & Brockless' cheese range is the largest collection of artisan cheese in the UK – they source, understand and supply the very finest cheeses from across the UK and the Continent. Dedicated to developing close relationships with their suppliers, Harvey & Brockless are always building their knowledge of products and the people behind them. Similarly, by taking the time to really get to know the retailers, chefs and restaurateurs which they distribute to, Harvey & Brockless truly understand the different needs through the supply chain and tailor their offering to service these effectively.

Putting their cheese expertise into practice, Harvey & Brockless also create and distribute their own range of cheese and dairy products under the name Cheese Cellar Dairy. Based at Broomhall Farm in Worcester, Cheese Cellar Dairy are continually developing new products to meet demand. They currently produce Worcester White and Double Worcester cheeses, along with their extremely versatile Goats' Curd.

Renowned for their exceptional knowledge of artisan cheese, Harvey & Brockless also have expertise in a diverse variety of fine foods. From charcuterie and olives to snacks and sauces, they offer a wide range of speciality products – which complement cheese perfectly.

WHAT SERVICES DO HARVEY & BROCKLESS DELIVER TO CHEESEMONGERS AND CHEESE COUNTER OWNERS?

''At Harvey & Brockless we actively encourage our customers to engage directly with our suppliers,'' says Owen Davies, category manager. ''We believe it is vital for customers



to taste and learn directly from the producers themselves. Organised by our events coordinator, Tracey Colley, each year we host a series of Meet the Makers' days. By gathering a variety of suppliers in one place, these events provide customers with a valuable opportunity to develop a greater understanding of our range. So, where I go out to source cheeses from the makers, and our sales team go out to secure new business – Tracey is the one who brings everyone together! This year we are hosting four events across the country, in Devon, London, Manchester and Worcester.

Additionally, Harvey & Brockless' BRC-accredited production facility has state-of-the-art cutting, packaging and assembly capabilities – meaning we are equipped to slice, dice, grate, crumb, shave and portion a wide range of cheese in extraordinary volume. This enables us to offer our customers a bespoke service, where cheese can be delivered in whatever format they wish!''

TELL US ABOUT YOUR RANGE

''We are constantly searching for the best cheese innovations, and update our range twice a year. I regularly visit cheesemakers to taste their produce, tour their farms and dairies, and discover exactly what goes into the production of their cheeses. Where flavour and quality is undeniably important; how cheese is made and who it is made by are also key considerations when choosing our cheese range.

''We are always keen to explore current food trends and recently we have seen a real resurgence in the popularity of raw milk cheese. Consumers finally seem to be getting over the fear of bacteria and are beginning to see just how special these cheeses really are. Additionally, the 'raw food diet' is certainly giving this type of cheese an extra edge!

''Especially in the UK, we are discovering a growing wealth of talented cheesemakers using unpasteurised milk. A particular favourite of ours at the moment is Fen Farm Dairy's Baron Bigod, which is the UK's only traditional authentic, raw milk Brie-de-Meaux style cheese.''

ANY NEW PRODUCTS?

- White Lake – Pavé Cobble: Following the success of Sheep Rustler, we introduced Pavé Cobble. A creamy, slightly citrus flavour (ewes' milk)
- Lightwood – St Thom: A unique brick shaped cheese (unpasteurised goats' milk)
- Lightwood – Worcester Blue: A cross between a traditional Stilton and Continental blue cheese (cows' milk)
- Burt's Cheese – Traditionally handcrafted in Cheshire. We supply Burt's three varieties: the original Burt's Blue cheese; the cider-washed Drunken Burt; and DiVine, which is washed in cider then wrapped in vine leaves (cows' milk)
- King Stone Dairy – Rollright: A semi-soft cheese with a buttery texture (cows' milk)

WHAT'S NEXT?

''We are recognised for our dedication to quality food, and so we will continue to develop our stunning ranges. From authentic PDO Grana Padano to goats' cheese created in the South West of England, Harvey & Brockless will always deliver the very finest produce available.''

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STOCK A CHAMPION

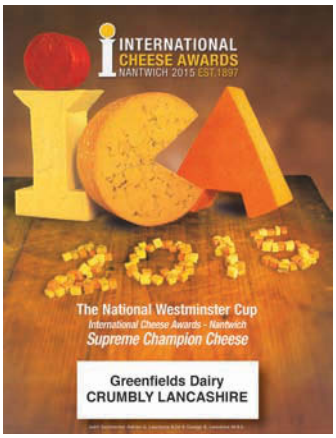
Winning Supreme Champion at last year's International Cheese Awards has brought deserved recognition to Greenfields Crumbly Lancashire

Nothing tells the world that you have a superb cheese on your hands like winning Supreme Champion at the International Cheese Awards. This was a feat achieved by Greenfields at last year's show, with their superb Crumbly Lancashire. Cheese lovers in the North West are already familiar with the fresh, slightly acidic flavour of Greenfields Crumbly Lancashire, which is a mainstay of cheese counters at the upmarket Booths supermarket chain and a deserved favourite of delis and farm shops.

Despite being the flavour of the moment, Greenfields Crumbly Lancashire has roots steeped in tradition. Not only is it now recognised as the best Crumbly Lancashire, it was also the very first, says Steven Procter, managing director of Greenfields Dairy. "Crumbly Lancashire Cheese was developed by my late grandfather in the early 1950s. He was the first person to create this bright white, fluffy, acidic and citrusy young cheese, which is sold from two weeks old. Presently it gives us strong sales in Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire and slightly further afield, but our aim is to bring the extraordinary tastes of Lancashire to the South as well."

Production at Greenfields centres around the Crumbly Lancashire and has been boosted by its recent public acclaim. "But," Steven says, "we like to think that all our cheeses are champions." Greenfields offers a range of around 20 British cheeses of several types. The range of Lancashire cheeses is completed by Creamy Lancashire, which is "more of a fluffy, open textured cheese with a rich creamy flavour and smooth, buttery finish," Steven says, and Tasty Lancashire, which is a mature version of Creamy Lancashire. Greenfields Dairy is also the producer of Sykes Fell Sheep Cheese and Grace's Goats Cheese. "Sykes Fell is a sheep's cheese developed towards a Creamy Lancashire recipe," Steven says. "It's smooth and buttery and though it is hard-pressed it's not rock hard like a Cheddar." Wensleydale, Red Leicester and Double Gloucester are also available and among the wide range of additive cheeses are Wensleydale with Cranberries or Apricot, Double Gloucester with Chives & Onion and 'Chilli Con Cheddar' cheese.

Like the other Greenfields cheeses, Greenfields' Champion Crumbly Lancashire is handmade using traditional methods by a small but highly skilled staff at this family-run business. Greenfields Crumbly Lancashire is the first cheese a retailer should consider when adding Lancashires to his cheese counter.





BOMBER COMMAND

Snowdonia's popular Black Bomber is just one of a ten-strong range of Welsh cheeses which has made big inroads into the independent market



Snowdonia Cheese Company's brightly-coloured, wax-wrapped cheeses are a familiar sight in delis and farm shops across Britain. Richard Newton-Jones, Snowdonia's commercial director, says, "in order to ensure an intense depth and creamy taste, only the very best ingredients are used. Our range of ten cheeses includes Black Bomber, Red Storm, Green Thunder, Red Devil, Beechwood, Pickle Power, Bouncing Berry, Ginger Spice, Ruby Mist and Amber Mist."

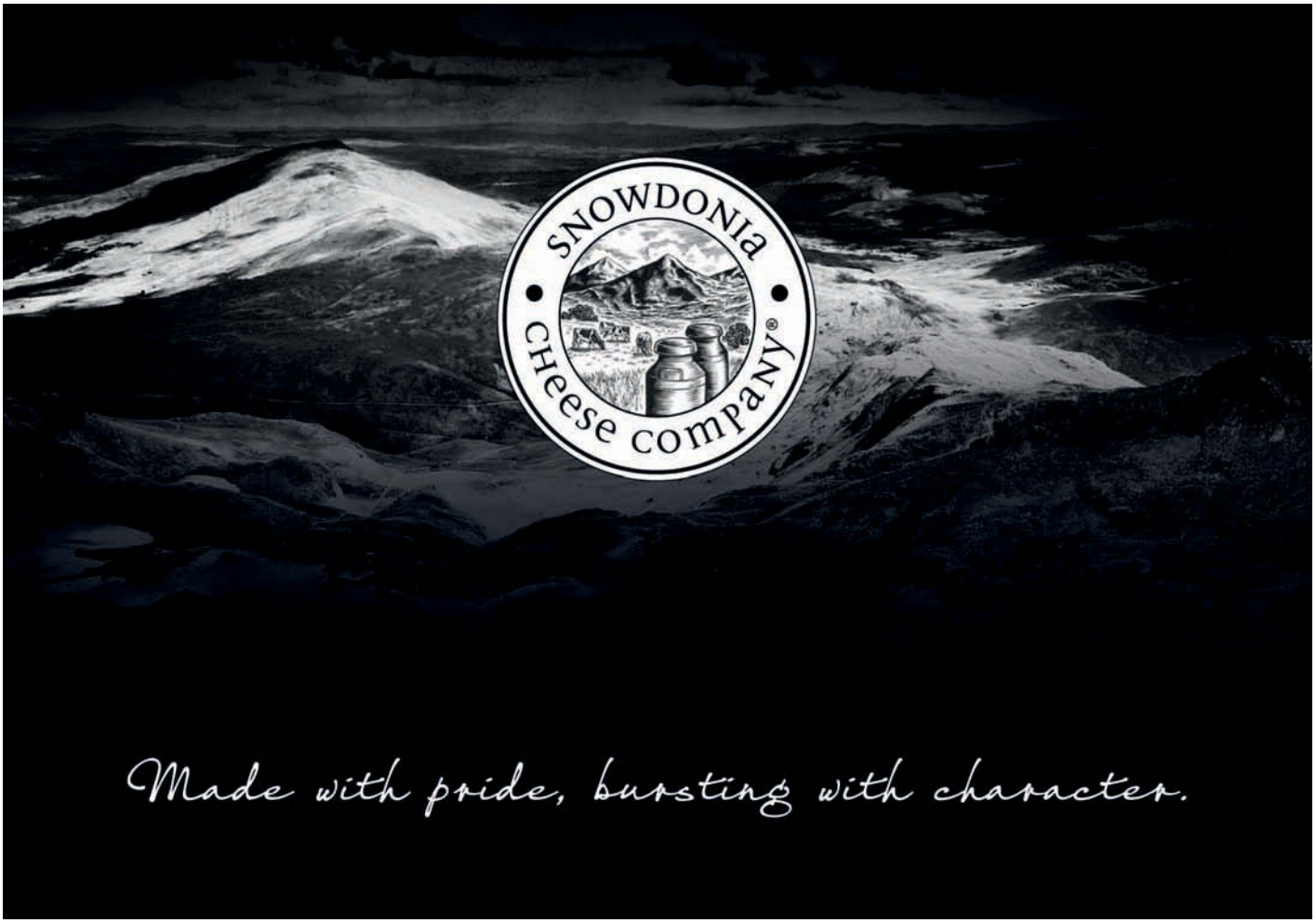
"The hand-crafted cheeses are combined with natural ingredients that sit well on the palate and enhance the taste of the cheese. It is an important balance to ensure that the strength of cheese and ingredient are exact. We find the perfect level of maturity, so the cheese is not overpowered." Snowdonia's most popular cheese is the iconic Black Bomber. "This is well known for its rich, extra-mature taste," Richard says. "We also have sweet, savoury, smoked, and alcohol cheeses which appeal to different preferences and tastes. Our customers know what they like and most have a firm favourite. Eight out of 10 cheeses are Cheddar-based and the other two are Red Leicester. The cheese is well-known for the unique creamy texture which has become the signature of Snowdonia Cheese Company, where we produce millions of truckles and wheels every year. Great care is taken throughout the production of this distinctive range that the product, the packaging and the experience are all sensational and dramatic."





The company was founded in 2001 by a group of dairy farmers in North Wales. "My brother John (the managing director), and I grew up on a dairy farm in the local area. The idea was to produce a range of premium cheeses encased in wax, each with its own name, colour and character." The cheeses are available in 200g truckles and 2kg wheels, with Black Bomber also available in a 400g truckle and 3kg wheel. Snowdonia Cheese Company also produces a piquant sweet Orchard Apple Chutney. Made to a traditional recipe and rich in fruit , this is "the perfect accompaniment to our extra mature Black Bomber Cheddar and vintage aged Red Storm Red Leicester." An extensive range of POS is available for existing stockists and those looking to start stocking the brand.

Tel: 01745 360 246
www.snowdoniacheese.co.uk



HANDCRAFTED IN HAWES

Sandra Bell, marketing manager of Wensleydale Creamery, shares the story of one of Britain's best-loved territorials



WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND WENSLEYDALE?

Wensleydale cheese has a heritage that spans centuries, with its roots firmly set in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. First crafted in the 12th century by a group of Cistercian monk settlers in Wensleydale, the art of Wensleydale cheesemaking was perfected over time and eventually found itself in the hands of local farmers' wives. It wasn't until 1897, when the first creamery was built in Hawes, that Wensleydale cheesemaking began on a large scale.

It was thanks to a management buyout in 1992, following the closure of the creamery earlier that year, that cheesemaking in Wensleydale was reborn. Owned by Wensleydale Dairy Products Ltd., the business now employs over 200 people across two manufacturing sites and plays a vital economic role in the deeply rural area in which it is situated.

The name of Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese has become synonymous with quality, authenticity and tradition. Our skilled cheesemakers continue the art of handcrafting Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese at the Wensleydale Creamery at Hawes in the heart of the beautiful Yorkshire Dales today.

WHAT DOES ITS YORKSHIRE PROVENANCE BRING TO THE CHEESE?

Yorkshire Wensleydale's unique creamy, crumbly taste, which is full of flavour, is a result of the unique cheesemaking starter cultures that, combined with our cheesemaking knowledge and expertise, create a cheese with a texture and flavour that no other region can match. We also source milk from local family farms to help ensure the quality and authenticity of our Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR PGI ACCREDITATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR WENSLEYDALE?

In December 2013, The Wensleydale Creamery achieved European Protected Food Name Status in the form of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for our Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese. This has helped to elevate and create differentiation from the many other Wensleydale cheese that are currently produced in other counties around the UK. Cheesemakers outside of the designated Wensleydale area can only call their cheese 'Wensleydale' not 'Yorkshire Wensleydale'.

This international mark recognises and guarantees the quality and authenticity of our Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese. There is growing awareness of this international mark of quality and authenticity, and has been particularly advantageous when selling into international markets, giving us a platform for telling the story of our provenance and authenticity globally.

AND FOR THE RETAILERS AND CONSUMERS BUYING YOUR CHEESE?

We've become more educated as a population in the last five years and the influence of imported cheese has caused the UK consumer to become more discerning and understanding of where their cheeses come from and the quality they expect. Consumers buying Yorkshire Wensleydale can rest assured that their cheese has been handcrafted in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales using milk from local farms.





WHAT CHEESES DO YOU SELL?

We have a wide portfolio of products; in addition to our Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese, we also handcraft a selection of premium cheeses, including our award-winning Wensleydale Blue, Kit Calvert old-style Wensleydale cheese and a Sheep's Milk Wensleydale.

Whilst staying true to our heritage and maintaining the deepest cheesemaking traditions, we are continually innovating, pioneering cheese development and new recipes, especially with our range of blended cheeses.

We produce a varied range of blended cheeses, and in 1995 we were the first to launch Yorkshire Wensleydale & Cranberries, which has now become one of our best sellers and has firmly become established as a 'core' cheese in the blended cheese category. In 2015, we introduced a range of blended cheese taster packs (90g) and also introduced the very first crumbly cheese slice, made using our famous Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese, owing to consumer demand for high quality convenient cheese options

Our portfolio also includes Dales Butter, churned from our whey cream, and we recently launched our range of Yorkshire Yogurt; a premium, naturally thick and creamy yogurt with a fruit layer, made using Yorkshire milk.

HOW IS YORKSHIRE WENSLEYDALE BEST SERVED?

As well as the traditional cheeseboard, Yorkshire Wensleydale now finds its place as a versatile recipe ingredient; from salads to soups, pies and desserts, and was also voted as the best cheese for cheese on toast. It's great for the everyday sandwich, too. For many years, Yorkshire folk have been embracing the well-known northern tradition of eating Yorkshire Wensleydale cheese with a slice of fruit cake or apple pie!



TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISITOR CENTRE, CREAMERY AND MUSEUM

Our Visitor Centre, which opened in 1994 and was extended in 2010, offers our 250,000 visitors per year the opportunity to enjoy a taste of Yorkshire, from watching the handcrafting of our famous cheese in our creamery from a viewing gallery to learning all about its history in our museum and enjoying the finished product in our much-loved cheese shop and deli with free cheese sampling, and savouring dishes inspired by the use of our cheese in our Calvert's Restaurant and 1897 Coffee Shop. We also offer cheesemaking demonstrations for our visitors, and have recently introduced cookery demonstrations, showcasing dishes inspired by our cheese, which provide an enjoyable insight into our cheese.

Phase one of our new interactive family 'Yorkshire Wensleydale Experience' recently opened, which brings to life many of our unique selling points in a fun way, and also takes our visitors on a journey through to the viewing gallery in our new Creamery. The next phase of this experience is due to open in the summer.

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE FOR WENSLEYDALE?

This year is a significant milestone for Yorkshire Wensleydale cheesemaking. We are nearing completion of a multi-million pound investment in our new creamery and cheesemaking facilities which will increase capacity and improve efficiency. The next phase of our interactive Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese Experience is also due to open.

Love Wensleydale Cheese... make sure it's from Yorkshire!

Not all cheeses bearing the Wensleydale name are actually produced in Yorkshire!

By stocking Yorkshire Wensleydale your customers can be assured that they are buying an authentic product, traditionally handcrafted with integrity in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales.



WENSLEYDALE CREAMERY

PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

Yorkshire Wensleydale Cheese is now protected

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