2026

SF SPECIALITY FOOD

CHEESE BUYER

LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP



From dramatic landscapes to the best cheese counters

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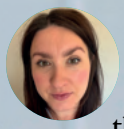
EXPERT CRAFTSMANSHIP - NATURAL PERFECTION - TRUSTED QUALITY

KALTBACH cheeses are refined by Cavemasters in a 22-million-year-old Swiss sandstone cave, backed by 70+ years of expertise.



For more information on our Kaltbach range of cheese go to www.emmi-kaltbach.com/international or email info.uk@emmi.com

Welcome to CHEESE BUYER



Welcome to *Cheese Buyer 2026*, brought to you by the team behind *Speciality Food*.

The world of fine cheese is as inspirational as ever, and we've relished the opportunity to get behind the curtain to speak to some of the world's finest makers and retailers to uncover what's making the industry tick right now.

From some of Britain's most popular artisan cheeses to European icons, we share the stories of must-stock products to inspire you and your team to share them with your customers.

We also explore the skillsets required to become a destination cheesemonger, from cheese care and pairing suggestions to the education that will aid your journey. We also discover the value of international cheeses the UK market and explore how creating an immersive experience can reap dividends.

Until next time.

HOLLY SHACKLETON | EDITOR

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What's Trending in Cheese Right Now

Keep your finger on the dairy pulse – join us as we reveal what's hot on the cheese scene in 2026, from trending formats to eco production

Speciality cheese sales are booming in the UK. With an estimated annual growth of 5.4% (driven by demand for premium and artisan options and provenance) there's every reason to be optimistic in retail. So, what's driving this upwards trajectory? Let's dive in!

Cottage cheese hits the mainstream

No longer considered purely fodder for dieters and gym bods, cottage cheese has reached new heights of popularity in the last two years, and its star continues to climb. Significant interest in lower fat sources of protein and whole milk dairy have contributed to its success, and we're seeing new, challenger brands emerging as a result.

Ocado alone has seen sales of cottage cheese grow 144% year-on-year, reveals senior buyer for cheese, Rich Sharpe, who says the online retailer's shoppers are loving how the product can easily be integrated into both sweet and savoury recipes.

"We have expanded our cottage cheese range this year to cater to the increasing consumer demand, bringing in new flavours such as All Things Cottage Cheese Mixed Berries for people looking to enjoy cottage cheese as an easy breakfast option. We have also just launched The Estate Dairy's new cottage cheese this month, exclusive to ocado.com, which is made with Jersey cream for extra indulgence."

A premium option

Premium Cheddar is driving the specialist cheese category with a move away from mass-produced varieties in speciality retail, says George & Joseph's Stephen Fleming. "I'd say that's absolutely where the opportunity is," he explains. "Cheddar is familiar, which makes it easy to engage people with. Once customers taste a really good clothbound or farmhouse Cheddar, it's often a real lightbulb moment. They realise how much depth, complexity and sense of place the style can have." He continues, "In a speciality setting, premium Cheddar is one of the best ways of showing people that Cheddar doesn't have to mean bland or anonymous." For Stephen, this type of cheese means more flavour, more character, more story, and more connection to farmers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Vintage Cheddar sales have increase 5.4% in the last 12 months

ADHB

Organic's on the up

Penny Nagle of Feltham's Farm, who founded the Organic Cheesemakers Network with partner Marcus Fergusson, says the story around organic right now is positive and pointing in one direction – up!

"It's a really good thing that the market is growing, even more so while we're in a cost-of-living crisis. All our retail members are telling us they want more organic cheese, and that's great to hear," she says.

EXPERT VIEW



'Scooping Gorgonzola is one of our biggest sellers. We scoop it into pots, so you get this fantastic bit of theatre at the counter. As soon as one person does it, everyone else wants it as well'

STEPHEN FLEMING
GEORGE & JOSEPH





144%
the YoY increase in cottage cheese sales at Ocado over the last 12 months

At Growing Communities – the UK's only all-organic market in Hackney – the Organic Cheesemakers Network stall has grown by a third each year since launching in 2024, Penny reveals, adding that they're finding more people are wanting to talk about how cheese is made and where it comes from. Customers are making decisions based on both sustainability and health.

"If you care about your health and wellbeing, as more people are now, you realise the stuff you put in your body has an impact long-term," Penny adds, saying that she feels the market is shifting in a positive way, especially with ongoing talks happening between the Network and Soil Association to find ways to reduce admin around certifying.

Injecting personality

In France, affinage is part and parcel of the cheese retailing experience. It's incredibly common for cheesemongers to use their know-how to usher along all manner of varieties in ever-creative ways.



The advent of the Academy of Cheese's Affineur of the Year awards (launched in 2022) has only served to raise the profile of this edible artform in the UK, encouraging British retailers of speciality cheeses to push the boundaries, experiment, and contribute to an even more exciting and growing cheese world. It really does feel like we're only just getting started here, and interest and adoption of affinage is growing.

We're talking varieties washed in local spirits, coated in chocolate, aged in coal and more.

"The model of having a cheesemonger with the space and skilled staff to also age the cheese prior to sale benefits both the cheesemaker and the consumer," says the Academy of Cheese's education project manager, Katy Fenwick. "Small-scale, as well as new, cheesemakers do not have to invest so much capital, time, space and resources into ageing their cheeses. They can focus on making cheese, with the affineur taking care of bringing it to perfect maturity." This translates to consumers buying products at their absolute peak.

"The Affineur of the Year competition has accelerated the growth of affineurs in the UK, building a cohort of curious, inspired cheese specialists in the UK that has even caught the attention of those across the Channel. Over the years, the competition has inspired new businesses, career changes, and entirely new cheeses," Katie adds.

More from across the pond

At a showcase in London last autumn, a delegate of artisan farmhouse cheesemakers from Ireland demonstrated the beauty of what they can offer – the majority of which has not been available to mainland UK retailers for quite some time, if ever.

The tide is turning, though, says Tim Rowcliffe, acting as an ambassador for Irish cheese through his work with the Specialist Cheesemakers Association and Irish trade bodies. He expects stronger relations and the coming down of walls will see more and more Irish varieties in counters this year.

A great sign, he adds, was the number of Irish cheeses present at this year's British & Irish Cheese Awards in Shepton Mallet. "There was no Irish cheese last year because of logistics. This time we got them in a week early and saw a record number of entries – dozens of Irish cheeses, and a number of awards with serious recognition which is great news."

A barrier to entry for many Irish makers post-Brexit has been lack of SALSA accreditation – which definitely, Tim says, impacts the interest from buyers. Work has happened behind the scenes so that now Irish makers who join the SCA will get a code of best practice and eventually be audited for SALSA, removing another major barrier to trade.

Tim hails this as a "major step", particularly for those who want to see their cheeses in bigger retailers. "The path is continually being smoothed. The ambition is we want to keep driving this forward. Itish cheese is every bit as good as what's produced in the UK. Every bit as imaginative. And because of the microclimate most of the animals are out all-year-round so you get very different, fairly unique flavours. I can't think of like-for-like comparisons for Durrus or Gubbeen. Terroir is very important."

Grass makes a difference

Consumers, especially younger shoppers, are ever more concerned about the environment, ultra-processed foods and the nutritional value of what they're eating. And they're asking more questions at the counter, leaning into grass-fed cheeses, and cheeses with greater sustainability claims.

"More customers are asking where cheeses come from, how the animals are kept, and what







sits behind the product beyond flavour alone," says Stephen.

Jessica thinks this messaging is more important than raw milk to consumers, who she says don't seem to be as concerned about this aspect. "From my experience, raw milk doesn't automatically mean better flavour. That comes more from ageing and the cheesemaker. Grass-fed and artisan cheeses do show a really noticeable difference in depth and seasonality."

DID YOU KNOW?

Organic cheese accounted for around 27% of the organic food and drink sales in the UK last year

FARMERS WEEKLY

A new consumer

During the last 12 months speaking to independent retailers, a major pattern that's emerged is the increased footfall from Millennial and Gen-Z customers. They are definitely, says Jessica Summer, founder of Mouse & Grape, driven by health (particularly protein), visual appeal and convenience.

"They are more selective with spending, and less focussed on traditional dining occasions, but they still value quality," she explains, saying that individual creamy cheeses do well with this type of customer in her shop. "They feel indulgent, but still fun and approachable.

What works best with younger consumers is, "low commitment, ready to enjoy options such as smaller portions, strong pairings, and clear benefits. Looking ahead, I think we will see more demand for snackable luxury and hybrid retail experiences that combine shopping with tasting."

Stephen agrees, saying he too is noticing more younger shoppers in store, who are less tied to traditional cheese-buying habits, while being more intrigued by exploration. "They're curious, happy to try something unfamiliar, and they respond well to story, provenance and occasion. They might not always come in asking for 'the usual', but they are very open to cheeses that feel interesting, authentic and worth talking about."

Gorgeously gooey

Melting cheeses, predominately of the Alpine variety, are showing clear growth in the UK. Many of these types are thermised, making them sweeter (marrying with the modern palate) and also lower or devoid of lactose, appealing to those with intolerances.

Retailers and producers all say they are seeing sustained and increased sales across the board. Raclette (which used to peak in sales in the winter months) is now a good seller year-round for many, including at The Pangbourne Cheese Shop in Berkshire, according to owner Jen Grimstone-Jones.

Both Raclette and fondue are seen, she says, as a sophisticated dining option, and a more unique, different way to share cheese beyond grazing platters. "We are seeing a huge rise in people across all ages and background staying at home to socialise."

Jessica is also finding these cheeses consistently popular. "Raclette and baked Camembert nights work really well because they are social, interactive and easy to engage with. It is less about the product, and more about the experience around it, which is what customers are increasingly looking for," she explains.

There is a big opportunity, Jessica thinks, in at-home kits, especially as consumers seek out ways to recreate moments more affordably.

"Alpine cheeses have been flying out for us recently," says Stephen. "There's clearly a strong appetite for cheeses that offer warmth, comfort and theatre – the kind of cheeses that feel generous and satisfying, whether for entertaining, weekend eating, or just treating yourself."

Schlossberger has been doing especially well for the retailer. "It



HOW TO SELL...

...to Gen Z

- *Younger consumers appreciate smaller formats (pre-portions and individual cheeses). Present yours in a way that's visually appealing and intriguing for them.*
- *Gen Z value sustainability, welfare and health. Signpost the credentials of your cheeses well – ie noting whether certain varieties are from grass-fed cows or are higher in protein.*
- *Use social media to tap into their sense of fun and novelty. Think of different ways to position/present/showcase cheeses, both new and traditional.*



has that lovely combination of depth, nuttiness and rich, savoury character that customers really respond to once they taste it. Alpine cheeses feel indulgent, but still versatile, and that combination has been a real winner for us."

Singing the blues

Blue cheese is experiencing a renaissance across the board – with a strong leaning from shoppers towards softer, sweeter blues, which is making some larger blue cheese manufacturers reconsider their recipes for the modern market.

Stephen says he's definitely noticing customers gravitating towards gentle, creamy varieties. "I think part of the appeal is that a soft creamy blue can feel more approachable than a firmer, punchier traditional blue. You still get the character and complexity of blue cheese, but in a more indulgent format, which makes it easier for customers to give it a go."

Across the category, scooping Gorgonzola is making waves, with numerous businesses in our Inspirational Cheese Retailers publication saying it's one of their top sellers today. This is, in part, they say driven by the cheese's heightened social media presence, where it's being used inventively – served in ice cream cones with savoury toppings, or even squidged between crackers with sweet preserves to make a kind of Jammy Dodger.

Carron Lodge director, Tom Rhodes, says sales of scooping Gorgonzola have more than tripled for the wholesaler in the past year.

"It's without doubt been one of the standout trends we've seen, quickly moving from a niche product to something with broad appeal."

"I think part of the appeal is the theatre of it," Tom continues. "Seeing the cheese being scooped adds a sense of occasion, and it allows shops to be directly involved in the process. It's interactive and engaging, which makes it more than just a purchase – it becomes an experience."

Peter Pooley, owner of Cheese & Bees, says there's something wonderfully indulgent about a soft, creamy blue cheese. Agreeing with Tom, he says, "Customers do enjoy the theatre of it. I think it gives people a feeling of a fresher and more special product. The Gorgonzola's history, combined with its rich, buttery flavour, also suits the current appetite for comfort foods with a touch of luxury."

Valentina Fine Foods' Bruno Zoccola thinks scooping Gorgonzola is 'having a moment'.

"It's incredibly indulgent, visually striking, and offers a unique sensory experience," he says, adding that customers are drawn to its texture and rich flavour. "It feels luxurious but approachable", appealing to consumers' desire for bold, authentic and artisan-driven products.

TRENDING NOW

- ***Alpine cheese*** *– Is a huge contributor to British imports right now. Interest in sweeter profiles and melting/cooking cheese have seen demand for varieties like Le Gruyère, Comtè and Raclette soar*
- ***Grass-fed and whole dairy*** *– Consumers are more passionate than ever about not only animal welfare, but eating wholesome foods. Interest in grass-fed cheese is up, as are sales of whole milk and natural yoghurt*
- ***Snacking cheese*** *– 6-7% category growth is expected in the UK by the end of the decade*

DEEP MARKET INSIGHTS





Heritage to Trust

We caught up with Rowcliffe's new MD, Matthew Friel, to find out what 2026 holds for this iconic wholesaler

Rowcliffe is a business with a real sense of heritage, and that history has shaped who we are today. We've been part of the UK cheese trade for well over 50 years, which means quality, provenance and integrity have always been at the heart of what we do.

What really sets us apart is the experience within the team. We have trained cheesemongers and specialists who genuinely understand cheese – not just how it's made, but how it should be matured, cared for and sold. That knowledge allows us to support both our producers and our customers in a very hands-on, meaningful way.



What's new for the business in 2026?

This year is about building on those strong foundations while continuing to move forward. We're investing in our ranges, refreshing our offer and making sure we're aligned with how customers are shopping and eating today.

A big priority for us is making sure we're supporting independent retailers in the most practical ways possible – whether that's clearer ranging, better insight, or helping them bring the stories behind the cheeses to life at the counter.

Are there any new launches in the 2026 catalogue?

There are some fresh new additions in the 2026 catalogue that we're really proud of, from local Kent-produced curd goat's cheese to, Swiss Vacherin and a French pasteurised alternative to Brie de Meaux complimented by a selection of dips, chutneys and delisticks.

EXPERT VIEW



"A big priority for us is making sure we're supporting independent retailers in the most practical ways possible – whether that's clearer ranging, better insight, or helping them bring the stories behind the cheeses to life at the counter"

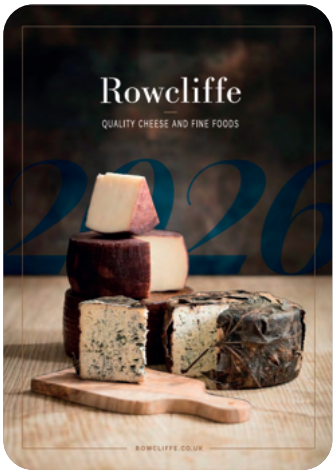
MATTHEW FRIEL
ROWCLIFFE





DID YOU KNOW?

Rowcliffe has been working within the UK cheese industry for nearly 70 years



As ever, our range has been carefully selected, with a continued focus on cheeses and fine foods that excel in quality, provenance and consistency.

How do fine food retailers benefit by working with Rowcliffe?

We see ourselves as a partner to our customers rather than just a supplier. Our team understands the day-to-day challenges of running a cheese counter and is always on hand to help with ranging, seasonality, storage and handling, or simply sharing ideas.

Our aim is to make things as easy as possible for retailers, while helping them offer something distinctive and high quality to their customers.

"We see ourselves as a partner to our customers rather than just a supplier"

What's to come for Rowcliffe?

Looking ahead, our focus is on sustainable, long-term growth. That means continuing to invest in our relationships with artisan producers, developing our people, and finding better ways to support customers at the point of sale.

As the new managing director, I'm keen to build on Rowcliffe's fantastic heritage while making sure we remain relevant, forward looking and trusted in the specialist cheese world.





TOP PRODUCT



Rutland Red
Aged up to 12 months and intensely savoury with caramel and nutty notes. Named Super Gold and Best British Cheese at the World Cheese Awards 2025.

A Golden Era

The popularity of Clawson's Rutland Red goes far beyond cheese-loving consumers – judges are in its thrall, too

A premium alternative to a staple of retailer shelves up and down the country is winning plaudits and fans as far as the eye can see, with its rich and buttery flavour becoming a favourite of shoppers and judges across the UK. The cheese in question: Rutland Red®, an innovation steeped in heritage and crafted expertise.

A rich history

Alongside its stablemates Stilton® and Shropshire Blue, Rutland Red® has truly put Clawson on the cheese counter map thanks to its satisfying open texture and optimum balance of sweet and savoury flavour. While Rutland Red® was only added to Clawson's range in the early 2000s, the history of this cheese runs deep into the cheesemaking heritage of the region.

Open vats, handheld hoops and presses, and hand-buttering and cloth-binding are just some of the traditional methods that go into its production, inspired by the tradition of Stilton®-makers to utilise milk from summer, autumn and winter to produce Red Leicester due to Stilton's heavy reliance on spring milk thanks to its strong Christmas sales.

Family at its heart

Many team members' family trees run parallel to Clawson's storied history. "We have a number of colleagues here whose families have worked here for generations," says Bill. "Richard, who is our head cheesemaker, is the third generation of his family who have produced cheese at Clawson – his grandmother used to make Stilton here, and a great uncle made a Red Leicester. It's wonderful that these traditional skills have been passed down from generation to generation within our team.

"Indeed, the family of our chairman, Paul Eggleston, were founding members, showing the longevity of involvement and relationships in the community and highlighting this multi-generational vein still runs through everything we do, from farmers to cheesemakers."

Clawson doesn't only harness the expertise of master cheesemakers, but the freshness and quality of the milk produced by its local farming communities in the Vale of Belvoir too. Indeed, provenance is at the cheesemaker's core. "We're constantly inspired by being able to trace our products back to the farm where the milk was produced, and the fact that our closest farm is only 1,000 yards from the dairy is a source of genuine pride," says Bill Mathieson, managing director.

Locally loved, internationally renowned

The magic of Clawson's master cheesemakers as well as the quality of the milk they conjure with is not to be underestimated; this artistry can be the difference between a great cheese and a superlative one that will go on to win awards – which is exactly what's happened throughout its time in production.







In November 2025, Rutland Red® was named Best British Cheese and gilded with the Super Gold accolade at the World Cheese Awards. "To be awarded Super Gold for our Aged Rutland Red is an outstanding achievement and testament to our dedicated team at Clawson Farms – from our farming cooperative's sustainably produced milk, our generations of cheesemaking expertise and our collective passion to champion Clawson Farms' provenance and heritage, this win reinforces our pride and devotion to these great British cheeses," managing director Bill Matthieson said of the win.

A modern British classic cheese with awards aplenty and a rich history, Rutland Red® is a surefire hit for cheese counters in 2026.

EXPERT VIEW



"To be awarded Super Gold and Best British Cheese for our Aged Rutland Red is an outstanding achievement and testament to our dedicated team"

BILL MATHIESON
CLAWSON

CLAWSON
19 FARMS 12
MASTER CHEESEMAKERS

At Clawson Farms, we've been a proud farmer-owned cooperative since 1912.

Our Master Cheesemakers are dedicated to ensure exceptional quality, award-winning cheese, every time.



ARTISAN AGED RUTLAND RED®

SUPER GOLD AWARD WINNING

Deliciously rich and caramelised flavour. Rich orange, firm but flaky, open texture.
Traditionally crafted, wrapped in cloth, hand-buttered and matured over many months.

To find out more, contact our sales team on enquiries@clawson.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1664 822332

www.clawsonfarms.co.uk

The Best of Italian Dairy Tradition

Discover the best of Italian cheese with this bastion of the country's dairy produce

In an increasingly quality-driven retail market, where transparency and authenticity are key, British consumers are showing growing attention to products that tell a story, as is the case with Made in Italy products, which ensures high product quality standards. In this context, DalterFood Group, a major player in the European dairy sector for over 45 years, positions itself as a strategic partner for retailers in the UK with a proposition that combines Italian tradition, innovation, and deep knowledge of the local market. The presence of Dalter UK, the company's commercial branch in the UK, enables the company to quickly and effectively interpret the market dynamics and trends.

At the heart of the offer is Parmigiano Reggiano, produced in the Group's mountain dairies, available in different aging varieties, from 12 to over 40 months, to cater to various taste preferences and consumption occasions. Alongside this excellence, DalterFood Group offers a wide range of Italian hard cheeses, including Pecorino Romano and Spinoro – made with microbial rennet, making it suitable for vegetarians – as well as iconic Italian fresh cheeses such as mozzarella and burrata. All products are designed to enhance the retail refrigerated section with quality and authenticity, meeting the growing demand for premium and distinctive references. A key role is played by the development of private label solutions, which have become a strategic lever for differentiating shelf offerings.

A consultative approach is a distinctive feature of the company, clearly reflected in the wide range of cuts and formats designed for domestic consumption: from grated to flakes, cubes to special formats, and even more innovative solutions intended to facilitate kitchen use. On the packaging front, the range includes reclosable doypacks, practical tubs, vacuum-sealed wedges, designed to ensure freshness and convenience. Thanks to a flexible structure and a team R&D, DalterFood Group is able to tailor products, cuts, and packaging to meet customers' specific needs, supporting them in the development of private label ranges that align with their brand positioning.

An additional value is represented, in fact, by the company's focus on sustainability: DalterFood Group constantly invests in controlled supply chains, attention to animal welfare, and more sustainable packaging solutions, aiming to reduce environmental impact and respond effectively to the market's evolving sensitivities.

The Group's ability to deliver tailor-made solutions remains a key differentiator across international markets, supported by all its companies. Its global footprint was further strengthened in 2026 with two major developments: the opening of a new production facility in Parma, Italy, and expansion in France through the recent acquisition of the distributor For Food France - both clear signs of continued investment in growth.

The Group also operates in Germany through Vip-Italia GmbH and holds a stake in the Brazilian company CMC.

IN THE KNOW

DALTERFOOD'S ECOSYSTEM

From production to distribution, DalterFood Group operates in international markets through the contribution of each of its companies: Dalter Alimentari, the parent company based in Sant'Ilario d'Enza (RE) with two plants for cutting and packaging hard and semi-hard cheeses; Colline di Canossa, the heart of Parmigiano Reggiano production with its two mountain dairies (Colline di Selvapiana and Canossa and Colline del Cigarello and Canossa); Vip-Italia Gmbh, the commercial subsidiary in Germany; Dalter UK Ltd, the commercial subsidiary in Great Britain; For Food France, the commercial subsidiary in France. DalterFood Group also holds a stake in the Brazilian company CMC.

EXPERT VIEW



"This combination of Italian quality, customization, innovation, and direct market presence makes DalterFood Group an ideal partner for UK retailers looking to stand out with an authentic, contemporary offer. With a strong focus on sustainability, we ensure top quality through a controlled Parmigiano Reggiano supply chain and a thoughtfully sourced selection of cheeses, supported by our UK subsidiary."

ANDREA GUIDI
GENERAL MANAGER OF DALTERFOOD GROUP



A Real Charmer

Bookham Harrison Farms is growing – thanks to a special guest appearance on TV



Imagine turning on the telly and seeing your product front and centre on the big screen – it's the dream. A dream that became reality for the team at Bookham Harrison Farms, who experienced their 'pinch me' moment late last year when their creation – Sussex Charmer – was catapulted to stardom in Waitrose's brilliant Christmas ad featuring Keira Knightley and comedian Joe Wilkinson.

"We knew it would be special, but it was something else," says director Rob Bookham. "It was bonkers. But it made us see the potential to grow this business. We're making lots more cheese!"

The company, which also sells Italian hard-style cheese Twineham Grange, Charmer Blue and South Downs Butter, celebrates the 20th anniversary of Sussex Charmer in 2026 – with big plans afoot.

But first, let's get to know it a little better. While travelling the Southern Counties selling Twineham Grange at markets, Rob and wife Claire heard the same story over and over. Couples would pop to the stall and say one of them liked Parmesan while the other preferred Cheddar. That got their cogs whirring...could there be a way to combine the two?

The answer a resounding yes. After partnering up with their milk supplier (the Harrison family 20 miles from the creamery), the adventure began.

3X
the amount of growth Sussex Charmer has experienced since featuring in Waitrose's Christmas advert

The process uses both a Cheddar and a Parmesan recipe that's salted, scalded at a higher temperature, and has the cream left in rather than skimmed off. The resulting curds are then cut, unusually, into cubes.

The flavour, says Rob, is unique. "You get a creamy mature Cheddar taste that develops in your mouth, then a zing and a crunch towards the end. As it's aged for 15 months, there's a slightly crumbly texture too."

This May, to honour Sussex Charmer's 20th birthday, the creamery will launch a black waxed variety which, says Rob, "Looks really special." And tapping into the growing premium ready meal market, there are plans for a Sussex Charmer mac and cheese for retail and catering sectors too.

EXPERT VIEW



We knew it would be special [to be featured on the Waitrose advert] but it was bonkers

ROB BOOKHAM
BOOKHAM HARRISON FARMS

SUSSEX CHARMER
The award-winning cheese the nation is talking about — now ready for your shelves.
Mature Cheddar meets Italian-style hard cheese.
Matured 15 months. Creamy, zingy, unmistakable.
As seen in Waitrose's Christmas Ad with Keira Knightley and Joe Wilkinson!
Retail Starter Pack — 6 x 200g Cubes | £19.25
✓ Free delivery ✓ Point of sale leaflets ✓ Sale or Return ✓ 40.25% margin
bookhamharrison.co.uk/trade | 01403 339 150

Modern Cheese Pairing

The culinary world is your cheese pairing oyster in 2026... Here, experts share some of their out-of-the-ordinary favourites







A year of cheese pairings



Dan Bliss, retail manager at Paxton & Whitfield, talks us through her ultimate accompaniments, season by season

In the winter months my favourite styles of cheese are big and rich alpine styles, think Gruyere or Comte, the savoury quality of them means that they work well with an accompaniment with a bit of bite, and I think pickled fruits and vegetables are ideal. There are some incredible British versions of these styles of cheeses really coming into their own – I am really enjoying Ashcombe and Corinium. Classically, I would pair with a Cornichon, for something more unusual, pickled quince or pickled pears. Also fabulous with kimchi if you like a touch of heat too.

In the spring months, the cheese world gets excited about new season goat's milk cheeses – the milk is fresh and the cheeses that are made with this milk are just bursting with juicy acidity. One of the oldest pairings in the world is cheese and honey, and I think it's still pretty unbeatable. Try Acacia honeycomb with a goat's cheese with a mousse like texture like Sinodun or Dorstone for divine salty sweet combo.

In the summer, I enjoy lighter, brighter cheeses – especially those made with sheep's milk. Cullum and Corra Linn are too excellent British examples, think Manchego or Pecorino if you are looking for continental cousins. Often with a good salty acidity, you need something to pair that balances out this profile. I love pairing cheese with nuts – almonds would work well here, as would cashews and hazelnuts. Perfect with a glass of something chilled!

The autumn for me is synonymous with British orchard fruit. I think a crisp apple is one of the most perfect things to pair with cheese. Perfect with traditional English cheeses like a proper clothbound Cheddar such as a Montgomery or a more crumbly textured cheese like a Yoredale Wensleydale or Kirkhams Lancashire.

QUICKFIRE PAIRINGS

TOP PAIRINGS FROM MASTER CHEESEMONGERS



FRANCISCO AND SABINA PERELLO
THE CHEESE HOLE

Our fave example is Dark Chocolate (75%) with hard cheeses especially aged Alpines/ Cheddars and Manchego. They have been doing this in Europe for years and we are having some great success in introducing the concept. The key is to have high cocoa with low bitterness. Exquisite!



GEORGE HAMMOND
GEORGONZOLA

"I love putting sour beer with things like Renegade Monk and Rebel Nun from Feltham's Farm. They cut through the funk."

"People are moving away from the idea that cheese always needs a traditional chutney, and they're experimenting more"



BRUNO ZOCCOLA
VALENTINA DELI

People are moving away from the idea that cheese always needs a traditional chutney, and they're starting to experiment more: honey with blue cheese like gorgonzola, fruit confits with goat's cheese, that kind of thing. There's more curiosity around regional Italian pairings too. Customers seem more confident mixing flavours and textures and are looking for accompaniments that feel a bit more special without being complicated.





"Oozy, soft and unctuous Brie gets its lively opposite in the bubbles of the Champagne"

Consider cocktails



Morgan McGlynn-Parr of Cheeses of Muswell Hill makes some inventive cocktail pairing suggestions

GORGONZOLA AND NEGRONI

Negroni is an intensely bitter and alcoholic aperitivo, made with equal parts Campari, gin and sweet vermouth. The bitterness is just what this Gorgonzola needs to bring out its biting quality, cutting through the creaminess of the paste.

The fiery alcohol of the Negroni is restrained by the milky mouthfeel of this mild Gorgonzola. The Negroni's citrussy aroma, thanks to the traditional orange-peel garnish and the oils it imparts, provides roundedness. The sweet-sour notes balance the bitterness in the other elements of the cocktail and the earthy, savoury notes in the aroma of the cheese.

CHEDDAR AND WHISKEY SOUR

A good strong Cheddar has exactly the acidity and tanginess that this cocktail needs to complement its sour flavours – in the whiskey and the lemon juice. Hold a piece of strong Cheddar on your tongue and as it melts; you'll find an underlying nutty sweetness in its aroma that lingers in the finish.

The Whiskey Sour lives up to its name (not only in the lemon juice, but in the whiskey itself), so take a sip after that finish and enjoy the contrast. Not only does egg white bring the drink its characteristic froth, its creamy, meringue-like flavour tempers all that sourness. The soft froth itself balances out the harsh intensity of the alcohol.



Cocktail Oatcakes made with Seaweed
Bringing the character of the Outer Hebrides to your cheeseboard
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Building a Community

A passion for bringing fabulous cheese to a wide audience drives the small team behind Shepherds Purse

It's easy for retailers (and consumers) to get the impression that high visibility and availability equals large-scale production, but Caroline Bell of Shepherds Purse is keen to spread the message that a large audience doesn't mean that quality has been compromised – and that real, honest food should be available to all.

"We are passionate that craft, quality and reach are not mutually exclusive," she begins. "We are a small team of 30 on the family farm passionate about honouring the milk we produce our cheeses from, which is from farmers we know and trust, producing consistently excellent cheeses for our customers to enjoy."

Caroline and the team have long been passionate about producing fine quality cheese that can be enjoyed by everyone who seeks it. "Our mission has always been to make speciality cheese that is easy to love, consistent, gorgeous and approachable," she explains. "That philosophy travels across retail formats and customer types, which is why our audience is genuinely wide and varied."

The speciality cheese mission

Britain's artisan cheese sector has undoubtedly experienced more than its fair share of challenges in recent times, but its audience – and opportunity – is widening and there is plenty of room for additional growth. "The UK speciality cheese market is still to reach more people," says Caroline. "Somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent of cheese sold in this country is Cheddar, and speciality cheese is a fraction of spend. The growth potential is substantial, and it comes from bringing new customers in, not fighting over existing ones."



This opportunity could be lost if we approach cheese-selling as a matter of 'us and them'. "As a speciality sector we miss out on bringing people into the space if we don't have some brands bridging across speciality and mainstream retail," says Caroline. "You see that a lot with European cheeses and we'd like to see it more with British speciality cheeses too. A customer who discovers us in a supermarket and then seeks out an independent to go deeper is not lost to the speciality sector, they are the beginning of a richer relationship with British cheese. We see ourselves as part of that journey for the customer, not in competition with it."

EXPERT VIEW



The UPF conversation is a real commercial tailwind for the whole speciality sector. Cheese made with milk, cultures, and time is the antithesis of ultra-processed food and consumers are increasingly seeking exactly that

CAROLINE BELL
SHEPHERDS PURSE

IN THE KNOW

AWARD-WINNING ROOTS

This family business, founded in 1987, is still run by the same family and continues to make cheese at Leachfield Grange in North Yorkshire. "That story is a perfect fit for any farm shop, deli, or speciality retailer who wants to offer their customers something with genuine roots," says Caroline. "We're really proud to have won a number of trophies and the overall Supreme Champion Award at the Artisan Cheese Awards in 2025 too."




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AWARD WINNING
SHEPHERDS PURSE
Artisan Cheeses
great taste
2023
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Cheese Legends

Godminster don't only make great cheese – they've created a characterful world of wonder, too

EXPERT VIEW



"Cheese is all about telling stories. And storytelling is a fundamental part of salesmanship, especially for cheesemongers and independent retailers who want to differentiate themselves from the big supermarkets. It's a great way of engaging with your customer in a way that supermarkets can't"

JESSICA KIMBER-HOLLOWAY
GODMINSTER

The cheesemaking sphere is rich with stories and tradition, and Somerset business Godminster has taken this creativity to a whole new level with its range of colourful characters based around local myths. "We include Westcountry legends in the branding of each cheese, which ties them into our countryside in a new and fresh way," begins Jessica Kimber-Holloway, commercial and operations director. "We've talked about our organic heritage and our guardianship of the land for over 20 years, and this gives us another great talking point plus ties us even more to the land around us."

For Godminster's latest launches – the Mighty Middlewick Witch Cheddar and Scarlet Crumb Sunrise Red Leicester – the team researched Wessex myths to find fun and quirky legends. "We visited Glastonbury – only 30 minutes away from the Godminster offices – and read into the wild and magical histories all over the Westcountry," she says. They finally settled on the witch motif for their Cheddar as a salute to the local legend of the Witch of Wookey Hole, then looked to Stonehenge for inspiration for their Scarlet Crumb character, who brings light and sunshine everywhere she goes.



"Our waxed cheese range have their own characters too," Jessica continues. "The Bruton Beauty is a mysterious beast inspired by the wild boar you can find roaming around Bruton in Somerset (something I can attest to, having come across many when jogging around the lanes), and Cheyney, the Green Man-inspired figure on our smoked Cheddar, is a protector of the land and inspired by the ancient oaks on Godminster Farm."

Godminster worked with a local Morris side and an art studio to create bring a Cheyney to life as part of their local 'Jack on the Green' day, which is an ancient English folk celebration about welcoming the sun back after winter.

"The Howling Hound on our Black Truffle Cheddar is inspired by the old myth of the Grimme, or black dog, that roams the wilds. In other parts of the country the black dog is a bad omen, but in Somerset the black dog is a protector and guide. And the Devil of the Red Chilli Devil's Dance harks back to the legend of the wedding fiddler who turned the guests to stone in Stanton Drew, near Bristol."

The team behind Godminster certainly have plenty of inspiration for their storytelling – not just from local legends but the artistry of the cheesemaking itself. "From the history of cheese, the family dynasties of cheesemakers, and the role cheesemaking has played in social history, we have plenty to call upon," Jessica says. "Cheesemongers have got a wealth of stories they can tell about the processes and people involved. Whether it's the legend of the shepherd leaving his lunch in the Roquefort caves or cheese-making families that stretch back generations, there are plenty more tales to tell."

The **Bruton Beauty** is our hero character, the centrepiece of the Godminster brand. A mythical, rarely spotted creature, the Bruton Beauty lives out of sight on the Godminster farm, and brings the gift of good fortune to all those she passes.

the DEVIL'S DANCE



In a nearby village, a mysterious musician known as the **Devil's Dance** played his fiddle at a wedding party. He played and he played 'til the revellers could dance no more and were frozen in time. The heat and fire of the dance could only be from the devil's music, matched by the fiery heat in our chilli cheddar.



BRUTON BEAUTY

An ancient symbol of good fortune, the oak leaf comes from the great Godminster oaks, planted by much-loved friend of the farm, **Cheyney**. It's the perfect encapsulation of our oak-smoked cheddar.

the HOWLING HOUND

The **Howling Hound** roams wild on the Somerset hills and is a good omen, protector and guide to all those who see it. Dark and mysterious, it's the essence of our rich, black truffle-flecked cheddar.



CHEYNEY'S FORTUNE



EXPLORE the LEGENDARY RANGE

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Quality Without Compromise

Carron Lodge enters an exciting chapter in 2026, with major evolution shaping its future

As an industry rich in tradition and heritage, it can be easy to forget that in order to continue to cater to consumers' (ever changing) demands, not to mention maintain support for the rich tapestry of independent fine food retailers across the UK, cheeses businesses must evolve – and this is something that Tom Rhodes and the team at Carron Lodge is doing with aplomb in 2026.

Perhaps the company's most exciting update for the year is its revamped website, which not only boasts an improved user journey and next-day delivery but allows customers to browse its 2,500-strong product range which showcases the very best cheese from the UK and across the world. New tasting notes are sure to prove an invaluable resource for cheese counters while the ability to download product specifications directly from the site could be a real boon for time-poor retailers.

"Carron Lodge has always prided itself on our customer service – as a family business it's an imperative part of the way we work within the industry – and the team and I are delighted to be able to offer an even higher level of satisfaction to the businesses we partner with," says Tom Rhodes, managing director. "To have a brand new, bespoke website that we are confident will benefit our retailer customers is a real highlight of 2026."



It's not only the new-and-improved resources that will impress *Cheese Buyer* readers, as Ribblesdale Cheese Co – represented by Carron Lodge – is set to expand its range of soft lactic goats cheeses with the addition of exciting new flavours. A new Orange & Cranberry variant is due to join the range in the summer, and additional varieties are destined to be added to the range later in the year.

This will undoubtedly be music to the ears of the multitude of fans of Ribblesdale's Honey & Flower goats log, which has been going from strength to strength to become a staple of farm shop cheese counters across the UK.

Changes are also afoot at Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company. Internationally revered as the only cheese dairy to be located in the Somerset town of Cheddar, the business – with backing from Carron Lodge – has grand plans to improve the experience of the thousands of visitors it attracts each year.

Major renovations are being undertaken to rebuild, renovate and extend the visitor centre and existing factory premises to provide a modernised and improved experience for all. As a jewel in the crown of the Carron Lodge portfolio, this investment will boost the appeal and reach of Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company across the UK and beyond – sure to be a boon for retailers whose customers actively seek out cheese with unique heritage.

"We're hugely excited to apply these changes to Carron Lodge and our associated brands this year," concludes Tom. "By investing in an improved customer experience and product range, we are confident that independent fine food retailers will benefit."

TOP PRODUCT



Ribblesdale Flower & Honey Goats Cheese Log

Fresh, light and perfect for the warmer months, this popular cheese is handcrafted by experts.

"By investing in an improved customer experience and product range, we are confident that independent fine food retailers will benefit"

Carron Lodge



A trusted cheese and fine food supplier to more than 1,000 independent retailers.

Our Brands

The Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company

the Ribblesdale cheese company

SINCE 1745 SINGLETONS &Co CHEESEMAKERS & CHEESEMONGERS

Farm Maid

www.carronlodge.com 01995 640352 enquiries@carronlodge.com

Reinventing the wheel



Clawson Farms' truckle range has invigorated the category – and now there's a new flavour and format on the table

Innovation, coupled with more than 100 years of cheesemaking know-how, go hand-in-hand at Clawson Farms.

Set amidst rolling countryside in Leicestershire's Vale of Belvoir, the maker boasts a strong reputation for its award-winning heritage ranges, including exquisite PDO Blue Stilton, Rutland Red, and Shropshire Blue.

More recently, Clawson Farms has been leading the way in premium truckles, having launched six utterly irresistible varieties in 2024.

Designed to surprise and delight customers with quirky characters and inclusion combinations that stand out from the crowd, the truckles have shaken up the category, says senior brand manager, Heather Lewis, who adds that their success has been so strong, they're introducing a new flavour to the flock this year, as well as a new format.

Cheese and onion is a tried and tested pairing, and the new Innkeeper's truckle takes the flavour to the next level, begins Heather. "We know people love those flavours together – they hark back to ploughman's days – but our cheese is an elevated version with extra mature Cheddar, pickled onion and herbs. It's a bit different like the rest of our truckles, and we feel the combination fills a gap in our truckle range. We think it's going to be very popular."

A second announcement this year for Clawson Farms is the launch of some of the truckle recipes into unwaxed half-moon formats for slicing at the counter – unleashing those carefully created imaginative flavours to an even bigger audience.

"We know truckles are amazing," Heather continues, "Our research shows that customers are buying them as gifts, for special occasions and as a treats for themselves throughout the year. However, we wanted to put some of them into a format where they can be enjoyed as a more everyday cheese, and we wanted to give retailers the chance to offer exciting premium flavoured cutting cheeses within their deli counters."

The unwaxed products are, "easier to cut than big waxed cheeses, saving time. Also, we wanted to avoid 'wax drag' through the product, and we were mindful of the use in deli counters, so a lighter weight has been chosen to reduce waste, which is important to our customers."

Orders are being taken for cutting cheeses and the new Innkeeper's truckle now, with point-of-sale materials and marketing packs available, helping you to roll into the summer selling season.



20%

Sales of truckles have grown by almost **20%** in the last two years

IMI

CLAWSON FARMS' **TRUCKLE RANGE**

Captain Bulldog
Vintage Cheddar with a subtle crunch

Dormouse's Delight
Wensleydale with cranberry, elderflower and marmalade

Castaway
Wensleydale with mango and ginger

Truffle Seeker
Extra mature Cheddar with truffle and honey

Wizard's Fire
Red Leicester with scotch bonnet and harissa

NEW Innkeeper's
Extra mature Cheddar with pickled onion and herbs

£ HOW TO SELL

1 *"We absolutely know sampling really sells the cheese. Most people will buy if they try it first".*

2 *"Place the cheeses in different positions. They don't just have to be in the cheese counter.*

3 *"Make sure you and your staff know the flavours and can explain them."*





NEW
ORDER NOW

INTRODUCING INNKEEPER'S

EXTRA MATURE CHEDDAR WITH PICKLED ONIONS AND HERBS

We are delighted to introduce a new character to our truckle family: Innkeeper's Extra Mature Cheddar with Picked Onion and Herbs. With its deliciously savoury and tangy flavour, it's a nostalgic nod to classic British pub fare and is aptly represented by Arnold, our quintessential pub landlord.



Contact our sales team to find out more - enquiries@clawson.co.uk +44 (0) 1664 822332

www.clawsonfarms.co.uk





Flavour That Runs Cave-deep

Alpine cheeses are high priority purchases for today's consumers – and Emmi's heritage and expertise place it firmly at the forefront of this growing demand

£830 MILLION

The Continental cheese category is worth **£830m** in the UK, with sales up **3.3%** year-on-year

NIELSEN NIQ 52 W/E 21.02.26

EXPERT VIEW

The value of storytelling

Amanda Burningham, Emmi on what sells now

"British shoppers aren't just buying cheese, they're buying stories. Provenance, craftsmanship and a clear sense of place are more important than ever. Brands that can offer authentic heritage while still fitting into modern lifestyles, like our cave-aged Kaltbach range or convenient Fondues and Raclette slices are perfectly positioned for the next phase of premium growth."



"Brands that can offer authentic heritage while fitting into modern lifestyles are perfectly placed for premium growth"

The UK cheese market is shifting rapidly. Shoppers are more curious, more quality-led, and more willing to trade up for products with provenance and character. Cheese is no longer just an accompaniment but is increasingly taking centre stage at mealtimes and social occasions.

Emmi cheese brand lead, Amanda Burningham believes the business is well placed to respond to this shift. "Emmi combines authentic Swiss craftsmanship with modern convenience," she says. "From cave-aged Kaltbach through Emmi Fondü and Raclette, alongside Bettine's distinctive Dutch character, the range blends heritage with versatility and delivers strong cheese counter appeal."

Consumers are increasingly seeking cheeses that offer both flavour and experience. Whether building a standout cheeseboard or entertaining at home, they are looking for products that bring a sense of occasion. Alpine cheeses meet this demand with rich, nutty, savoury profiles that feel both indulgent and distinctive.

Across the range, Emmi continues to deliver standout performers, including Kaltbach Le Gruyère AOP, a recent Super Gold winner at the World Cheese Awards. Also performing strongly is Kaltbach Creamy, a signature wheel unique to the maker enriched with double cream during production to create a smooth, indulgent texture balanced by a bold Alpine character. Interest is also growing in Appenzeller, which continues to gain traction and wider distribution.

A legacy built on relationships and trust

Emmi will soon mark its 120th anniversary. While the company continues to innovate, it remains firmly rooted in its heritage, preserving the techniques and relationships that have underpinned its success for well over a century.



A defining moment came in 1907 with the formation of the Central Switzerland Milk Association, when 62 dairy farming co-operatives came together to promote quality and ensure economic stability for rural communities.

"Today Emmi has grown into a global player," says Amanda, "but it remains close to its original ethos in the way it partners with its farmers - supporting them, their families, and the environment. Many of our cheeses are produced under AOP standards, which set strict requirements for production methods and output. The business sources milk from small and medium-sized family farms with high welfare standards and grass-fed cows."

Sustainability is also central to its operations, with investment in solar energy across production facilities, alongside wider renewable energy initiatives and circular packaging solutions.

Black gold

The Kaltbach journey begins deep underground in a 22-million-year-old cave, hidden within Switzerland's Lucerne Valley. "Kaltbach cheeses only get the brand name if they are scored by our cavemasters," Amanda explains, adding that grading goes up to 20 points, and to be certified Kaltbach, the products need to score 19 or above. "So they really are the best of the best."





TOP PRODUCT



Kaltbach Le Gruyère AOP: Matured for a year – at least nine months in the cave – and winner of a Super Gold at the 2025 World Cheese Awards. **emmi-kaltbach.com**

The cave is a unique environment with its own cool microclimate, which remains at a constant temperature of 12.5°C, whether it's 30°C or –15°C above ground. Incredibly, it takes around two years for rainwater to trickle through the cave system from source into the stream below, from which the cheeses take their name – Kaltbach translating to 'cold creek'.

"Our cavemasters use mineral-rich rainwater from the cave walls to brush the cheeses, and turn them regularly to create the natural mould that gives them their characteristic brown-black rind and unique flavour profile that makes them so special," Amanda adds.

Moving with the times

Hot and melting cheeses are rapidly capturing shoppers' imaginations, fuelled by cheese pulls and fondue moments across social platforms.

Emmi's fondue pop-up with Whole Foods over Christmas generated a surge in interest. According to Amanda, sales of cheese for hot eating are now growing three times faster than the overall cheese category, with the cheese ingredients segment up 10.4% [Nielsen NIQ 52 w/e 21.02.26].

Sales of Emmi Fondü and Emmi Raclette slices are both up more than 25% year on year [Emmi sales data].

"There's a real rise in recreating restaurant experiences and holiday moments at home," Amanda says. "We launched the first ready-made fondue in 1911, and it's rewarding to see that heritage resonate with modern consumers today."

Another key trend is the shift towards healthier, protein-rich snacking, with 66% of British consumers actively seeking to improve wellbeing through diet. This is driving growth across snacking (up 12%), spreads (up 10%), and the £436 million speciality cheese category [Nielsen NIQ 52 w/e 21.02.26].

Emmi's Bettine goat's cheese range is well positioned to meet this demand. "Made from 100% fresh goat's milk, it's naturally nutritious, high in protein, and easy to digest, while still being mild, creamy, and delicious," says Amanda. "It fits modern healthier eating habits without compromising on indulgence or versatility."



DID YOU KNOW?

The Kaltbach cave is a natural sandstone labyrinth with its own microclimate – impossible to recreate anywhere else in the world



On the horizon

This year, Emmi will further expand its portfolio with Kaltbach Rustic, launching in Q4. A six-month matured Alpine cheese, it delivers a tangy flavour profile balanced by a rich, smooth texture.

Further innovation in the hot cheese category is also planned, alongside continued work to reposition goat's cheese as a more central, versatile cooking ingredient. The aim is to increase accessibility and everyday usage. "It's a very exciting time for us at Emmi," Amanda concludes.

£ HOW TO SELL

- ***Bring the story to life by using artisanal storytelling***
  "Customers love hearing about our 22-million-year-old cave and its cavemasters."
- ***Create theatre by sampling***
  "A bubbling fondue pot at the deli counter never fails to draw a crowd."
- ***Merchandise by occasion***
  "Position cheeses with charcuterie, breads, pickles and drinks to inspire entertaining-led baskets."



An Appetite for International

While British cheese is booming, UK consumers undoubtedly have a taste for cheese from overseas

CONTRIBUTORS



NED PALMER
EU'S MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK CAMPAIGN

EMMA YOUNG
THE CHEESE EXPLORER





JEN GRIMSTONE-JONES
CHEESE ETC/THE PANGBOURNE CHEESE SHOP

"The British have had a long love affair with foreign cheeses," begins Ned Palmer, ambassador to the EU's More Than Only Food & Drink campaign. "In the 19th and early 20th century foreign cheese was known as 'fancy cheese' and considered more of a treat than our native types.

"British cheese is now highly regarded, but in 2024 the UK still imported around 450,000 tonnes, that's about a quarter of all the cheese consumed in Britain, and an increase of 10 percent over the previous year. Up to ninety-eight percent of those imports come from the European Union and about 12% is sold in speciality shops and delis," he explains.

"The market for Continental cheese is strong, even among the most patriotic of UK consumers"

What's selling

"Speaking to British cheesemongers, the core range of imported cheese contains few surprises. Comté is unfailingly popular. Moz Murphy, owner of Grate Newcastle says 'there isn't a day where I don't sell a piece of Comté'. Brie and Camembert still hold their own against UK versions like Tunworth and Baron Bigod, Parmesan is a kitchen staple, and the craze for Burrata shows no sign of abating. Manchego appeared on the UK cheeseboard with the rise of cheap package holidays to Spain and now discerning cheese fans seek out artisanal versions.

EXPERT VIEW



"The market for Continental cheese is strong, even among the most patriotic of UK consumers, and selling them means taking care of the fundamentals: curate your range mindfully, with a mix of core cheeses and interesting alternatives, get the best cheeses you can and make sure they are at their best on your counter, know your cheeses and your producers well and share this knowledge with love and joy"

NED PALMER
AMBASSADOR TO THE EU'S MORE THAN ONLY FOOD & DRINK CAMPAIGN

Well aged Dutch Gouda is again popular, as it was in London in the 15th century.

"The new kid on the block," says Ned, "is the indulgent Délice de Bourgogne, a triple-cream style cows' milk cheese. Caroline Elliot of Darlington Cheese and Wine refers to it as 'the crack cocaine of cheese', a description her customers have enthusiastically adopted. Novelty can be a good selling point – Murphy offers the French blue Fourme d'Ambert as a less punchy alternative to Roquefort, and also finds that its distinctive appearance attracts customers."

Starting a conversation with customers is always the best way to promote and sell foreign cheese, says Ned. "Caroline locates 'the education of the cheesemonger' at the core of this craft, which means getting to know the cheeses well yourself, learning where the cheese comes from and being familiar with its history and making."

Seasonality as a selling tool

"Seasonality can be a big draw for customers, for example building excitement around the approach of Vacherin season, or offering cheeses appropriate to the time of year," advises Ned. "That might mean Burrata or Feta for summer salads and rich piquant blues like Roquefort or the mighty Spanish Cabrales for winter warmth.

"Offering a tasting event – even as a loss leader – can expand your customers' horizons, and here creative, thought provoking pairings are helpful.

"Try matching a cheese with produce from its home country or region – Parmesan and balsamic vinegar for example, or tying your theme in with current events, so when England are playing France at the rugby or football, try showing a British beer with a French cheese. You can always offer these pairings on the counter if an actual event feels like too much."

In 2024 the UK imported around **450,000** tonnes of cheese from the EU
GOV.UK

Dispatches from Brazil



Emma Young, AKA The Cheese Explorer, reports on her recent trip to the Mundial do queijo do Brasil - a cheese competition and festival held in Sao Paolo, Brazil

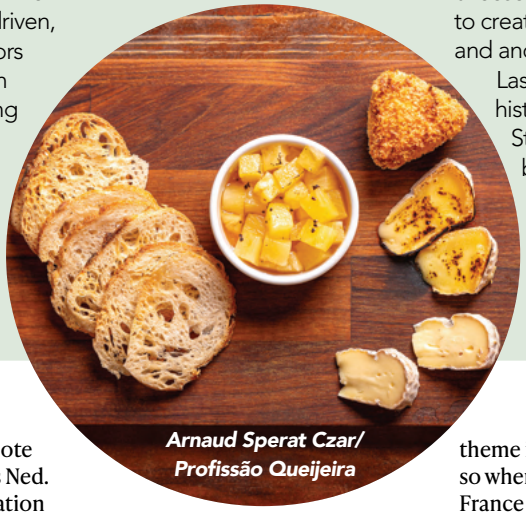
Brazil has never traditionally been a cheese dominant country, with just a handful notable as typical Brazilian cheeses, such as Canastra and Minas Frescal. There is however a lot of land, a lot of milk and an ever-growing demand from farmers and cheesemakers for knowledge and training. Their spirit is very technically driven, looking deeply into factors such as milk composition and artisan cheesemaking techniques but with the spin of a blank canvas and therefore room for innovation and interpretation.

Having quite a blank canvas means that you can find many styles of cheeses made in Brazil – many being influenced by cheesemaking techniques and recipes in Europe. The typical Brazilian palate is quite tame, so strong blues, strong washed rinds and lively natural rinds are in smaller numbers.

Where in the last competition in 2024, it was hard to define "Brazilian cheese" as there was a bit of everything, this time, the styles had funnelled down into the majority being cheeses suited to the climate and palate – semi-hard and hard long aged cheeses with salty, spicy flavours such as those in Southern Italy as well as cheeses with sweet flavours from cultures and additional elements (the Brazilians have a VERY sweet tooth). Some cheeses were heavily influenced by cheeses made in Europe such as spruce bound soft cheeses and crumbly blues.

Alongside the Continental and long aged cheeses, Brazilian cheesemakers use a lot of creativity – this year I saw cheeses marbled with Spirulina to create a marbled blue effect and another using cacao.

Last year, Brazilian cheese history was made, as Essex Street Cheese in the USA became the first to ever receive an exported Brazilian cheese, namely Mandala by Pardinho Artesenal. Watch this space, UK!



Arnaud Sperat Czar/ Profissão Queijeira

TOP-SELLING INTERNATIONAL CHEESES

Jen Grimstone-Jones of Cheese Etc/The Pangbourne Cheese Shop lists her most popular cheeses from overseas

- **Irish** – Gubbeen (smoked and unsmoked), Cashel Blue, Crozier Blue
- **French** – Brie, Camembert, Ossau-Iraty PDO, Roquefort PDO, Crottin de Chavignol PDO, Chevre Buche (and a smoked version), St Maure de Touraine PDO, Brebirousse d'Argental Bleu d'Auvergne PDO, Bleu des Causses PDO, Raclette, Epoisses PDO, Mimolette and 2 ages of Comté PDO (12 and 30 month)
- **Italian** – Parmigiano Reggiano PDO, various Pecorinos, Dolcelatte, Gorgonzola PDO (we sell the Dolce and get through a 6kg wheel every 2 days), Mozzarella di Bufala, Burrata
- **Swiss** – Le Gruyère AOP, Emmenthaler AOP, Stärnächäs
- **Spanish** – Manchego PDO, Murcia al Vino, Valdeón Blue PGI
- **Dutch** – Gouda (mild, four year old, cumin, truffle)
- **Norwegian** – Gjetost, Jarlsberg
- **Greek** – Feta PDO
- **Cypriot** – Halloumi
- **German** – Montagnolo



Loved for Centuries

Le Gruyère AOP's enviable taste and heritage is a heady mix for today's fine food consumer

In family-run village dairies located in the picturesque western cantons of Switzerland, the internationally-renowned cheese Le Gruyère AOP is made by expert hands using skills passed down the generations for centuries.

A heritage cheese

The history of Le Gruyère AOP begins in 1115, when the inhabitants of five neighbouring regions of Switzerland – the town of Gruyères in the Canton of Fribourg, Vaud, Neuchâtel, Jura and Bern – transformed the milk of their cattle herds into cheese. In the 900 years since then, the knowledge and techniques established by its original makers have been upheld to the delight of cheese lovers across the world. By 1762 the cheese was officially named and its provenance noted in the dictionary of the Académie Française, but despite this, the style of the Le Gruyère AOP was often imitated to create lesser quality wheels until – following discussions held across Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – it was awarded AOC (Controlled Designation of Origin) accreditation across Switzerland then certified AOP (Protected Designation of Origin) across Europe.

The 160 dairies which produce Le Gruyère AOP are expected to uphold the rigid specifications set by the accreditation at every stage of the production process, from the cows producing the milk to the ageing of the cheese – keeping the high quality and unique, delicious flavour of Le Gruyère AOP consistent.

Unique and versatile for all ages

This consistent flavour has played a huge part in earning and maintaining the worldwide popularity of Le Gruyère AOP, as well as numerous awards. Its distinctive yet subtle flavours are both unique and versatile, making it popular with consumers of all ages as well as delicious served in a number of ways, from a flavourful addition to a cheeseboard to melted in a fondue.

IN THE **KNOW**

HOW TO CUT LE GRUYÉRE AOP

Cut the wheel in half using a cheesewire then cut into quarters using a double-handled knife – halve these quarters into eighths, then cut the top half into three wedges and the bottom into six slices. Wrap the cut portions with clingfilm in order to avoid the cheese getting into contact with the air.



"The 160 dairies which produce Le Gruyère AOP are expected to uphold the rigid specifications set by the accreditation at every stage of the production process, keeping the high quality and unique, delicious flavour of Le Gruyère AOP consistent"

TASTING **NOTES**

Le Gruyère AOP is available in two ages, each of which displays subtle differences in flavour:

- **Le Gruyère AOP Classic (aged six-nine months)** Nutty, sweet and refined – delicious melted and popular with fans of mild cheeses
- **Le Gruyère AOP Réserve (aged 10 months and up)** Aromatic and full of flavour – its complex, mature flavours make it a popular choice for a cheeseboard


numéro 10
EAT, CHEESE,
SLEEP, REPEAT.
LE GRUYÈRE
SWITZERLAND
Réserve
AOP
DISCOVER
THE RECIPE:
LE GRUYÈRE®
SWITZERLAND
AOP
THE TASTE OF SWITZERLAND SINCE 1115.
SCHWEIZ
SUISSE
SVIZZERA
SWITZERLAND
Switzerland. Naturally.
AOP
Cheeses from Switzerland.
www.cheesesfromswitzerland.com



Daan Treur (2nd generation), Evert Treur (founder), Eduard Treur (3rd generation)

A Taste of The Netherlands

Since 1955, Treur Kaas has been delighting consumers with a distinctive range of high quality cheeses, explains Willem-Jan Oudehinken

EXPERT VIEW



"Dutch farmstead cheeses stand out thanks to their pure "farm" flavor and rich, creamy character. This creaminess and authentic taste come from fresh, full-fat cow's milk. The traditional production methods are clearly reflected in the flavor of the cheese"

WILLEM-JAN OUDEHINKEN
TREUR KAAS

Treur Kaas is a cheese wholesaler and family-owned business based in Woerden, the cheese capital of the Netherlands. Since 1955, we have been maturing and caring for Dutch cheeses in our own cheese warehouse, where a constant temperature and humidity allow the optimal flavor to develop. Treur Kaas is run by father and son, Daan and Eduard Treur.

We are always searching for the finest cheese specialties with unique flavors. To achieve this, we collaborate with small-scale cheesemakers and passionate farmers. This enables us to create a distinctive range, complemented by extensive marketing support, offering a strong and appealing concept. In this way, we support you as an entrepreneur in selling cheese. That is what we call: everyone's strength!

A varied selection

In addition to our farmstead and herbed cheeses, our range also includes the finest premium Gouda cheese under the name Weydeland Kaas. From low-fat to full-fat, available in various ages; even as crumbly varieties!

The artisanal herbed cheeses from Villa are a fantastic addition to any cheese board. Both their flavor and appearance make them an attractive enhancement to your presentation.

Fresh herbed cheeses are especially popular in spring and summer. Villa Nutmix (Nut cheese) is a favorite during autumn, while our Villa Truffo (truffle cheese) performs particularly well during the festive season.

Behind the cheese: Bon Repas

The story of this cheese begins with the cows of the Van Erk family in Berkenwoude. These cows produce fresh, full-fat milk; the foundation of this delicious cheese, type Emmental.

Before processing, the milk is thermized: gently heated to around 50°C to remove unwanted bacteria. It is then transferred to the cheese vat, where starter cultures, rennet, and propionic acid bacteria are added. These bacteria are responsible for creating the characteristic holes during maturation. To enhance the rich farmhouse flavor, we also add a special culture blend developed by Daan Treur, the second generation of Treur Kaas.

After a few weeks, the cheese is moved to a special warm room at approximately 20°C. Here, the propionic acid bacteria continue their work, forming the large, beautiful holes and allowing the unique flavor to fully develop.

What truly sets this farmstead cheese apart is its creamy texture, delivering a full flavor and a pleasant mouthfeel, making Bon Repas a real crowd-pleaser. After around seven weeks, the cheese is given its band and label, so everyone recognizes this special Bon Repas: a cheese you won't soon forget.

TOP PRODUCTS



Chevretta Daslook
A high-quality goat cheese with the fresh, aromatic flavor of wild garlic; perfect for lovers of refined cheeses.



Villa Jalapeño
A characterful farmstead herbed cheese with a spicy kick of jalapeño, combined with paprika, garlic, coriander seeds, and tomato. A true flavor booster for your cheese board, but also delicious on bread!

DID YOU KNOW?

The crystals in aged crumbly cheeses are not salt crystals, but protein crystals? These form as the cheese loses moisture during maturation. The cheese must mature for at least nine months before these crystals develop

Chevretta Wild Garlic

A creamy young goat's cheese with a deliciously herbaceous flavor, thanks to the addition of wild garlic.





Villa Jalapeño

Made from thermized cow's milk and contains jalapeño, paprika, garlic, coriander seeds, and tomato. Very creamy!

Or take a look at our other 45 herbed cheeses

TREUR KAAS
The Dutch Cheese Experience

www.treurkaas.com | info@treurkaas.nl

A Delicious Solution

WIth a long-held passion for delivering the very best and a solution to a common challenge, Sodiaal is well placed to support cheesemongers in 2026

Cheesemongers across the UK have felt the effects of the raw milk soft cheese import ban, but Sodiaal has a (delicious) solution: Brie de Caractère - and it delivers exactly what British tastebuds are craving. "Our Brie de Caractère is made following the same process and strict rules that make Brie de Meaux a staple of French gastronomy. From local milk collection, to careful hand ladling and turning, the wheels of cheese benefit from the same attention to detail and quality control we allocate to our award-winning Brie de Meaux," explains Camille Sharif.

Following the restrictions on importing raw milk soft cheese into the UK, the Renard Gillard dairy had to transition to supplying a thermised Brie as an alternative to the famous Brie de Meaux.

The gentle heat treatment makes it a great alternative for export customers, as it benefits from a stable and predictable texture and ripening, while preserving the complex aromas and mouthfeel that characterized Brie de Meaux.

"Fine food retailers benefit from stocking Brie de Caractère because it offers the authentic flavour profile and craftsmanship associated with Brie de Meaux, but with greater consistency and reliability," says Camille. "Its stable texture and ripening make it easier to manage in-store, while still giving retailers a premium French cheese with a strong heritage story to share with customers."

A rich heritage

The Renard Gillard story starts in 1886, with Alfred and Virginie Gillard creating a dairy in their village of Biencourt sur Orge. It remained a family-run business until 2000, when it was passed onto a local cooperative.

"Jean François Renard, who was the last family member to run the company, made it his life's mission to ensure his dairy would keep providing stable employment to the people of the Meuse region," Camille says. "He had a strong attachment to his region, his village, and considered it his duty to ensure the men and women at the heart of Renard Gillard would be taken care of, as well as future generations."

In 1986, he was instrumental in getting Brie de Meaux its official AOC recognition, insisting on the hand ladling process being explicitly written in, to avoid any risk of automation in the process and therefore secure employment for generations to come. The Renard Gillard dairy is still, to this day, representing these values and making cheeses that are synonymous with quality and care.

DID YOU KNOW?

Renard-Gillard's Brie de Caractère has long been supplied into the UK, as it is historically used to make our range of Royal Bries, filled with luscious cream and a variety of fillings: black truffles, wild garlic and a three-peppercorn blend

EXPERT VIEW



"Brie de Caractère represents a bridge between tradition and modern export requirements. By combining the heritage and craftsmanship of the original recipe with the reliability of thermised milk, it allows retailers and consumers alike to continue enjoying an authentic French Brie experience"

CAMILLE SHARIF
SODIAAL





FROMAGERIE
RENARD GILLARD
DEPUIS 1886

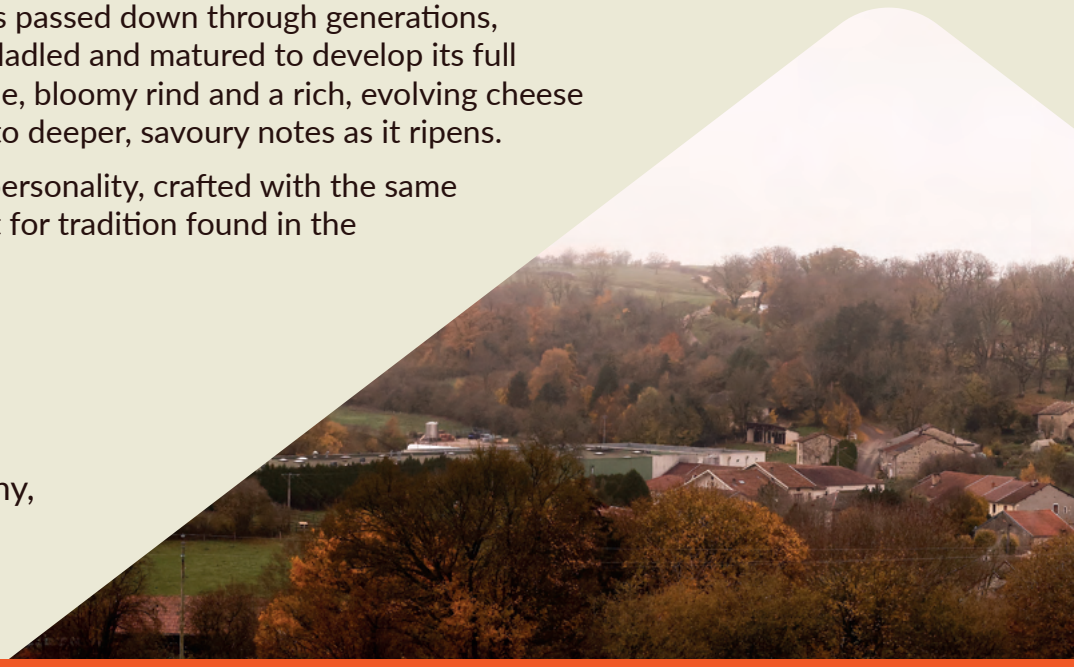
Brie de Caractère

A true expression of Brie-making expertise:
generous, balanced, and full of character.

Made in the heart of the French countryside by Renard Gillard, this is a Brie shaped by tradition.

Using time-honoured methods passed down through generations, each cheese is carefully hand-ladled and matured to develop its full character. The result is a supple, bloomy rind and a rich, evolving cheese that moves from fresh cream to deeper, savoury notes as it ripens.

This is a Brie with depth and personality, crafted with the same attention to detail and respect for tradition found in the great Brie dairies of France.



Tasting notes:

Delicate at first, with notes of fresh cream and cultured butter, developing into earthy, mushroomy richness with a soft, lingering finish.

Crafted by Renard Gillard, brie makers since 1886.

DISCOVER MORE AT

www.sodiaal.co.uk
info@sodiaal.co.uk
sodiaaluk

SODIAAL
The Excellence of *French Dairy*



A Heritage of Raw Milk Artistry

Affineur Walo is not merely a brand; it is a family legacy. Since the 19th century, the von Mühlenen family has been the custodian of Swiss cheese tradition, says Fabiola von Mühlenen

Today, as the 6th generation enters the business, we remain dedicated to the philosophy that defined our ancestors: the research of the best product and the pursuit of perfection through maturation. 'Family spirit 1867' is not a slogan on our logo; it is the quiet discipline that shapes every wheel we send out.

Antoine the cheese artist: a story in every wheel

Among our most distinctive offerings is the l'Antoine range, born from the tale of Antoine the Cheese Artist – a literary figure we brought to life from the folklore of the Gruyère region.

The story goes that Antoine was the son of a Gruyère shepherd who left the mountains to serve as a mercenary in the armies of Louis XIV. Upon returning to his native valleys, he turned to cheesemaking – and became, so the legend tells, the first affineur to carefully write down everything he did: the milk, the weather, the rind, the ripening.

At Affineur Walo, we have revived the recipes Antoine is said to have created. L'Antoine tells a story of tradition, heritage, and the rugged beauty of the mountains captured in every wheel.

Our Flower Meadow cheeses begin not in the cellar but in the pasture: the diversity of flowers the cows graze on transfers directly into the raw milk, and from there into the finished cheese. Every wheel carries the signature of a specific landscape and season.

For the UK fine food sector, the Flower Meadow range offers something increasingly rare: a cheese whose character cannot be replicated industrially.

Raw milk is central to this. Because the milk is not pasteurised, it retains its native enzymes, its beneficial microflora, and the full aromatic complexity of the meadow. The flavour evolves in the cellar and continues to evolve on the counter – a living product in the truest sense.

"In a competitive marketplace, we stand out through a combination of rigour and relationship"

TOP PRODUCT



L'Antoine

An award-winning raw milk masterpiece with a creamy texture and airy alpine aroma which captures the essence of flower meadows.





Where Speciality Meets Scale

Eurilait has been providing the best of speciality dairy to the UK for more than 30 years, combining an incredible range, deep expertise, and a willingness to share savoir-faire and technical capabilities with an everwider range of partners

In Evercreech, in the heart of Somerset, more than 120 employees work every day to bring the best of European dairy to the UK. From here, they source and select an exceptionally wide range of the finest cheeses from more than 90 European dairies. From Brie, Camembert, Feta and Halloumi to Kefir and Greek yogurt... Their range is incredibly vast, including many PDO cheeses.

"Our strength lies in our ability to source almost anything our customers need, while ensuring compliance with the highest UK standards," say Ed Leahy and Craig Brayshaw, Eurilait MDs.

Beyond sourcing, their Evercreech site offers tailored solutions that bring added value to the market. From selection packs to precise cutting and repacking, Eurilait teams continue to develop new capabilities to meet the needs of a diverse customer base, including retail, foodservice, wholesale and industrial.

They are also extending these capabilities to other producers, offering bespoke professional copacking solutions, helping create more collaborative approaches across the industry.

"We started working with local British producers to integrate the best of British cheeses into our Selection packs and realised that many lacked the equipment and teams needed to access the wider market," they continue.

"Especially in these challenging times, we believe our unique structure – combining experienced teams and high-quality flexible facilities – can help all types of producers make things simpler, turning challenges into tailored solutions.





DID YOU KNOW?

Eurilait offers copacking services for other producers (chilled or ambient, dairy or non dairy)

EURILAIT

YOUR SOLUTION FOR SPECIALITY DAIRY



Get in Touch

eurilait.co.uk | +44 1749 838 100 | Eurilait Ltd, Leighton Lane Industrial Estate, Evercreech, Somerset, BA4 6LQ



Catering for Demand

REHA Milk's grilling cheese offering satisfies both retail and consumer appetites

Provenance and quality are high on the list of customer demands when they're standing at the cheese counter of an independent fine food retailer – and when a product offers these while simultaneously perfectly catering for a growing trend, everyone is poised to succeed.

This is just the scenario that REHA Milk finds itself at present: bringing a premium grilling cheese product range into a British market which is hungry for just that. The versatility of grilling cheese is just one of the reasons behind its success, with demand continuing to grow across retail and food service as consumers increasingly appreciate showcasing cheese as the centrepiece of a dish.

Global cuisine trends also play a role, with shoppers travelling to destinations where grilling cheese is an important part of the menu and wanting to recreate the experience at home.

Thankfully, for 45 years REHA Milk has been producing a range of grilling cheeses that are sure to please cheese lovers – from traditional Halloumi to Crispy Fried Halloumi and Sliced Burger Grill Cheese, an innovation 18 months in the making, under its Cyproloumi and Reha brands. Even better: all of the cheeses are suitable for vegetarians, so everyone can enjoy their delicious taste and versatility.

"Grilling cheese is no longer niche – it's a core category," agrees Alpaslan Karabulut, director at Erech, REHA Milk's UK distributor, which also provides grilling cheese under its Anastasia and Limos brands. "Supply consistency is now the key differentiator." Indeed, REHA Milk offer consistency and scale with style having mastered the art of producing and distributing traditional 'Hellim' since its founding by Mustafa Kaynar in 1981.

Sector-spanning quality

Erech's range of cheeses, both through its own Anastasia and Limos brands and from REHA Milk, deliver the product performance demanded by today's consumers and businesses, offering consistent texture, structure and grilling performance, and both professionals and at-home cooks are catered for with the foodservice sector being supplied with 1kg blocks and 200g blocks being available to retail as well as smaller foodservice operators.

A worldwide proposition

REHA Milk is truly an international player, operating across multiple production facilities in Northern Cyprus and Turkey and an EU-compliant site in Poland run in partnership with Ali Kaynar, but its UK audience – managed by UK distributor Erech – is a key driver for the business's future plans. Across its portfolio, REHA Milk's range is renowned for its quality, consistency and suitability for both large and small-scale usage – making a strong case for retailers and wholesalers who are looking to evolve their grilling cheese selection to collaborate with the business.

A deliciously versatile range which satisfies the growing appetite for grilling cheese? It's a winning formula.

TOP PRODUCT



REHA Milk Grilling Cheese
A versatile and consistent cheese that can be grilled or fried.

DID YOU KNOW?

UK sales of grilling cheese including Halloumi are set to boom, with a projected market value of 72.5 million USD in 2030

AHDB





EXPERT VIEW



"Grilling cheese is no longer niche – it's a core category"

ALPASLAN KARABALUT
ERECH

ERECH
LTD.

UK WHOLESALE & FOODSERVICE DISTRIBUTOR

Trusted by UK wholesalers



FOODSERVICE & RETAIL PACKS – 200g









FOODSERVICE BLOCKS – 1kg





HIGH GRILLING PERFORMANCE
Excellent texture, golden grill and great taste.

CONSISTENT SUPPLY
Reliable production and on-time delivery.

HORECA FOCUSED FORMATS
1kg blocks for kitchens, 200g packs for foodservices and retail.

www.erech.co.uk | alp@erech.co.uk | +44 20 8888 9898



A Bright Future

With its bold new look and game-changing plans afoot, Croome Cheese is entering an exciting new chapter

For over 15 years Croome Cheese has been crafting an exceptional selection that perfectly cater to the changing palates of cheese-loving Britons, and its growing legion of fans is set to be delighted with the work that's been going on behind the scenes to make this flavour-packed range more impressive than ever...

The story of Croome Cheese has always been centred around provenance, story and great flavour. Owner Nick Hodgetts was inspired by his family's century of farming on the 15,000-acre Croome Estate in Worcestershire to create a range of cheeses which not only celebrate this beautiful part of the world but offer a delicious taste of it, too.

Locally-sourced ingredients – including from the estate itself – are used wherever possible to add personality to Croome Cheese's 15-strong selection of truckles, which ranges from Vintage English Cheddar to Stinking Rose (a mature Cheddar with parsley and garlic) and The Lazy Mule (mature Cheddar with hot chillies and red bell pepper) – with a kaleidoscope of other sweet and savoury flavours in between.



Speaking of kaleidoscope, the visuals of the new-look truckle range are striking to say the least.



"We wanted to wow cheesemongers and their customers with an incredibly eye-catching range of truckles that also delivers a punch of flavour, and we think we've succeeded in doing that," says Nick Hodgetts, managing director. "So much of success in fine food retail is about eating with your eyes, and this new look is sure to inspire customers to purchase and delight in our varied range of flavours."

While the new-look truckles are sure to gain traction on cheese counters, there are two other formats that cheesemongers can utilise for optimum versatility – a cutting cheese format for the ultimate centrepiece, and pre-packed wedges which offer convenience and sustainable credentials in one. More format innovation is in the pipeline, so watch this space...

Loved by awards judges

As well as delighting taste-loving consumers, Croome Cheese's range of cheeses has won over judges for many years. Whittington Oak Smoked, traditionally smoked over oak logs for 24 hours, has won gold at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards three times, alongside three other stand-out Croome Cheese creations, and three plaudits at the Royal Three Counties Show: Supreme Champion, People's Choice and Best Territorial Cheese.

TOP PRODUCT



Jubilee Fig

A delightful combination of honey made by bees on the farm and crunchy figs.

EXPERT VIEW



"So much of success in fine food retail is about eating with your eyes, and this new look is sure to inspire customers to purchase and delight in our varied range of flavours"

NICK HODGETTS
CROOME CHEESE





TASTE REIGNS SUPREME

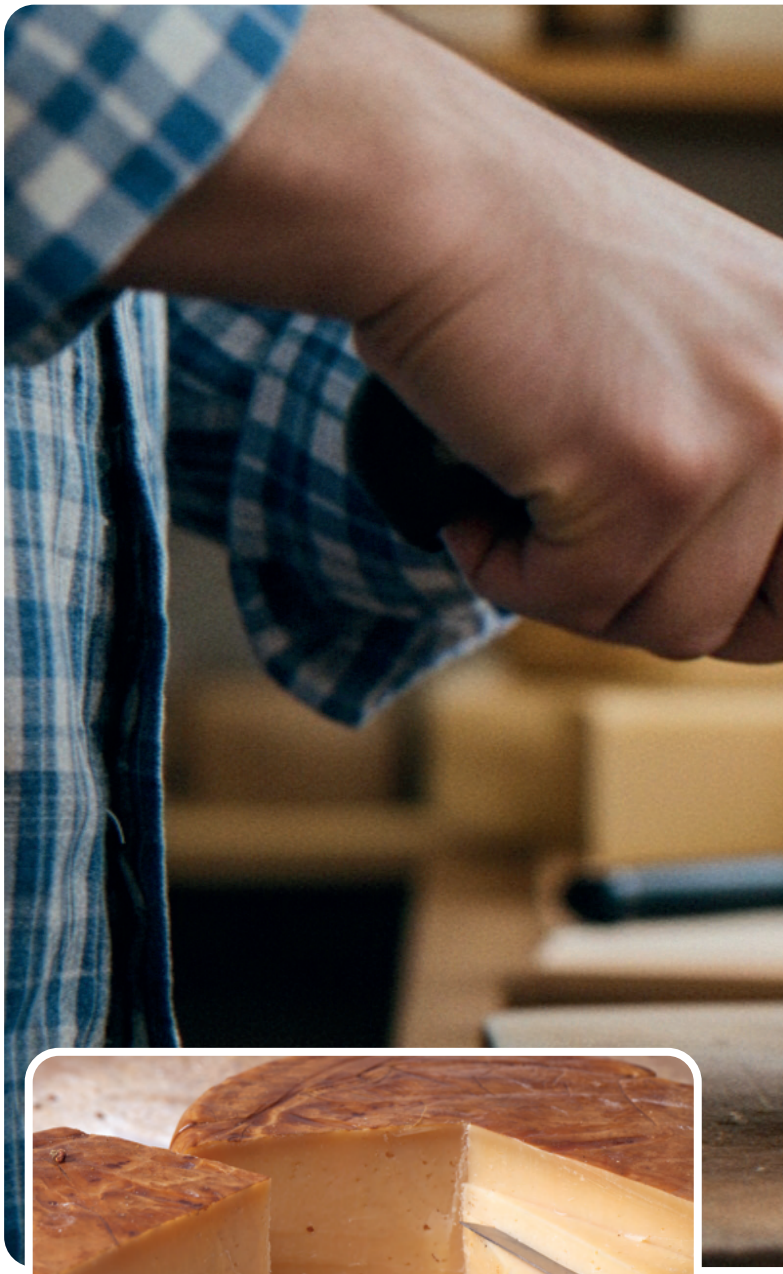
Croome Cheese is lovingly made on our family farm in Worcestershire. A varied range of flavour-packed cheeses that do the hard work so you don't have to!

croomecheese.co.uk 01905 350 788 info@croomecheese.co.uk



Education as a Sales Tool

The world of cheese has myriad skills to be mastered and knowledge to take on board... Here, three experts advise how you can do just that



CONTRIBUTORS



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GEORGE & JOSEPH



TRACEY COLLEY
ACADEMY OF CHEESE



MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI

It's easy for the artisan cheese realm to seem overwhelming; swathes of talented cheesemakers creating growing ranges of fabulous cheese, and the techniques required to sell them at their best both a science and an art... Not to mention the retail tools to utilise in order to give your customer base what they want at any given moment.

There is undoubtely a lot of work to be done, but support is on-hand, and by engaging with this ever-inspiring sector and equipping yourself and your team with the intel to succeed you can make a tangible difference in your cheese counter's bottom line... and potential.

Building confidence in the team – and customer

"Education builds confidence and confidence drives sales," says Stephen Fleming, owner of George & Joseph. "The more I train my team, the more knowledge they have that they are able to pass onto customers to inspire a purchase."

Stephen has found that some people can seem nervous when first entering the shop, and that an open approach can reap dividends – making the cheese counter, which can seem a "scary" thing, more accessible.

"This year I want to teach my team about having open-ended customers so they learn more about the person on the other side of the counter and what they want, as opposed to focusing on just the cheese."

Knowledge about the cheeses, how to care for them and how they can be best enjoyed is key and can allow staff members to have organic discussions with customers about what's in the counter – rather than learning by rote.

Bringing staff into the world of cheesemaking itself, beyond the cheese counter, can play an important role in instilling confidence and in-depth knowledge.





"Cheesemaker visits are a great way to instil knowledge into staff," suggests Tracey Colley, founding director of the Academy of Cheese. "Start with local cheesemakers and if budget or time doesn't allow why not invite the cheesemakers into store to sample cheeses with customers and carve out some extra time for a staff tutorial before opening."

Keeping abreast of industry news is important, says Tracey, so read trade magazines, follow cheesemakers on social media and join the groups, and ask suppliers for updates when ordering. And, of course, The Academy of Cheese has plenty of resources to support your team's learning journey.

"Many of the Academy of Cheese classroom classes are at a cheesemaker so you can get firsthand experience of the milking animals, cheese production, affinage and farm shop sales," advises Tracey.



EXPERT VIEW



"Naturally, we care about what we're selling. You can't do this properly without that. So the curiosity, the learning, the conversations that part is instinctive. But turning that into something useful for customers? That's deliberate. The guides, the way we structure product descriptions, the way we've built things like the Cheesemonger Selection, that's all intentional. It's designed to bridge the gap between what we know and what customers need to feel confident buying"

MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI

Build your own resources

For Mark Kacary, owner of The Norfolk Deli, immersion is the best way to educate oneself on the subject of cheese. "I could have gone down the route many will go down and sit in a classroom to 'learn cheese' but instead I decided to immerse myself in it," he begins. "For the last 12+ years, cheese has been the product I've lived and breathed every single day. That means tasting constantly, speaking directly to producers, understanding how and why cheeses are made, and most importantly seeing how customers react to them.

"You can read books (and I have), you can attend shows (and I do), but as with many things in life the only 'real' way to learn anything is to experience it yourself. the real education comes from standing behind a counter, cutting cheese, selling it, and having thousands of



"Training solo has flexibility with online courses giving 24hr access to resources. Team training can double up as team building; those with experience can share knowledge and skills with others. When tasting cheese in a group, it helps you understand your own palate as well as understanding other palates"

MAKE IT WORK

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF SELLING CHEESE

Cheesemongering is not a simple case of sticking it on the shelf and promoting it well, reminds Tracey Colley, founding director of the Academy of Cheese. "Cheese is a living, perishable ingredient and as such, requires a lot of care and attention to keep those delectable flavours locked in, that texture just right and most importantly, the cheese looking and tasting great," she begins. "Knowledge is key to understanding different cheeses and how they need to be looked after."

Without optimum cheese care, you won't have cheeses to sell – or they will have past their peak, meaning that customers are unlikely to return. "The job of the cheesemonger whether large or small-scale, is to treat the cheese with due care and respect, ensure their products reach the customer in perfect condition and are displayed in a manner that persuades the customer to purchase," Tracey continues. "There are best practices that will keep it, not only safe for consumption, but also in tip-top condition. These include identifying the current condition of the cheese, where best to store the cheese, how to cut the cheese and how best to wrap the cheese."



conversations about it. Let's face it, passing the driving theory test doesn't mean you're a driver."

It has to be an ongoing education, he believes. "If you think you've "learned cheese," you've already fallen behind. Cheese is constantly evolving new makers, new styles, changes in seasonality, milk quality, techniques. Even cheeses you think you know inside out can taste completely different depending on the time of year. You never finish learning and that's exactly how it should be."

Educating customers

"I very much see our job as gathering the knowledge and then to translate it into layman's language," continues Mark. "I do not see it as our job to impress or intimate with references to flavour nuances many may struggle to grasp.

"Everything we do whether that's on the counter, on the website, through email, or through socials is about making cheese more understandable and more enjoyable. That might be as simple as asking the right question: 'What do you normally like?'

"From there, we guide. We suggest. We explain just enough to help someone make a better choice without overwhelming them. The guides we've created, the Cheesemonger Selection, the product descriptions - they all do the same job. They remove the guesswork."

"Everything we do whether that's on the counter, on the website, through email or social media is about making cheese more understandable and more enjoyable"

"This approach builds trust and trust drives everything. If a customer feels confident buying from you, they buy more, they come back, and they tell other people. But there's another side to it as well. Most people don't buy cheese because they don't know what to choose. Remove that barrier, and you unlock demand that was already there."





Fourth-generation Cheesemaking At Its Finest

Great flavour with family at heart

What sets truly great cheese apart is the passion and craftsmanship that goes into making it. Having produced cheese in Shropshire for four generations (since 1922) the Beckett family can certainly say they truly love what they do – bringing excellent, award-winning, remarkable-tasting cheeses to tables up and down Britain.

This heritage and know-how underpins every part of the business today, driving innovation forward, most recently with the development of the newest member of the popular Fox cheese family.

Special Reserve Silver Fox sits at the top of the Silver Fox collection, representing the pinnacle of Belton Farm's Cheddar making. Matured for around 20 months, it offers even more depth and complexity, with this extended maturation allowing the cheese to develop a fullbodied, savoury profile, balanced with subtle sweetness and an unexpected crunch.

A defining feature of Special Reserve Silver Fox is the hands on involvement of third generation cheesemaker Justin Beckett who personally taste tests, grades and assesses each batch. Only those cheeses which meet his exacting standards are approved with his signature. This careful selection process ensures that every traditional wheel delivers on flavour and texture.

Special Reserve Silver Fox has already been recognised with Gold awards at both the World Cheese Awards and the British and Irish Cheese Awards.

"To make great tasting cheese we need the right ingredients: local quality milk, dedicated, skilled people and lots of passion"

JUSTIN BECKETT, BELTON FARM



Grassfed, freeroaming cows contribute to the consistently high quality of the milk, supporting a short and transparent supply chain.

For retailers looking to strengthen their premium Cheddar offer, Special Reserve Silver Fox delivers a compelling combination of heritage, craftsmanship and standout flavour, a cheese shaped by decades of expertise, personally approved by one of Britain's leading modern cheesemakers.

DID YOU KNOW?

Belton Farm cheeses are made using milk sourced from family farms within a 25 mile radius





DID YOU KNOW?

Founded in North Wales in 2001, Snowdonia Cheese Co is a family business whose celebrated cheeses are now enjoyed in over 35 countries across the world

SNOWDONIA CHEESE Co
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

BEHIND THE **BRAND**

For 25 years, Snowdonia have been delighting cheese lovers with its range of colourful and inventive flavour-first truckles. In celebration of its quarter-century of production, we look at what sets this Welsh icon apart.

1 Founders, brothers Richard and John, were originally inspired by the lush surroundings of its North Wales home to craft premium Cheddar and Red Leicester which boasted impressive depth of flavour and a luxurious creamy texture.

2 The range was an instant hit at farmers' markets, agricultural shows and food festivals, with the moreish Black Bomber in particular a sell-out success, and the brand soon added farm shops, cheesemongers and butchers to its customer list.

3 In 2012, Snowdonia began exporting internationally and is now enjoyed around the world.

4 The Snowdonia range was expanded in 2018 to include the perfect partners for its cheeses in the form of chutneys and crackers, and indulgent cheese bakes so that consumers could easily enjoy decadent hot cheese at home.

A Modern Icon

Famed across the world for its flavourful cheeses in signature coloured wax, Snowdonia is celebrating 25 years in style

Snowdonia has long been a failsafe stock for cheese counters. Familiar to many and loved by rafts of consumers it has made a name for itself crafting iconic waxed truckles that brilliantly showcase a heady punch of flavour.

In celebration of its 25th anniversary it is launching Purple Vale, a flavour-packed blend of specially selected mature Cheddar and balsamic vinegar which offers an intensely savoury taste with rich notes of dark fruit and honey, and a satisfyingly crumbly texture.

Handcrafted in collaboration with world-renowned Modena-based balsamic maker Giusti – which boasts a history spanning over 400 years and 17 generations – the cheese is a truly indulgent addition to cheese counters across the UK.

When creating Purple Vale, Snowdonia's famous mature Cheddar is first blended with its Balsamic Caramelised Red Onion Chutney – made using Duchessa Carlotta Balsamic Vinegar of Modena from Giusti – before being finished with the award-winning 3 Gold Medals Balsamic Vinegar of Modena, which is crafted from sun-ripened grapes hailing from the Lambrusco vineyards of Emilia-Romagna that are slowly aged in oak barriques.

Purple Vale's combination of buttery Cheddar and rich, savoury complexity makes for the perfect pairing for wholemeal crackers and a juicy red wine, and its deep purple wax coating pays homage to the Lambrusco grapes within Giusti's balsamic as well as the heather-tinted valleys of Snowdonia's North Wales home.



"Handcrafted in collaboration with world-renowned Modena-based balsamic maker Giusti, Purple Vale is a truly indulgent addition to cheese counters across the UK"





SNOWDONIA
CHEESE Co®

PURE CHEESE INDULGENCE

Award-winning, handcrafted cheese & accompaniments range using the finest natural and fresh ingredients producing extraordinary depth of flavour.

NEW for 2026: Introducing Purple Vale, our mature Cheddar with caramelised onion chutney and Giusti balsamic vinegar of Modena.

SCAN FOR MARKETING SUPPORT & SALES ENQUIRIES

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS



A Tasty New Chapter

Harvey & Brockless's latest launches are sure to delight thrill-seeking cheese lovers

The British fine cheese customer's appetite for richly indulgent cheeses shows no signs of waning, and Harvey & Brockless has relaunched its popular Delilah cheese just in time for enjoying al fresco during the warmer months.

This new and improved version is in an updated log format, making it more versatile than ever, and its triple cream texture is sure to wow customers seeking a decadent flavour and texture to pair with refreshing wines and summery dishes.

It also makes a delightful addition to cheeseboards whatever the weather; paired with a fruity chutney to offer richness and tang, it's a surefire crowdpleaser with customers young and old.

Delilah has an enviable heritage, too – created by George Bramham at Harvey & Brockless's very own cheesemaking facility in Worcestershire, Cheese Cellar Dairy, it is made using locally-sourced cows milk and artisan production and maturing methods.

Also in the range are five goat's cheeses: Ashlynn, Blanche, Trufflyn, Luna, Clara and a goats curd, as well as cow's milk cheese Greta.

Plant-based innovation

Customers following dairy-free diets are invited to experience the Julienne Bruno range – a game-changing selection of unctuous plant-based cheeses that are perfect ingredients for chefs. The range covers Crematta, Superstraccia and international award-winner Burrella; all decadently creamy and versatile, Superstraccia and Burrella are delicious served with pasta or salads, while Crematta makes for an incredible dairy-free tiramisu.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cheese Cellar Dairy is celebrating a milestone 10 years of production. Since its inception, the dairy has won awards from across the cheese industry













1.75 MILLION
the average number of Comté wheels produced annually

Over 800 Years of Storytelling

With its renowned heritage and iconic flavour, Comté is a cheese counter classic around the world

With its rich history and heritage, there are endless fascinating stories about Comté cheese for you to share with your customers, giving them a glimpse into a wonderful world that they can be a part of, with a cheese tasting experience like no other. And stories that they can recount to their loved ones over the cheeseboard or dinner table.

One of the most exciting parts of stocking Comté is the different ages available. Imagine creating a cheeseboard solely with Comté, where every piece looks and tastes different from the other. So how is this unique cheese made?

For more than eight centuries, farmers, fruitières and affineurs of Eastern France's Jura Massif region have been producing the internationally popular Comté cheese every single day of the year.

Its delicious flavour originates from the raw milk of the region's Montbéliarde and French Simmental cows – each having their own 1.3 hectares of land to graze on. The cows eat grass and a wide range of plants and flowers out on the pasture in the summer, and locally harvested hay in the winter, producing high-quality milk and giving Comté its very special taste, scent, colour and texture.

Every day, the milk is brought in from a collection of the nearest local farms and transformed into large 40kg wheels of Comté cheese by small village dairies, known as fruitières. These dairies use the refined skills and expertise passed down from generation to generation, to make sure each batch of the cheese is at its most perfect for consumption.

The wheels are moved to local ageing caves and cellars, where 'affineurs' take care of the wheels of Comté during the ageing process, regularly turning, salting and rubbing each one with brine solution for up to 24+ months. It is down to their experience and skills to decide when the cheese is ready for consumption.

No two wheels of Comté are ever the same, and that's what makes it so special. With 83 identified flavour profiles (as diverse as walnut, buttered toast, artichoke, leather and vanilla), shaped by altitude, season and the expertise of the cheesemaker and affineur, every bite offers your customers something completely unique.

Its AOP status guarantees the highest standards of provenance and quality, while its versatility, equally at home on a cheeseboard, in a gratin or a seasonal salad, gives it genuine year-round appeal. Its ability to melt easily means it can be added to all kinds of recipes, giving each dish a different flavour. For retailers, that means a wonderfully individual cheese that sells itself across every season and occasion.

By stocking multiple different ages of Comté, your customers can experience this first-hand for themselves, giving them the opportunity to decide which age of the cheese they prefer, including whether their palate preference leans more towards a winter or a summer flavour.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each Comté that comes out of the cellar is rated based on different criteria. Cheeses rated from 14-20 receive a green 'clochette' band and those rated from 12-14 receive a brown band



The Comté AOP zone extends over Doubs, Jura, part of Ain and several communes of Saône-et-Loire



Creating an Experience

Cheese selling is about so much more than transactions; it's an opportunity to welcome people into the wonderful world of artisan cheese

Fine food establishments are natural habitats for experiential retail, and with customers likely to spend a little more than they would at a supermarket they are less likely to be content with a crisp transaction – in fact, they could well be seeking value in the form of connection and theatre. By widening the scope of the services that you provide and welcoming customers into your world, you could be well on your way to becoming a destination for cheese lovers far and wide.

At George & Joseph, creating a warm sense of theatre is the name of the game. "We win when we offer something that people can't get elsewhere, either in-store or online," he begins, "and by sharing our expertise and a bit of theatre we can create a sense of occasion that will have people wanting to return."

Retail environments can often feel sterile, but by paying attention to the feel of your shop and creating a space in which people want to linger can reap rewards. "So often people say to us that the shop feels nice to walk into, and that makes me happy." Despite having no background in retail design before creating his own store, Stephen has been able to build an atmosphere which is warm and welcoming before customers even step inside.

"When I really think about it, I've basically created a space that I want to spend time in myself and sometimes that matters more than the cheese. The customer experience begins before they even walk inside with the signage and visual displays in the window," he says. Stephen has been inspired by the hospitality sector over the years, taking tidbits of inspiration from positive experiences he has had while out for meals.



"By sharing our expertise and a bit of theatre we can create a sense of occasion that will have people wanting to return"



"I often don't recall the food I ate, but I always remember the way the place made me feel." This is both in terms of the visual cues and atmosphere of the space, and the warmth of the staff on duty.

"The difference between service and hospitality is that service is often transactional – 'that'll be £5 for that wedge of cheese, thanks" – whereas hospitality is more engaging – 'How's it going? What are you going to use the cheese for, and have you tried this one yet?'" Such an approach makes the process a lot more memorable, enjoyable, and worth coming back for.

Become the host with the most

At La Fromagerie, Patricia Michelson, owner, utilises themes to create an immersive experience in-store. "Have a theme whether it's seasonal, regional or concentrating on a style of cheese and bring in pairings and partners alongside," she suggests. She



EXPERT VIEW



Cheese is a very emotive food – whether it's an oozy melting toasted sandwich or dipping into a fondue. Whether you're cutting open a cheese and tasting or simply comparing three different Cheddars, having the right words and phrases and how you project your subject is vital. You need to practice engaging with your audience and draw them in; the only way to do that is know your subject and understand why you love it

PATRICIA MICHELSON
LA FROMAGERIE



MAKE IT WORK

PATRICIA MICHELSON, OWNER OF LA FROMAGERIE, SHARES HER TIPS ON GETTING CHEESE EVENTS RUNNING SMOOTHLY

"Plan ahead – get a diary of events in place so you can do your homework and get organised"

"Get cheese book authors to come in and do a tasting evening as well as selling their book"

"Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok are all great ways to engage but they need dedication and coverage and that means taking the time to do it. Reels to chat about a particular cheese that's just arrived, or to let people know about an upcoming tasting event"

"A weekly newsletter about the business and what's happening is always a welcome distraction from the day to day – opening up mail with a newsy newsletter and some good photos"

also recommends "inviting a cheesemaker to tell their story and process" – with 'meet the maker' events popping up across the world of food and drink, and cheese being a topic with such colour and detail to share, this is sure to be a winner.

If you have limited resources and a small team, don't worry – you can still make the most of the appetite for events. "The team have their roles – who will create the interesting selection and how it is presented. Who will talk about the cheese and who will pull other products as matches and partners," says Patricia. A communal table to encourage discussion and ideas through the event help to create a warm atmosphere.

Running an event can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. "Don't over-complicate the choices and keep the number of cheeses no more than five," suggests Paticia. "Think about the families of cheese and how they will interact with each other to make it an enjoyable journey experience – but don't talk too long and keep the attendees engaged with discussion."

Think beyond the box

Creating a counter which is attractive as well as being functional is important, and some cheeses create theatre all by themselves, for example Gorgonzola Dolce, which often kicks off a trend in the queue at George & Joseph. "We always have it on the counter alongside pots and a big spoon to scoop it out with, and can guarantee that if somebody is ordering some the next person in line will ask for some too."

Being creative and trying something new – to you and your team as well as your customer base – could well reap dividends. "I'm always trying to think of different ways for people to enjoy their cheese," says Stephen. "It basically comes down to come up with various ways of shoehorning cheese into people's life, whether that be creating an occasion out of a consultation for a wedding cheese or partnering with a local coffee shop to run cheese and coffee pairing events."







TOP PRODUCT



Blacksticks Blue
An award-winning blue cheese renowned for its creamy texture with just enough blue bite to tingle the taste buds.

A New Era for Farmhouse Cheese

Family-run Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses has overcome adversity to enter its most exciting chapter yet, explains Matthew Hall, fourth generation owner



Jon Super/PA

EXPERT VIEW



Whether customers are looking for hard, blue or soft farmhouse cheese, we handmake it using milk from the family herd of cows, goats and local sheep's milk. Our cheese campus marries traditional cheesemaking with technology to protect our craft and consistently produce the highest quality cheese

MATTHEW HALL
BUTLERS FARMHOUSE CHEESES

We've always had a very clear direction as a business, and I believe it is this plus our farming grit and resilience as a team that has allowed us to power through recent challenges and emerge stronger. Our North Star is to make farmhouse cheese with high quality and proven provenance accessible to all, so after the fire which devastated our site in November 2023 we knew that we would find ways to rebuild and protect that craft.

We were honoured to have welcomed His Majesty the King onto our farm to officially open our state-of-the-art cheese campus earlier this year; it was a momentous occasion to draw a line under everything that has happened and to demonstrate that we have made a generational investment into the future of farmhouse cheese – when technology can work in harmony with tradition to welcome more people into the craft of farmhouse cheese, by making it sustainable for the next 100 years without changing recipes or the way it has been done for generations.



Making farmhouse cheese accessible to all

Accessibility is a key mission of ours, both in terms of fellow businesses and consumers. We're proud to say that whatever our customers want in quality British farmhouse cheese, we have it available for them – and that is in large part down to the investment we have made into our cheese campus since the fire. We now nurture our cheese from beginning to end at the dairy – from milk to maturation to packing – meaning low food miles and very little movement for our cheeses. That helps ensure the consistency and quality we deliver in every single cheese we make. It's the capabilities unlocked by our campus that make this such an exciting prospect for our customers. Meanwhile, we welcome the new generation of consumers who are powering a renaissance within farmhouse cheeses. They are demanding more from cheesemakers – who makes it, what does it contain, and do the claims it's making stack up – and we are excited to be part of this new era.

By using the new systems and technology we have on our campus we are able to drive the transparency that consumers are demanding in 2026, whether that be via our direct to consumer channels or new trade site. For example, cheesemongers are now able to order from the dairy direct in just a few clicks – as we expect now in all areas of our lives when ordering online – meaning they can get access to quality cheese from the farm and monitor the progress of that order simply from their phone.











BUTLERS®

FARMHOUSE CHEESES



DRIVING CATEGORY GROWTH THROUGH DISCOVERY & ACCESSIBILITY





100% BRITISH

MILK FROM FAMILY & FRIENDS' HERDS





HANDMADE IN RURAL LANCASHIRE

4TH GENERATION CHEESEMAKERS









Affinage 101

Perry Wakeman, CEO and chief of cheese at Rennet & Rind, and three-time winner of the Affineur of the Year accolade, shares his cheese care and affinage expertise

Affinage is what separates a good cheese counter from a great one. When you mature cheese in-house, you're not just storing stock. You're finishing a product, guiding a wheel through its final chapter so it hits the counter at exactly the right moment.

That's the difference between selling cheese and selling your cheese. Anyone can order from a wholesaler's list, but when you can tell a customer the Cheddar in front of them has been sitting in your own maturing room, turned and assessed week by week until it hit the profile you wanted, that's a story no one else can tell. It builds loyalty, justifies the price, and gives you genuine identity on the high street.

The other thing to say is that you're probably doing a bit of affinage already. Think of it as counter care on steroids. A younger cheese is going to change a fair bit within the shelf life it was supplied with, and you're just trying to find the spot that works best for your customers. Take a small cheese, a batch of ten or so, ideally something pasteurised where the blueprint of how it develops month to month is a little more stable. Taste that cheese every week across its shelf life. Do the basic care, turning, checking,



photos, notes, and monitor the differences. Work out which stage your customers like the most. That's your first maturation plan, and it's the building block for everything that follows.

Affinage shouldn't feel like a mysterious, elite skill. It's a practical craft with deep roots. People have been maturing cheese for thousands of years without digital hygrometers, using attention, experience, and a willingness to learn from the cheese itself. Pick up a cheese, put it somewhere sensible, and start watching what happens.

How to get started in affinage

Start with what you already do. If you receive whole wheels and hold them before cutting, you're already doing a form of affinage. The question is whether you're doing it with intention.





MAKE IT WORK

THE FUNDAMENTALS COME DOWN TO FOUR THINGS: TEMPERATURE, HUMIDITY, AIRFLOW, AND ATTENTION

Temperature controls pace. Too warm and rinds run away, pastes break down, ammonia builds. Too cold and you stall the cheese. Most maturing rooms sit between 8 and 14°C depending on the family.

Humidity protects the cheese. Too dry and rinds crack, wheels lose weight. Too damp and you get unwanted mould and slippery rinds. Somewhere in the 85 to 95% range suits most natural-rind cheeses.

Airflow keeps the environment clean. Stagnant air lets ammonia build and encourages the wrong moulds.

And then attention. Turn your cheeses, check your rinds, note changes, act when something isn't right. Whether it's a whole wheel or a cut piece in the cabinet, the principle is the same.





You don't need a purpose-built cave to begin. A clean, temperature-controlled room with reasonable humidity and airflow is enough. Pick one cheese family you know well, a natural-rind hard cheese is the most forgiving, and pay close attention. Weigh it weekly. Note the rind, the aroma, how the paste feels. The cheese will tell you what it needs. You learn by doing, not by reading.

The cheese care/ affinage connection

They're the same discipline at different scales. Every piece of cheese on your counter is still alive. Enzymes are working, moisture is migrating, the rind is still developing. How you store, wrap, and display that cheese determines whether the customer gets something wonderful or something disappointing.

Potential pitfalls

The biggest challenge is consistency. Milk changes with the seasons, the weather, the herd's diet. A wheel made in March won't behave like one made in August. Learning to read each batch on its own terms, rather than applying a rigid formula, takes time.

Unwanted mould is common. The answer is usually environmental: check airflow, check humidity, keep turning and brushing. Good hygiene isn't about sterility, it's about managing the microbial environment so the cultures you want are winning.

Space and equipment are practical hurdles. Start small, prove the value with one or two cheeses, then build the case for investment. A single well-managed maturing fridge beats an ambitious setup you can't maintain.

The last challenge is confidence. There's no substitute for cutting test pieces regularly and tasting. Build a reference library in your head of what your cheeses should taste, smell, and feel like at different stages. And don't be afraid to cull something that isn't up to standard. Sending out a cheese you're not proud of costs more in reputation than it saves in waste.

Don't forget the basics

The important thing to stress here is food safety. It's easy to get carried away with maturing cheese, so once you've chosen a cheese you want to edge along, get the product specification from the supplier. Work within the confines of that spec sheet, the shelf life, and the temperature advice. Yes, this limits your affinage activity and the levers you can push and pull, but it means you can do it safely.

TOP TIPS

AFFINAGE AT A GLANCE

- It's easy to get carried away with maturing cheese, so once you've chosen a cheese you want to edge along, get the product specification from the supplier
- Build a reference library in your head of what your cheeses should taste, smell, and feel like at different stages
- How you store, wrap, and display that cheese determines whether the customer gets something wonderful or something disappointing

"Affinage shouldn't feel like a mysterious, elite skill. It's a practical craft with deep roots. People have been maturing cheese for thousands of years without digital hygrometers, using attention, experience, and a willingness to learn from the cheese itself. Pick up a cheese, put it somewhere sensible, and start watching what happens"





The PDO Point of Difference

Clawson Farms' Blue Stilton has held a PDO status for 30 years in 2026

Specialist cheese retailers up and down the UK will tell you their customers are more engaged than ever before – especially on the topics of sourcing and sustainability.

Something else they're appreciating, say the team at Clawson Farms, is messaging around local food, reduced carbon footprints and short supply chains. Basically, the less distance from farm to plate, the better as far as they're concerned.

There are some cheeses that can't (unless you live nearby) be made outside of their locale due to strict historical criteria. But this, we think, makes them even more worthy of seeking out.

A prime example is the 'King of Cheeses', PDO Blue Stilton, licensed to be crafted by just four dairies within the boundaries of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

Clawson Farms has been making its Blue Stilton for more than 100 years, celebrating 30 years of PDO status in 2026. Thirty – it seems – is the magic number, because what makes the dairy (in the lush, green Vale of Belvoir) tick, is the very special, close relationship it has with its 30 partner farms, all based within a 30-mile radius (one of them just a short walk up the road).

"That 'local' message is so strong within the business and very important to us," says Kim Kettle, farms liaison director. "We have wonderful relationships with our farmers, who are working in a sustainable way that's better for their animals, the land, and ultimately our customers. We think you really can taste the difference."

Clawson Farms PDO Blue Stilton is fudgy, and a touch crumbly, with deep blue veining and a creamy paste. The flavour is richly umami, gaining a punchier, weightier blue accent as it ages.

"Our graders have many decades of experience between them," says Kim. "Armed with their trusty 'irons' they have some of the most attuned palates in the industry, ensuring every cheese that leaves the dairy is delicious and award-worthy."

While the teams throughout the dairy lean into the brand's heritage, they are constantly looking forward too. Most recently that's involved trialling new pack sizes, including 150g wedges and 50g snack packs to enable greater discovery for a new wave of blue cheese lovers.

"Those have been so successful," says Kim. "Blue cheese is definitely having a renaissance and people are being so creative – even using it in cocktails. Offering smaller formats means shoppers who perhaps haven't eaten it before, can dip their toes into the wonderful world of blues. It's our pleasure to help them enjoy the journey."

EXPERT VIEW



"Blue cheese is definitely having a renaissance and people are being so creative – even using it in cocktails. Offering smaller formats means shoppers who perhaps haven't eaten it before can dip their toes into the wonderful world of blues"

KIM KETTLE
FARM LIAISON

HOW TO EAT PDO BLUE STILTON

1. ***With dark chocolate and digestive biscuits*** – *The bittersweet notes of the chocolate and malty essence of the biscuits bring out some of the finer nuances of PDO Blue Stilton.*
2. ***Quince paste*** – *Quince lets the flavour of Stilton shine through, lending a heady sweetness when you eat the two together.*
3. ***Tokaji*** – *Serve the Hungarian dessert wine chilled with room temperature PDO Blue Stilton.*



DID YOU KNOW?

To celebrate its centenary in 2012, Clawson Farms staff made the world's largest Stilton at 140kg, setting an official world record for serving the world's largest slice of cheese at 110.5kg

CLAWSON
19 FARMS 12
MASTER CHEESEMAKERS

AWARD-WINNING TASTE, CRAFTED BY TRADITION

At Clawson Farms, our award-winning Blue Stilton® is something truly special. Made in the heart of Leicestershire under its Protected Designation of Origin, it is crafted by our master cheesemakers to the highest standards to deliver exceptional flavour, heritage and unmistakable standout appeal.



To learn more about our award-winning Stilton®, crafted with skill, heritage and care, please contact
enquiries@clawsonfarms.co.uk



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