ALL YOU NEED TO SELL CHEESE SUCCESSFULLY

CHEESE BUYER

2024

From the publishers of SPECIALITY FOOD

MAGAZINE

LE GRUYÈRE® SWITZERLAND AOP



LE GRUYÈRE AOP
The True Taste of Switzerland

RENNET & RIND

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WELCOME TO CHEESE BUYER



Welcome to the 2024 edition of *Cheese Buyer*, brought to you by the team at *Speciality Food* magazine. We spend a lot of time thinking and talking about cheese at our HQ, and are proud to have built significant connections with the many wonderful people that work in this delicious community. Because that's exactly what it is – a community. The artisan cheese world is filled with folk who are incredibly passionate about everything they do. From the welfare of the animals and sourcing of milk, to nurturing the landscape and environment, and, most of all, crafting delicious-tasting products.

In this edition, we've got plenty to inspire you as you make those critical buying decisions. In addition to profiling the makers of some of Britain and Europe's bestselling cheesemakers, there are features which we hope you'll find both educational and inspirational.

Our special report is dedicated to regional territorials, celebrating their rich history and heritage. These are some of Britain's oldest cheeses and rightly deserve their moment of glory.

Ten cheese retailers share their sage advice and tips for success at the counter. We discover more about raw milk cheese. And there's an homage to traditional Cheddar.

We hope you find this edition a helpful guiding companion.

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10 THINGS EVERY CHEESEMONGER SHOULD KNOW

From engaging with customers, to expert pairing tips...cheese industry insiders share their advice for success at the counter

No matter if you're a seasoned pro, or a newbie to the wonderful world of cheese, there's always something new to learn. And who better to lean on than your peers and friends? *Cheese Buyer* asked cheesemongers across the UK what sage words they would pass on.

1 MARK RODGERS
CHEESE ON TOWCEST

Firstly, buy two of everything. Cheese will always sell, but equipment will always break. I'd also say, listen to your customers and make sure you're acting on what they ask for. And be honest. If a customer asks for a particular cheese and you don't have it, they'll be happier if you say it's a really good cheese but not to your taste, rather than pretend. They'll see right through you. Finally, you need to budget. Look at your week to date and order accordingly. Don't overstock or panic buy – you'll never make any money that way.

2 DEL LOUIS
AUBREY ALLEN

Getting as many people as possible to try new cheeses is key to understanding what's going to work in the counter, whether that's shop staff, customers or passersby – it all helps. Also, a cheese of the week display provides a focus point in the counter and allows you to promote something unusual, or that has a great story behind it."

3 MORGAN MCGLYNN,
CHEESES OF MUSWELL HILL

Get to know your cheeses. They are special, and they are steeped in history – stories of cheesemakers and farmers – you customers will thank you for your knowledge. You are the link between them and the cheesemaker, and it is a really rewarding part of the job being able to share that precious knowledge.

Also, take your time. Yes, having 50 customers an hour would be great for the tills, but taking your time to get to know your customers is so important. Offering tastings, information and knowledge, and creating a friendly, welcoming place to buy cheese is key. Cheese buying can be a task that some may find daunting due to the overwhelming range out there.

4 ANDY SUMMERS
CURD & RENNET

An important tip for me is being able to understand what customers actually want, and to ask the right questions. We have many customers asking for the strongest Cheddar available, not realising that there are different Cheddar families (from traditional farmhouse to modern creamery). Both have strong examples, but completely different flavour profiles.

5 MARK KACARY
THE NORFOLK DELI

I would say that knowledge is one of the key differentiators between a good cheesemonger and a standard retail shop that happens to stock a bit of cheese. I do not mean that I feel it necessary for everyone to go on an Academy of Cheese course, though.

There is much that can be passed on through experience by



having tried and tested cheese with a variety of accompaniments and pairings that do not come out of a well-worn cheese playbook.

But a cheesemonger is the final custodian of a product somebody created and has lovingly developed over the years. It is our duty to get to know the people who make the cheese (obviously easier with local cheesemakers) so that we can sell it in the best condition possible, and even with a little back story so that the person purchasing it understands and appreciates the difference between an artisan product, and mass-produced products. To put it succinctly, treat the product with the respect and love you would if it were your own, and sell it to the public as if it were your own too.

6 ALEX HUNT
THE CHEESE LOCKER

It may sound obvious, but it's important to have fun with cheese and to understand where it comes from. I find that many customers love to know more about where their cheese is produced and the story of the makers of cheese. When you get a cheese in that you have never heard of and don't know, that's fine, just make it a show. Try the cheese with your customers, get their thoughts on it. Try to make them feel more involved with your business - that they have a say in what you are purchasing. When a customer enters your shop, it should always feel like a new experience.





7 MORVEN KERR
IDLE HANDS SHOP & BAKERY

We find the best thing is to offer samples. Piero deals with the cheese, and cuts it on our counter, and when customers come in, they always ask what it is. So we let them try, and it almost always leads to a sale.

Alp Blossom is a real crowd pleaser. It looks unusual, with the herbs and flowers on the rind, so this is a great one to show to customers. And offering some of our own apricot and ginger chutney or black cherry jam on a cracker with a triple-whipped cream cheese like Brillat Savarin or Delice de Bourgogne is always a winner.

We now have a very knowledgeable customer base who eagerly await our cheese deliveries to find out what's new or back in stock. Engaging the buyer is key. If they are left to their own devices they will stick to old favourites. It is essential to allow them to try new things so they can find a new cheese to love.

8 GEORGE HAMMOND
GEORGONZOLA

For someone with quite a small cheese counter, product rotation is key. We have a core range of hard, soft and blue cheeses, but the rest is always up for debate - from sporadic arrivals, such as Snowdrop from Cote Hill, to Edmund Tew from Blackwoods. I advise you to have plenty of cheese cutting boards. When you are busy you don't want to be rushing around, trying to find a clean board. The same goes to smaller, sampling knives.

And my final piece of advice is to showcase weird and wonderful pairings that you are confident in. Use them to keep your customers talking. This, in turn, also keeps your customers looking around the shop, and has the potential to create impulse purchases. Talking to your customers is massively important, and remembering what they enjoyed last time. This builds trust between you and your regulars.

9 DAGMARA SZTOMPKA
KNOWLES GREEN

It's important for a good cheese counter to have variety. A selection that includes everything from your local cheeses, to a Continental classic. We are big on promoting our local businesses and supporting local farmers.

I also think every good cheesemonger should know what to look for when putting together a cheeseboard, such as matching wines. Make sure you pass on your suggestions before customers leave.

10 GINA DOLCI
FEAST & FROMAGE

Look into what accompaniments pair well with the cheeses on your counter, and try to take it further afield than the typical fig or onion chutney. Think Baron Bigod and chilli jam, or Gorgonzola Al Cucchiaio and honey, or even Cheddar and coffee (yes, it's a thing). Cheese is incredible, but finding the right pairing is magical.

> "Get to know your cheeses. They are special and they are steeped in history - stories of cheesemakers and farmers"

EXPERTS
WHO GO THE EXTRA MILE

Rowcliffe's team of passionate foodies are renowned for their expertise, and for service that goes above and beyond

COMMENTATORS



PAUL HEASMAN



SUNIT MEHTA



TIM COLLINGS







There's a happy camaraderie at Rowcliffe's headquarters. A bonhomie between colleagues who, collectively, boast many decades working at the wholesaler – renowned for its unrivalled knowledge and passion for artisan, specialist cheeses...and more.

Working collaboratively (from the expert, dedicated sales team, through buying, strategy, supplier relations and operations) this is a group of foodies who go above and beyond for their customers every single day. Because working at Rowcliffe is not a job. It is a vocation.

At the beating heart of Rowcliffe are relationships. Between team members and producers, cheese buyers, and food hall, deli and farm shop managers. This is something, says managing director Sunit Mehta, that truly sets the business apart. It's a core principle of the company, founded by Anthony Rowcliffe in 1967 (joined later by son Tim). Anthony felt it was crucial to get to know, and work closely with, Britain and Europe's finest artisan cheesemakers, while taking pride and care in the selection and storage of every piece, and being a guiding hand and source of support for both independent and premium multiple retailers.

"I think Anthony was very pioneering," says Tim Collings, head of sales (independents). "He played such a huge part in supporting British producers, like those territorial cheesemakers such as Appleby's and Kirkham's, from a very early stage. And he introduced cheeses that no one had necessarily seen at that time. It must have been magical, really, taking those cheeses to retailers. Bringing in huge wheels of Comte and Gruyere. His enthusiasm was infectious, and it carries through the business today."

Anthony and Tim were "very big on having area managers", who work regionally across the UK to this day. "A large part of our role, and our USP," says Tim, "is helping set up delis and farm shop counters. We can train their staff, show them how to cut and wrap cheese properly, and help them understand the best way to sell it and how to chat to their customers about it. That aftersales is something that really sets us apart. We stand by those values of customer service and a real, ingrained knowledge of cheese. And it makes a difference. A lot of my customers, I class as friends now."

Championing producers

The Rowcliffe sales team can often be found in Britain's artisan dairies, learning the heritage and nuances of the cheeses they sell, directly from the people who make them. "You see so much dedication going into the products," Tim says. "When you invest in your staff going to the farms and giving that support back, it goes such a long way. Every cheese has a story to tell, and telling those stories, because we know our cheesemakers, is something we are very very good at."

A highly-respected member of the Rowcliffe team is supplier relationship manager, Paul Heasman. With more than 30 years of experience in cheese buying and expert judging, Paul brings an extraordinary breadth of knowledge to the business.

For him, the producers come first. "We always champion the producer, then the product. I think that's the right way round to do it," he says. "These are living, breathing things. The cheeses all have their own personalities, and that comes through from the people. Nice people make nice cheese!"

Paul has, during his career, fostered working relationships (now many friendships) with generations of producers. "With some, we're now onto the third generation since we started working with them. Our







really core supplier base, we've been dealing with for 30 to 40 years plus."

Something these suppliers appreciate, particularly start-ups, is the industry-leading technical team at Rowcliffe, led by Aga Mielcarek. "If there's a start-up wanting to get into the doors of the bigger market," says Paul, "they'll need something like SALSA or SALSA-Plus accreditation. We work with them and point them in the right direction and take them on that journey."

"People know we've got that experience and expertise, and they will come to us for it," adds Tim. "Often people will steer producers to Rowcliffe. Knowing they've worked with us on the technical side gives retailers that extra confidence too."

Brands who've been nurtured in this way include Rosary. "We really helped them get kickstarted," says Paul. "We account for a large portion of their business now. And we've done a lot of work with Kingstone Dairy and Nettlebed Creamery."

Taking stock

The Rowcliffe brochure is expansive, with around 800 SKU's across not only cheese, but charcuterie, cured fish, antipasti, crackers...and even gourmet Italian pastries.

Regularly monitored stock levels and forecasting within the operations side of the business mean orders can be fulfilled swiftly, so the likes of Sparkenhoe Red Leicester, Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire, Brie de Nangis and Roquefort AOP can land with retailers in a reasonable timeline. Special advance orders can also be placed, and Paul is more than happy to be a 'cheese hunter', tracking down varieties customers have tried and loved which might not feature in the Rowcliffe listings.

Smaller retailers also appreciate the wholesaler's low order point, beginning at only £100, allowing new specialist food shops to tap into the artisan market while navigating what their customers and demographic love.

In a bid to further help retailers, Rowcliffe is working with suppliers to release sampling packs throughout this year.

"Sampling is so important," says Tim. "Nine out of 10 times, if someone tries something they will buy it. We're lucky enough that our suppliers are very good at coming forward with samples. They know themselves we'll sell more for them that way."

Best in class

Everyone at Rowcliffe is proud of its own-label Clemency Hall range – a collection of 36 cheeses and antipasti, benchmarked across the industry to be 'best in class'. Only the very very best products, skilfully chosen by Paul and the team, will be stamped with the Clemency Hall logo – from Lincolnshire Poacher, to Keen's Cheddar, Colston Bassett Stilton, and Rowcliffe's exclusive Le Cret Gruyere.

"Covid was a key driver for Clemency Hall," says Paul. More shops wanted to retail pre-packed cheese. That's how it started. We were dealing with farm shops that only had fridges, not counter space, and the idea was to give these retailers a really good range of top quality cheese. Cheeses that have a story, provenance and history."

"They are premium products," says Tim. "They're random weight and hand-wrapped, so they have that artisan feel. We're always looking for new things to bring into the Clemency Hall range, but we're quite strict actually. We're looking for those 'ooh yeah' products.

Anything that will elevate the brand. Everything under the Clemency Hall label is quite special."

Looking forward to festivities

Rowcliffe began its Christmas preparations in April, in anticipation of advance summer orders for festive stock, which fills the warehouse in the latter part of the year. If you're thinking about your December counter, now's the time to get in touch.

The team are working tirelessly to ensure there are some unique new additions across the whole grazing board, sampling everything from truffle cheeses, to blues soaked in alcohol. Contact the sales department to discover how they can help you make your cheese offering even more extraordinary at Christmas, and throughout the rest of the year.



CHEESE THAT DOES GOOD

Golden Hooves leads the way in products that are deliciously regenerative

"We want to shake up the status queso!" These are bold words from First Milk's Leona McDonald, but she stands by them... and the 700 dedicated farms across England, Scotland and Wales which come together to form the brand's Regenerative Co-operative.

First Milk launched its first 'market disrupting', award-winning Golden Hooves cheese a year ago.

Flavour and exceptional quality are crucial to Golden Hooves' success, and customers are loving the rugged, savoury, rich nature of the brand's Mature and Vintage Cheddar (a Gold winner at the recent British Cheese Awards), as well as a newer Red Leicester, with a Smoked Cheddar added in April, and Double Gloucester joining the family in September.

But taste alone isn't what drives the team behind Golden Hooves. It's their desire to reshape the dairy industry, one field at a time, while offering consumers alternatives to mass commodity products.

"We believe people should be able to have something that's good for the environment, good for animals, and good for them without compromise," says Leona.

"It's about getting people to think about dairy. About the person who made what they're eating, and the land it came from."

First Milk's farmers are incentivised to adopt regenerative principles, including grazing their cows, ensuring high animal welfare, minimising or reducing soil disturbance, and encouraging biodiversity. As around 72% of our countryside in the UK is in the custody of farmers "how they operate is really important," Leona stresses.

"We pride ourselves on farming with nature, while using research, science and data for everything we do. We want to be pioneers, and to make improvements that make us better every single day!"

Continual NPD is part of the process, with work ongoing into Golden Hooves butter, and even crackers made using that new butter along with regenerative flour and foraged herbs.

The team are also in the first stages of their Stomp of Approval scheme, rewarding farming members who meet a set of criteria with a 'badge of honour' they can stick on their products to show they're proudly part of the regenerative movement family. "It's just one way we can play our part in spreading the regenerative message," Leona adds.









AN EXPERT AND QUALIFIED PARTNER FOR RETAILERS

Taste the quality of traditionally made, Italian cheese of excellence

With more than 45 years of experience, DalterFood Group is today one of the leading players in the dairy sector. An ambassador of Italian food excellence, it produces traditional Parmigiano Reggiano, Mountain Product, organic, and a variety made only using milk sourced from Italian Pezzata Rossa cows, as well as selecting and distributing a wide range of the best Italian PDO cheeses, such as Grana Padano, Pecorino Romano, and non-PDO matured and semi-matured cheeses, which it reserves for its domestic and foreign customers. Among these is Spinoro, a finely grained hard Italian cheese, produced using a time-honoured processing method, with 100% Italian cow's milk. It is free of preservatives and lysozyme, and the use of microbial rennet also makes it suitable for those following a vegetarian diet. All products are available in different consumer packs and cuts, and can even be customised, to meet all retailer needs.

The adoption of a sustainable business model, environmentally, socially and economically, has allowed the group to expand significantly in the UK, consolidating a strong position in the British dairy market thanks to the direct presence in the territory of the Dalter UK sales subsidiary.

At the core of the group's offer is Parmigiano Reggiano, the most loved and recognised PDO cheese in the world, which is produced directly in its two mountain dairies - Colline di Selvapiana e Canossa and Colline del Cigarello e Canossa, located in the Reggio Emilia Apennines. Two hundred cheeses are processed every day, with different maturations available, from 12 months to over 40 months. The assortment is wide, both in terms of cuts and packaging: from the classic fixed-weight and variable-weight wedge, to grated cheese in doypacks, and practical tubs with resealable caps in different formats such as shavings and flakes, ideal for carpaccio and salads. Each retailer thus sees the most varied requirements for formats and packs satisfied, qualifying its offer to the public. This flexible structure and continuous research and development, through careful and meticulous listening to customers, and constant in-depth dialogue, also allows tailor-made solutions to be formulated.

The entire supply chain is controlled, integrated and sustainable, starting with the milk supply, provided by 40 local farms, to the distribution of the product. This care permeates the process, and has allowed the company to obtain the Animal Welfare certification issued by Certiquality according to the ClassyFarm protocol - the Italian reference organisation for Animal Welfare.

Leveraging its historical know-how, as selector and distributor also of the most popular fresh Italian dairy specialities, DalterFood Group is able to answer and satisfy the trends of the UK market, which is showing an ever-increasing interest in this product category. From cow's milk mozzarella, one of the most iconic cheeses, to buffalo mozzarella with its unique and immediately recognisable flavour linked to its territory (Southern Italy), and burrata, a fresh cheese with an unmistakable shape and a sweet and delicate taste. Proposed in practical consumer packs, they can be eaten on their own, as protagonists of Italian-style aperitifs, or as an ingredient to enrich salads and dress pizzas.

In addition to the daily focus on offering the highest quality products, and the great attention dedicated to the sourcing of all raw materials, there is also a strong and declared commitment to sustainability, well expressed in the group's second Sustainability Report, drawn up according to GRI standards. DalterFood Group fully represents excellence in the food market panorama, constantly committed to guaranteeing the highest quality of the dairy products it supplies, and a qualified partner of the best distribution chains.

> "Parmigiano Reggiano is made sustainably and with integrity, to traditional methods"





GROWING TRADITIONALLY

Carron Lodge's recent aquisitions bring even more delicious choice to its customers

Three recent brand acquisitions have expanded the portfolio of artisan cheeses available from Lancashire producer Carron Lodge, while securing the future of several much-loved products.

The cheesemaker announced the purchase of the Singleton's Dairy brand and premises last December, and is pleased to have also acquired the Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company and Ribblesdale Cheese into the business, due the retirement of their previous owners.

Despite this significant growth, Carron Lodge's director, Tom Rhodes, says, "The team will never waver from our commitment to making the very highest quality cheese using the farm's own milk, providing exceptional personal customer service, and standing by our sustainable vision and values."

The additional lines join an ever-evolving collection of Carron Lodge products, from Lancashire Blue, to classic territorials, varieties smoked over oak in the onsite smokehouse, and a growing range of contemporary cheeses.

"We are a true farmhouse cheesemaker," says Tom. "Sometimes we're milking the cows at 4am and turning it into cheese at 6am. It's as fresh as you can possibly get. And we're always trying exciting new things, leading from the front on innovation with products like our Inglewhite Buffalo Cheese, based on a Pecorino recipe. It can be used as an ingredient, as shavings, or as part of a fabulous cheeseboard."

Some of Carron Lodge's cheeses are now available in a new truckle format, under the Farm Maid branding. And development is ongoing (due to consumer demand and buying habits) into a series of new, lactic, soft cheeses, which are a perfect fit for grazing and sharing.

Being able to offer both heritage and modern varieties has made Carron Lodge one of the makers of choice for buyers in the speciality cheese sphere, and Tom says the business is incredibly passionate about supporting independent channels, with delis, farm shops and independent cheesemongers vital to its success.

He very much believes in the personal touch, and while customers can order wholesale online, Tom says, "We will never replace customer service and telephone lines, which we think are very much part of the future of the business. We want to be able to have conversations with farm shop managers and deli managers to recommend new products and answer queries."

To support the fine food retail sector Carron Lodge has removed all minimum order quantities, offering maximum flexibility, says Tom. "And everything is delivered in our own refrigerated vehicles, so customers are not having to deal with courier companies, which have the disadvantage of using lots of packaging." Drivers are happy to take all packaging from Carron Lodge back to the farm, where it's recycled as part of the company's environmental commitment. Cardboard is shredded and used as animal bedding, negating the need to buy in sawdust, and as a bonus, increasing milk yields.

In further welfare measures, the farm has grown to ensure at least one acre of land per animal. Having plenty of stress-free land to roam produces superb milk, which lends itself to making award-winning cheeses where you can really taste the difference.

In its sustainable mission the business has also "invested significantly in solar panels, and we have plans by the end of this year for the entire farm to be powered by solar energy," says Tom. "We're constantly thinking about where we can go with regards to sustainability. It really does matter."









AVAILABLE IN THE RANGE

- **GRANDMA SINGLETON'S**
Crafted with passion and expertise that has been passed down through generations, this cheese is known for its famously strong and tangy taste and crumbly texture.

- **CHEDDAR GORGE CAVE MATURED CHEDDAR**
An award-winning Cheddar, matured within Cheddar Gorge's natural caves. This environment leads to a smooth and well-rounded texture and complex flavour.

- **RIBBLESDALE GOATS' BLUE**
A creamy Gouda-style cheese with medium blueing - a firm favourite.

- **TRUE GRIT**
A strong mature Cheddar with a gritty texture. Calcium lactate crystals form in the cheese over time giving it a bit of crunch.

- **INGLEWHITE BUFFALO**
This Cheddar-style delight boasts a creamy texture from buffalo milk's high fat content. Wrapped in muslin cloth and sealed with butter, it matures for six months, unveiling a rich, salty, crumbly texture perfect for grating over pasta or shaving onto salads. Made using vegetarian rennet, it has earned accolades at the World Cheese Awards, standing as a testament to its exceptional quality and flavour.

Carron Lodge



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

Our Brands

Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company

the Ribblesdale cheese company

SINCE 1745 SINGLETONS &Co CHEESEMAKERS & CHEESEMONGERS

Farm Maid

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



RED FOX PUTS FUN AT THE HEART OF THE CHEESEBOARD

Belton Farm's revitalised branding is bringing a new kind of cheese lover to the table

Belton Farm's recent rebranding of its 'Fox' range has not only revitalised its image but also captured the taste buds of a younger generation of cheese lovers. With bold and vibrant pack designs featuring the charismatic 'jaunty fox', these cheeses really stand out on the counter. Backed by a dynamic social media campaign, rebranding has catapulted the 'Fox' range to new heights of success. Belton Farm's commitment to innovation and market responsiveness has ensured its products remain relevant and irresistible to a diverse audience.

The success story of 'Red Fox' highlights the brand's ability to add value and excitement to the cheese category. Its popularity as a leading Red Leicester is a testament to Belton Farm's dedication to flavour and quality, which has been the hallmark of the Becketts' family-run business since 1922. Beyond the captivating packaging and bold marketing initiatives lies a deep-rooted commitment to sustainability and quality. Belton Farm's sourcing practices ensure only the finest ingredients are used. Milk is selected from free-range herds, all within 25 miles of the dairy. Farmers prioritise their cows' health, with a diet of grass during warmer months, supplemented in winter with sileage, including oats and grass grown organically at Belton Farm.

The secret to Belton Farm's exceptional flavour lies in its closely guarded cultures, which infuse each cheese with a savoury depth and intensity that keeps customers coming back for more. In addition to the contemporary Fox cheese family, Belton Farm offers a diverse selection of classics, including beloved varieties like Cheshire, Wensleydale and Lancashire, showcasing its mastery of cheese-making techniques. Organic Cheddar and vat-made additive cheeses like Sage Derby and Double Gloucester Onion and Chive, ensure Belton Farm delivers a delightful culinary experience for all cheese enthusiasts.

As the legacy of three generations of cheesemakers, Belton Farm continues to push boundaries while staying true to its heritage. With newfound appeal to younger consumers, the business is poised to remain a leader in the cheese industry for generations to come.







PHOTOS: MATT AUSTIN



COMTÉ – A TRULY CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH

Experience the taste of the mountains in every bite of this exceptional cheese

How much do you know about Comté and its rich heritage? There are so many fascinating stories 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.

For more than 10 centuries, farmers, fruitières and affineurs of the Jura Massif region of Eastern France have been producing the internationally popular Comté cheese every single day of the year. It has been awarded AOC status, which means that it must be made following the traditional rules that generations have been using to create the cheese exclusively in this region, integrating Comté into every aspect of the community life.

Its delicious flavour originates from the raw milk of the Montbéliarde and French Simmental cows of the Jura Massif, each of which has its own hectare 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 single 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 then moved to local ageing caves and cellars, where 'affineurs' take care of the wheels of Comté, regularly turning, salting and rubbing each one with brine solution for up to 24 months. It is down to their experience and expertise to decide when the cheese is ready for consumption.

As a result, one piece of Comté might have a firmer texture with a nuttier taste, and another might be smoother with a more floral flavour, dependent on several factors such as the altitude the cows were grazing at, the time of year, and the skills of the affineur during ageing. Each wheel and bite of Comté is therefore completely unique. No fewer than 83 different flavour profiles in six flavour 'families' have been identified in Comté. These are as diverse as walnut, buttered toast, artichoke, leather and vanilla.

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

Comté is a firm favourite of chefs and home cooks all over the world. With its array of delicious flavours, it is a perfect addition to many mouth-watering dishes, from gratins and risottos to seasonal salads and soups. Its ability to melt easily means it can be added to all kinds of recipes, giving each one of them a different flavour.

If you would like to stock Comté and enjoy a slice of the potential profits of this wonderfully unique cheese, head to comtecheese.co.uk where you can find out more, and download promotional materials.

> "More than 80 different flavour profiles have been uncovered in Comté cheese"





PROTECTING OUR TERRITORY

Uninspired mass production and a lack of knowledge have knocked territorial cheeses from their historical pedestal. But there are makers and cheesemongers dedicated to helping them shine once more. *Cheese Buyer* reports

The world view of British cheese has changed exponentially. Where once we had little to show for our dairy industry other than world-leading Stilton, block Cheddar and waxy parcels of mass-produced crumbly varieties, today's 'new wave' of makers have asserted a revival. Of dreamy, raw milk Bries, unctuous, velvety washed-rind rounds, and melt-in-the-mouth cream cheeses.

But what of the territorials? Those humbly made farmhouse varieties, traditionally crafted (often by women) in lush rural pastures?

These kinds of cheeses (Wensleydale, Lancashire, Cheshire, Single and Double Gloucester, Caerphilly) in their true form were reduced to edible relics following their industrialisation, and positioning in supermarkets as, in most basic terms, different coloured cheeses sharing a mutual crumbly, acidic, unexciting flavour profile.

It is only thanks to a handful of purists, people who truly believe in our cheesemaking heritage, that cheese lovers have access to traditional territorials. They firmly believe these varieties should not only be made more widely in the UK, but that they deserve to be celebrated and guarded more fiercely.

Ben Ticehurst, head cheesemaker and dairy manager at Trethowan Brothers, has a strong stance on the topic of territorials, imploring buyers to keep supporting them, and other cheesemakers to continue to uphold the art of making these products, which so deftly reflect their terroir.

"It's important to keep making this style of cheese because it's pretty unique to these islands," Ben says. "You don't find cheeses with these dynamics anywhere else. The use of mesophilic starters is what makes them. They work best at a slighter cooler temperature, below 40C generally – and that gives a distinctive character that's typically drier and more crumbly, but with that slightly more acidic quality.

"Obviously now they're in the minority and in danger of disappearing." The problem, he believes, is that territorials don't lend themselves well to mass production, where they lose the very qualities that make them appealing to begin with.

"You can hardly find cheeses like Caerphilly in the supermarket anymore. Mass produced Caerphilly was flavourless, very dry and demineralised and, if I'm honest, not particularly pleasant."

Artisan made territorials, on the other hand, Ben adds, are "far from being boring".



"There's so much flavour and enjoyment, but you have to taste them when they've warmed up. Then you can appreciate just how delicious they are. In the excitement and rush of the new, we're not celebrating the traditional cheeses – we're overlooking them, and industrialisation has done us a disservice!"

Why you should be stocking territorials

Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy has been passionately advocating for Britain's farmhouse territorial cheeses for many years, and has become an arbiter for change in the industry, helping to foster fledgling territorial brands, while putting them on the map with his customers.

"I just think we have a reputation for making some of the best cheese in the world," Andy says. Though, he admits, for a long time cheese



counters were dominated by continental cheeses and the odd wheel of Stilton, "in the last 10 to 15 years we've had this renaissance of small farmhouse cheesemaking."

The majority have erred towards French styles, but that's largely, he thinks, because we had a spell of producing cheeses that were perhaps a bit "standard", and new cheesemakers wanted to set themselves apart.

However "ask any cheesemonger who's been doing their job for years and they'll tell you they gravitate to territorials. They're not up front or sexy, but they are rich and complex. The other thing I think about good old-fashioned territorials is they are literally milk. When you buy a Brie or a blue cheese you're getting a lot of flavour from the mould or adjuncts, but a territorial is showcasing the milk in its real form. The milk is so different from farm to farm. For me, that's really exciting."

These makers, Ben says are "not hiding behind anything. They're part of Britain's cheese history, and that's something we have to keep alive."

Choosing your cheese

Mathew Carver, who runs dedicated cheese restaurants in London, including Pick & Cheese, says the amount of British cheeses buyers have access to in the category today is dizzying. "When I started, I said I'd only use British cheese and there wasn't much to pick from, but now we have too many choices!"

If you have a small counter your mainstay territorial cheese, he says, should probably be Cheddar. "It's one that less adventurous cheese eaters will try. It gives them a safer starting place, and then they might be willing to try something else.

"The most interesting thing we found with Cheddar is people intrinsically think it's boring. But get them to try proper, clothbound Cheddar, and they can taste the difference quite significantly. The same with Caerphilly and Lancashire. People have tried really poor versions and say they don't like them, but if they try a well-made one it's a totally different experience."

One of Mathew's favourite examples of a territorial cheese is Gorwydd Caerphilly. "I'm a massive, massive fan of that cheese. I think it's incredibly well made. You get this really interesting cheese with three parts to it – from a chalky, crumbly centre, to the melting part underneath the rind that's a bit different, and this delicious rind that's almost suede in texture."

Mathew is a huge fan of Keen's Cheddar too, which is a regular fixture on his menus. "It's a fantastic raw milk, clothbound Cheddar. Occasionally we have a Westcombe's smoked Cheddar as well. I'm a bit of a purist when it comes to Cheddar, but people really do love a smoked cheese!"

Andy has a penchant for Wensleydale and Lancashire cheese. "Industrialisation meant they became crumbly, acidic cheeses that lost their reputation. But now we've got Stonebeck, Kirkham's and others. I could eat them all day. They are cheeses you could just consume for breakfast, for lunch in sandwiches, or put on a cheeseboard, and the quality ones shine through. Wensleydale, especially, is a big part of our shop."

A stand out Red Leicester could be a fantastic 'gateway' territorial to get your customers hooked, says Rennet & Rind's Perry Wakeman, who adds Sparkenhoe is "a fantastic example of how a Red Leicester can be. It blows people's

> "It's important to keep making this style of cheese because it's pretty unique to these islands"







minds. They've been getting a selection pack from a nameless supermarket, or had a slab of dull red before, and all that is is Cheddar with food colouring in."

Give them 'proper' Red Leicester "at 21 months and people will think it's next level!"

Duckett's Caerphilly, made at Westcombe Dairy, is another favourite with Perry and his customers. "I love that one," he says. "They used to mature it under their house. You'd go downstairs and they had a cellar – that's where I first fell in love with their cheese. There's just something about the way the cheese is connected to the land."

Gorwydd Caerphilly, he adds, is one of the most accomplished artisan cheeses he's ever tried. "Every time I've had it, that cheese has been utterly perfect. The guys nail it. For me that is a shining example of a territorial. And people know Caerphilly. They understand it. There is a demand for it."

The challenges of selling territorials

Our preference for European-style cheeses presents a challenges for the cheesemonger, says Mathew because "the thing with territorials is they are quite subtle. They're not like the big, punchy cheeses and I think, off the bat, people aren't drawn to that." Often this means they can be overlooked.

Perry agrees. "The cheese industry has been trying to get territorials back on the map forever. I think we bang on this drum with rose-tinted glasses because we are bastions of the protection of our heritage." When actually cheesemongers and makers need to be thinking, "how are we going to sell more of these cheeses? How are we going to get the younger audience to engage with them?"

As well as the allure of continental styles, Perry adds the

> "Ask any cheesemonger who's been doing their job for years and they'll tell you they gravitate to territorials"

British palate has become more attuned to savoury and umami flavours in the last 15 years. It's what they crave from their cheeseboard – and they have more options than ever before. No longer is a grazing platter a simple wedge of Cheddar or Wensleydale with a few slices of apple and a chunk of bread.

This means you have to put more effort in at the counter. "If someone puts a big, flavoured wax cheese in front of you that's short and sharp and ticks all the boxes in two seconds, it's going to get sold. Then, on the other hand, you've got cheeses where you need a long conversation, taking someone through a mini tasting. It's easy to understand why some of them are going extinct. I hate the thought of that!"

Perry thinks the term 'territorials' is a turn off and "counter-productive" to selling artisan British farmhouse cheese. "What I train in my delis, and I might be pitch forked by the cheese community for saying this, is that no one ever comes in and says 'have you got any territorials?'.

"I think the best thing we can do to support these cheeses is to ditch the territorial 'brand', that is a cheesemonger term covering how we group them up. It doesn't appeal



to the general public."

What does create inspiration, though, is "for example, with Wensleydale, letting them know that the Wensleydale they have been eating for the last 15 years flavoured with cranberries or tiramisu, is a completely different product."

Andy thinks adding more makers to the small list of territorial producers in the UK could help the sector, allowing cheesemongers to create displays where there are multiple examples of a specific type of cheese for customers to sample.

"I think Graham (Kirkham) is the last farmhouse maker of Lancashire cheese. And 10 years ago, when we set up, there wasn't one Cheshire cheese being made in the whole of the Dales. Now they are resurfacing, which is a positive thing," he says.

Andy would be delighted to see more examples of Cheshire and Lancashire Cheese. "And, this might be controversial, but I'd really like to see more Sage Derby. It's one of Britain's oldest cheeses and is a classic. We don't do any flavoured cheese, but putting sage in a cheese is historic, and it would be nice to see another quality one of those on the market as a nod towards British traditions."

Engaging your customers

Stocking really good quality examples of territorials, and explaining more about the people that make them really works, says Andy, who adds that these cheeses are the biggest sellers in his shop, being something "people are less likely to find elsewhere. They can buy a piece of Cheddar in a supermarket, but if you give them a taste of artisan Cheddar the difference is astronomical."

Doing 'micro tastings' of territorials is a nice way to put them on customers' radars, says Perry. Get them to understand what a variety made using time-honoured methods, really tastes



> Get some pictures of Mrs Kirkham and Lucy Appleby and put them by the cheese to support the farmers and their social history

like. "When people stop to engage with these cheeses their profiles change completely. Nine out of 10 times they are blown away, but it requires a lot of engagement."

The majority of territorial cheeses are fresh and lactic. "And if you don't dig around in what that acidity is, be it sour cream, yoghurt or a touch of mushroom, everyone thinks of them as lemony cheeses, and it can be hard to differentiate them."

When training deli staff Perry advises them to "ramp up" conversations. "They need to let customers know Wensleydale is one of the oldest cheeses we make. Tell them how it's changed so much, and how the one they know (that's vac packed and tastes like watery lemon), is miles apart from this one. That what they find in the supermarket is not representative of how good our cheesemaking is. Get them engaged with that aroma of summer meadow grass. Territorials need quite a bit of engagement, getting people to pause and think about what's in their mouth."

Perry is not an advocate of pairing these cheeses with anything – letting their subtle flavour profiles do all the talking. But Mathew has found, in his restaurants, that interesting pairings have led to customers giving territorials a try.

"For us, we've found it's sometimes what you put with cheese that helps its chances of getting picked," he says. "Like Stilton. We serve that with chocolate brownies. And Lancashire cheese with fruit cake. That's more popular than when we put it with a simple jam or chutney." Offering a few pairings in store, so customers can imagine their cheeseboard experience, and be inspired "can help push their boundaries".

Above all else, Andy says demonstrable pride is one of the best ways to clinch a sale. "Be proud of Britain's cheese industry."

These are cheeses "developed by farmers' wives in their kitchens, and we need to showcase the influence women had (and still have) on the industry. Get some pictures of Mrs Kirkham and Lucy Appleby, pictures of those old family farms, and put them by the cheese to support the farmers and their social history. You are selling a slice of our past, and that makes a huge difference."





SOPHISTICATED NEW LOOK

Snowdonia Cheese Co has revealed a bold brand refresh

Ask any consumer about cheese truckles and there's one name that will stand out – Snowdonia Cheese Co. Snowdonia has become synonymous with the category both in the UK and internationally, with its products recognised for their consistent quality, from the savoury bite and creamy texture of original recipe Black Bomber, to the intensely nutty, distinctive-tasting 18-month aged Red Storm.

To mark the brand's ongoing success, the team has just revealed its new look. A year in the making, and the first refresh for the Snowdonia Cheese Co since 2018.

Commercial director, Richard Newton-Jones, says a great deal of time, thought and care has gone into the refresh, to premiumise the brand further, while celebrating Snowdonia Cheese Co's roots in the wild, ruggedly beautiful North Wales landscape.

"For us, it was also about pulling out the values of the brand, and communicating them," Richard adds. Colour choice has been key. "You've got the slate blue because there's slate everywhere you look across North Wales. And, in terms of the gold colouring, that's inspired by the summit of Snowdon, and the golden sunsets you see there."

When it comes to imagery there's a sense of grounding, and rooting, illustrating several key elements. "One is the mountains," says Richard. "Which is obviously the landscape of North Wales where we're from, and where our products are made.

Then the farmhouse, again, signifies the family, the place, and the people, with the windblown tree and chimney smoke rising."

Incorporating that sense of 'people' was essential to the new look, says Richard. "We're a family business, but also a people business. Our dedicated team are fantastic, and we're all passionate about food and our provenance."



There's already been a "hugely positive" reception to the refresh, with Richard saying he's thrilled that customers and consumers are "as passionate about the brand as we are".

Truckles as a format have really taken off in the UK, with cheese expert Charlie Turnball saying they are an integral part of the modern independent cheese and deli counter. Snowdonia Cheese Co leads the way in the category, says Richard, predominantly because "we really care about quality.

Whenever we are introducing a new product line, it has to give us the 'wow' factor or we don't bring it to market. We're always researching new flavours and innovating, and a lot of resource goes into development, so everything reaches our very high expectations."

That unwillingness to waver from being exceptional, is what has led Snowdonia Cheese Co to be voted best British cheese brand six times, with more than 130 awards both on home soil, and globally, to its name.

"We're always thinking about the experience," Richard says. "Making sure the products look great, that the service our customers receive is taken very seriously, and that there's excitement for the consumer experience."

There certainly was excitement last September when Snowdonia Cheese Co introduced its innovative Cheese Bakes, which have become an instant hit with shoppers for their look, ease of use, and delicious flavour profiles.

A series of new promotional and marketing materials is coming soon for the range, with a third flavour to be introduced later in the year, in time for the festive buying season.

"They are so popular. They're 150g portions, in a terracotta dish, which retains the warmth, and they cook in the oven in 20 minutes, or in the microwave in 2.5 minutes," says Richard.

A Welsh Rarebit combines Black Bomber with wholegrain mustard, craft ale and Worcestershire sauce, while Rock Star is melted into French Sauvignon Blanc for a fondue-style offering. Both ideal for grazing platters and al fresco dining and dipping this summer.

THE SNOWDONIA CHEESE CO RANGE INCLUDES

- **BLACK BOMBER**
A powerful, mature, creamy and bold cheese, with layer after layer of savoury flavour. Very distinctive and a bestseller.
- **ROCK STAR FONDUE CHEESE BAKE**
A blend of cave-aged vintage Rock Star Cheddar with Sauvignon Blanc and cracked black pepper. Bakes in a terracotta ramekin in only 20 minutes.
- **GREEN THUNDER**
A mouth-watering combination of Snowdonia's signature Cheddar with aromatic garden herbs and roasted garlic.
- **TRUFFLE TROVE**
Mature Cheddar combined with luxurious black summer truffles.
- **BEECH WOOD**
A deeply flavoured naturally smoked Cheddar.
- **PICKLE POWER**
Inspired by a classic ploughman's lunch. Mature Cheddar with a punch of pickled onion.



Further NPD was achieved with the launch of three types of crackers, designed to perfectly complement the cheeses.

And Richard says there are more "exciting new things" to come later in 2024, but you'll have to "watch this space".

Snowdonia Cheese Co thinks letting consumers try its products is key, so a wide range of sampling kits and point of sale information is available. Get in touch to find out how to bring them to your store.

> "A lot of resource goes into development, so everything reaches our very high expectations"

PURE CHEESE INDULGENCE



Award-winning cheese handcrafted using the finest natural and fresh ingredients producing extraordinary depth of flavour and creaminess.

snowdoniacheese.co.uk



> The rules which govern the consistency and quality of Le Gruyère AOP ensure that the finished product has the unique and subtle flavours which lift it above anything machine-made

A SLICE OF PURE TRADITION

Le Gruyère AOP is a source of great pride for the skilled artisans who produce this edible expression of nature and time

The legend of Le Gruyère AOP rests on a bedrock of tradition and history. The iconic cheese has been made in the Gruyère region and then in the Swiss cantons of Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Jura, Vaud and the Bern area since the twelfth century, which has allowed plenty of time for the cheese to reach its present – some would say perfect – state. But, of course, it's the taste of Le Gruyère AOP which has ensured its longevity and present fame. Ranging from delicately floral to deeply nutty, these flavours originate in the milk of the Alpine cows and this milk achieves its unique flavours because of the lush hillside grasses on which the animals are fed.

The small but interesting variations in the flavours of Le Gruyère AOP are the result of cows being fed on rich grass in the summer and hay in the winter. No silage is used and nor are any preservatives or additives. Le Gruyère AOP is an entirely natural, artisanally-made product, which is made with animal rennet and which is naturally gluten and lactose-free.

Quality is king

At a time when provenance is so important, Le Gruyère AOP's is impeccable. The 160 small dairies which produce the cheese (often making only 14 wheels daily) are governed by the PDO specifications which ensure that the cheese is consistent, made to the highest standards possible and entirely traceable, from the cows which supplied the milk, right through to the affineur who aged it and beyond.

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

An international favourite, made by artisans

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

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



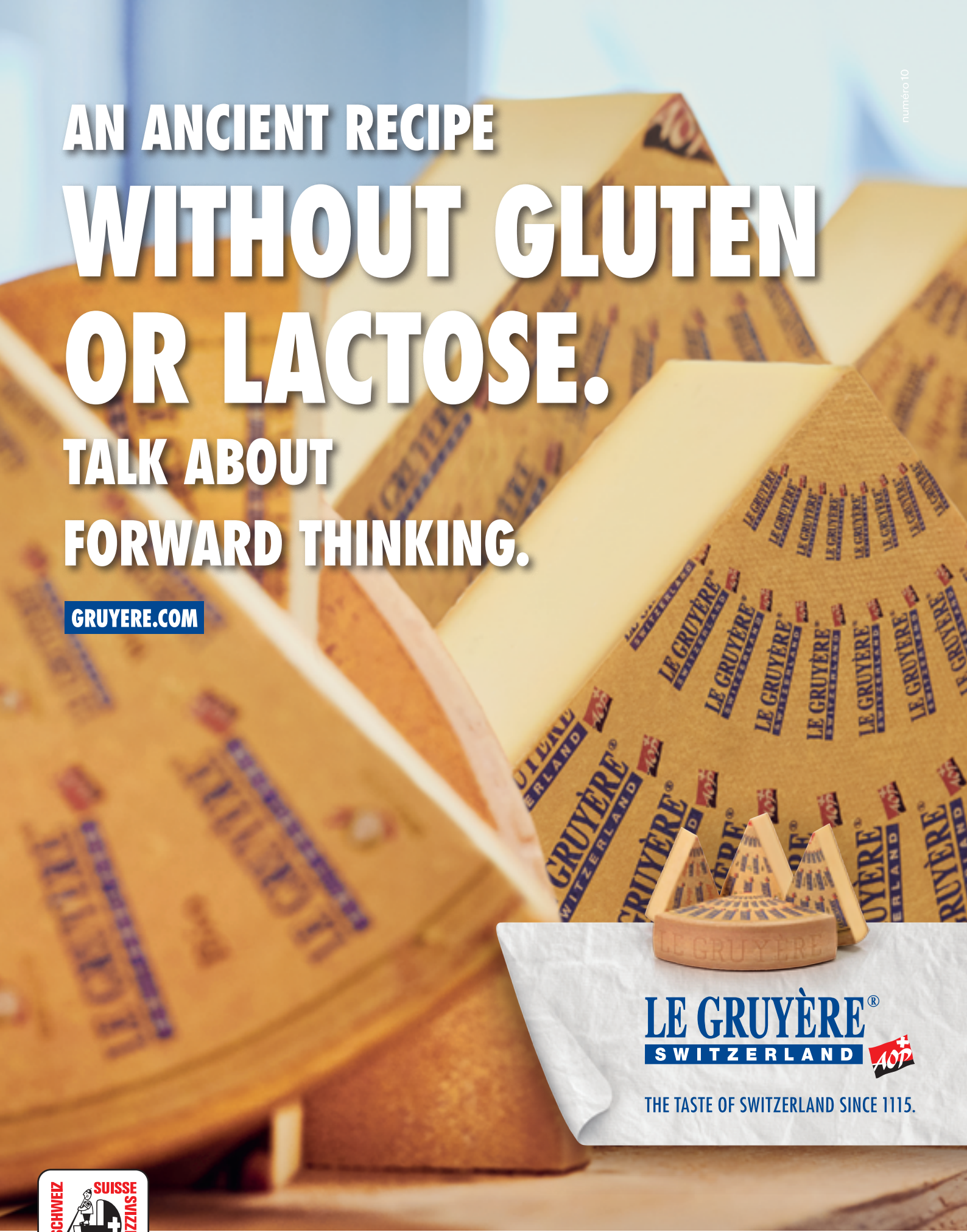
STOCK ONLY GENUINE LE GRUYÈRE AOP

British retailers interested in stocking Le Gruyère AOP can be assured not only of traceable provenance, but also of the authenticity of the product. This is achieved by the casein mark which appears on every wheel, along with the date of production. On a genuine wheel, the words Le Gruyère AOP appear, together with the number of the producing dairy. The dairy which produced the cheese can be easily identified at gruyère.com

numéro 10

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A FAMILY OF FLAVOUR

Affineur Walo - the renowned cheese dynasty with over a thousand awards

For six generations, the von Mühlenen family has been passionately dedicated to producing excellent award-winning Swiss cheese. Since the 1970s, their cheeses have also captured the English market, where they have been granted a multitude of prizes at prestigious competitions. Especially noteworthy is Affineur Walo's three-time honour as the maker of the "Best Cheese in the World" at the World Cheese Awards - a proud moment for the family.

Equally impressive is the success story of their cheeses at the US World Cheese Championships, where they have won numerous gold medals and the title of "World Champion Cheese." To this day, the von Mühlenen family's cheeses continue to uphold their quality standards in international competitions.

In an interview, CEO Walo von Mühlenen revealed what makes the family's cheeses so special citing the following five key factors as essential to their enduring success:

- The meticulous selection of outstanding dairies and cheeses. Long-standing partnerships with top dairies defines the family business, with some relationships spanning generations.
- The uncompromising quality policy. Only cheese that meets strict quality criteria leaves the ageing cellars.
- The commitment to flower meadow cheese made from natural raw milk. The goal is to create cheese that is distinguished not by its salt content, but primarily by its rich, flowery aroma.
- The loyalty to proven family recipes, nurtured under the "Affineur Walo" label. The newly launched "Antoine the Cheese Artist" label refreshes recipes from the 17th century.
- The purity law. Low intervention treatment of the milk is essential to preserve its full flavour, natural nutrients, and lactic acid bacteria.

To ensure consumers a perfect taste experience, the von Mühlenen family places great importance on selecting their distribution partners. Only specialist businesses that guarantee the highest standards in storage and advice are permitted to sell the exquisite cheese. In England, The Fine Cheese Co, Bath, is responsible for the exclusive distribution to specialist retailers. Interested resellers are invited to contact Fine Cheese Co or directly reach out to the von Mühlenen family.





PERFECT PARTNERS

Great artisan cheese stands alone, but it's also nice to offer a few tasty little extras to take it to the next level



STORNAWAY SEAWEED SHORTBREAD STAG

Perfectly balancing sweetness with sea salt and seaweed, these biscuits have a deliciously different taste that works a treat with goats' cheese.

stagbakeries.co.uk



GLUTEN FREE FIG & SUNFLOWER SEEDED TOASTS OLINA'S BAKEHOUSE

Crisp, tasty toasts absolutely packed with berries and seeds, and produced in small batches. Free from gluten.

gourmetfood.com.au/uk



BEETROOT & HORSERADISH CHUTNEY HAWKSHEAD RELISH COMPANY

A customer favourite, this maroon-coloured chutney combines sweet grated beetroot with onions, a hint of fresh horseradish and sweet raisins.

hawksheadrelish.com



ISLE OF MULL CHEESE BISCUITS – HARISSA WITH CHILLI AND CUMIN ISLAND BAKERY

Melt-in-the-mouth organic biscuits combining savoury Isle of Mull Cheddar with harissa, chilli and earthy cumin.

islandbakery.scot



AROMATIC MEDLAR JELLY TRACKLEMENTS

Brings a delicate fragrance to the cheese plate, and a classic accompaniment particularly for hard and blue cheeses. For every jar sold 50p goes to projects to save bees.

tracklements.co.uk



PUMPKIN & SUNFLOWER SEED SOURDOUGH CRACKERS PETER'S YARD

These snappy sourdough crackers are made with the finest ingredients and will work perfectly alongside all cheeses and dips.

petersyard.com



CHEESE MAKER'S PICKLE COTTAGE DELIGHT

Just the ticket for the cheeseboard. A delightful blend of berries, rhubarb, plums, crunchy carrots and onions.

cottagedelight.co.uk



STICKY FIG CHUTNEY GODMINSTER

Deep, rich, and filled with fresh figs. This crunchy, sticky chutney is a game-changer when paired with truffle cheese, or alongside game dishes.

godminster.com



BEETROOT & THREE SEEDS VEGGIE THINS KALLO

Striking beetroot-flavoured chickpea crackers made with quinoa, nigella and chia seeds.

kallo.com



SMOKY TOMATO CHUTNEY WILD & FRUITFUL

Made with ripe summer tomatoes, caramelised garlic and smoky spices. Ideal with cheeses, or barbecued meats, or even stirred into sauces and pastas.

wildandfruitful.co.uk



THE NON MANGO MANGO CHUTNEY CANDI'S CHUTNEY

A traditional Kashmiri mango chutney – made with East Anglian Bramley apples for lower food miles. Excellent with cheese or alongside curries.

candiscupboard.com



SWEET & SOUR PINEAPPLE CROOKED PICKLE CO

Juicy pieces of pineapple, pickled with chillies, Szechuan pepper and turmeric. Deliciously different.

crookedpickle.co



STICKY PICKLE STOKES SAUCES

A big hitter from this brand, combining their blend of vegetables with a sticky, spicy, sweet concoction made from molasses and treacle.

stokessauces.co.uk



WHOLEMEAL & EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL CRACKERS SNOWDONIA CHEESE CO

Complete your cheeseboard with these malty crackers, handcrafted in small batches using stoneground wholemeal flour.

snowdoniacheese.co.uk







THE NEW CONTINENTAL CLASSICS

Which direction should you be taking your European selection in? *Cheese Buyer* investigates

Unless they're steered to a particular country or theme, modern British cheese counters have a distinctly different look and feel from 20, or even 10, years ago.

Back then customers could expect a raft of 'exotic' selections drawn largely from dairies and manufacturers across France, jazzed up with a sprinkling from Italy (usually just a Gorgonzola), and backfilled with a few British Cheddars or territorials.

Today many cheesemongers feel a strong obligation to support the 'new wave' of makers that have emerged across the UK over the past two decades – from the valleys of Wales, to the craggy pastures of Scotland, and creeks and caves of the West Country.

This is a contemporary food revolution that has put our isles on the cheese map, demonstrating a breadth of skill, passion and heritage pride.

But, many cheesemongers will add, you ignore the classic and up-and-coming European cheeses at your peril!

Look to the Alps

Dan Williams of Godfrey C Williams & Son says 80% of his counter is British, largely because customers are delighted to find 'home grown' counterparts to try. "For example, we now sell more Beauvale than Gorgonzola Dolce, and we do have Roquefort on the counter, but we sell a lot more Mrs Bell's Blue from Shepherd's Purse in Yorkshire."

The 20% of fridge space left, therefore, Dan says, has to reflect the creme de la creme of Europe – cheeses that stand out over and above what we are now able to produce on our own shores.

In addition to premium Comte, Gouda and Gruyere, he is increasingly looking to new classics "like Kaltbach – a creamy Alpine cheese. That's a really good one that's picked up a customer following with us. And Beemster, an 18-month-old Gouda, that's a bit like a step up from aged Gouda like Old Amsterdam. People are trying these cheeses and challenging their own perceptions. And I, personally, like hearing about and discovering new and exciting modern cheeses that challenge the old world."



Dan is inspired, for his European stocking decisions, by the series of regular themed events the shop holds, focusing for an entire month on a style or part of the world. "It's a really good way to pitch out different cheeses," he explains. "I know I'm guilty at home every week of going for the same cheeses from my own fridge. It's always good to challenge what customers have and let them try something new. We enjoy it too."

This year the deli will zone in on Spanish, German and Italian cheese, but most recently was very successful in bringing an Alpine flavour to the shop floor.

"I love Alpine cheeses," says Dan. "We carried a good range already, from Le Gruyere to Fontina and Taleggio, but we wanted to explore cheeses that were not so known, and bring them to our customers."

Working with specialist London supplier, Jumi, the deli saw a huge amount of interest in these varieties. So much so, in fact, that several of





the varieties sampled have been chosen as mainstays in the counter. These include Aarewasser. "It's a Swiss, Raclette-style cheese, but the point of difference is it has a higher fat content, so it's more buttery. Then we had Apres Solais, which is a Gruyere style with a bit of crunch and a good depth of sweet and savoury flavour. It's a really interesting one with herbaceous notes, almost like the fresh, tomato greenery. That sold particularly well. We had a 6kg wheel and sold half of it on a Saturday, and we're only a small shop!"

A taste of Italy

France is often the first port of call for mongers expanding their Continental collection, but it's well worth veering over the border into Italy says Francesco Lentini of Gastronomica. "We've got big variety across cow's, sheep's and goats' milk!"

The specialist retailer reports huge growth in two particular products – Burrata and Pecorino – as consumers (especially those who've bought into the pizza oven craze) seek to bring authenticity to their pizzas, pasta dishes and salads.

Burrata, like nduja sausage, is a particular customer favourite. "And ours is very popular all over the world," adds Francesco. "Also, buffalo Mozzarella is always selling well, and Pecorino Romana, for the real carbonara. It's getting famous everywhere."

Pecorino could be the one to watch in 2024 as more chefs choose to use it as they replicate the traditional recipes of Sicily, or the regions of Lazio or Tuscany. Bringing a salty, umami flavour to the table, Francesco says, "We've been selling a lot of Pecorino since we started in Borough Market 20 years ago. A lot of Pecorino Toscano. And we found this selection of historic white Pecorino, and red wine coloured with tomato, and a black one."

Occelli and Castelmagno are also catching customers' eyes, in addition to Italy's flair for cheese infusions. Francesco lists a variety from Veneto that's wrapped in tea leaves, a saffron cheese whose sides are freckled with peppercorns, and a Pecorino rippled with truffle.

"Every region of Italy has its own cheeses. It's a huge selection, and very different from English and French," he says. "They are so different in taste and texture. I spend a lot of time trying them saying 'wow, this is good'!"

Spain could be the 'one to watch'

Getting your hands on authentic Spanish food, particularly cheeses, is not easy, says Los OrigenES founder Jesus Llamazares. It takes time, patience and, vitally, good connections. But if you have all three, you can add some very special, and often rare, products to your counter.

"Spain is not like Italy or France in terms of marketing," he explains. "We do not have this nature of talking, or coming out of our borders to share what we've made. We, of course, share the passion when it comes to our food and our country, but many Spanish companies are not so keen to internationalise." They also, he reflects, rarely speak English.

There are more than 150 varieties of cheese to discover in Spain, and there's certainly, Jesus says, a lot to more to taste beyond Manchego. But choosing the best quality Manchego (familiar to UK consumers) is a good starting point.

"In the UK, in most places, it is not good quality, and it is only three months old. For us in Spain, it goes from 15 days, up to three, six and 12 months."

When people are thinking about Manchego, Jesus adds, "it's often the very soft mild one, or the very hard one, a bit like Parmesan, they are familiar with."

Also, "Manchego has its own PDO and is only made with sheep's milk." Buying inferior Manchego made with a mixture of milks is a common mistake buyers in the UK often make.

He's excited by new innovation for the cheese, in the form of infused Manchego 'balls', which have managed to gain PDO status, and are infused with black garlic or black truffle. "They are very interesting and very unique." And expensive, he adds. "It's a new flavour, even for the Spanish."

Your next step away from Manchego might be Zamorano. "It's another cheese from the region north of Madrid, where the climate is similar. The brand we bring is one that won a gold medal in the World Cheese Awards in Norway last year. It's a very powerful cheese. Normally it is cured for 11 months or 12 months. It's like a Manchego, but more matured."

Buyers looking for something with a bit more clout and power could look to the Torta Del Casar – a rounded, sheep's milk cheese weighing in at around 400g, so ideal for grab and go selections. "It's not soft, but if you get a good brand like ours, you can get it to spread," Jesus advises. "We recommend keeping it at room temperature for 60 minutes to 90 minutes.

"When you have a party of four to six people have it with crackers or some marmalades or jams. It is an amazing one if you like strong cheese. Whenever I open one up, people are buying one...sometimes two!"

Another, often unsung hero of the Spanish dairy arena is Cabrales, which is little-known in Britain, but revered and celebrated in its home. "It is made in caves, normally at 1,500 metres, and once or twice a week they turn the cheese to keep the balance."

Remarkably, the cheesemakers have to travel by foot for the final leg of the journey to the cheese caves, where there is no running water or electricity. Each Cabrales is washed using water drops generated by the caves' humidity. It is a true labour of love, and not a practice that can be scaled up exponentially.

Therefore, Jesus says, the very best cheeses are hotly fought over. He was delighted, last July, to buy a Cabrales that was later named best in the world in a competition that pits makers against one another. After the competition in Northern Spain, a single wheel of the winning cheese sold for a record-breaking 30,000 Euros.

Typically Cabrales is sold at three, six and 12 months. "Twelve months is very rare. Again, it is difficult to cherry pick the best cheeses to go beyond that point. A 12-month Cabrales is a very strong flavour, so less people will like it. We get three to six months, when it's a paste, and it's a really lovely product."

Jesus thinks the landscape of Spanish cheese is "definitely very interesting", and he loves seeing customers' reactions when they try what he's imported. Their faces "light up" the first time they try a Torta Del Casar, for example. "Then you explain the story, and why it is so good, and they love it. It is very very satisfying."







INDUSTRY LEADING INNOVATION

Clawson boasts more than 100 years of cheesemaking heritage, but never stands still when it comes to delighting customers with new products

"We never stand still," says Clawson's senior brand manager, Heather Lewis. The cheesemaker, one of the longest established in the country, renowned particularly for its award-winning traditional Stilton, is on a constant journey of tasting, trialling and discovery, working behind the scenes to bring even more delicious products to its discerning customers.

Most recently, this has led to the launch of a super-premium range of wax truckles, designed to shake-up the market with their stories, characterful branding and, most importantly, exceptional flavour profiles.

"We carried out research into the speciality deli channel, and found that people absolutely love wax truckles," says Heather. "But there was definitely a space for really premium, good quality wax truckle cheeses with a twist. We're using the very best Cheddar, Red Leicester and Wensleydale for ours, introducing some fantastic flavour profiles, and really interesting branding that stands out."

The range of six products, officially introduced at this year's Farm Shop & Deli Show in Birmingham, includes Dormouse's Delight (creamy Wensleydale, infused with cranberries, a twist of elderflower and a hint of spiced marmalade), and Wizard's Fire (Red Leicester with a touch of Scotch Bonnet chilli and harissa).



SHROPSHIRE BLUE



STILTON

Each one has its own unique personality, says Heather. "We spent a long time thinking every element through, giving the cheeses a name and a character representative of the cheese. For example, Bertie the Bulldog fronts our Captain Bulldog vintage Cheddar. We see the bulldog as being very British, and, of course, Cheddar is one of the most-recognised British cheeses."

Then there is Castaway (Wensleydale with mango and ginger), characterised by Castaway Jane, and "a robust, beautifully balanced, smoked cheese", Gunpowder, advocated by the Big Tom cannon, who knows his way around smoke.

Ushering in the new doesn't distract Clawson from its roots, however.

The cheesemaking team are rightly proud of the dairy's flagship Stilton, which has been made in the PDO region since 1912, using milk from Clawson's 32 trusted co-operative member farms, all based within 30 miles of the dairy.

"This gives us a huge amount of control over the quality of the milk," says Heather. "It helps to give us a significantly lower carbon footprint than the average dairy too."

This level of control, across the whole process, comes naturally to those working at Clawson, who see themselves as guardians of what's recognised globally as one of the most important British ingredients.

"An unbelievable amount of care goes into making our Stilton," adds Heather. "They are all hand turned, and every single one is graded by hand. We believe that craftsmanship and dedication is so valuable."

Beyond Stilton, Clawson's artisans make a wide range of equally stand out products – many of them award winners. "Two we feel are almost undiscovered gems are our Rutland Red, and Blue Shropshire," Heather explains.

Rutland Red is the only vegetarian, pasteurised, classic farmhouse Red Leicester in the UK, made (as all Clawson's artisan cheeses are) with milk from the dairy's local farms. "It just has this really rich colour, and lovely flaky texture," says Heather. "Initially, people think it's a simple cheese, but the more you taste it, the more you uncover those savoury, nutty layers." Rutland Red achieved gold, and was named champion territorial, at this year's British Cheese Awards.

Meanwhile, Blue Shropshire wowed judges at the International Cheese & Dairy Awards in 2022, delivering a Supreme Champion win for Clawson. "We love it! It's got some of the character of Stilton, but with a beautiful golden colour from the added annatto, which actually changes the flavour a bit. It's more mellow, with a real balance in the mouth, and we see it as being a really good bridge for people who aren't sure about blue cheese, or find it too strong, to try. It's a wonderful product."



RUTLAND RED

All of Clawson's new truckles are available to order now from selected wholesalers, with a series of new promotional materials and sampling packs for the range, and the dairy's other cheeses, to follow. "It's important that we support the people who take our cheese," says Heather. "And we're committed to doing that, so retailers have everything they need to talk to consumers"



THE CLAWSON RANGE INCLUDES

- **RUTLAND RED**
  A buttered, cloth-bound traditional Red Leicester, with a flaky, open texture and slightly sweet, caramelised flavour. Gold and Champion Territorial, British Cheese Awards 2024
- **BLUE SHROPSHIRE**
  A mellow, mature, orange-hued blue with a golden crust. Supreme Champion, ICDA 2022
- **STILTON**
  More than 100 years of experience goes into the making of this award-winning, crumbly, mature, expressive blue. Gold, Global Cheese Awards 2023
- **DORMOUSE'S DELIGHT**
  This crowd-pleaser blends Clawson's creamy Wensleydale with tangy cranberries, elderflower and Seville orange marmalade.
- **CAPTAIN BULLDOG**
  A characterful wax truckle of the very best vintage mature Cheddar. The signature cheese at the heart of the new range.



CHEESES OF CHARACTER (WITH CHARACTERS)

Introducing Clawson Farms deliciously characterful cheeses. A flavour packed range of six truckles each made from premium ingredients and represented by a unique personality.

Available to order NOW, contact our sales team to find out more enquiries@clawson.co.uk +44 (0) 1664 82233







PROUDLY MADE IN YORKSHIRE

The county's finest quality milk, and unique terroir inspire Shepherds Purse every day

Anniversaries are a good time to reflect. On what was, what is, and what is still to come. In 2024 the family behind independent Yorkshire cheese brand, Shepherds Purse, are proud to mark 35 years in business, and in celebration their newest launch pays homage to founder, Judy Bell MBE, who they sadly lost two years ago.

It would put a smile on her mum's face to see Organic Yorkshire Blue on the market, says Caroline Bell. The cheese is made in collaboration with their friends at Acorn Dairy, just up the road. "Organic is something mum was passionate about," Caroline explains. "Actually, we're all quite passionate about organic, and regenerative farming." The cheese helps Shepherds Purse play its part in "keeping organic milk in the region and supporting organic farming, while making a great product that's better for everyone," she adds, saying their sustainability journey also includes measures such as ensuring waste whey is processed through a local anaerobic digestor, and packaging blue cheeses in recyclable foil. "They're all hand wrapped, although our team are so neat and have such attention to detail that some people think they are machine wrapped. As well as being recyclable we think the foil keeps soft blue cheeses like ours in the best condition."

The story of Shepherds Purse stretches back to the late 80s shortly after Judy began working as a receptionist for an osteopath, seeing patients who had been diagnosed with cow's milk intolerances and allergies. Coming from farming stock (the family ran a medium size mixed arable farm at the time), Judy's interest was piqued when she found there were no real alternatives apart from goats' milk products. "And some of those had a reputation for having quite a strong taste," Caroline says.

After exploring the benefits of sheep's milk, coming to think of it as a 'superfood', Judy laid her cards on the table at home. Tentatively her husband and father-in-law took to the idea of bringing in a flock, and after experiments with yoghurt and ice cream, a local master cheesemaker started to mentor Judy, who other local farmers thought of as "this crazy lady milking sheep," Caroline laughs. "The original Wensleydale was made with sheep's milk in the Dales, and he was really keen to make it traditionally. He taught her all the basics, and discovered mum was a talented cheesemaker."

So impressed was her teacher that Judy was encouraged to enter her conjurings into awards, and in 1989 one of her first cheeses, Old Yorke, came home with a gold medal which "really gave her the confidence she was doing something pretty special."

Sourcing the finest sheep's, cow's and buffalo milk from local farms to make its collection of continental-style cheeses, Shepherds Purse has never wavered from its commitment to be best in class, and has traded with delis and artisan channels, right from the start.

The family's ethos centres around "excellence, quality, consistency and gentleness. We make soft, creamy cheeses and we need to be respectful of the whole process," Caroline adds. "Such a huge amount of care and attention goes into every single batch, and we want every cheese to be of award-winning quality. To do this you have to be passionate about cheese. You have to love it. And we really do."

> "We're proud to support organic farming while making a great product that's better for everyone"

THE SHEPHERDS PURSE RANGE

- **OLD YORKE**
  Soft, creamy sheep's milk cheese with a lemony, citrussy flavour and a meadow sweetness. Almost spreadable.
- **MRS BELL'S SALAD CHEESE**
  A British take on a feta. Also available as Katy's White – marinated in British lavender.
- **YORKSHIRE BLUE**
  A mild, creamy cow's milk blue that's rich and satisfying and often wins over non-blue cheese fans.
- **MRS BELL'S BLUE**
  Sweet, meadowy and creamy from sheep's milk, with a hint of mellow Roquefort about it. A champion cheese and multiple award winner.
- **BUFFALO BLUE**
  Creamy and mild, while being fresh and clean on the palate.
- **HARROGATE BLUE**
  A golden bodied blue, tinted with natural annatto. One of the most popular varieties in the range.
- **NORTHERN BLUE**
  Uses a stronger strain of blue cultures for a longer, more piquant flavour that retains its super creamy balance.
- **BLUEMIN WHITE**
  The brand's most versatile cheese. Full and luscious like a brie, with a hint of blue and nutty, earthy, mushroomy notes







MADE WITH 100% ORGANIC MILK



HOW TO MAKE CUSTOMERS FALL IN LOVE WITH GOATS' CHEESE

This kind of cheese can sometimes be a hard sell, as not everyone loves it, but there is a goats' cheese for everyone, insiders say





Some shoppers have sworn off goats' cheese, but can savvy cheesemongers change their minds?

For many, goats' cheese is a must-have on a cheeseboard. Hard or soft, locally made or imported, there are countless fantastic options to stock your fridges with.

But for some, goat's milk cheese is a no-go. "Goat's milk cheese is generally divisive as it contains a 'musty' or 'leathery' taste that is a bit like Marmite or coriander in its divisiveness," explains Edward Hancock of The Cheese Geek.

Cheese Buyer digs into the science behind goats' cheese's unique flavour and whether, with a few tips and tricks, cheesemongers can make their customers fall in love.

Where does goats' cheese get its flavour?

As Edward tells *Cheese Buyer* the root cause of the divisiveness around goats' cheese is an enzyme in goats' milk (capric acid) that is released when it is poorly processed. If the milk is 'sloshed' during processing, this disrupts its chemical structure. "It is this enzyme that produces the 'musty/goaty/leathery' flavour," Edward says.

"Generally speaking, the highest-quality, best produced goat milk won't have an overpowering flavour that puts people off," Edward says. "It will be subtle, and dominated by creamy, nutty and slightly sweet flavours. Sometimes even malty." He points to three examples: Sinodun Hill made by Norton and Yarrow, Golden Cross made by Kevin and Alison Blunt and Ireland's St Tola.

These cheeses minimise pumping, transport and disruption of milk, and the curds are hand-scooped gently and carefully. They are also produced in small batches, putting quality before quantity.

How to sell goats' cheese

"The first tip I'd give is never to be negative about goats' cheese," says Patricia Michelson, founder of La Fromagerie. Point to the many positives consumers can take away, she advises. "It is not only delicious but also healthy, as the milk is easily digested and very nutritious."

Once you've explained the benefits of goat milk cheese and the science behind that 'goaty' flavour, the proof is in the pudding – or the sampling.

Tread carefully here. "Our French friends favour that goaty, lactic cheese," says James Grant of No2 Pound Street. "Fresh goats' cheese is more acidic. There is naturally more capric acid in goats' cheese. More often, people would have tried this fresh, lactic style from France and perhaps been put off."

"I would either start with a very light, fresh style with a lovely lemon-salt taste, or a semi-hard goat cheese, which will have had time to expel more moisture and concentrate the flavours into a sweeter taste with a fudgy texture," Patricia suggests.

Edward agrees that cheesemongers should help customers to explore all the variety goats' cheeses have to offer. "We do love to challenge customers and surprise them, and often if we're told by a customer they don't like goat milk cheese, we will send them something very different in style. A great example would be Rachel, made by Roger Longman at White Lake. It's a slightly more aged, semi-hard Tomme-style cheese made with goat milk. It's sweet, nutty and complex with barely any hint of goatiness," Edward says.

As well as Rachel, James also recommends Tinto from Errington Cheese. "Both cheeses are loosely based on Gouda recipes and are washed curd. This means they are gentle and sweeter. They are delicious and a great starting point to develop your palate."

Goats' cheeses that have a dusting of ash, which helps to draw out the stronger, gamey flavour of the milk, are another good option, Patricia says. "Golden Cross, Brightwell Ash and Elrick Log are all cheeses that tick the boxes with their ash coats."

THE HISTORY OF GOATS' CHEESE

Patricia Michelson of La Fromagerie explains how goats' cheese production has changed through the years

"In the old days, goats' cheeses were quite aromatic and strong. This is because goat's milk picks up all the sensory aromas of the dairy, from the earthy pasture to the heat of the parlour where the milk is transformed from milk into curds. Goats have a strong-flavoured meat, and their skin and coat exude that strong aroma too. For those who find strong animal aromas a problem, then it would be difficult to persuade them to taste the cheese.

"However, as a seller of cheese, one must not be daunted by this and explain that now goats' cheeses have a much different production method, with milk transformed quickly and efficiently and not left in buckets to catch all the elements of the farm. The milk is easy to turn from milk into curds, and this is why in the earliest of days these cheeses were made for family consumption at the farm table, as the women of the family could make goat cheeses quickly during their normal working day and have them ready either as a very fresh curdy cheese or in a firmer texture after a few days. They were also a way for the farm to bring in some much-needed money by selling their little pucks of cheese at the farm gate or the local market."







Showing off a different side to goats' milk cheese breaks the stereotypes customers might have in their minds. "I think too many consumers just associate goats' milk cheese with young, fresh, acidic, lactic goats' cheeses, when in fact it is as variable as cow or sheep," Edward adds. "Once someone realises all goat isn't the same, you can then start to challenge them again on the classic French-style cheeses!"

Goats' cheese recipes and pairings

When in doubt, offering suggestions of how to cook with goats' cheese or providing pairing ideas might act as a gateway for the goats'-cheese-curious.

To balance the flavour of the cheese, try pairing it with:

- Honey
- Figs
- Walnuts

"Whilst allowing your customer to have their first taste of goat cheese, you should also initiate the great partners in wine, cider and even Champagne to lift the flavours and give the cheeses their prominence on the cheeseboard," Patricia explains. Why not host a cheesemaker for a tasting in your shop to spark conversations with customers?

You are what you eat

Artisan goats' cheese is a seasonal product, and it's important to take this into consideration when choosing your selection. "Diet is fundamental to the foundation of great milk. Additionally, sensory comfort for the goats is also important. This helps reduce any stress. If either of these factors are not looked after, it will potentially affect the milk quality," James says. The seasons also showcase what the goats are eating, explains Patricia. "In winter when they are kept indoors, their food is dry hay, legumes and added seeds to give the milk a more uniform flavour. In the spring, summer and autumn, the fresh pastures give their unique properties, from early zingy grass studded with nettles and spring flora, to summery, fruity grazing, and in the autumn drier grasses with lots of seed pods from the wildflowers and herbs. They all give their unique flavours to the milk."

- **SPRING**
sell fresh, zesty styles
- **SUMMER**
sell silky, luxurious styles
- **AUTUMN**
sell blue and harder styles which have ripened and matured

> "Start with a very light, fresh style with a lovely lemon-salt taste"



GOATS' CHEESE FAQS

DOES GOATS' CHEESE HAVE LACTOSE?
Yes, goats' cheese contains lactose. However, it has less than cows' milk. Unfortunately for those with severe lactose intolerance, this makes goats' cheese a no go, but those with a mild intolerance may be able to try it.

IS GOATS' CHEESE HEALTHY?
Goats' cheese contains a number of vitamins, minerals and healthy fats, as well as protein and probiotics.

IS GOATS' CHEESE VEGETARIAN?
Not always. Many goats' cheeses are vegetarian as they don't contain animal rennet, but some do, so it is always good practice for retailers to display this.



UNLOCKING CHEESE DISCOVERY

"We want more people to eat the very best British cheeses in more places"

From humble beginnings in 1932 when Richard and Annie Butler made a handful of Lancashire cheeses in the family kitchen, today Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses is an industry pioneer, producing 14 different varieties from its rural Lancashire dairy.

"At our core, we are about producing great quality cheese, consistently," says fourth-generation owner, Matthew Hall. "Across the cheese category we should all want more people to eat more amazing cheese, more of the time, and we are uniquely positioned to offer that. Our guiding light is about unlocking more usage occasions for quality farmhouse cheese through format innovations that make it accessible for cheese lovers."

Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses defines its mission in two words; discovery and accessibility. Far from a new concept, it is what the family have always done, ever since producing the very first Mrs Butler's Lancashire - still made to the original recipe today. In the decades since, Butlers has scaled to produce more cheeses and meet ever-evolving consumer tastes.

Butlers produces hard, blue and soft cheese from cow, sheep and goats' milk, with a range including flagship blue cheese brand, Blacksticks, soft and creamy Button Mill, and hard, 18-month matured Lancashire, Sunday Best (all three are Great Taste Award winners). Parlick is a newer sheep's milk range for Butlers, successfully tapping into the growing trend for sheep cheese from the health conscious.

With its Blacksticks brand Butlers has truly pushed the boundaries, with a goal to inspire blue cheese exploration beyond the cheeseboard, from 'Blacksticks Mega Melts' for gourmet burgers and 'Blacksticks Dip' which taps into the growing trend for dips and on-the-go snacking, to 'Blacksticks Everyday' that can be sliced and grated for sandwiches and more.

At the heart of Butlers' accessibility and discovery mission is running a sustainable business that provides for its staff, farmers and the local community. Investment is always for the long-term, and balancing technology with traditional techniques is what keeps Butlers true to its values and relentless focus on quality. All its cheeses are hand-made using traditional farmhouse methods with milk from the family herd, with recipes that have been handed down through the family.

When Butlers talks about discovery and accessibility it's also about channel, as Matthew explains, "Discovery is about finding the right cheese for someone and then pairing that with the right route to market."

That product and channel union is pertinent for Butlers Farmhouse Cheeses following the acquisition earlier this year of Hampshire Cheese Company and its Tunworth and Winslade soft cheeses. "They are incredible little cheeses that we are very proud to nurture," says Matthew. "Tunworth has a loyal following and its premium customers share in our passion to help people discover and enjoy high quality British cheese. Being an artisan cheesemaker at scale, we are able to take Tunworth further and introduce it to more people who appreciate that level of quality. It's really exciting."

The role of retailers in discovery and accessibility is an interesting one, Matthew adds, "Habitual cheese buying is driven partly by the fixture, because the sum of what you see on the shelf is what you buy. Retailers need to encourage exploration of, and engagement with, speciality cheeses. By making it easier to shop, educating and inspiring consumers and by providing that accessibility through facings, more people will eat better cheeses, more often.

"The cheese category will always change and evolve; that is why we love it. We have been learning our craft for the last 90 years and we are still learning today. One thing for sure is that the future is really exciting."

AVAILABLE FROM BUTLERS

- **BLACKSTICKS**
A distinctive-looking, orange-hued cheese, with a creamy, mellow heart, and a blue bite.

- **BUTTON MILL**
A small, creamy, soft cow's milk cheese with a thin, delicious rind, and savoury, squidgy middle.

- **SUNDAY BEST**
Made to a 50-year-old recipe, it takes 48 hours to craft this exceptional, richly flavoured cheese, and 18 months to mature.

- **TUNWORTH**
An award-winning, Camembert-style cheese, with a velvety texture under the rind, and lingering earthy, mushroomy, vegetal notes.

- **KIDDERTON ASH**
A silky goats' cheese, made with milk sourced just up the lane from the dairy. Handmade, and coated in ash for an attractive speckled finish.

- **PARLICK**
Taking its name from Parlick Fell, this handmade ewe's milk cheese has a clean, fresh, nutty taste.













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FARMHOUSE CHEESES

DRIVING CATEGORY
GROWTH THROUGH
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100%
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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BRITISH CHEDDAR

It's Britain's most quintessential cheese, but how much do you know about Cheddar? *Cheese Buyer* delves into its history as experts answer customers' top questions

Whether used in a cheese and pickle sarnie, providing the bubbly topping on a pasta bake, or adding rich, umami flavour to a soup, Cheddar is the backbone to many Brits' recipes. When it's time to reach for a quick, cheesy snack or to fashion a cheeseboard centrepiece, it's the go-to for many – in fact, Cheddar represents 50% of all cheese sales in the UK, according to Kite's recent report on the UK cheese market.

"Cheddar is the quintessential British cheese," says Jen Grimstone-Jones of Cheese Etc, The Pangbourne Cheese Shop. "It is often the first cheese that we experience as children, and it has that comforting taste of home appeal."

But this humble cheese is popular the world over. What makes it so universally beloved? "Cheddar is sold at many different ages, so it caters for a wide range of tastes, and therefore it appeals to many different people," Jen says. "It is an amazingly versatile cheese. It's easy to slice or grate, so is used in many culinary dishes as well as on a cheeseboard. It is also the cheese that we produce the most of here in the UK, so it is readily available to most people."

With most consumers familiar with supermarket varieties of Cheddar, cheesemongers have the opportunity to reveal what the real deal is really like. By delving into the history and background of Cheddar and answering customers' burning questions, you can ensure you're prepared to showcase why they should ditch their mass-produced block cheese for a fantastic farmhouse variety.



The history of British Cheddar

WHERE IS CHEDDAR FROM?

"Cheese production in Somerset goes back to the 12th century," says James Grant of No2 Pound Street and the Great British & Irish Cheddar Challenge. "In 1170, King Henry bought over 4,500 kilos."

While it is known that the cheese gained popularity from the village of Cheddar in Somerset, much of its origin story remains a mystery.

"The Cheddar Gorge contains caves which were used by local farmers to keep their milk cool. Legend has it that a milk maid left a bucket of milk in the caves for too long and it coagulated to form an early version of cheese," Jen says.

IS CHEDDAR A PROTECTED CHEESE?

Customers might be surprised by the sheer volume of cheeses around the world that call themselves 'Cheddar', despite having different flavours – and even colours. "Traditionally, Cheddar had to be produced within 30 miles of Wells Cathedral, but now it is made in almost every country around the world," Jen says.

However, there is a protected variety: West Country Farmhouse Cheddar PDO. "This protection only applies to Cheddars made in Dorset, Somerset, Devon or Cornwall," Jen explains. The Cheddars must be at least nine months old and made from cow's milk, which can be pasteurised or not, and the cheeses themselves can be produced either in a cylinder shape or in a block."

ARTISAN CHEDDAR'S NEWFOUND POPULARITY

Cheddar "is the easily the most popular cheese in the UK," James says. But times have not always been easy for this staple of British life.

"During the Industrial Revolution of 1760, and by the end of World War 2, out of 3,500 cheese producers only 100 survived," James says. "The



Milk Marketing Board was created to enable dairy farmers to sell their milk without consequence. The farmers were guaranteed a market price. Since the demise of the MMB and supermarket buying power, milk lost 40% of its market value. This caused a lot of pain but has also encouraged dairy farmers to make cheese again."

Selling British Cheddar

With this history in mind, it's more important than ever to celebrate the UK's growing ranks of farmhouse Cheddar producers. "I love all farmhouse Cheddars," James says. "Quicke's, Westcombe Cheddar, Hafod, Pitchfork, Keens, Isle of Mull, Mount Leinster, Montgomery. Each cheese offers delicious flavour and length on the palate."

When selling Cheddar, retailers can highlight West Country links by suggesting that customers complement their selection with a swill of cider. "Dowding's Cider from Somerset is awesome, as well as another Somerset Cider named Wildings," James says.

The Pangbourne Cheese Shop sells 11 different Cheddars. "I can happily munch on any of them, but my all-time favourite is Montgomery's," Jen says. "When Ali and I got married, we had a 7kg wheel of Montgomery's West Country Farmhouse Cheddar PDO (to give it its full name) as the base of our wedding cake. It is a traditional, clothbound Cheddar with fabulous rich, almost brothy flavours, and the most wonderful aroma!"

As for pairings, while Jen typically chooses to forgo accompaniments to really experience the flavours of the cheese itself, she admits that an apple-based chutney, sourdough bread and a glass of West Country cider makes for the perfect ploughman's lunch.

Consumers' frequently asked questions

As a cheesemonger, you can be a font of knowledge for your customers, and with education comes appreciation and understanding. You might be surprised how many questions they have about this classic cheese.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE AGE OF CHEDDAR MAKE? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MATURE CHEDDAR, EXTRA MATURE CHEDDAR, VINTAGE CHEDDAR, ETC?

"Generally, with any cheese, the older they are the stronger they taste. This is the same for Cheddar," Jen says.

This guide can help you explain Cheddar ageing to your customers:

- **Mild Cheddar** – under six months old
- **Medium Cheddar** – six to 12 months old
- **Mature Cheddar** – 12 to 18 months old
- **Extra mature Cheddar** – 18 to 24 months old
- **Vintage Cheddar** – 24 months old and over

"The cheeses get stronger as they age due to the fact that they lose moisture, and more of the lactose in the milk is broken down into lactic acid, which causes the older cheeses to taste sharper," Jen explains.

"Flavours develop in traditional Cheddar because of starter cultures used, time, humidity, and the temperature of the ageing rooms," adds James. "This is more applicable to farmhouse and genuine single-herd, often clothbound, whole Cheddars.

"Larger, industrially produced cheeses often use thermophilic cultures that are usually associated with mountain cheese like the Swiss and French Gruyere and Comte cheeses," he continues, adding that the culture tastes candy-like and has a more one-dimensional flavour profile.

WHAT IS CLOTHBOUND CHEDDAR, AND WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT?

The term 'clothbound Cheddar' refers to the wrapping of the whole Cheddar cheese, which helps it maintain its shape while it ages and matures, James says. "This also allows the cheese to take on the microbiome of the room or cave that it is ageing in."

"Often the outside of the cloth is rubbed with lard or butter, which stops the cheese from drying out and cracking," Jen adds. "Wrapping Cheddar in cloth also causes a traditional rind to form, which usually has an earthy aroma. Clothbound Cheddar has a very distinctive taste with complex savoury flavours. Often sweet with hints of nuts."

WHAT IS CAVE-AGED CHEDDAR, AND WHY IS IT DIFFERENT?

"Cave-aged cheeses are exactly as you'd imagine – cheeses that have been matured in caves," Jen says. Some are aged in traditional caves, such as those in Cheddar Gorge, while others are man-made, such as the maturing space at Westcombe Cheddar. "Caves are used because they maintain a consistent temperature. They generally have a higher humidity than other areas, and they have fairly low barometric pressure, making them ideal for cheese maturation.

"Cave-aged Cheddars tend to have richer flavours," Jen says.

The art of maturing cheese is called affinage, and this process can produce strikingly different flavours in a cheese. "The Academy of Cheese founded an affinage competition that encourages cheesemongers and makers to compete by ageing a Cheddar from the same cheesemaker," James says.

"The goal is to take a young cheese and age for over nine months. The results are amazing. Each cheese, although originally from the same producer, tastes different. This is due to temperature, time and humidity. This is because each location where the cheese is stored and taken care of has a unique biome," he continues.

"If you place a cheese in a clean room without any other cheese close by, it will develop but not offer the same flavours of one aged in a cave with mould spores adorning the walls and airflow, plus a constant temperature and humidity."

WHAT ARE THE CRYSTALS IN CHEDDAR?

Crystals can form in Cheddar and other hard cheeses as part of the maturing process. They form when naturally occurring lactic acid and calcium combine to create calcium lactate crystals, or when amino acids like tyrosine form as protein breaks down (typically found on the cut surface or eyes of cheeses like Gouda, Gruyère, Comté or Parmesan).

Traditionally, crystals weren't found in Cheddar. In fact, cheesemakers often avoided it so their customers wouldn't confuse the crystals with mould. These days, more Cheddar makers are using production methods and bacteria that create these crystals to give their cheeses a distinctive crunch.

WILL CHEDDAR CONTINUE TO AGE IN THE FRIDGE?

The short answer is yes, but it will only age well if it is stored properly. Cheddar is traditionally aged in cool, dark caves. Affinage, or the process of maturing cheese, is a science and an artform in itself. Ageing cheese requires a lot of training and research.

WHICH CHEDDAR MELTS THE BEST?

For customers planning on using their Cheddar in a toastie or on a burger rather than a cheeseboard, a younger Cheddar typically works better. A variety of factors can affect how cheeses melt, from moisture to acidity to age. More mature cheeses can become oily rather than achieving a creamy melt. Grating Cheddar can also help to produce a more even melt.

CAN CHEDDAR BE FROZEN?

Cheddar cheese can be frozen safely, but be warned that as the cheese thaws its texture and flavour can be significantly altered.





WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RAW MILK CHEESE

Unpasteurised cheese, also known as raw milk cheese, has recently been in the spotlight in the UK. *Cheese Buyer* explores what makes these cheeses special, as well as consumers' most frequently asked questions

The British cheese industry was rocked on Christmas Eve 2023 when a favourite maker amongst speciality cheesemongers, Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese, had several products pulled off shelves after being issued an emergency precautionary recall. Despite thorough testing showing no sign of Shiga-toxin producing E. coli, the outbreak strain of the suspect pathogen, and being given the all-clear to resume sales, questions swirled around what it all meant for speciality cheesemakers of raw milk cheeses.

"With the investigation into Kirkham's Lancashire, the future of the last raw milk farmhouse version of this important style of British cheese has been threatened, not to mention the status of raw milk British cheese as a whole," Neal's Yard Dairy wrote in a blog post.

What makes unpasteurised raw milk cheese so important in the British cheese landscape, and how can retailers help to support makers?

WHAT IS RAW MILK CHEESE, AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

Unpasteurised cheese is made with milk that has not been pasteurised, also known as 'raw milk'. Because of this, raw milk cheese has a more intense flavour and offers a subtler sense of terroir, with its flavours reflecting where and when it was made – right down to what the animals were grazing on.

The intense flavours of raw milk cheese can transform consumers' appreciation for cheese as a whole, but it is not only a staple for fine food retailers and dedicated cheesemongers. "Raw milk cheese is more common than you think," says Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy. "Every block of Parmesan, Comté, and Roquefort sold (whether it be in a small retailer or Tesco) is raw milk."

But while it's true that raw milk cheeses are much more common than consumers might realise, they are still truly artisan products that require careful production. "Raw milk cheeses need to be made with the utmost care – it isn't simply a case of 'not pasteurising,'" Andy explains.

Good quality raw milk cheese starts in the field with the forage and breed of cow being as important as the milking and cheesemaking procedures and hygiene.

Unpasteurised cheese is best made, Andy says, on the farm where the milk can be used warm and fresh from the cow. "Thereafter, the procedures of making cheese are broadly similar to all cheeses, with the key cheesemaking and hygiene controls of fermentation (acidification), moisture loss and salting."

SUPPORTING RAW MILK CHEESEMAKERS

The care that raw milk cheeses naturally require, and the way they buck the trend for ultra processed foods are part of what makes them special. "In my opinion, [raw milk] allows for you to produce a cheese that truly reflects the farm on which you are making that cheese in its character," Andy says. "It's not just a milk which is pasteurised, standardised, that you then add bacteria to to make cheese, but it is a reflection of that place."





Here in the UK, it also represents our cheesemaking history. Raw milk cheesemaking, Andy says, "is incredibly difficult to do, part of Britain's social history and hopefully makes a product unique to that place and farm." For retailers, stocking raw milk cheeses shows a sign of support to these special and hardworking producers.

With more consumers interested in eating seasonally and locally, raw milk cheese provides retailers with a perfect artisan answer. What's more, when compared with pasteurised or more processed cheeses, it offers something for shoppers who are keen to eat healthier and more natural foods. "It's not just important for flavour, but also diversity of microbes and microbial communities," Andy says. "This diversity has many advantages – we're only just starting to understand this importance on our daily lives."

And by supporting raw milk cheesemakers, retailers are encouraging producers who champion the highest farming and hygiene practices. Andy believes it's his job as a British cheesemonger to advocate for these producers. "Being small scale, many of these farmers don't have the support of big marketing departments or salesmen on the road, so I feel it is our job as a cheesemonger to get their message across and stand by them."

IS UNPASTEURISED CHEESE SAFE?

As pasteurised cheese is heat-treated to kill off bacteria that may be present in raw milk, such as E. coli and listeria, consumers may wonder if unpasteurised cheese is really safe to eat. While pasteurising is common and, for large producers using milk from multiples dairies, often important, it's not necessary to guarantee safety for smaller-scale producers. What's more, pasteurisation also kills off the natural microflora needed to make cheese, so producers must add specific bacterial cultures back in during the cheesemaking process.

As Andy says, good practices start on the farm. Pathogens are unlikely to be found in milk of well-kept animals or a high-quality dairy.

Not only does the heat treating of milk remove the 'good' bacteria as well as the bad, but it also doesn't guarantee the prevention of foodborne illnesses. Pasteurisation can even act as an excuse for producers to be less stringent on safety and hygiene.

Raw milk cheese today is made with careful production methods and good hygiene – including regular tests that cheesemakers are legally required to do. While there are risks to eating unpasteurised cheese, there are also risks with eating pasteurised cheese, or other foods that have been associated with cases of food poisoning, like lettuce. Outbreaks of food poisoning, while very rare, occur from pasteurised cheese as well as unpasteurised. One analysis by Public Health England in 2004/5 found no difference between the risk of the pasteurised and unpasteurised cheeses sampled.

However, according to NHS advice, people who are pregnant should avoid unpasteurised milk and cheeses, with the exception of hard cheeses, such as Cheddar, Gruyère and Parmesan which can be eaten even if unpasteurised.

EXAMPLES OF RAW MILK CHEESE

In addition to the well-loved unpasteurised cheeses made on the continent, which include Gruyère, Camembert, Asiago and many more, there are numerous cheesemakers on British shores who demonstrate the broad range of flavours that the category can encompass.

"For me, our cheese shop wouldn't be complete without Kirkham's Lancashire, Stonebeck, St James, Hafod, Stichelton, Appleby's Cheshire, Sparkenhoe Vintage and Young Buck," Andy says. "There is a reason these have become iconic British cheeses – they should be the backbone of any good cheese shop."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT UNPASTEURISED CHEESE

Customers in your shop may still have questions about raw milk cheeses, so it's important to educate yourself and your team about the qualities of both pasteurised and unpasteurised cheeses.

IS RAW MILK CHEESE GOOD FOR YOU?

There are some health benefits to eating raw milk cheese compared to pasteurised cheese, as it contains more protein, vitamins, minerals and probiotics, which are 'good' gut healthy bacteria.

DOES UNPASTEURISED CHEESE HAVE LACTOSE?

Unpasteurised cheese does have lactose, but for people with lactose intolerance it is easier to digest because there are certain enzymes present that help to produce lactase, which helps break down lactose.

HOW LONG DOES RAW MILK CHEESE LAST?

Raw milk, or unpasteurised, cheese will last the same amount of time as pasteurised cheese. The quality that will have the greatest effect on how well a cheese keeps is its moisture content, with aged Parmesan or Cheddar, for example, naturally lasting longer than high-moisture cheeses like Brie.

CAN YOU BUY UNPASTEURISED CHEESE IN THE UK?

Yes, you can buy unpasteurised cheese in the UK at both independent retailers, like cheesemongers, farm shops and delis, and supermarkets.

> "Raw milk allows for you to produce a cheese that truly reflects the farm"











JESSICA KIMBER-HOLLOWAY

QUALITY YOU CAN TASTE

Every Godminster truckle is an edible homage to the Wessex landscape



SARAH NORRIS

One of the most exciting things about artisan cheese is the stories it tells. A romantic thread weaves through the process, from the land, via the deft hands of the cheesemaker, to the counter, where a cheese will eventually sit amongst its 'dairy friends', waiting for the cheesemonger to pick it up, show it off, and explain to customers why this one, single, particular product is special.

These stories are hugely significant to Somerset-based, organic waxed Cheddar pioneer Godminster. What is the Howling Hound? Or the Bruton Beauty? How does Cheney's Fortune pay homage to the Godminster oak trees? Unique, playful design and packaging from the premium brand gives retail folk a fun jumping point for conversations with customers. Each one is steeped in the mystique and mythology of the Wessex landscape and "has its own personality", says head of marketing Sarah Norris. "This gives the person at the deli counter so much more to talk about than the fact it's made with cow's milk, or that it's vegetarian."

They can instead, Sarah beams, conjure a picture, using tales of the cheeky Bruton Beast who, legend has it, lurks around Godminster farm, bringing luck to anyone who sees her.

The new branding, launched a year ago, consolidates the quirky nature and premium positioning of Godminster, and "the reception from customers has been fantastic," says Sarah. "We're the first waxed cheese to introduce a secondary bellyband label, which gives us extra marketing space on to catch shoppers' attention."

This new look has, Sarah adds, energised the brand more than they could have imagined.

As for what's inside? The recipe for the original Vintage Bruton Beauty Cheddar hasn't changed in nearly a century, and this stand out cheese has been part of the Godminster journey for 20 years. When it comes to the flavoured incantations (smoked, chilli and truffle), it's that same gold standard Cheddar tucked inside the truckle. "You can taste that authentic, beautiful Cheddar in every bite," says Sarah. "Even in our flavoured Cheddars, we're not trying to cover up or overpower the cheese. For us quality is everything."

> "The cheese is the hero, not the additives, and we get amazing comments from customers"

When customers take a bite of, say, Howling Hound, there's nothing more stirred in than a dash of truffle oil and heady nibs of real truffle, foraged traditionally by a hunter and his dog.

"Just two additional ingredients, that's it," continues commercial and operations director, Jessica Kimber-Holloway. "We are purists, and we want to keep as clean an ingredient list as possible on all our products. The cheese is the hero, not the additives, and we get amazing comments from people saying, 'I can really taste the quality of the cheese'."

As well as that incomparable taste, Godminster is known for its commitment to the environment. The entire cheese range is organic, while Godminster farm is not only organic, but carbon negative – something that matters deeply to founder Richard Hollingbery.

"We see organic as the future of farming," says Jess. "When you're speaking about sustainability, organic is the highest animal welfare standard and, also, just a really good framework for biodiversity and agroecology, that actually has a legal accreditation."

Being in a truckle format is another sustainable win for Godminster. Not only does this mitigate the need for unnecessary plastic, but it acts to preserve the cheeses for longer (meaning they're as fresh and delicious as the day they were made when you cut into them), while minimising the chance of waste.

If you've yet to discover Godminster for yourself, the team will be out sampling throughout 2024, and has sampling packs available for independent farm shops, delis and food halls. Get in touch to find out more.

THE GODMINSTER RANGE

- **VINTAGE BRUTON BEAUTY**
  Rich, smooth and creamy Cheddar with a good balance of sweet and savoury notes. A classic cheddar and a great entry point for curious cheese fans.

- **OAK-SMOKED CHEYNEY'S FORTUNE**
  Smokey and mellow, this oak-smoked Cheddar is named after the great Godminster oaks. The deep and intense flavour comes from being cold-smoked for up to six hours over sustainably sourced oak chippings.

- **BLACK TRUFFLE HOWLING HOUND**
  This Cheddar's character comes from real black truffles that have been authentically foraged with a truffle hunting hound.

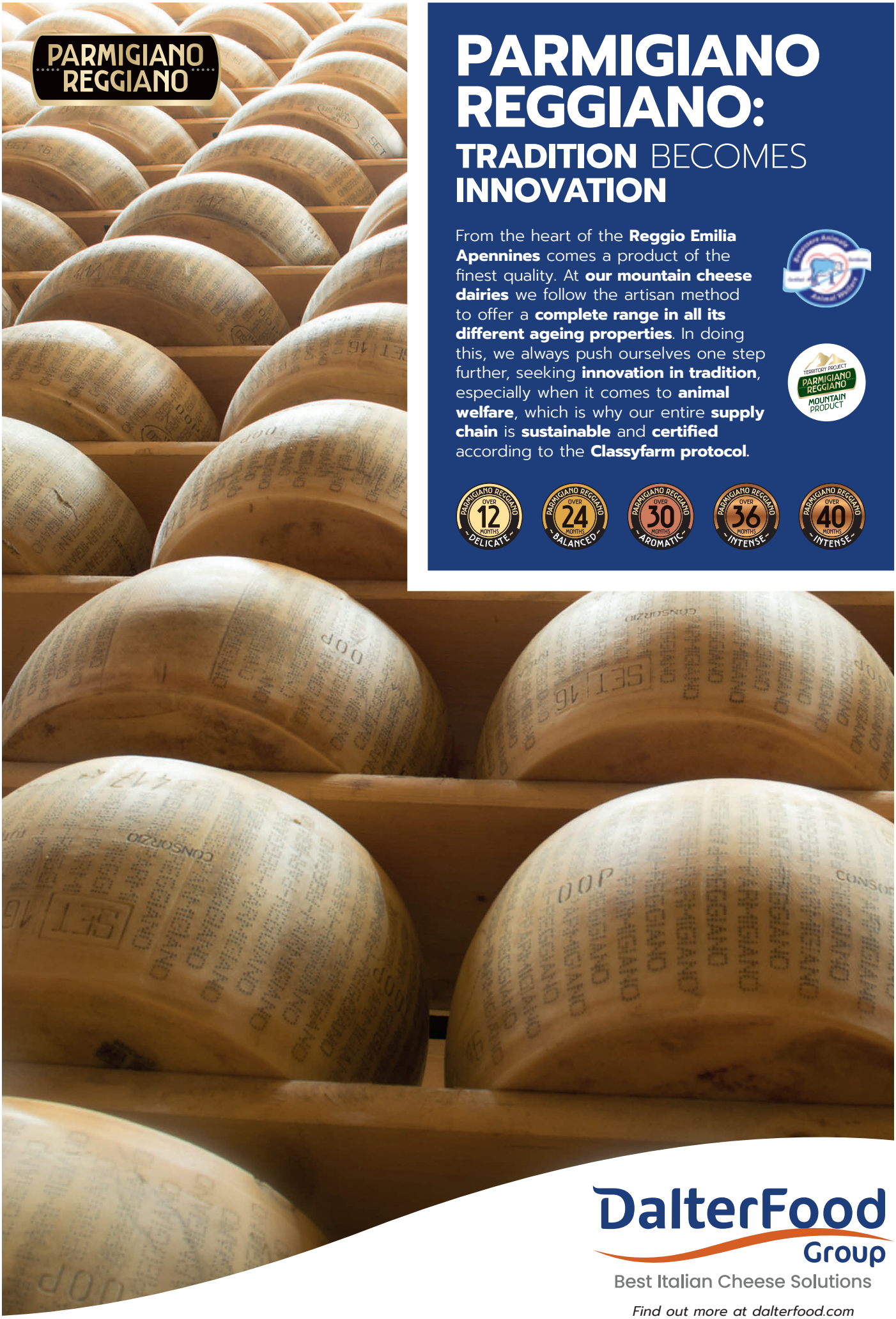
- **RED CHILLI DEVIL'S DANCE**
  Bright and fiery, this chilli-flecked Cheddar packs a punch and was developed using owner Richard's family recipe for hot chilli sauce.

SAVOUR the SPIRIT of SOMERSET



Explore the legendary range

at godminster.com



PARMIGIANO REGGIANO:

TRADITION BECOMES INNOVATION

From the heart of the **Reggio Emilia Apennines** comes a product of the finest quality. At **our mountain cheese dairies** we follow the artisan method to offer a **complete range in all its different ageing properties**. In doing this, we always push ourselves one step further, seeking **innovation in tradition**, especially when it comes to **animal welfare**, which is why our entire **supply chain** is **sustainable** and **certified** according to the **Classyfarm protocol**.

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO OVER 12 MONTHS DELICATE

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO OVER 24 MONTHS BALANCED

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO OVER 30 MONTHS AROMATIC

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO OVER 36 MONTHS INTENSE

PARMIGIANO REGGIANO OVER 40 MONTHS INTENSE

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