

2015

ALL YOU NEED TO SELL CHEESE SUCCESSFULLY

# CHEESEBUYER

MAGAZINE

From the publishers of  
SPECIALITY FOOD

## MUST-STOCK BRITISH CHEESE

Juliet Harbutt's choices

## BOOST YOUR FOOTFALL

How great display  
draws custom

## KEEPING CHEESE

Experts talk care,  
ageing and storage



# GRUYÈRE

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ANDY SWINSCOE AT THE COURTYARD DAIRY

affineur is Neal's Yard Dairy, which matures the rich creamy St Jude cheese into the powerful, intense, washed-rind 'St Cera.

Different cheese types need different environments. The washed rinds, for example, are more suited to higher humidity, ammoniated and warmer environments, which are the necessary conditions for the sticky orange rind to grow and flourish. If you ever visit a true affineur, therefore, you'll find they have a series of different maturing rooms (or caves!) in which the environments differ, suiting different cheeses. You don't have to be an expert to put some of the principles of cheese maturing to work in your own shop, with the intention of selling the cheese you stock in a tastier condition.

## Soft cheeses

Often packed in a wood box (e.g. Brie and Camembert), soft cheeses benefit from the humid environment that is held within the box. The key thing is to open every single box you receive and give the cheese a gentle squeeze – they will vary in ripeness even if they have identical batch codes or best-before dates. Then sort them by ripeness so you can supply the right cheese to each customer, depending how ripe they need it. At The Courtyard Dairy, we keep most soft cheeses about 6–8 degrees celsius so they mature nicely, but you can use a lower temperature to slow down the maturation and enable the cheeses to be kept for a longer period before they are fully ripe.

## Goats cheese in a box

Once again, the key thing is to unwrap the cheeses and feel them – if they're too wet on the rind, or the rind is slipping off, leave them to dry a few days. If they're solid and dry, wrap them up in thick wax paper, or use clear butchers' cellophane if you want to clearly see the cheese!

## Washed rind cheeses

Keep them humid, because that's what their particular bacteria like: use extra wrapping and keep them in sealed boxes overnight. Using cellophane instead of cling film works well to wrap these cheeses because you can still see the cheese (to sell), but the wrapping doesn't sit quite as tight and smother the bacteria.

## Cheddars/ cloth-bound cheeses

On the whole, these are easier to mature, but if you are keeping them for any length of time, they may need frequent brushing to limit mould and cheese-mite growth. In conventional fridges, you may find the aggressiveness of the chiller will dry them out, in which case it may be better to keep them in the cardboard box they arrived in. This will help to maintain a humid environment, protecting the cheese from the cold, dry air. But be sure to get the cheeses out regularly to be turned and examined – if they feel too wet, let that side dry out for a few days. Conversely, if they have started to crack or show hairline fissures, the environment is too dry – they may

need an extra layer of protection.

This rule of leaving cheeses inside cardboard boxes applies to lots of other cheeses too, to help stop them drying out in your fridge. With Stilton, for example, you'll notice this when the wax paper sticks to the rind and crinkles up – Stiltons are definitely best left inside their boxes in commercial chillers. Blue cheeses in general are best kept slightly cooler, as this stops the blue mould getting carried away and making the cheese too bitter!

## Already-cut cheeses

Don't forget that even more important than caring for your cheese when it's whole and maturing is the care you give it when it's been cut. Be sure to clean all your cheeses each day to keep them fresh and ensure that they are 'glass-wrapped' – cling filmed tightly over the face, with no wrinkles, so it looks like glass!

There are no hard and fast rules in good cheese maturing, so if you want to take it to the next level, it's worth spending a little time experimenting! At The Courtyard Dairy, for example, we have been helping develop a new fresh goats cheese, received by us at seven days old. The classic way that we would look after a lactic goats cheese like this is to dry it a little (particularly if the rind is wet to touch) before storing it in a warmer environment to let the yeasts grow (the wrinkly rind you get on the small goats' cheeses. Then, once they have established, mature them in a cool cave till they have

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Always remember that cheese is a living product and every single cheese arriving at your premises will be different

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'broken down' and are at a perfect stage to sell. With the cheese we've been helping to develop, however, we experimented with the initial trial batches we received: dried some, kept some warmer, carried out the normal procedure for our goats cheeses, washed some, etc. We quickly found that the best thing for this new goats' cheese was to keep it wrapped in the fridge – certainly not what we'd normally do. The aggressiveness of the strain of yeast that was growing on this particular cheese meant that the yeast had to be restrained, or the cheese developed too fast and an off-flavour crept in!

Always remember that cheese is a living product and therefore every single cheese that arrives at your premises will be different from the last one you received of the same type, and often will be different from other cheeses of the same batch arriving at the same time. **Andy Swinscoe set up The Courtyard Dairy in 2012, specialising in maturing and selling traditional, farm-made cheeses. @thecourtyarddairy.co.uk**

## RIPENING ON WOOD



### PAUL THOMAS, OWNER THE THIMBLE CHEESEMAKERS

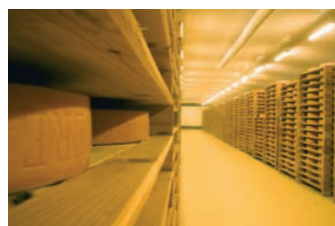
**While concerns about wood often focus on the difficulty in cleaning and the risk of splintering, it is important to note that both that the UK Food Standards Agency and the European Commission do not entirely proscribe the use of wood, and the Codex Alimentarius commission of the United Nations and World Health Organisation also allows for its use where there are 'convincing technological reasons'.**

Wooden surfaces have a low thermal conductivity in comparison to the alternatives, plastic or metal, so they are not as prone to condensation. The growth of spoilage bacteria, such as *Pseudomonas*, and pathogens such as *listeria*, is supported by surface condensation and may lead to the formation of biofilms that survive disinfection. Concerns over the ease of cleaning wood relate to the presumption of inferior hygienic

qualities but surface abrasion can render plastic surfaces hard to clean and they can be prone to chipping or cracking. Metals shelves may be prone to oxidation and fatigue which also pose a physical contamination hazard. Wood, if properly maintained, is infinitely preferable to any of the alternatives if they are badly maintained.

### Protective effect

The available scientific literature is generally supportive of a protective effect offered by stable microbial biofilms formed on wooden shelving used by cheesemakers.



This research may be of less use to retailers and wholesalers; with a diverse range of cheeses coming in from different producers and having completed much of their primary ripening, shelf biofilms may show greater, and more unpredictable, variability. It perhaps makes more sense to concentrate on very effective cleaning.

### Wood species

The French Republic approved oak, hornbeam, sweet chestnut, ash, false acacia, walnut, beech, elm and poplar for use in food contact surfaces in 1945, later adding silver fir, Norway spruce, douglas fir, maritime pine, scots pine, beech, plane, aspen, alder, olive and birch to the list of approved wood species. Spruce is also commonly used in food contact. Exotic wood species are best avoided as some species are known to be toxic.

The wood should not be chemically treated but should be free from splits. Damaged boards should be immediately removed from use. Cleaning should follow your documented procedures accurately and consistently. The cleaning process outlined previously

is effective, but it should not be considered superior to a successfully validated system already in place within a business.

Effective drying of the shelves is as important as effective cleaning. Reductions in bacterial load have been shown in several studies to take longer when the wood is not dried. The use of a dehumidifier or drying room might be considered after cleaning.

The effectiveness of the cleaning regime may be verified by environmental swabs for shelves before and after cleaning and drying. Analysis for Total Viable Count makes sense while testing for yeasts and moulds does not as they tend to be fairly resilient and often form part of the ripening flora of cheeses. As with all environmental swabbing, use a template to standardise the sample area. Swabs taken before and after cleaning from areas of 5cm<sup>2</sup> and 50cm<sup>2</sup> respectively will not deliver meaningful results.

**Paul Thomas is a dairy technical consultant and teaches cheesemaking and dairy science courses at the School of Artisan Food. [whymaker@outlook.com](mailto:whymaker@outlook.com)**

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# CHEESEBOARD ESSENTIALS

*Seeking inspiration for your cheese counter? The following should provide plenty of ideas*



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[oxfordfinefood.com](http://oxfordfinefood.com)



## MONTAGNOLO AFFINÉ

Montagnolo Affiné is a premium blue vein cheese from Bavaria.

Soft and creamy with a distinctive grey rind, it won became Nantwich Supreme Champion in 2012 & World Cheese Awards Champion in 2013.

[elite-imports-limited.co.uk](http://elite-imports-limited.co.uk)



## GODMINSTER BRIE

Godminster's Brie is made using the organic milk from Godminster Farm, two miles up the road from their small cheesemaking facility on-site. The milk is brought down via Land Rover and made into three signature types of Brie at Godminster HQ: traditional, rolled in cracked black pepper and infused with garlic and chives.

[godminster.com](http://godminster.com)



## SUMMER BEAUFORT

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[jreignier@entremont.com](mailto:jreignier@entremont.com)



## DELAMERE GOATS CHEESE

This smooth and tasty goats' cheese is matured for between four and six months to give it a pronounced flavour. It can be used in just the same way as you would use a Cheddar cheese, simply on crackers, in sandwiches, sauces and all your favourite recipes.

[delameredairy.co.uk](http://delameredairy.co.uk)



## SHIPSTON BLUE

Hand-crafted using milk from Carron Lodge's own herd of water buffalo which grazes on lush Lancashire meadows, this soft and blue-veined cheese is smooth, creamy and delicate on the palate, due to the superior constituent quality of the milk.

[carronlodge.com](http://carronlodge.com)



## SINGLE GLOUCESTER

Simon Weaver Organic is one of only seven producers in the world to make PDO-accredited Single Gloucester, which has a light, crumbly texture and creamy flavour – making it a firm favourite with our customers.

[simonweaver.net](http://simonweaver.net)



## SMOKEY CHARCOAL CHEDDAR

Developed from Fine Cheese's original Char Coal, the first all-black charcoal Cheddar, this new Smokey Char Coal is a mature Cheddar blended with charcoal and then naturally smoked. Also available in the range is Flaming Char Coal.

[finecheesesltd.co.uk](http://finecheesesltd.co.uk)





#### ARTISAN CRISPBREAD

Peter's Yard artisan crispbreads are made in the UK using a traditional Swedish recipe and the best natural ingredients. These irresistibly crisp, dimpled crispbreads are the perfect host for cheese and are available in a range of formats to suit every occasion.

[petersyard.com](http://petersyard.com)



#### BARBERS 1833

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[barbers1833.co.uk](http://barbers1833.co.uk)



#### GRUYÈRE

This traditionally-made classic Swiss cheese has a sweet but slightly salty flavour that varies with age; creamy and nutty when young, it develops more complex, earthy flavours with age. AOP-accredited, Gruyère is made to exacting standards in line with its impressive heritage.

[gruyere.com](http://gruyere.com)



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## CONTINENTAL CHEESE NOW

*Howard Newmarch, managing director of European cheese specialist Eurilait offers his insight*

### WHAT'S THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CONTINENTAL CHEESE MARKET IN THE UK?

Continental cheese is performing well across the UK retail market year on year. It has grown by 2% in value and 5.5% in volume on last year, reflecting the growing consumer interest in the premium and speciality sector. More consumers are coming into the category and Continental cheese is being purchased more frequently than 12 months ago (Kantar WPO 52 w/e 4th January 2015). The recovery in the foodservice sector means that new menus are being created and fresh attention is being paid to cheese, the most versatile culinary ingredient. Nothing else will deliver such great variety in tastes and texture and enhance meals.

### WHAT CHEESES HAVE BEEN MOST POPULAR IN RECENT MONTHS?

In the quarter running up to January 2015, Continental cheeses performing well in the retail market include Camembert (+21.3% vol), Halloumi (+34.7% vol) and Feta (+15% vol). Wider use of cheese as an ingredient in cooking has helped fuel the growth of these types.

### CAN YOU FORESEE ANY TRENDS DEVELOPING IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

With consumers being more imaginative and adventurous, we expect to see this reflected in their shopping habits and eating out experiences. With the warmer months coming up, outdoor eating occasions such as BBQs and picnics will inevitably become more popular, so cheeses that are convenient to prepare, cook and eat in this way will be enjoyed by consumers. Grazing-style eating is another developing trend, so we anticipate more emphasis on fast, portable and smaller-portioned meal options from retailers and eating out venues.

### HOW CAN INDEPENDENT RETAILERS MAKE THE MOST OF THESE?

They can look imaginatively at explaining/demonstrating how the cheeses can be used in a greater number of eating occasions. They can focus on the use of cheese in barbecues, salads, quiches, tartlets and perhaps pairing with other chutneys, sauces and olives.

### HOW DO COUNTERFEIT CONTINENTAL CHEESES AFFECT EURILAIT'S WORK AND THE MARKET AS A WHOLE?

I think products such as cow's milk salad cheese that try and imitate Feta, risk devaluing the market and

create confusion. The same can be said of Italian-style hard cheeses that don't have the maturity of Grana Padano or Parmesan. They are not illegal though, and have a place in certain market places where price is paramount. When it comes to passing off cheeses as something they are not, then it cheats the consumer of the real experience. The claims reported in the Italian press about the switching of non-DOP cheeses for Parmesan are very topical. If it's similar but not the real thing, then label it properly and let the consumer decide.

### WHAT DOES BRITISH PRODUCTION OF CONTINENTAL-STYLE CHEESES MEAN FOR THE CONTINENTAL CHEESE MARKET?

British cheese makers have been producing Continental-style cheeses such as Cornish Brie, Somerset Camembert and Welsh Goats Gouda for many years. Each cheese has its own unique characteristics and provenance, and consumers can choose which they prefer. Cheeses produced on the Continent will often represent better value than UK imitations, as they are produced for larger markets and on a larger scale. That said, the time, care and attention paid to the production of small batches of locally-produced cheeses will often yield cheese of exceptional quality. Both can live happily side by side. Within its range, Eurilait offers traditional Cypriot Halloumi as well as a British Halloumi-style cheese called Milky's Halum. Both cheeses are award-winning and absolutely delicious. It is great for us to be able to offer customers an authentic Cypriot recipe with fresh sheep, goat and cow's milk, as well as a lovely British-made option that comes with fewer food miles.

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so flavoursome,  
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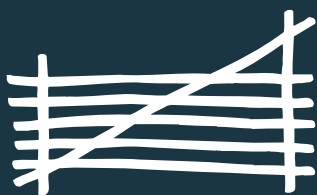
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# EASTERN PROMISE



*Cheesecounters are being augmented by an increasing numbers on Eastern European cheeses, but selling these to your regular customers may depend on knowing a little about these cheeses and the stories behind them. Juliet Harbutt chooses the cheeses*

**D**espite the fact that so many Eastern European countries have joined, or are waiting to join the EU, surprisingly little appears to be known about the traditional or artisanally-made foods of these new members or about the cheeses that they, like all European countries, consume in significant quantities.

Eastern European customers will be looking for their favourite cheeses, and properly explained, these products will also be of interest to regular customers too. The cheeses that I have chosen to write about here are simply the ones I know about and have tasted, but there are, no doubt, many more just waiting to be discovered or to be made in sufficient volume to make it worthwhile for makers to export.

Over its long history, Europe's borders have changed frequently and the Continent has become a melting pot of culinary influences. As a result, borders are blurred and cheeses with similar names and recipes are often found throughout Eastern Europe. Where this has happened, I have written about the cheese under the country where it is most likely to be sold, and then noted the other countries who make it and the name they use for it.

## ROMANIA



Like its neighbours and near neighbours, Romania has seen its fair share of invaders, each of whom has

bought their own unique culinary style, from the Romans who probably introduced the region's two main cheeses, Kaskaval and Branza, to the Ottoman Empire with its Turkish and Arabic influences.

### Cascaval PDO

Named after Cacicavallo, the Italian stretched curd cheese on which it is based, Cascaval PDO has been made for centuries across Eastern Europe under similar names in Hungary, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and particularly Romania, where it is used to indicate a type of cheese made from sheep's or cow's milk. This typical yellow cheese is produced in Romania, but is also made in Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, Greece and Croatia. A sheep's milk cheese, which is aged for six months, it has a smooth texture and mild, slightly



ROMANIAN CHEESE BRAIDS

tangy, taste that hints of olive oil.

**Tasting Notes:** Aged for around eight weeks, weighing between 7 – 9 kg, with thin, ridged rinds, these cheeses tend to be flexible, supple to crumbly, with a salty, sharp, almost mineral, bitter taste. Those made with ewes' milk have characteristic sweet notes which hint of caramelised onions on the finish.

### Other Romanian cheeses

**Telemea** is a feta-type cheese made with sheep's milk and stored

## CROATIA



Croatian cuisine is known as "the cuisine of regions". Mainland cuisine is characterized by the Proto-Slavic and more recently, the more famous gastronomic orders of today such as Hungarian, Viennese and Turkish. Coastal regions bear the imprint of Greek, Roman and Illyrian, as well as later Mediterranean cuisines.

### Paski Sir PDO

Early accounts of a sheep's milk cheese made in dry stone huts on the hilly, windswept parts of Pag Island date back to the 1700s. The huts are now homes, but the sheep still graze the natural pastures of aromatic grasses and herbs that give the milk its unique flavour. PDO regulations ensure Paski Sir will always be recognized a symbol of the Northern Dalmatian island where it was first made.

**Tasting Notes:** Made with 100% sheep's milk between January and end of June, it is aged between two and 18 months. The young cheese has a warm, yellow rind with a gentle aroma and a nutty, subtle, aromatic taste with citrus notes.



PASKI SIR PDO FROM CROATIA

After 18 months, the rind is brown and the interior has become drier and crystalline, yet it still melts in the mouth, where it releases its nutty character with hints of sage and spice on the finish. Paski sir, produced in May, is said to be at its best when the wild sage on Pag is in full bloom, producing a long and pleasant after-taste that hints of wild pastures. Aged Paski Sir is excellent with local dishes such as gnocchi, risotto, macaroni or polenta and best served with strong local reds or aromatic white wines.



TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN CHEESES ON SALE

in barrels of brine for up to six months. It is sometimes spiced with cumin seeds. With a wet, crumbly, consistency reminiscent of feta, Telemea is creamy, salty and tangy.

**Brânză de burduf** is a kneaded sheep's milk cheese with a strong taste and semi-soft texture.

**Ardalena** is made from Transylvanian water buffalo milk and aged for around 12 months, when it has a firm, dense texture and subtle, earthy flavour and is used for snacking, shredding, grating, or cooking.

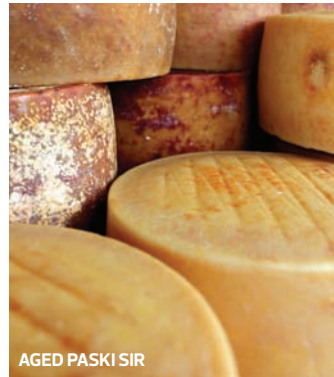


SMOKED CHEESE FROM BRON





**Basa** and **Skripavac** are cheeses made in the unspoilt mountainous region of Lika. Basa is a simple, home-made, fresh cheese typically made in the summer from Busa cow's milk. This small, strong, breed of cattle producers a high percentage of fat, but has a short lactation period. Rubbery with a mild acidity which hints of wild grazing, this cheese is made using sour cream as a starter culture and drained in a cloth over night, after which it is lightly pressed and eaten during the next few days as a spread with cured meats, or in



AGED PASKI SIR

various savoury dishes, as well as in cakes. Similar to Basa is Škripavac. Made with raw Busa milk, this cheese has been coagulated with rennet so it can be eaten fresh or allowed to age. Škripavac is rare and facing extinction because the number of cattle has fallen dangerously low. **Turoš** is a speciality from Medimurje [North of Zagreb] which is made by combining fresh cottage cheese, salt and paprika into a cone shape, then drying the cheese in the sun, or near a stove. It is then served with spring onions and home-made corn bread.

**Sir Laguna Cheese with Truffles.** This cheese is produced at the Spin sheep farm in a modern factory,

using traditional methods. The factory is located close to Tar in Istria, an area where shepherding dates back centuries.

**Tasting Notes:** Sir Laguna cheese with truffles is a full fat, semi-firm cheese made using both cow's and 30 per cent sheep's milk. The rind is pale yellow, and towards the interior, takes on a light beige colour, shot through with evenly-distributed black spots of grated truffle. Sir Laguna cheese is noted for having a more intense flavour than cheeses made with cow's milk alone. The cheese has a buttery, rich flavour and melts in the mouth, while the truffles impart their unique, pungent and quite unmistakable aroma.



## OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN PRODUCERS



### LITHUANIA

Legend has it that this cheese was first made by the giant Džiugas, after whom it was named, to celebrate his marriage. Pronounced Dewgas, it is similar in style to Parmesan, though less grainy and is made only between spring and autumn, when the small herds graze the natural pastures in and around the Zemaitijos National Park. Its November 2013 launch in the UK was followed up by a social media and PR campaign.

[www.dziugashouse.lt](http://www.dziugashouse.lt)

**Tasting notes:** Weighing in at around 8kg or sold in 180gm packs from 12 – 48 months, this is a hard, pale yellow cheese with

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## OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN PRODUCERS

a thin, edible crust. At 24 months, it is savoury rather than sweet, with some crunchy crystals, while at 36 months the flavour is more intense, very fruity, with a mouth-watering tingle. In Lithuania, it is traditionally served in bite-sized chunks alongside soft fruit, nuts and honey, used in numerous recipes, or served on a cheeseboard.



### LATVIA

Latvians are rather conservative and prefer simple dairy products like cottage cheese, sour cream, kefir and Edam, with the traditional cheese Janis, taking centre stage. The major producer in Latvia is Trikata, which in 2006 became a cooperative owned by farmers whose aim is to produce quality cheeses based on old, traditional recipes.

#### Janu Siers or John's Cheese.

Dating back to the 12th century, the name of this cheese derives from John's Day, an annual midsummer celebration at the end of June. Made in homes following traditional recipes, but now also made commercially, this once-a-year treat is made by heating cottage cheese and milk together until it curdles. This is then combined with melted butter, beaten eggs, salt and caraway seeds and stirred until it becomes stretchy, when it is made into a round.

**Tasting notes:** Somewhere between Halloumi and Edam in texture, this cheese is layers of yellow, moist, chewy cheese with mildly citrus zing, a taste reminiscent of scrambled egg offset by the exotic taste of the caraway. It weighs around 500gm and is consumed from 1 – 4 weeks old. Today the tradition of home-made John's cheese is still alive although it is also produced industrially and available all year long. It may also be covered in breadcrumbs, fried and served with honey and fresh berries.

## POLAND



As many Poles live and work in the UK, it is of course, worth seeking out some Polish cheeses and other products.

Poland is a big cheese producer and consumer, with around 30 unique traditional cheeses. Many share their history with neighbouring countries and although they are PDO protected, they are rarely seen outside Poland (with the exception of Oscypek, a smoked cheese made of sheep milk). Other cheeses you may come across from Poland are Damski, a semi-soft, smoked, cow's milk cheese from Mragowo, an area known for its lush grazing and thriving dairy industry, and Golka, which is similar to Oscypek but made with cow's milk and in a different spindle shape. Bryndza Podhalańska, from the Podhale region, is similar to Bryndza, and it is also made from sheep's milk.

### Oscypek PDO.

These pale, mahogany-brown, spindle-shaped cheeses are made by pressing the curd into intricately, hand-crafted wooden moulds, then stored in the eaves of the shepherds' huts or family homes, where the cheese absorbs smoke



UNIQUELY-SHAPED OSCYPEK SMOKED CHEESE

from the fire below. Still made on a small-scale, few are found outside the markets of Zakopane (Poland's most upmarket ski resort), Nowy Targ and Zywiec. The cheese, which dates back to 14th century, is made from a rare breed of probably Romanian sheep. Quite similar cheeses can be found in Romania and also in Slovakia.

**Tasting Notes:** Beneath the smooth rind, which ranges from a pale straw to a deep orange-brown depending on age and smoking, this cheese is dense, yet supple. It feels creamy and smooth in the mouth with a smoky, slightly salty tang and a caramel sweetness which comes from the ewes' milk.



POLISH TWAROG CHEESE



## SLOVAKIA



The central European state of Slovakia is bordered by the Czech Republic, Austria, Romania, the Ukraine, Hungary and Poland and not surprisingly, some of the cheeses found here are also enjoyed across its borders.

**Bryndza PGI** which closely resembles Feta, was probably introduced by the Greeks and similar cheeses are made throughout Eastern Europe. Traditional Bryndza is a greyish, sharp, salty, grated and

pin-rolled, crumbly, semi-spreadable 100% sheep cheese. There is no close equivalent in taste and texture among sheep's, cow's, or goat's milk cheeses. Most modern, commercially available Bryndza is milder, bleached creamy white, and two of its three varieties can legally contain up to 49% cow's milk. The EU registered the latter as Slovenská bryndza on its food list of Protected Geographical Indications on 16 July 2008. Although the PGI treats Slovakian and Polish Bryndza as separate products, the traditional variety differs little.

### Slovak and Polish definitions

The modern products registered by the European Commission differ more. Slovak Bryndza (Slovenská Bryndza) must contain more than 50% sheep cheese and can be produced year-round. Podhale Bryndza (Bryndza Podhalańska) must contain no less than 60% sheep cheese and can be produced only from May through September. The product labelled Slovak Bryndza can come from most of Slovakia, while Podhale Bryndza can come only from two counties adjacent to Slovakia's northern border and several neighbouring villages. The traditional product used to be marketed as liptovská Bryndza, but now is more often sold as ovčia Bryndza (sheep bryndza). This variety must be made using only sheep's milk.

**Tasting notes.** Similar to Feta, but softer, spreadable, and not as salty, it has a lemony acidity and varies from soft to firm, to crumbly, depending on its age and the type of milk used. It is intensely salty and sharp and is believed to be at its best in May.



# GOING CONTINENTAL

*Look beyond the obvious for great Continentals, says Lucy Pritchard*



The past decade has seen real growth in British artisan cheese production. British cheese competes very successfully at an international level, and whilst we are always happy to fly the home flag, here, we take a look at five other European countries. Owen Davies, category manager for Harvey & Brockless explains how the market has changed in the past few years; "UK multiples have been far more proactive in selecting cheese for their supermarket shelves, on the whole introducing a wider choice of products. This increased availability and improved consumer awareness raises the bar for smaller independents – who frequently respond by extending and improving their own knowledge by seeking out overseas cheese from specialist wholesalers."

Today, deli owners and cheesemongers have an opportunity to stand out from the competition. As Ros Windsor, managing director of Paxton & Whitefield says, "When creating a comprehensive Continental range, it is important to make sure that we have the classic Continental cheeses

that our customers would expect, e.g. Brie, Camembert, Manchego, as well as having new cheeses for our customers to try and enjoy."

Ros also points out how European cheeses differ from their British counterparts. "Although there are regional strengths, the history of Continental cheeses is very much about Protected Designation of Origin status. PDO cheeses such as Brie and Manchego have been made for a long time and have gathered great acclaim. Owing to this tradition in the artisan Continental cheesemaking sector, there is not the same innovation that you see with younger generations of British cheesemakers. In Great Britain we don't have this PDO tradition, which has meant that cheesemakers have been able to experiment with their cheesemaking recipes. To ensure we receive the best quality cheeses from the Continent, it is important for us to establish relationships with Continental cheesemakers and wholesalers, such as our working partnership with the Parisian fromagerie, Androuet."

## FRANCE



The French have produced many of world's greatest cheese. The country's

cheesemaking dates back thousands of years, with every region producing its own speciality, decided by geography, climate and livestock. Specialist wholesaler, Harvey & Brockless works closely with the French affineur, Paccard, to source cheese from the Haute-Savoie region. Mark Birkett, Export Director at Paccard, explains; "There is a niche demand for French cheeses that are well matured, but this is growing."

### Reblochon

**Type:** semi soft

**Milk:** unpasteurised cows'

**Flavours:** fruity, mild, nutty

**Vegetarian:** no

**Provenance:** Haute-Savoie region

A seasonal rind-washed sensation, Reblochon from the Haute-Savoie, is available from September and throughout the winter months. Traditionally made in small batches by Alpine farmers, the raw milk cheese is produced twice a day, immediately after milking. Reblochon undergoes a rigorous three stage process. Firstly, the rind

is developed in humid cellars that are maintained at 12°C. Then the cheese is moved to a cold room to develop the dough. Lastly, it finishes maturing in a warmer environment before being classified as Tartiflette, Surchoix, or Extra.

### Chevroton

**Type:** soft

**Milk:** unpasteurised goats'

**Provenance:** Haute-Savoie region

This unpasteurised French goats cheese has been produced since the 17th century in the Alpine foothills of the Savoyard Chablais, Bauges and Aravis districts. Made between January and September by three farmers located above 1,000m altitude, Chevroton is equivalent to a goat Reblochon. This cheese has a very brief maturation period, so remains very fresh tasting. At a minimum, it needs three weeks to ripen on pine timber shelves.



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# WELCOME TO CHEESE BUYER

*Cheese Buyer magazine is brought to you by people with one thing in common – a passion for cheese*

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**W**elcome to an exciting new magazine for cheese buyers.

Whether you are buying to supply food halls or farm shops, looking for something unusual for your deli's cheesecounter, or a cheesemonger who lives and breathes cheese, you'll find much to inform, advise, and satisfy your cravings in these pages.

Cheese has always been central to Speciality Food magazine. Each issue, we bring you the latest news from the industry along with informed comment from those in the know. You'll also find regular features on the various cheese groups and opportunities to find out how your colleagues sell cheese in our interviews with cheesemongers themselves. It makes sense, then, to bring you a magazine which is dedicated solely to the selling of this amazing product.

In Cheese Buyer, we have valuable contributions from key people in cheese. British Cheese Awards founder Juliet Harbutt has brought her considerable knowledge and experience in this field to bear on our selection

of subjects to tackle. Hero Hirsch, manager of Paxton & Whitfield's flagship store, joins Andy Swinscoe of The Courtyard Dairy, and Thimble cheesemaker and consultant Paul Thomas to offer expert guidance on keeping, cutting and ageing your cheese.

Identifying future trends is crucial to any business and here Bradbury's George Paul suggests how the cheese industry might evolve as time goes on. To sell cheese you must first pull your customers through your doors and how you and your cheeses appear to passers by can be an

important factor in attracting footfall. We look at how the look of your shop can bring in custom, how installing the right cheese counter can help and at how the cheese itself can be displayed to maximum effect. Perhaps your cheese counter includes a few cheeses from Eastern Europe? There are many more just waiting to be discovered and Juliet Harbutt introduces her favourites. Another new trend is the pairing of whisky with cheese. As with cheese and wine pairing, this offers retailers the chance to acquaint cheese aficionados with good whisky and the other way around, too. Richard Veal of Berry Bros & Rudd is among the people offering their own pairing suggestions. Also in this packed inaugural issue, you'll discover how cheese is best sold, both within and beyond our shores. This, a good hard look at what's on offer from Europe, and an opinion piece from Mary Quicke, will, I hope, ensure that you will find your copy of Cheese Buyer helpfully informative and an entertaining read.

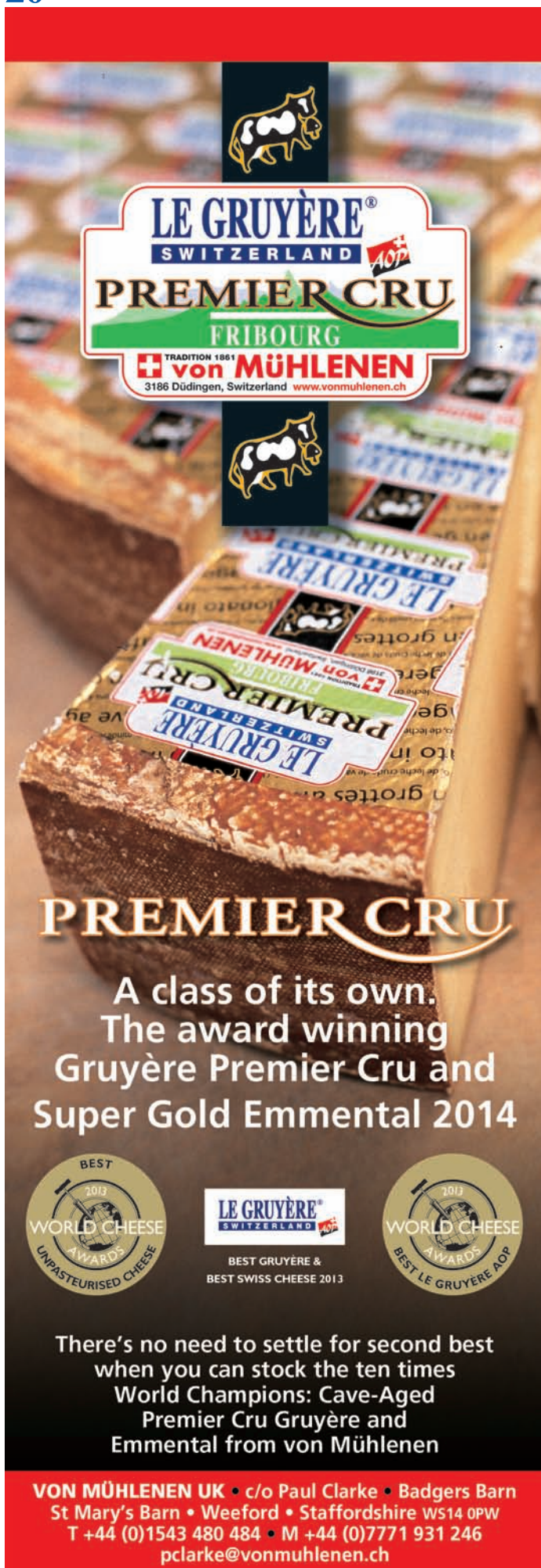
*Ross Gilfillan*

ross@aceville.com

“  
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## Roquefort Le Tropeau

**Type:** blue

**Milk:** unpasteurised ewes'

**Flavours:** strong, spicy

**Vegetarian:** no

**Provenance:** Roquefort in France

Think of a French blue and Roquefort will almost certainly spring to mind. Strictly governed, the cheese is still handmade using original methods with ewes milk from the hardy Lacaune sheep; Roquefort is matured in limestone caves known as 'Fleurine' in Southwest France. *Penicillium Roqueforti* creates the blue-green colouration from the moulds. Usually matured for at least three months, this particular Roquefort has been aged for nine months to develop a truly exemplary tang.



## Camembert di Normandie

**Type:** soft

**Milk:** unpasteurised cows'

**Provenance:** Normandy

With a glorious, white ripened rind and soft, creamy consistency, Camembert is a true French icon – slick, sophisticated and decadent. Made over a two week period, the cheeses are carefully tended by hand – regularly turned, and monitored for temperature and moisture levels. Some of the finest cheeses will be selected to ripen for a further twenty days; the result is intensely fruity, with an earthy undertone and a supple texture.



## Ossau Iraty

**Type:** hard

**Milk:** pasteurised ewes'

**Flavours:** sweet, nutty

**Vegetarian:** no

**Provenance:** Basque region

From the Basque region, Ossau Iraty, is the only protected cheese of the Pyrénées. Pierre Gjurasevic, export director of Onetik, a leading

dairy producer of the region said, "The terroir of the region is very complex. Sheep graze on the hillsides in winter and pastures in summer, creating a cheese with a beautifully compact, rich texture that has wheat aromas and nutty, grassy-sweet flavours."

## ITALY



Artisan cheesemaking is embedded in Italy's food culture. The association of Italy with quality food, laden with

provenance, is strong and imminently saleable. Everyone has heard of the core Italian cheeses: Parmesan, Gorgonzola, Pecorino, Taleggio and Mozzarella.

## Occelli al Barolo

**Type:** enriched and hard

**Milk:** pasteurised cows' and goats'

**Flavours:** rich, intense

**Vegetarian:** no

**Provenance:** Piedmont

For a product of absolute quality and originality, then Occelli al Barolo is worthy of all serious cheese lovers. Made from cows' and goats' milk that have grazed freely on the alpine pastures, these cheeses are selected from the best and aged for two years. They are then enriched in the marc from the wine presses, where the cheese develops a unique depth of flavour.



## Pecorino Romano

**Type:** hard

**Milk:** pasteurised ewes' milk

**Flavours:** buttery, mild, nutty

**Vegetarian:** no

**Provenance:** Region of Pecorino

Deriving from the Italian word 'pecora' meaning 'sheep' – this is the collective name for family of hard Italian cheeses made unsurprisingly from ewes' milk. There are four main varieties that all have PDO status; of those, Pecorino Romano is the best known in the UK. An important export since the 19th century, Pecorino Romano is produced on the island of Sardinia, in Lazio and the Tuscan Province of Grosseto. These traditional hard, drum-shaped cheeses are determined by their age. Matured



Pecorinos, referred to as 'stagionato', are hard and crumbly in texture with buttery and nutty flavours. Younger, 'semi-stagionato' or 'fresco' Pecorinos feature a softer texture with mild, creamy flavours.



## Taleggio

**Type:** semi-soft, smear-ripened  
**Milk:** pasteurised cows'  
**Flavours:** fruity, mild, tangy  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Val Taleggio in Italy

With its herbaceous aroma, this smear-ripened cheese from the northern Valsassina foothills, has been made since the 9th century. It is named after the caves of Val Taleggio where it is traditionally aged. Produced throughout the autumn and winter, squares of pasteurised cows' milk are washed once a week with a brine to develop a sticky, orange edible rind. A constant current of air is pumped from the original caves causes a dappling of soft and earthy tasting grey mould. Its longevity and appeal is down to its meaty texture and relatively mild taste that has an unusual fruity tang.



## Collebianco Buffalo Mozzarella

**Type:** semi-soft  
**Milk:** water buffalo's  
**Flavours:** milky  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** traditionally Southern Italy

Formed into beautiful white, glazed globes, Mozzarella is one the freshest and most versatile cheeses around. These tactile spheres are composed of thin layers with a satisfying, springy elasticity. The traditional, intricate hand moulding process has mostly been mechanised and in many cases cows' milk or a mix of cows' and buffalo's milk is used, rather than pure buffalo. A good mozzarella should taste of creamy milk with no cheese or yoghurt undertones, and have a moist texture.

## SPAIN



Typically known for Rioja, chorizo and paella, with the exception of Manchego, Spain has sometimes been overlooked when it comes to speciality cheeses.



## La Mancha Iberico

**Type:** hard  
**Milk:** cows', goats', ewes'  
**Flavours:** full, sharp, smooth, acidic  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** La Mancha

The region of La Mancha is vast and dry; a place where herds of sheep and goats forage among the thistles and rosemary. This aromatic diet and free-roaming life creates a flavourful, rich milk, the secret to La Mancha Ibérico's complex taste. One of the most popular cheeses in Spain, this firm, oily cheese is mild and aromatic. It is medium cured, with a firm bite, offering a subtle alternative to the more intense flavour of Manchego cheese.

## Monte Enebro

**Type:** soft  
**Milk:** pasteurised goats' milk  
**Flavours:** acidic, lemony, pungent, tangy  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Avila

A soft-ripened cheese, Monte Enebro is handmade exclusively by cheese maker Rafael Baez and his daughter Paloma. Produced in Avila, Spain, Monte Enebro is made using pasteurised goats' milk and ripened using a *Penicillium Roqueforti* mould. Allowing the blue mould to develop on the rind of the cheese adds to the distinct appearance and intricate flavours of this new-age cheese. Younger Monte Enebro cheese evokes a mild, bright and slightly acidic taste with a cellar-like aroma. As the cheese matures, the aroma becomes more pungent and the flavours intensify.

## Murcia Al Vino

**Type:** hard  
**Milk:** unpasteurised goats'  
**Flavours:** Fruity, spicy, sweet  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Murcia

A dense, creamy cheese that originates from the Murcia region, in South-Eastern Spain. The term 'al vino' refers to the rind that is bathed in red wine during maturation to form a burgundy tint without filtering through to the cheese. Murcia Al Vino offers a pleasant creamy flavour, that is slightly salty with a mild aroma. Add to that, a hint of fruit and spice as a result of the red wine baths during maturation.

## Picos Blue

**Type:** blue  
**Milk:** pasteurised cows', goats'  
**Flavours:** strong, spicy  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Picos de Europa

A smooth, creamy blue cheese, Picos Blue is produced in the beautiful Asturian Mountains of Spain. Traditionally matured in high caves in the cold, damp and salty winds of the Bay of Biscay, giving the cheese its slightly salty bite. This delightful cheese is made from a blend of pasteurised cows' and goats' milk wrapped in maple leaves. Picos Blue is strong, soft to spread and has a buttery, rich taste.



## Garrotxa

**Type:** semi-hard  
**Milk:** pasteurised goats  
**Flavours:** creamy, herbaceous  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Garrotxa in Catalonia

Garrotxa is a semi-hard, artisan cheese produced in Catalonia, Northern Spain. Made from the pasteurised milk of Murcian goats, the cheese is then aged in caves to enhance mould development, creating earthy, natural flavours. With a moist, creamy yet almost flaky texture, Garrotxa's delicate taste is not characteristic of a usual goats' cheese. The velvety grey mould coating lends a woody aroma and the flavour is creamy, herbaceous yet slightly nutty.

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## Cabrales

**Type:** semi-hard, blue-veined  
**Milk:** unpasteurised cows', goats', sheep's milk  
**Flavours:** acidic, salty, sharp  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** region of Asturias

Much like Picos Blue cheese, Cabrales is made in the artisan tradition by rural dairy farmers in the Asturian Mountains of Spain. Milk used in the production of Cabrales must come exclusively from cattle raised in the Asturias area. This unpasteurised cows' milk is then blended with goats' and sheeps' milk which presents the cheese with its stronger, spicier flavour. This semi-hard cheese is matured in limestone caves, under chilly and humid conditions to facilitate the growth of its blue-green *Penicillium* mould. Natural development of the *Penicillium* mould allows the Cabrales to cure from the outside in. Resulting in the cheese's strong, pungent aroma and sharp, acidic, slightly salty taste.

## SWITZERLAND



Cheese making has been a tradition in Switzerland for hundreds of years, and favourites including

Gruyère (see page 24) and Emmentaler show there's more to Swiss cheese than just making holes. Good quality, natural ingredients and great taste are distinctive of cheeses from Switzerland thanks to their strict production guidelines.

## Appenzeller

**Type:** hard  
**Milk:** cows'  
**Flavours:** nutty, fruity  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Appenzell

Originating in the region of Appenzell next to the Liechtenstein border, this hard, spicy cheese is made from high quality, raw milk from cows fed exclusively rich herbal grass and hay. Appenzeller cheese wheels are then placed in herbal brine baths whilst curing. This process enhances the unique flavour and promotes the formation of rind. Only a handful of dairies produce the cheese today, each with its own 'trade secret' recipe for the brine wash. Strong aromas range from mild to tangy, dependent on the ageing process. Classic is aged for three to four

months, Surchoix aged between four and six months and Extra is aged for six months or longer, each delivering a nutty or fruity flavour.



## Kaltbach Emmentaler

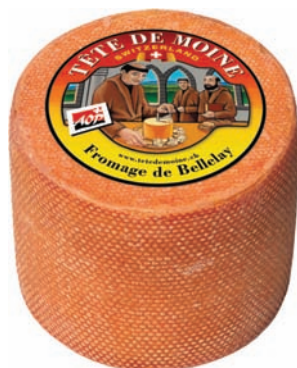
**Type:** semi-hard, processed  
**Milk:** pasteurised cows'  
**Flavours:** nutty, tangy  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Lucerne

One of the most recognised Swiss cheeses, Emmentaler is famed for its open 'holes' and brown patina. Made from pasteurised cows' milk by the Emmi Dairy in the Swiss region of Lucerne, Kaltbach Emmentaler is aged for four to five months deep in the sandstone caves under Mount Santenberg. This unique climate gives the cheese its distinct dark brown natural rind. White crystals and drops of water are formed during the cave-ageing and this indicates the fine quality of the cheese. With a melt-in-the-mouth sensation due to the extra cream added, this semi-soft cheese offers a nutty taste and crumbly texture coupled with tangy aromatic flavours.

## Tête de Moine

**Type:** semi-hard  
**Milk:** cows'  
**Flavours:** fruity, sweet  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** Bernese Jura and Canton of Bern

Tête de Moine, a semi-hard cheese, is traditionally prepared by carefully producing 'shaved' petals by skilfully paring the surface with a sharp knife. The process helps to release the cheese's odour as it comes into increased contact with air.



## Vacherin Fribourgeois

**Type:** semi-soft, artisan  
**Milk:** unpasteurised cows'  
**Flavours:** acidic, buttery, nutty  
**Vegetarian:** no  
**Provenance:** regions of Bulle, Fribourg and Jura

The unpasteurised cow's milk used to make this specific Vacherin is sourced from the Fribourgeois breed of cows that graze on alpine grass and wild flowers. This delivers a semi-soft cheese with a nutty flavour underpinned by notes of fresh hay and milk. Originally made in the towns of Bulle and Fribourg, today Vacherin Fribourgeois is produced by just a small number of artisanal cheesemakers – it can be sourced by specialists. Vacherin has an unpalatable natural and brushed washed rind accompanied by an inimitable aroma.

## HOLLAND



The Dutch have been making delectable cheese since 400AD and Holland is the second biggest exporter of cheese by volume, producing around 700,000 tonnes a year. Most production is on an industrial scale, yet there are some 300 Dutch farmers producing 'Boerenkaas' (farmers cheese) which is a protected form of Gouda made in the traditional manner, using unpasteurized milk.

## Vintage Gouda 3 Year

**Type:** semi-hard to hard  
**Milk:** cows (both unpasteurised and pasteurised)  
**Flavours:** fruity, nutty  
**Vegetarian:** no

Gouda comes in many ages, flavours, and sizes. The

commonality between Goudas is the flattened wheel shape and how the curds are washed during making. This process removes some of the lactose. The result is a sweeter cheese that doesn't become sharp as it ages. Aged Gouda is a complex cheese containing a medley of flavours. High-quality Gouda exhibits the perfect balance of salty and sweet, meltiness and crunch.



## Gouda with Truffles

**Type:** semi-hard  
**Milk:** pasteurised cows  
**Flavours:** fruity, nutty  
**Vegetarian:** no

Melkbus 149 Truffle, starts as a traditional Dutch 'Boerenkaas', however, prior to pressing and shaping the cheese, indulgent shavings of Italian Black Truffles are generously sprinkled into the curd, making it truly decadent. After 10 weeks of ageing – the earthy flavours from the truffle are infused throughout the cheese with harmonising notes of walnuts.





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hours after milking, early consignments will be ready to begin the cheesemaking process a very short time after milking. In order to ensure complete freshness, the small herds must be located no further than 12.4 miles from the dairy.

If you have noticed one or two rules being laid down here, then this is what Le Gruyère AOP is all about. To ensure the balance of flavour and quality of a cheese which is sold at different ages, and is made by so many little dairies, strict rules ensure conformity of both character and quality right across the board.

This does not, however, mean that there are not the same little differences consistent with being a live product. While you will find small seasonal and regional variations, and larger ones in cheeses of different ages, both Gruyère AOP Classic (matured for between five and nine months) and Gruyère AOP Reserve (matured for a minimum of 10 months) differ widely when it comes to flavour notes, many consumers detecting a creamy, floral character in the younger cheeses and a dryer, sometimes crystalline texture and deeper flavour in the longer-matured ones.

To achieve this level of consistency, Le Gruyère AOP closely monitors the product of each cheesemaker, checking paste quality, texture, aroma and

appearance. All must conform perfectly to Le Gruyère AOP standards before the cheese can be sold under that name. Each part of the process is entirely separate from the next: milk producers do not produce any cheese and cheese makers may not produce any milk. Cheeses are judged using a points system, and cheese makers are paid more for higher-scoring cheeses, making it in their interest to ensure very high standards.

Retailers will appreciate the fact that Gruyère AOP cheese is an entirely traceable product, thanks to records and checks at every stage of its production. When the milk arrives at the dairy, a sample is taken and held for six months, so that in the event of an imperfection, the milk can be traced back to its supplier. Produced with animal rennet, Le Gruyère AOP is a very traditional cheese which, allowing for a few modern innovations such as heated copper vats, has been made using the same recipe for 900 years and is naturally gluten and lactose-free.

The integrity of Le Gruyère AOP is protected by the casein mark and date of production which can be found on the top of the wheel, and the words Le Gruyère AOP along with the number of the dairy, which is imprinted on the rind.

You can find out which cheesemaker made your wheel at [www.gruyere.com](http://www.gruyere.com).

## GRUYÈRE AOP THE SWISS CLASSIC

*If you are considering adding continentals to your cheese counter, Le Gruyère AOP has the artisanal credentials to make it a 'must stock'*

In an age of increasing homogenisation, it's reassuring to know that there's at least one international product which is still made by the same artisanal and very human methods which have been used in its production for hundreds of years. Despite its worldwide recognition, Le Gruyère AOP is no factory-made product, but a traditional cheese which is created daily in the 170 small dairies which shelter under the Le Gruyère AOP umbrella.

These producers really are small, too. Drive through the rolling foothills of Western Switzerland and you may blink and miss them. A medium-sized dairy often employs only two or three people and may produce 14 wheels of Gruyère AOP a day.

But this is a cheese made in a way that is quite unique, and its story begins in the lush grasslands of the cantons of Fribourg, Vaud,

Neuchâtel, Jura and the Bern area, where alpine cows produce the high quality milk which is essential for the making of Gruyère AOP. The cheese is an entirely natural product: the milk comes from small herds of animals which have been fed on grass in the summer and hay in the winter. No silage is used and nor are any preservatives or additives. The unpasteurised milk is delivered to the cheesemaker twice per day, every day, and although it must be poured into the vat no more than 18



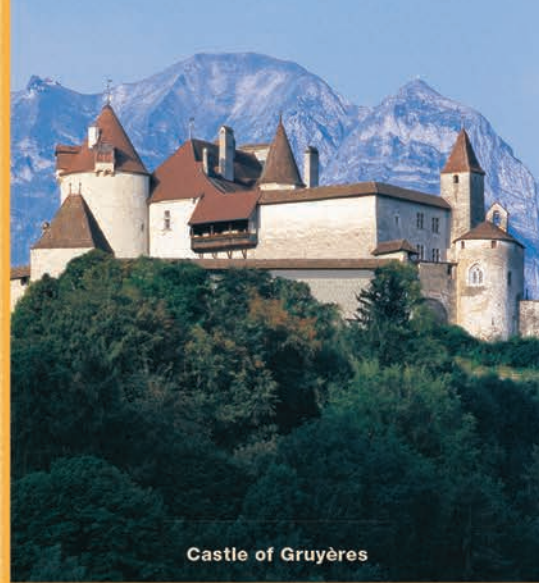
“ The cheese is an entirely natural product: the milk comes from small herds of animals which have been fed on grass in the summer and hay in the winter. No silage is used and nor are any preservatives or additives ”



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



Castle of Gruyères



When you're looking for the uniquely smooth, savoury Gruyère flavour, there's only one cheese that fits the bill: Le Gruyère AOP, since 1115 AD. The fact is, the flavour in any cheese is a product of its surroundings – the fields **(only in the villages of Western Switzerland)** where the cows that supply the milk are raised and fed, the way in which the cheese is produced **(hand-made, in small batches, with fresh raw milk)**, and, of course, the centuries-old recipe **(slow-aged in the region's cheese cellars and caves)**. This is what creates the unique characteristics found in the only cheese that can call itself Le Gruyère AOP.

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ELEGANT INTERIOR

## LOOKING THE PART

*Well-considered décor and skilful display are key to enticing customers into your shop and up to your counter, as these experts concur*

Customers taste with their eyes, it's said, long before the food passes their lips. Before a customer can be tempted to taste your cheese, he has first to be persuaded through your doors. This is where good display and presentation repay the investment. If a customer has not heard of your shop, his decision to enter will be partly based on how your business appears to him. The name or the typeface used in its signage may be an inducement, and what he can see through what is very often a large plate glass window, is another. Whether you are a cheese shop, delicatessen or a farm shop, this is where good display becomes all-important. Shops may be thematically different when it comes to display – while some have a smart, upmarket food hall look, others favour an artisanal, part-of-the-dairy approach and many more have been decorated in accordance with the restrictions of space and cash flow – but all successful independent food retailers place importance on appearance.

### The complete refit

Ray Kenny owns International Cheese at London's Liverpool Street, which has two branches, at Marylebone and Victoria stations. Having recently moved premises

within the retail areas of Liverpool St Station, he was afforded a chance to look again at the way in which he displays his wares. Although he also sells wines and ports, his first consideration, he says, was how he would display his cheeses.

"A complete makeover of the unit is really good," he says, "because you have to think what it is you are trying to achieve and how you are going to play with the space you've got. After asking the question, 'what am I aiming to do here?' I would then be asking myself 'what products am I going to put on display?'"

In this case, there were three considerations, he says. "We have 400 cheeses, a fair range of port, wine and champagne, and equally important are our home-made sandwiches, for which we have got a good following. These are the three main things that I would want to be sure that customers could see and could get to, without a great deal of effort."

Easy access to everything underlies Ray's display. As well as the sandwiches made with artisanal cheese which can easily be grabbed from a basket on the counter, Ray sells a lot of easily-portable small cheeses and also provides "pieces of pre-wrapped

EFFECTIVE SHELF USAGE AT  
INTERNATIONAL CHEESE

cheese, especially at Christmas time, when we can do more business in a day than we might otherwise do in a week. At these times I would, for instance, chop a whole Montgomery into all sorts of sizes before labelling and pricing each piece. People then can come in and taste it and choose the piece they want without having to engage with me, meaning they can get in and out quickly." People need to be able to see the product," Ray says, "or have it passed to them without feeling it's going to inconvenience me by doing that."

Ray's primary consideration in setting the look of his shop is the arrangement of his cheeses, which he changes around regularly. "I have always laid things out nationally and

RAY KENNY OF  
INTERNATIONAL CHEESE

then according to whether they were blue, soft or hard. You would want to keep all the British cheeses together and all the French cheeses together, in order that people can go to a specific area and get a full picture of that nation's cheese without having to look around for its products."

Once clearly arranged, the labelling of those cheeses needs to be just as clear, Ray says. Cheese retailers vary in their approach to labelling, some adding tasting notes and personal opinions. Ray, though, is very clear about the essential information which his labels must offer. "Obviously, the name of the product," he says, "and where it comes from. We would always state whether the milk was pasteurised





INTERNATIONAL CHEESE  
AT LIVERPOOL STREET

or unpasteurised, vegetable or animal rennet and very importantly, whether it is cow's, goat's or sheep's milk. Cheese needs to be clearly labelled and clearly priced, and the product must look good at all times."

### Shopping pattern

Tastings are a useful and popular part of Ray's cheese selling at Liverpool St and space is allowed for these. "We put out 15-20 cheeses every day, and people can come and nibble," Ray says. "The whole idea of tastings is that there are things on the table that they would never buy just from looking at

them. However, if they can taste them, they might walk away and maybe two weeks later, come back and ask about a cheese we had on taste when they were last in. 'Customers don't often want to engage in a conversation, particularly in a railway station, unless they know us well and we are part of their pattern of shopping.' When holding wedding cake tastings, Ray assigns only a limited amount of space. "We have a maximum of three couples," he says, "because otherwise, it gets too complicated. People need space to voice their views about the cheese they might be having as their wedding cake."

Branding is an important consideration and part of the look of the establishment. Ray's newest outlet at Liverpool Street Station has "branded bags with the new address and a new 'Otto the Skunk' motif for use online and on other branding." "To add a bit of interest, we have an Otto stamp which goes on the loyalty card each time someone buys a coffee. Signage and branding is very important. People need to feel proud that they are carrying your bag down the street, or that they are seen on your premises."

Ray's range of wines, ports and champagne are clearly displayed, but wine will be more actively promoted in a new way this year, when Ray aims "to create a proper cheese bar outside the station, where you can walk in and have a fondue or a raclette, a platter of good cheese and a glass of wine with olives, and good bread. We will be having four or five tables in here, where people can come in, do a tasting, sit down and have a glass of wine. It will be quick, yet pleasant."

Like any product on sale, cheese needs to be seen in the right light and lighting needs to be changed if it is not doing its job, which is, of course, to properly show off the cheeses and create the right ambience in the store, without overheating the products on display. "We've got a lot of

spotlights in here and some LED lights too," Ray says. "But I'm now thinking, having spent a large sum on electrics, that we don't need as much lighting as we've got. I am considering converting it all to LED lighting, because of the heat."



“ A canny choice of props can boost the ambience of the store, whether the owner is wanting to emphasise his artisanal credentials or attract people who like to buy in a more upmarket environment ”

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THE GUILD OF FINE FOOD MEMBER



## DISPLAY CHECK LIST

- **First impressions.** Your interior and cheesecounter should entice (lots of cheese easily visible), reassure (it looks spotless) and excite. It's through your window that a first time customer will take a first impression of your shop, so if you use it to advertise special offers, tastings etc, do ensure room is allowed for customers to do this.
- **Cheeses should be arranged so that customers can see what they want quickly and easily.** Arrange by region or type and then cascade cheeses, with larger examples at the rear, smaller and seasonal cheeses towards the front. Your cheesecounter should provide maximum visibility of the cheeses within.
- **Use space wisely.** Allow for a tasting or conversation area. Risers, trays and baskets can be used to provide extra space in and above the cheese counter. Shelving above the counter or along side walls can be used for cheese, cheese accompaniments and related gift items, helpful if you want to convey the impression of abundance.
- **Everyone of the cheeses themselves must always look in peak condition.** Wrap your cheeses carefully, and pare off any unsightly surfaces.
- **Shop signage is important.** Choose your shop name and the typeface it appears in very carefully. Both will say a lot about the sort of shop you are. In-store signage can save customers the bother or embarrassment of engaging in conversation to discover basic cheese facts. Consider offering pre-cut, wrapped and priced portions of cheese for the same reason.
- **Effective labelling is very important.** Ensure that all the information the customer needs is concisely conveyed: name, provenance, milk type and price are all important. Add a 'v' for vegetarian cheese.
- **For some customers, the appearance of your staff will be as important as that of your shop.** Clean, possibly branded, overalls and head wear look hygienic, and give the impressions of dedication and efficiency. Ensure hands and fingernails are always clean and staff always look fully employed.



### Effective use of space

"There is a variety of ways to categorize cheese in a retail context," says Gerry Moss of packaging and retail display company WBC, "and the first one is by animal variety. Cheese can be sectioned by cows, sheep or goats milk." Like Ray Kenny, Gerry understands the importance of regional grouping, which "enables someone with an affinity for a certain country to find what he wants with ease. Another easy way for retailers to display cheese is by texture: soft, medium and hard cheeses. Finally, a retailer might consider having a seasonal offering. Many people still don't understand that some cheeses have a season to them. "When it comes to displaying in a chiller cabinet, size does matter," Gerry says. "You should go smallest at the front of the display, working towards the wheels and large blocks of cheese at the back. This cascading effect allows the customer to engage with the cheese case easily."

Space above the counter can be effectively used, he says. "The classic or farmstead way is the tower effect. "This takes sturdy cheeses and builds pyramids or towers to create theatre and an effect of abundance. Most retailers have very limited space, so creating these plinths of cheese enables a greater variety to be displayed. Another way of displaying on the counter is to employ risers. Shallow risers can create a bit of lift to a display, allowing it to be architecturally pleasing. Another way to add interest to a counter is the cluster effect, using a variety of trays or boxes. Shallow boxes, for example, could house an attractive collection of goat's cheeses that people can then pick from." Careful choice of the surfaces on which cheese is to be sold, tasted or displayed is important.

"In the past, cheese counters used cheese mats made of hay," Gerry says, "but these were



discovered to house bacteria and were difficult to clean. Stone surfaces such as slate or marble are much easier for cheesemongers to deal with.

### Good retail

A key consideration in any good retail display is communication and perhaps the most important way in which the retailer can convey information about his cheeses is through clear labelling. Heavy-gauge plastic is perfect for cheese as it can be used and cleaned daily with sanitising solution." Information can also be communicated by mini-easels. "People want to understand where the cheese comes from," Gerry says, "what the milk and fat content is, and in some cases, who the farmer is. Using easels alongside a speciality or seasonal cheese helps a customer truly understand what that cheese is."

A canny choice of props can boost the ambience of the store,

whether the owner is wanting to emphasize his artisanal credentials or attract people who like to buy in a more upmarket environment. Gifting hampers address both possibilities and the canework hampers themselves provide attractive and suitable artefacts for display. When filled, they suggest a level of opulence. "Hampers are a luxurious way of gifting," Gerry says. "They are about abundance and luxury, for which people will pay a premium." As well as being pleasing decorative props, small hampers sell well around Christmas, when they can include a selection of cheese and chutneys for the cheeseboards and can also be employed to sell cheese for picnics in summertime. Other suitable props, such as milk churns and vintage dairy scales, can be bought in junk shops or at auctions.

### Installing to impress

If you are refitting a cheese shop or installing a new cheese area in your farm shop and delicatessen, it's often wise to call in the experts who can offer a whole gamut of retail design solutions. Getting your appearance right is almost as important as your food offering, and an initial outlay can be repaid by increased custom. "The look of a shop is very important," says Mark Smith of SRDS, which designs, install and custom-build display equipment and solid surfaces. "A clean, organised and well-planned layout will entice customers into the shop, and this, in turn, will increase sales. Customers tend to buy more products from a tidy, hygienic establishment where the food looks attractive. Looking in from the outside, it's important to have good visibility of the products for sale, either through window displays or unobstructed views of the shop through the windows."

When planning a new installation, Mark says, customers are asked to consider the quantity and type of products they are planning to sell, how they plan to sell them (i.e. self-



SRDS CHEESE COUNTER



service or assisted service) and also the footfall they expect to attract. They can then consider the sort of look they want and the image they want to project. "There is an enormous variety of 'looks' available to customers nowadays," Mark says. "With bespoke counters, any type of finish requested can be achieved. We have provided customers with finishes as basic as rustic wooden panels, to finishes as complicated as dry stone walling! It really is dependant on what type of market they are hoping to fall into, or what type of look they want. We always work closely with the customer to achieve exactly the type of finish they envisaged."

At present, Mark says, large display cabinets are very popular. "Depending on the size and layout available of the shop, these cabinets can either be visible from the window or be placed behind the main serve-over counters. These large displays of whole cheeses are always appealing and really give that 'wow factor'. It's very difficult to describe a layout that works well, because every shop has different retail space available. Again, we work closely with our customers to

achieve the best possible layout in their available retail space. We can supply a huge variety of display equipment, from the large display cabinets mentioned above, to the serve-over counters, bushel boxes and ambient 'impulse buy' baskets.

Another important consideration is how you will achieve maximum visibility for your cheese. "All of our recent installations have been flat fronted glass serve-overs," says Mark. "This type of glass is UV-bonded and therefore has no brackets or light fittings to obscure the customer's view of the products. There are options to introduce shelves and steps on the deck to allow for better visibility of products. Not only is this type of counter more cost-effective, it is

also more versatile in that there are no restrictions to the length and the depth that we can supply."

### Properly lit

In order to keep such counters clean without affecting the taste of the cheese, Mark says, "under ideal situations, the cabinets should be emptied every evening and restocked prior to the business opening each morning, but normally doing this once a week is sufficient. A good, clean, cheese counter that has maximum visibility, effective signs and which has the seasonal cheese displayed at the front says that the shop is well organised and is likely to be doing well."

To be seen at its best, a good installation needs to be properly lit and ideally, set upon an attractive and efficient floor. Mark agrees with Ray Kenny that good lighting is "vital." In Mark's opinion, lighting is "a much underrated element. Directional spotlights or pendant lights are very popular as they can turn a standard display into a much more enticing arrangement. Flooring is an important factor when planning a shop fit. Behind the serve-over, we recommend non-

slip flooring, such as altro flooring, which is easy to clean and non-slip. The flooring in the main shop is dependant, as with the finishes, on the customers' preference. The options are endless, from tiles, to wood, to slate etc."

Equal attention should be given to getting right the preparation units. "The customer needs to consider how much space is needed to work," Mark says. "Do you need cheese wires incorporated into the units? Do you need wash hand basins? Storage, refrigerated or not?" Customer and installer, he says, should "work together to achieve a well-organised and functional preparation area." A cheese storage room, he says, should have "a good balance between temperature and relative humidity. If it is too wet, the cheese can form a thick mould and look unattractive. If too warm, it will start to ooze and smell unpleasant." In Mark's opinion, behind the counter areas "should look clean and well organised. This reassures the customer that the products being sold are of the highest quality, and that they've been displayed and stored in clean environment."



DISPLAY CABINET BY SRDS

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**F**ew successful cheesemakers or retailers started their working careers in the world of cheese. For most of us, there was a moment, a turning point when cheese suddenly came into our lives and there was no going back.

For me, it happened in June 1983 in Androuet's maturing rooms beneath the streets of Paris, where the hum of thousands of cheeses ripening was almost audible. There I tasted an exquisite Roquefort. M Androuet told me that the cheese had been made in early March, just after the hardy indigenous sheep had started lambing, and were grazing on the sweet, new spring grasses and wild herbage of the Rouerque plateaux.

Until then, I had not understood the influence of the geology, geography, seasons, grazing and availability of milk on taste and texture. Yet the significance of these factors has long been recognised in Europe and by law, many of the great cheeses can only be made when the often ancient breeds graze on pastures that have remained unchanged for centuries.



## INSPIRING

*Cheese consultant and British Cheese Awards founder, Juliet Harbutt recalls her own cheese epiphany and outlines her mission in cheese*

Since then, I have sought out, worked with and ripened thousands of cheeses, from beads of yak cheese to 200kg wheels of Gruyere and tasted more cheese than my arteries and waistline care to reveal,

and have made it my mission to impart the magic of cheese to anyone who will listen and to create a generation who love and respect cheese and cheesemakers. I am therefore very proud to be involved

with this new cheese magazine created by Speciality Food, whose team has long promoted and supported cheese. The main objectives of the magazine are to provide you the cheesemaker with information on new and established cheeses, to offer tasting notes and anecdotes you can share with your customers.

My other aim is to help you create a more dynamic, more interesting and more effective cheese counter. When I work with clients, especially those new to retailing, I believe it is my role as a consultant to help them avoid obvious potholes, stop them from re-inventing the wheel and help them create an original and attractive environment, but most importantly, answer those questions they don't yet know they need to ask. And that's what I hope we achieve with this magazine.

None of us has time to read everything that comes through the post, over the internet or from suppliers, so I hope this will be your go-to bible for information, inspiration and innovation. So read it, use it and share it. And tell us what you think, so next year's edition can be bigger and better!

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Since the time of William the Conqueror in 1066, cheese has played an important role in the British economy and diet. Most were named after the county in which they were made or the nearest market town but, unlike the rest of Europe, the majority of our traditional cheeses are almost exclusively hard or blue. Small, fresh cheeses only being made for family consumption.

In the last 30 years, however, there has been an explosion in the number of cheesemakers. Old recipes have been revived and new ones developed using old methods, rare indigenous cows and recipes from Europe; the result is an extraordinary diversity of over 750 unique mostly modern British cheeses.

What amazes most cheese lovers and is cause for significant concern to people in the industry is the shrinking number of producers making our great territorials using the traditional methods, and many see these great stalwarts of our culinary history threatened with extinction.

### The Hard Territorials

These were, and many still are, handmade then wrapped in cloth and left to mature for months or even years. To meet the demands of the modern market they are also made in more economical 20kg block.

# GREAT BRITISH CHEESE



*Juliet Harbutt shares her appreciation of the cheeses of the UK*

### Traditional Cheddar

Cheddar has been copied the world over but nowhere is it really Cheddar unless it comes from the green and verdant hills that are England. Originally made in the Cheddar Gorge in Somerset, production has spread over the centuries from Devon to Northern Scotland. Depending on its age it is referred to as mild, medium, mature or vintage and weighs approximately 26kg.

Sadly the number of traditional clothbound Cheddar makers in the West country has been reduced to just five: Montgomery, Quicks, Westcombe, Keens and Barbers. There are also an increasing number of cheddars on the market made with the Helvetica starter cultures which gives it a sweeter tasted, more like the Swiss mountain cheeses in response to the demands for supermarkets

looking for new 'styles' of traditional cheese.

**Tasting Notes:** firm, dense, biteable almost chewy texture. Tangy, a wonderful complexity of aromas and taste. Nutty, rich, with a hint of fresh pastures.

### Red Leicester

Traditional makers – Beltons, Sparkenhoe, Long Clawson, Joseph Heler.

Leicester, with its characteristic deep russet colour, from annatto, had all but disappeared before World War II but farmhouse production has recently restarted. It can be eaten as young as two months, but at four months it has developed a more complex flavour and firm, chewable texture.

**Tasting notes:** clothbound which gives a firm, flaky, buttery texture; deep orange in colour. Slightly sharp butterscotch richness, rather nutty and medium to strong in flavour.

### Double Gloucester

Like Red Leicester it is coloured with annatto but is a paler orange and the few farmhouse examples come in elegant 4kg wheels.

**Tasting Notes:** firm body, close creamy texture, though not as firm as a Cheddar. Round and mellow in flavour. Delicious, zesty, orange tang on the finish.

### Single Gloucester PDO (six producers)

One of only a handful of British cheeses granted protection under the European PDO system (similar to the French AOC system) and can only be made by artisan cheesemakers in Gloucester. It is milder and smaller than Double Gloucester and is not coloured with annatto.

**Tasting Notes:** firm body but moist with a more open texture than Double Gloucester. Pale yellow with a delicate, buttery taste with a pleasant slightly sharp freshness on the finish.

### The Crumbly

These have higher moisture content and more crumbly texture than the other hard territorials. The farmhouse versions are clothbound while the block forms are matured in special plastic wrap.

### Caerphilly (14 producers)

First made in the Welsh village of Caerphilly for the miners, production soon moved to the West of England where Cheddar makers would also make it from their excess summer milk. Ready to eat as young as 6–10 days old or up to 4–5 months, each cheese weighs approximately 3kg.

**Tasting notes:** fresh, clean, grassy taste, firm yet moist, elastic, school eraser-type texture when broken, flaky rather than crumbly (two weeks old).

### Wensleydale (14 producers)

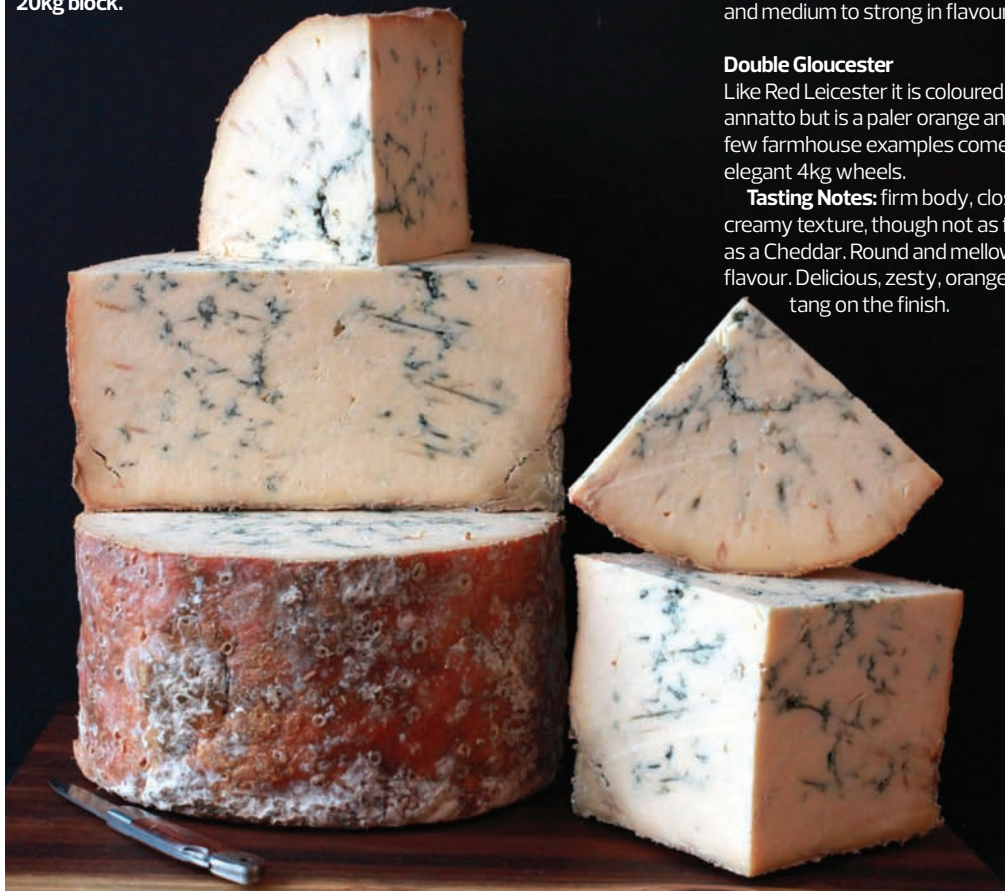
Wensleydale, originally made with ewes' milk, can be traced back to the monks who came over with William the Conqueror in the 11th century. It is typically eaten at about 2–3 months old and weighs 7–8kg. Traditional Wensleydale is wrapped in cloth.

**Tasting notes:** close textured, firm but supple, crumbly, moist texture similar to young Caerphilly. Sweet like wild honey and balanced with fresh acidity.

### Cheshire (11 producers)

The salt marshes of Cheshire originally gave Britain's oldest cheese its unique sea breeze freshness and character. Some are coloured with annatto, when it is called Red Cheshire, although the colour is in fact more pale apricot. It weighs between 8–10kg and may be waxed as well as cloth bound.

**Tasting notes:** crumbly yet moist-textured. Savoury with a gentle, green-grass, bitter tang, slightly salty (around two months old)





**Lancashire (12 producers)**

A large cylindrical cheese traditionally made by combining curd from three consecutive days. There are three distinct styles:

*Creamy* – creamier, mild and lactic in flavour, moist, almost lumpy

*Tasty* – sharper with green, grassy bite

*Crumbly* – modern fast-ripening, slightly sharp, crumbly and moist

**Tasting Notes:** higher in moisture



than the other crumbly and therefore more crumbly. Lemony fresh with a cheese and onion tang. Subtle yet creamy, Cheshire melts in the mouth.

**Stilton (five producers)**

The Stilton makers in the early 1900s joined forces to protect Stilton from being copied. They specified how it should be made and limited production to Nottingham, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. It was, until the introduction of the European PDO system, the only British cheese protected by law. Currently the PDO requires the cheeses to be made with pasteurised milk.

**Tasting notes:** well matured, rich, creamy and fills the mouth. The blue is scattered like shattered porcelain; spicy and rich in flavour and mellows with age.

**Other blues**

Other less well-known traditional British blues are made in smaller quantities and some, until recently, had become all but lost in history. The most notable are Shropshire Blue, Blue Cheshire, Blue Wensleydale, Blue Vinny and Yorkshire Blue.



## MEET THE MAKER...

### ADRIAN FOWLER, FOWLERS OF EARLSWOOD

Fowlers of Earlswood has an unparalleled lineage stretching back to 1670, and I am the 14th generation of the family to make cheese. Our cheeses are split into six groups: Derby, Warwickshire, Bard, Blue, Clarabel and Red Lakes – all of which are available in a variety of flavours, such as Sage Derby or Real Ale and Mustard Warwickshire.

In the last 12 months we launched two brand new cheeses: Clarabel and Red Lakes. I have nearly finished my current project with ewe's milk, watch this space for details! And I have a couple of new ideas to explore: Clarabel in particular has plenty more to offer in terms of new flavours.

Land that is in good heart and cows that are in good health make better milk, it's as simple as that.

And cheese like ours which is made with pasteurised milk is a food that is good for people. Our milk is not homogenised, so Fowlers cheeses retain all the natural taste and goodness. Which leads back to caring for my cows, because the flavour of our milk has such an impact on our end product. Fowlers stands for quality not volume. In turn this allows our retailers to command a premium for our cheeses. It makes a nice circle of care leading to profit!

Something I am personally very keen to promote is the wider image of cheese. Our industry struggles with the high fat image but we all know that when it is made properly cheese is a positive health food! It's a message I would like to see put forward to the wider public.

“ The quality of our cheese and the volumes we work to will see the firm through economic vagaries ”



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## Modern British Cheeses

The 750 or so cheeses now made across Britain range from tiny fresh goat cheeses to blue buffalo cheese and have been created using new ideas, new recipes, rare breeds or by adapting traditional recipes to new shapes, sizes and often with goat, ewe or buffalo milk.

Significantly, unlike the artisan cheeses of Europe, the vast majority is made by just one cheesemaker and therefore often only available locally or in specialist shops. Consumers do not understand this and expect to find their favourite cheese across the country so it is important retailers make a point of explain this and highlighting it as one of the things that make British artisan cheese sometimes hard to find but worth the effort.

As each cheese is made to a unique recipe and style based on the art and skill of the cheesemaker and the milk he uses rather than being restrained by historic regulations it is essential retailers explain to consumers the distinct styles of cheese available. So, rather than telling them how to cook with cheeses, it would be more helpful to build their knowledge of cheese in

the same way the wine industry has done over the last 25 years with such extraordinary success.

## The Categories

### Fresh No rind

Ready to eat within a few days, they have no rind, are high in moisture and are mild, refreshing and slightly lemony in taste. To enhance their appearance many are wrapped in leaves, rolled in ash or covered in herbs or spices giving them a striking, attractive appearance.

Some are encouraged to age developing a wrinkled rind that attract a multitude of colourful moulds and are known as Aged Fresh Cheeses.

### Soft White

*White velvety or bloomy rind*  
There are more than 120 of this style of cheese made in Britain alone. Beneath the soft white crust the interior ranges from firm and chalky when young to soft and creamy or almost runny when aged. They all have a characteristic aroma of mushrooms.

### Semi-Soft

*Brownish orange to thick grey-brown rind*

These are typically lightly pressed to increase the loss of whey. Some may be 'washed' in brine, cider, wine, etc. which encourages the development of an orange, sticky rind known for its feisty, pungent flavour and aroma.

### Hard

*Dense, and often waxed or oiled rind*  
This includes the majority of the traditional British cheese, listed under their generic names e.g. Cheddar, as well as those referred to as 'Modern British' hard cheese. These cheeses are pressed, often scalded in the whey and are typically aged from 2–24 months.

### Blue

*Gritty and rough or sticky damp rind*  
A blue penicillin mould is added to the milk and after a few weeks the young cheese is pierced with

stainless steel needles allowing the air to penetrate the interior, causing the mould to turn blue. When mature the blue spreads through the cheese like shattered porcelain – the spicy taste is due to a reaction between the curds and the blue mould as they ferment and mature together.

### Flavour added

#### *Various styles of rind*

This category can be divided into two distinct styles: traditional, where the flavours are mixed into the fresh curd and then left to matured together and blended or reformed cheeses; made by breaking up hard cheese like Cheddar, White Stilton or Wensleydale, blending it with a variety of flavours then pressing or reforming it into rounds.



GEORGE PAUL OF BRADBURY'S

## "The king has left the building"

**As possibly the UK's most respected exported regional cheese, Blue Stilton has achieved remarkable things from a very low point a decade ago. It's true that its massive seasonal imbalance in volume demand and relentless Christmas promotion create headaches that the major makers may well love to see changed, but it's on the fixture list and not likely to go away any time soon.**

Below the top two makers the smaller producers have quietly been progressing very nicely, and whilst doubtless they too wish an easier life, there would appear to be little to complain about. I make the statement again that some Blue Stilton brands will not be available in the UK in any sizeable volume within the next 3–4 years.

The home demand for Cropwell Bishop and certainly Colston Bassett is high if not fully accounted for at this moment, and if Blue Stilton is sometimes seen as Grandad's cheese and not a favourite of the younger blue buyer, then that gap is amply made up by demand from established and emerging British food export markets. Meanwhile, in the background, Websters do what they have always done, treading softly and quietly selling their wares with reasonable ease.

White Stilton will premiumise, even if via additive cheese. Anyone can make a passable Wensleydale as an additive carrier, but the PDO requirements are as

strict for White as they are for Blue, and as the original carrier of fruit additives it remains the best.

While the king may leave the building, some of the other speciality royalty may also opt – or be enticed – to do the same.

Several successful makers like Charles Martell of Stinking Bishop and Single Gloucester fame, the Read family of Lincolnshire Poacher, Catherine Mead of Cornish Yarg, Colston Bassett and long-time export success story Montgomery's may well see capacity filled, and have little desire to expand. Instead, I expect they will look to maximise the reputation for high quality which they have worked hard to gain.

Operations like Neal's Yard Dairy have taken these to many far flung destinations and flourished, so any fall-out as some multiples abandon speciality – whether through sales volume challenges or the technical security approach – will see fine cheeses find homes in specialist outlets here and abroad, and that may well become their final spiritual home.

This will could make them the product of choice for discerning shoppers who will see them as the Gucci, Armani and Louis Vuitton of cheese. I expect restaurants and caterers to seize them too, as their dedication to exposing consumers to good taste will surely find a connection with the philosophies of these cheesemakers.

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It's true to say that few of the past 40 dairy years have been as turbulent as this past one or two, most especially in the specialist area of the cheese trade, whether as a cheesemaker or cheese seller.

However, in change and turbulence comes opportunity for many, the hard part being to understand where those opportunity lies and which – if any – to take. It is, however, always true that standing still is a terminal disease, as few things remains the same.

Right now we have a cocktail of matters that challenge the direction. We have the savvy shopper emerging from the shadows of spending constraint, but surely hardened now by that experience.

We have the foodies and the faddists, the ones open to ideas, the others trying to direct it towards organic, low-fat and the like. The channels and routes to market have ruptured in the major retail areas, and the shopper now buys less but more often, as well as buying online.

Milk was short in November 2013 with spot price at 44p, now it languishes at 20p, and with the removal of milk quota in the EEC, cross-border milk tankering may soon be here. Emerging markets across the world have acquired a taste for quality British dairy produce and are stoking demand, plus eating out is at an all time high and set to go higher yet. Never in the history of cheese have we seen so many promotions, especially in Cheddar, driving value and even volume out of their market.

Price wars and price matching abound, but much NPD is lamentable and pointless in so many instances. There is much more – out of this haze of factors there emerges a great opportunity for speciality cheese, in retail, food service, export, cheesemaking and in routes to market; I believe it is the global giants, the national players, who right now have a lot of nettles to grasp. We may yet see casualties.

### The consumer is changing

The top of anyone's pyramid should always be the consumer and their influence in the total market. The shopper is savvy about price, that is now a reality, but thankfully a high proportion put taste at the highest level of importance in their choice. Without spending chapters on the marketing breakdown of consumer groups and their associated behaviours, this connection with the consumer/ the shopper/ the public is the single biggest opportunity for the speciality business.



# BACK TO THE FUTURE

*The owner of Bradbury's shares his visions of the future*

The one-size-fits-all approach is a necessity for mass retail, where control is rarely devolved to stores. But the independent can maximise that connection in conversation and talk, and meet the shoppers' aspirations when it comes to an affordable treat by offering something different and unusual. Waitrose and Booths are possibly the only major competitors capable

to deliver that against an independent market.

The shopper has never been more informed, or more influenced by media, celebrity chefs, the internet, research data and usage ideas, and many are probably more confused than ever. Success is about proximity and simplicity as well as price, and the savvy retailer should make the most of it. That opportunity to engage with consumers and build loyalty is rare.

### Structural change

The current fracture in retailing, fall in volumes and the ever-present technical police will make it harder and harder for the big major retailers to manage small-volume speciality types. Inevitably some regional speciality will fail hurdle rates, and unitary technical standards will add another high hurdle for the small

maker. I anticipate that smaller retailers can cash in on this throwing-the-baby-out-with-the-bathwater approach to make themselves the point of destination; the opportunity is not coming back once it's lost.

It seems the large consumer bulk shop is now almost extinct, and the new buying frequency makes it a more even game for small as well as large outlets, hence we have seen the surge in farm shops/delis with some substantial commercial successes. 'Fresh' is a brand in its own right, and the shopper is often more trusting of the private operator to create that individual approach. This, combined with home-delivered bulk shopping, puts the fresh range in play for everybody, so high street or farm shop could now see a benefit in that the shopper who moved away from them towards the multiples in the past 25 years may come back home. Food service, restaurants and caterers also have a great opportunity to be known for cheese.

### Blessed are the cheesemakers

At the top of the supply chain, the makers have something of a dilemma. Less than 18 months ago, milk price was pushed several rungs higher on its ladder.

Whilst a few makers were patient in its recovery, the queue formed quickly enough to the distributive and retail trade looking for higher prices, citing milk prices north of 38p. The thunderous silence that has followed since the fall of milk from its substantial height to levels around 24p has left trade customers wondering where the equity is in this need to be partners in speciality success. After all, it's those buying the product that are the paymasters in the end.

When milk climbs upwards – as we all should hope it will for a sustainable farming future – it will be interesting to see if another hand is out for an increase. Why should a maker which sells all it can make reduce its price, especially if the milk is its own production? Would anyone in that position do otherwise? However, that can lead to complacency and the opportunity for other aspiring makers to ally with the distributive trade and ultimately the consumer seeking the next kid on the block.

On the other hand, for those that buy in milk, or indeed sell off surplus into the market, surely this is a chance to invest in their cheese to grow the market. It need not be permanent in its application, nor



“ I would wish that the balance of dairy value will return, with a fair price to farmers and a consistent return for all trade contributors ”





WENSLEYDALE BLOCKING AND CUTTING

even be only about price reductions at all. Sampling remains the biggest single influencer of the shopper's decision-making at point of sale. Turn a negative into a positive and utilise lower-cost milk to help drive the long term volume of the brand. Create new distribution with an offer. Making the current big customers bigger is the best low-cost, long-term investment.

### Product development and the food fad gurus

The recent past is littered with 'me too' products and unnecessary developments by makers, many of which add complexity and cost.

Surely the way forward for the small maker and their customers is to concentrate on core products, and look at how to extend distribution of what they already

make the most of and what they want to be famous for. To invest in pack or unit size, even at the expense of product redevelopment, and to reduce waste and increase distribution. Development of prepack is usually desirable but often expensive, but it does give greater brand awareness and increases access via van sales, upright fridges and direct site sales. Fixed weight is a challenge but a partner packer may have good reason to support such a joint venture for mutual long-term gain.

The message of dairy generally, and of cheese occasionally, is one of faddist pot shots at fat in

particular – with scant, if any, regard for its beneficial properties. Low-fat cheese has made some useful contributions to satisfying this lobby and has improved taste remarkably in the past few years, with Cheddar in particular making some great strides – the Cricketers' Cheeky Cow brand is a fine example. But with the youth of today open to auto-suggestion via the media more than ever, we should not drop our guard in advocating the proven nutrition of a food that's survived for millennia and will, or indeed should, outlast the next surf-riding research which shows that cheese is a threat.



BILLY KEVAN OF COLSTON BASSETT

### WORTHY OF NOTE

- More than ever, it is necessary for those in retail and food service to connect with the savvy shopper as often and effectively as possible to build trust and loyalty
- The cheese maker should use any dip in price to invest in their product through tasting and marketing to enhance their long term franchise
- It's wise for retail sources to have a loyal and committed connection to a number of iconic brands who may have limited supplies to offer in the coming years
- Those makers who have not seen the horizons abroad should surely think of it as a way of deferring dependency on the home market
- Size does matter, so reducing waste and increasing distribution whilst keeping the cost inventory low should be a win win for both markets
- Food service and the catering trade look to be a hot prospect as routes to market

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**C**heese is milk concentrated about ten times. And the cheese tells the story of the milk, only ten times louder.

Start with the obvious: cows', sheep's or goats' milk? Each one comes with its own distinctive flavour. Left to itself, goats' and sheep's milk doesn't smell of the animal it comes from, although cows' milk has that warm, comforting, animal aroma. But of course, the milk is not left to itself – it is the ageing process and acidity development that precipitates those goaty and sheepy aromas.

The cheese tells the story of how the milk was made, who produced it and how she spent her time. Pasture-fed always gives those distinctive grassy notes, not rank farminess, but something closer to the rich warmth of cow breath (always delightful, if you were wondering). These flavours show up from the very first milking after the herd goes out to pasture.

Our cheese tells the story of where our cows grazed – this patch of soil, not that one. Bigger scale cheese, from many farms, loses that distinctiveness. You can tell how the milk is handled – milk fat is a delicate thing. Pumping, splashing, even light can damage the milk. Think of the bubbles when you pour milk into a glass, or froth on the top of a coffee, why whipped cream never lasts as long as double cream. The impact on cheese can be as little as a slight astringency at the back of the flavour, long before you get any rancidity.

Starter cultures – that magic ingredient in cheese. We use those wild collected starters, from the best cheese dairies in the 1960's and 1970's, 'wet pints'. I have them for breakfast every day; they taste like a Cheddary yogurt. The old farmhouse cheesemakers owned them collectively, and as farmers will, let them out of their hands, being too costly to maintain. These starters, these precious holders of the distilled flavour judgements of generations of cheesemakers, found their way into the hands of a French yeast company, who couldn't make any money out of them.

"Use ours", they said.

"The cheese tastes thin and bitter", we said.



# THINKING ALOUD

*Every bite of cheese tells a story, says Mary Quicke, and like any story, it's richer for a bit of background*

"The English won't notice. We will destroy them to make you use ours" (I kid you not).

Desperate cheesemakers were rescued by the English microbiologist who stole them, put them in the back of his car and drove them overnight to Barbers. All the richness, complexity and depth of flavour in the authentic Cheddars of Barbers, Montgomery, Keen, Westcombe and Quickes derives from these starters.

For ease of manufacture, many industrial cheeses didn't use these complex starters, which resulted in cheese with thin and bitter flavours. Easier, they thought, to use single strain, one theme flavours. Big buyers leapt on the American trend of adding alpine starters – the 'helveticus' strains. Those are the ones that give sweet flavours and

crunchy textures. They are the equivalent of the big Australian fruity red wine, all fruit and nothing else, attractive but boring, reliable but one-dimensional.

Then there are all the little details of the make that leave their trace in flavour and texture. Hand cheddaring is that process of piling the curd blocks up one on top of the other, and giving them five or six turns, when you are rocking and rolling. Machines can't do it just so. Hand-cheddaring gives a fuller, less sharp flavour (that's where Helveticus is a 'get out of jail free card' if you don't do it by hand). Hand-ladle Stilton, so you can make the delicate, soft, melting paste of a Colston Bassett or a Stichelton, rather than the firmer paste of an industrial cheese.

And then there's the rind – the complex and intense joys of naturally maturing, that whole ecosystem, that fragrant mould garden that comes from making a rind that lived free in a cheese store. Industrial cheese gets put in a plastic bag at birth, hugely reducing the work and expertise required to tend a natural rind: grow the mould garden, promote the rind, control the mite, while losing no moisture and gaining none of those added flavours.

Don't get me wrong. Industrial cheeses can be good and reliable and each one costs a lot less than the ones we make by hand. No surprise, given we make as much cheese in a year as an industrial producer does in a day, and they make it with fewer people.

All that work, all that attention from the cheesemakers, the soil the milk was pastured on, the microflora of that dairy, that store, is a whole universe of uniqueness.

Treasure cheese where you find it, and open up its flavour by telling its story.



A BEST-SELLER: QUICKES VINTAGE

“For ease of manufacture, many industrial cheeses didn't use these complex starters, which resulted in cheese with thin and bitter flavours”





*A careful stock of British soft and semi-soft cheeses can provide interesting alternatives to their Continental cousins*

**S**oft and semi-soft cheeses are popular both among people who want a light, summery cheese like Brie to pop in a salad or a fresh bread roll, and also with more sophisticated cheese lovers, for whom the pungent aroma of a rind-washed semi-soft is as attractive as the taste itself. This is a sector which allows plenty of scope for the cheese buyer to stamp his or her personality on the cheese counter.

### Soft cheeses

Soft cheeses are produced all over the British Isles, with Scotland offering fine examples such as the unpasteurized, full-fat Crannog, and the white mould-ripened Aiket. Wales makes a number of interesting soft cheeses, including the mild, sweet Caws Preseli, and the organic, bloomy white Perl Wen. Ireland produces notable examples too, such as the white mould-ripened Cooleeney, and the soft, goats' milk cheese St Tola. England spoils the cheese buyer for choice, whether it's an unpasteurized goats' milk cheese such as the ash-coated Golden Cross, or the Camembert style cows' milk cheese Tunworth. College White from the Oxford Cheese Company is a white mould, Brie-type cheese with a creamy texture.

### Semi-soft cheeses

Semi-soft cheeses often feature a quite mild taste, despite a sometimes pungent aroma. These

cheeses can be sourced from many regions of the UK. Good Scottish examples include Iona Cromag, a sheep's milk cheese with a sticky pale orange rind, and the washed rind Bishop Kennedy. From Wales comes the pale-apricot rinded Caws Cerwyn, while Teifi Farmhouse Cheese offers the pungent Saval. The Steeles of Co Cork produce the complex flavour of Milleens, and also from Ireland comes Gubbeen, which is washed with white wine to produce a rich, creamy flavour. In England, a wide choice encompasses such semi-soft cheeses as the washed rind, cow's milk Oxford Isis from the Oxford Cheese Company, which is rinsed with honey.

Selling well at the The Cheeseboard in Greenwich is goat's curd, says manager Holly Chaves, "and Morbier too." Stawley is popular, Holly says, but "St Jude's is probably our highest-selling individual soft cheese." Holly is also keen on Mistralou. The Cheeseboard sells "an equal amount of French to British soft and semi-soft cheeses. "We stock Brie de Meaux but also the British-made Brie Baron Bigod."

### West Country trends

Unsurprisingly, West Country cheese sellers The Cheese Shed move a lot of Cornish Brie. "When someone who wants to buy cheese for a wedding they will almost certainly want a Brie," says co-owner Ian Wellen. Other soft

cheeses which have earned their places at this online business are Sharpham Elmhurst and "a fantastic lactic ewes' milk cheese called Dumpling made by Wootton Organic Dairy in Somerset." Another "softish, sweetish" cheese currently interesting Ian is "a goat's cheese called White Nancy, from Somerset."

Among the semi-softs in demand at The Cheese Shed are Sharpham Rustic and Helford Blue. British soft and semi-soft cheeses compare well with similar Continental types, Ian says. Tunworth, "the Camembert made in Hampshire, now has a terrific reputation." Also making "a very estimable Camembert is the Helford Dairy," he adds. "There are few Continental cheese types for which we don't have a British equivalent of some sort."

"People are now eating soft cheeses every day," says Simon Weaver, whose own range of Cotswold Bries includes blue-veined

and herb varieties. If British soft cheeses were once regarded as poor relations of their Continental cousins, this is certainly no longer the case. "British Bries are every bit as good as Continental cheeses, especially the everyday cheeses," Simon says. "One message we are always getting from consumers is that they want to buy British."

Flavour and provenance are "particularly important for consumers now," Simon says, both of which demands can be satisfied by British soft cheeses. The flavour of Bries can vary throughout the year. This variation is a bonus, he says. "We are finding that once consumers know that they are not buying a standardised product, they realise that the change of flavour is something to be looked forward to. "With demand increasing and a wide choice of interesting examples, softs and semi-softs will earn their space in your counter.

“ This is a sector which allows plenty of scope for the cheese buyer to stamp his or her personality on the cheese counter ”

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**E**very cheese counter has its own personality. Considerations of demographics, local taste and turnover mean that a small cheese shop in one part of the country may offer a very different selection of cheeses from a high-end food hall at the other. That said, they will probably agree that essential inclusions in any good cheesecounter should be Cheddars, English territorialis, some soft and semi-soft cheeses, goats and sheep's milk cheeses, a few Continentals and, central to any good display, a canny selection of excellent blues.

Blue cheese, Stilton especially, has traditionally been British Christmas fare, the main component on the cheeseboard which is wheeled out as an alternative to the Christmas pudding. And if it has been considered a winter cheese by some, it has also had something of a conservative image, a cheese not primarily marketed at the young. This is not really surprising: the flavour profile of a good blue cheese is salty and sophisticated; it is a 'Marmite product', the taste for which is very often an acquired one.

But these days, all sorts of blue tastes are catered for and Stilton is, of course, only one of a great diversity of soft-textured and tangy cheeses which make a virtue of blue-green mould. In Lanarkshire, Humphry Errington makes Dunsyre Blue, a spicy, vegetarian, cow's milk blue cheese with a creamy texture. Still in Scotland, from Ross-shire comes mild blue cheese Strathdon Blue. Made by Highland Fine Cheeses, Strathdon Blue is matured for three months before sale. In Wales, Per Las ('blue pearl') is made by Caws Cenarth in Dyfed. This vegetarian, pasteurized cow's milk blue is matured for eight weeks or more to achieve a savoury, nutty taste and even veining. The Carmarthenshire Cheese Company of Llanllwch produces a small vegetarian, mould-ripened blue called Pont Gar Blue. A mildly-flavoured cheese with a golden rind, this blue resembles a soft cheese because of its bloomy white layer of mould. Two interesting blues from Co Tipperary are Cashel Blue and Crozier Blue, and both are made by the Grubb family. The well-established Cashel Blue is a vegetarian, farmhouse blue cheese made with pasteurized cow's milk and features a moist, creamy paste and a pleasing, mild flavour. The seasonal Crozier Blue is a pasteurized sheep's milk cheese with a sweet tang.

# BREAKING THE MOULD

*Stilton remains a sure-seller at Christmas, but newer blue cheeses are extending the appeal of blue cheese through the seasons*



## English blues

Stilton overshadows all other English blue cheese production but it is always worth expending some effort in bringing other fine English blues to the attention of your customers. Devon's Beenleigh Blue features a crumbly texture and bluey-green veins and this pasteurized sheep's milk cheese has a complex and savoury flavour. Lancashire is the home of the deep-orange hued Blacksticks Blue, a vegetarian, pasteurized cow's milk blue made by Butlers Farmhouse Cheese with milk from its own herd. The creamy, mellow-flavoured Suffolk Blue is made by the Suffolk Cheese Company with pasteurized Guernsey cow's milk and features a moist paste. In the far West of the country, The Cornish Cheese Company makes Cornish Blue at its Liskeard farm. With this moulded, unpressed, pasteurized and vegetarian blue, the salty tang of many blue cheeses is exchanged for a mellow sweetness.

A notable Wiltshire cheese is Brinkworth Blue. Produced by Ceri

Cryer at Brinkworth Dairy, this is a medium-strength blue which is made with milk from a Friesian herd. Despite its name, Shropshire Blue did not originate in the county but hundreds of miles away, in Inverness, the name being little more than a cunning marketing ploy. The cheese itself has a recognisable orange colour which is created by the addition of annatto, while the blue veining is produced by the addition of *Penicillium roqueforti*. The flavour is deep yet mild.

Blue cheeses made with Buffalo milk are a sure way to bring a point of difference to your cheese counter. In Yorkshire, Caroline Bell and her team at Shepherd's Purse Cheeses make Buffalo Blue, a smooth, mild and nutty-flavoured blue cheese which is made with vegetarian rennet and matured for 10 weeks. More buffalo's milk blue cheese is produced in Devon, where The Exmoor Cheese Company makes Blissful Buffalo, an unpasteurized sweet-tasting, milky blue cheese with a golden brown rind which is made with a vegetarian rennet.

King of British blues, of course, is Stilton. Nottinghamshire cheesemakers Cropwell Bishop (see below) makes a pasteurized cow's milk organic example which features even blue-green veining and a spicy flavour. In the same county is situated Colston Bassett, whose pasteurized cow's milk Stilton, which is matured for at least eight weeks, has a mellow, creamy flavour and is made with both animal and vegetarian rennet. Bearing the original name for the village of Stilton, Stichelton is an unpasteurized, traditional animal rennet blue with a long-lasting flavour. Though not officially a Stilton, it is made to a Stilton recipe by Randolph Hodgson and Joe Schneider. (Along with Colston Bassett Dairy and Cropwell Bishop licensed to make Stilton are Hartington Creamery, Long Clawson Dairy, Tuxford & Tebbutt Creamery and Websters).

## Younger demographic

Robin and Ben Skalles run Cropwell Bishop, a premium producer with long experience in the production and selling of this ancient cheese for which, Ben agrees, "there is certainly a loyal and well-established following." The accepted demographic of Stilton, he says, is something that Cropwell Bishop and their competitors would like to see change. Without denigrating the traditional market, Ben says, "we would all love to see a younger demographic getting involved with Stilton, and perhaps move the focus away from Stilton being a purely a seasonal cheese."

For now, then, Stilton will always be in demand in the run-up to Christmas, when it can be paired not only with a bottle of port, but with some more unusual food and drink too. Stilton pairs as well with a traditional ale as with port, Ben says, and "it often surprises people that Stilton and honey go well together." Stilton is available all year round, but at Christmas, and to a lesser degree at Easter, makers such as Cropwell Bishop and the shops they supply, can rely on a spike in sales. "While it remains very much a special occasion cheese," Ben says, "we would like to encourage people to eat it much as they do Cheddar."

Good Stilton makers produce a consistent product the year round, despite the fact that "the inputs change throughout the year, the principal change being milk," and whether the cows have been kept indoors or out. At Cropwell Bishop, achieving the correct flavour and a



level of consistency is the responsibility of Ben's cousin, Robin, the operations director, and his team. "Dealing with a key principle input which is changing its characteristics means you've got to do other things to end up with the same end product," Ben says. "It's quite a science, but we have a very good team and a lot of experience within the dairy."

If the market for Stilton is expanding, much of that growth is in the export sector. "While we do sell cheese right across the world," Ben says, "the USA is our principle market. The Americans are becoming very much more knowledgeable and enthusiastic about it. We see an increase in sales to the US every year."

### All year blues

The Cheeseboard has been selling artisan cheese from its shop in Greenwich since 1985 and now has a considerable online presence too. Many of the shop's local customers are elderly, manager Holly Chaves says, and there is a loyal following for Colston Bassett Stilton. "But," she adds, "we have started to sell a lot of Young Buck by Mike Thomson, which is an

pasteurised Stilton recipe cheese made in Northern Ireland. I'm a massive fan of this cheese. I also sell Cashel Blue, which is a classic Irish blue cheese." Stilton's image as an older people's cheese is being challenged by people like Michael Thomson, Holly says. This, and the unpasteurised Stichelton, "are bringing Stilton back into fashion." For The Cheeseboard, blue cheese is not just a Christmas cheese. "I sell it all year round, definitely," Holly says.

When customers ask Ian Wellen of West Country cheese specialists The Cheese Shed for blue cheese, he points them towards Cornish Blue, Dorset Blue Vinny and Devon Blue. In Ian's opinion, Cornish Blue ("it didn't win supreme Champion at the World Cheese Awards for nothing") or Beenleigh Blue are essential cheese counter inclusions. "It's surprising," he says, "how many people use Stilton as a generic for blue. They say they want a Stilton, but they mean they want a blue. I find that those people are very happy to entertain the idea of blue cheeses they haven't heard of, cheeses like Beenleigh or Helford Blue from Cornwall, or Bath Blue."



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#### SHEPHERD'S PURSE BUFFALO BLUE

Smooth, mild and nutty-flavoured, this buffalo milk cheese which is made in Yorkshire is matured for 10 weeks

[shepherdspurse.co.uk](http://shepherdspurse.co.uk)



#### CORNISH BLUE

This blue is mild and creamy, with a dense texture and buttery richness; instead of the 'salty tang' common of other traditional blue cheeses, it has a gentle sweetness.

[cornishcheese.co.uk](http://cornishcheese.co.uk)



#### COLSTON BASSETT STILTON

With a rich cream colour and blue veining spread throughout, this Stilton has a smooth and creamy texture and a mellow flavour.

[colstonbassettdairy.co.uk](http://colstonbassettdairy.co.uk)



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#### KENTISH BLUE

Kentish Blue is a young, blue raw milk cheese with a firm but moist texture, gentle and smooth flavours and a long-lasting aftertaste.

[kentishcheeses.co.uk](http://kentishcheeses.co.uk)



#### BEENLEIGH BLUE

A hand-crafted, Devon-made blue cheese with a tangy, sometimes salty flavour which develops satisfying sweet notes.

[ticklemorecheese.co.uk](http://ticklemorecheese.co.uk)



#### OXFORD BLUE

Oxford Blue cheese is a full-fat semi-soft Stilton-type blue cheese with a creamy texture and sharp clean flavour.

[oxfordfinefood.com](http://oxfordfinefood.com)



#### CASHEL BLUE

Characterful but not strong, Cashel Blue is pleasant, firm and creamy edged with an established blue character which is offset by a mouth-watering tanginess.

[cashelblue.com](http://cashelblue.com)



# RETAILING AROUND THE WORLD

*Cheese Buyer speaks to respected international retailers to find out the secrets of their success*

**A**lthough Britain can boast more native cheeses per head than any other country, this most versatile of ingredients is loved by consumers across the globe.

The UK is known for its quality touch when it comes to artisanal cheese, largely thanks to such revered retailers as Paxton & Whitfield, IJ Mellis and Neal's Yard Dairy – whose knowledge you'll find throughout Cheese Buyer – but what about cheesemongers further afield? How do they run their shops day to day, and do British cheeses play a part?

We've spoken to cheesemongers in Italy, New Zealand and the USA to see how they work.



**Kate Arding, owner and operations manager at Talbott & Arding, Hudson Valley, New York**

**A**merican consumers aren't so different from cheese lovers in the UK. I've found them to be very open and willing to try new cheeses. Many of our customers like hearing the stories behind the cheeses and the cheesemakers, which in turn makes our job as retailers much more interactive and rewarding.

**At Talbott & Arding we take pride in doing things properly.** We take great care in the selection of our cheeses and, where possible, taste through different batches side by side with the cheesemakers. In the shop, we provide one-on-one service and cut our cheeses to order for our customers.

**From among our imported cheeses, best sellers this season have been Colston Bassett Stilton, L'etivaz, Comté and L'Amuse Gouda.** Local and regional favourites include Chaseholm Farm's Camembert, Jasper Hill Farm's Winnimere and Vulto Creamery's Miranda.

**There are lots of American cheeses which should be better known in the UK.** The quality and consistency of American cheeses continues to improve dramatically and, in my opinion, many now rival their European counterparts. While a small number of UK cheese shops such as La Fromagerie and Neal's Yard Dairy are championing the American cheese cause, I would love to see a greater presence for cheeses such as those from Jasper Hill in Vermont, as they are so ahead of the curve. Others include Pleasant Ridge Reserve, Rogue River Blue from Oregon and Vella's Dry Jack Special Select.

**Although our main focus is on local and regional cheeses, we like to have a small, seasonal selection of British cheeses on-hand.** I have a personal affinity for British cheese and we have an unusually high number of British customers, so blues are always popular. We sell Colston Bassett, Stilton, Sparkenhoe Red Leicester and Hawes Wensleydale.

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IMAGE COURTESY OF BROCK HALL



# KIDDING AROUND

*No longer just the 'goaty' reserve of the true aficionado, goats cheese is enjoying a welcome return to cheeseboards across the UK. Speciality Food speaks to three experts at the helm of the renaissance*

## The British Cheese Board...

**Nigel White, secretary of the British Cheese Board explains the resurgence of goats cheese**



Firstly, let's get one thing straight. Any type of cheese that can be produced with cow's milk can generally be produced with goats'

milk. Many people seem to think that goats' milk cheese is confined to soft fresh cheeses. Not so. There are hard, semi hard, blue and white mould versions being produced.

Sales of all types of goats' milk cheeses are continuing to rise. Why? Demand has been stimulated by a number of factors – improved availability in supermarkets, high quality home

produced products, a boom in restaurants incorporating goats' milk cheeses in their recipes, and more adventurous consumers.

## Improved availability

Over the years, UK goats' milk production has been constrained through a lack of all year round supplies of goats' milk. Some retailers have been reluctant to stock products that are not

available throughout the year. Goats' milk production is naturally seasonal, and it has been more challenging to breed outside of the normal spring kidding season so as to get more milk produced in the winter months. As a manufacturer you want to try to supply product all year round, and if it is a fresh cheese, then you may have too much milk available in the spring/summer months but not enough in autumn/winter. You need to be able to balance your supplies – perhaps by making some hard (long-keeping) cheese when supplies are high, and bringing in milk when your supplies are short. Most of the cheese makers have also encouraged their supplying herds to produce more milk in the winter months through price incentives. The result – as the industry has matured – is a better managed milk supply, year round availability of most cheeses, and a more proactive approach to marketing the cheese by producers and retailers.

## High quality home-produced products

UK producers now have access to high quality home produced goats'

## THE PRODUCER...

**Sarah Hampton, owner of Brock Hall Farm shares the story of her premium cheeses**



The story of goats at Brock Hall Farm is simple: I had always wanted goats and I fell in love with the pure white Saanens from Switzerland, with their placid intelligence and long, productive lactations. So, 15 years ago, I tracked down a pair from Norfolk and brought them home. This was the start of our 'farm'. Goats cheese happened as a result of two goats who were so damned good that they gave over seven litres of milk each, every single day. We could have been awash with milk but I was

determined to find something worthwhile and delicious to do with it.

I do envy cheesemakers who can buy in their milk and not have the overheads that we do. Feed, bedding, energy and staff costs; all these are considerable and constant, all year round. However, by having our fantastic herd of rare Saanen goats on site and tending them to the best of our ability, every day, we are rewarded with a consistently high quality product – raw milk – and we are in charge of

every facet of its production. As the dairy is so close to the milking parlour, the milk travels only a few metres – as opposed to miles and days – from goat to the cheese vat.

In the early days, without having any wholesalers on board, I used to make a variety of soft and harder cheeses to attract market and food festival customers. Today, we still make this range and tailor production to what our customers want. The youngest, freshest cheese is curd, followed by a soft mould-ripened, ashed log called Pablo Cabrito. Next is my favourite, Capra Nouveau, which is sold at Neal's Yard Dairy and the bijou but prestigious Courtyard Dairy in Settle. Capra Nouveau is a unique, semi-soft goats cheese, wrapped

in a pretty spruce band, and has a fruity, long, captivating flavour. Based on a Gouda recipe, Dutch Mistress is a semi-hard, aromatic cheese, with rich, whisky notes when mature. And lastly, Joie de Chèvre is a little bit firmer and more acidic than Dutch Mistress.

Our cheese is special due to so many things: we have a herd of pedigree Saanens, all registered with the British Goat Society. They are looked after round the clock by a small team of local girls and each one of our goats is precious. With every year we have tried to improve the breed (udder, conformation, longevity, yield), and my passion for this type of goat and its welfare are at the forefront of what we do.



milk often produced in large modern holdings where the milk is quickly cooled, so avoiding the taints that otherwise might be present. The result is very clean tasting, brilliant white-coloured cheeses. The range of products made has also increased with some wonderful matured hard cheeses with sweet nutty flavours, Brie-style cheeses, the occasional blue cheese and more commonly fresh cheese. Twenty years ago there would have been a few hard cheeses but very little in the way of other variants.

### Recipe uses

It is unusual to go into a pub or a restaurant and not find a goats cheese recipe on the menu. Add to this the recipes promoted by celebrity chefs in the glossy magazines and colour supplements and you have created a much wider awareness of goats cheeses and tempted more consumers to try.

### More adventurous consumers

Historically, goats milk was seen by families where someone was allergic to cows milk as an acceptable substitute. Others may have been recommended goats' milk products because they were thought to be easier to digest due to the smaller fat molecules. Thus

goats cheese was often seen as more of a medicine rather than a high quality food. In addition, many consumers may have tried goats cheese when abroad and been put off by the distinctive (and not always very pleasant) billy goat flavours. All that has changed. Goats' milk cheeses are seen as both traditional and modern and thus highly desirable. Many consumers are now more willing to try all types of new (to them) foods and cheeses have benefited from this. Trying out these new recipes either when eating out or entertaining has now brought goats' milk cheeses into mainstream use with good prospects for growth in the future.



“ We make a typical type of goats cheese (the Pablo Cabrito ashed log) but we also go beyond this universal expectation of goats cheese by producing delicious, unusual, memorable, artisan cheeses that delight and captivate our customers ”



## THE DISTRIBUTOR...

**Michael Lee, managing director of Michael Lee Fine Cheeses, sheds light on the goats cheese revival**

We stock over 500 types of cheese from around the world. Wherever possible we tend to favour smaller artisan cheese makers – these are many and varied, and a lot of these in the UK are goats cheese producers.

10 years ago, many small artisan goats cheese dairies have set up developing their bespoke cheeses, and a number source milk from their own goat herd e.g. Lowna Dairy near Hull and Goatwood Dairy in Lincolnshire. Others buy in local milk from surrounding farms e.g. Haydn Roberts who in conjunction with Phil Hulland at Lightwood Cheese, in Worcester, makes Saint Thom, a new unpasteurised soft, lactic, 'brick-shaped' cheese, or Iona at the Ribblesdale Cheese company in North Yorkshire.

Such businesses have developed due to the increase in farmers markets and the huge growth in farm shop culture, both of which tend to champion and sell locally-produced foods, and diversification

of production on farms. Also customers want greener, locally-produced food with provenance; they are more discerning with their purchases.

Percentage-wise, approximately 20–25% of our cheese sales are made up of goats cheese. This is split equally between soft and hard cheeses.

Goats cheese is very popular in cooking, hence the high sales of the 1kg Continental goat log with the white bloomy rind, but now we see the emergence of the fresh rindless log which is also gathering popularity.

We also stock many cheese board varieties, such as Honey Bee, exclusive to us in the UK, a Dutch Gouda-style goats cheese with honey added. Cheeses coated in sterilised ash are popular (the ash aids your digestion) – this originates from traditional French goats cheesemaking but now finds popularity in British soft goats cheese varieties.

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# PERFECT PAIRINGS

*Speciality Food has spoken to five industry experts – including cheese, charcuterie and preserve pros – to find out what's hot in the world of accompaniments*



**Patricia Michelson**  
of **La Fromagerie**  
on best-selling  
accompaniments  
at her award-  
winning deli

Because we sell mostly unpasteurised cheeses and also work with small independent cheesemakers, we tend to use accompaniments with care.

For us it is all about the quality of the product, and so our biscuits for cheese under the La Fromagerie brand suit our cheeses perfectly. They are crisp-textured and don't have additions – we sell Oat, Charcoal and Rye, and for washed rind cheeses there is one with caraway seeds for an added dimension.

Bread is very important. There's a number of micro bakeries around making slow-fermented sourdough and other breads; these are particularly good with cheese, as are baguettes with their super crust and open, chewy texture.

Keeping it simple and true to flavour means you can't go wrong, and the same goes for drinks. The beers available now are amazing; with locally brewed beers which have been matured in the bottle you get great bursts of hoppy

flavours, which suit hard British cheeses as well as Stilton and Irish washed rind cheeses.

Because of the way independents work with cheese, they can select breads, biscuits and beers that are local to them and work with nearby cheesemakers for a unique selection. For continental cheeses think a little outside the box and maybe choose three or four cheeses that are superb with Champagne. Remember that Bordeaux wines have an affinity with Cheddar, and white wines with a good backbone are great with ewe's milk cheeses and soft white rind cheeses.

A simple Beaujolais Village and Brie de Meaux pairing is a classic that always works, Sancerre and goat cheese is a perfect combination, and Riesling with a younger-style Comté always goes down well.

Take care not to sell chutneys and relishes which are too vinegary – a lighter cider vinegar will produce fruitier chutneys and relishes that will not overpower the cheeses. Consider developing your own handmade chutney, either made by your team or a local producer using seasonal ingredients.



**Sean Cannon,**  
founder of  
**Cannon & Cannon**  
on  
combining cheese  
with charcuterie

Cured meat or 'charcuterie' is a great partner to cheese if selected carefully. Of course, Italians would often present the two together in an antipasti prior to the main meal. What they're always careful of (and what we must also take care with) is ensuring that neither the salty meats nor the creamy cheese is overpowered by the other. A range of textures is important, but one wouldn't be advised to serve a powerful blue cheese such as Stichelton with cured meats or, likewise, our air-dried and smoked

Dorset mutton with lighter cheeses. Rather, one should look for less intense flavoured cheeses such as Wensleydale with, for example, our lightly spiced bresaola from Gloucestershire, which has a wonderfully rich yet subtle flavour and melt-in-the-mouth texture.

We're finding that customers are becoming more adventurous with our meats generally. We do not have a gastronomic history of serving cold meat and cheese platters in the UK (although a Ploughmans is not far off), but we are so used to travelling to the continent to enjoy this sociable and informal way of dining that it is becoming much more popular, especially now that we have our own range of fantastic British



**Owen Davies, category manager at Harvey & Brockless** talks us through some sensational pairings

- **Known as 'the sexiest honey available', the premium quality Acacia honey from Global Harvest is scented with a generous amount of fine black summer truffle shavings.** It works incredibly well with Brock Hall Farm's three gold star Great Taste Award-winning goats cheese, Capra Nouveau. The rindwashed cheese is made with young, fresh milk to create a pure, sweet finish that works in harmony with the clean and beautifully pungent characteristics of the honey.
- **Create an after dinner talking point by serving a sweet and savoury petit four using chocolate and cheese.** We paired Manjari from the premium French chocolate producer Valrhona with either Quicques award-winning Goats Cheddar or White Lake's ash covered, citrus goats log Driftwood. Manjari is a single origin Madagascan chocolate with 64% cocoa solid content. It has very fruity, red berry notes that work very well with the slight acidity of the cheeses. Complete the overall effect with fresh thyme to garnish.
- **Global Harvest's Fruit for Cheese add a new dimension to your traditional cheeseboard.** We recommend serving Perfectly Pear with Colston Bassett's Stilton, the winner of two Supreme Champion titles in 2014. A simple, subtle and brilliant match.



A VARIED SELECTION OF BISCUITS FOR CHEESE FROM THE FINE CHEESE CO. IMAGE: JASON LOWE

“Independent retailers should think local and emphasise suppliers making small-batch breads and beers”



cheeses and cured meats made in the UK to proudly serve up. If you love eating this way and fancy giving something a little different a go, then try our hot-smoked pigs' cheeks (Bath Chaps) made by Trealy Farm with a Caerphilly such as Tregothan Dairy's Gorwydd.

We find customers want to try new and innovative things, especially if we're using lesser-known animals like duck or cuts such as cheek or fillet 'culatello' (which is stuffed into a pigs' bladder to dry for 12 months). We have heard whispers of squirrel salami coming soon and have already offered air-dried loin of alpaca. Last week we took delivery of dried cricket samples, but we're not sure if the UK is quite ready for that particular 'bush tucker trial' as yet!



**Ann-Marie Dyas, founder of The Fine Cheese Co. shares her pairing and upselling tips**  
Cheese loves

something sweet – they're natural bedfellows, the saltiness of the cheese is the ying to sweetness's

yang. We've developed that idea into our fruit for cheeses; this range celebrates English fruit such as damsons, cherries and gooseberries, but we always try to push the boundaries so we introduced some exotics – lime and chilli makes an amazing marriage with blue cheese, while guava offers an exciting alternative to quince.

We also have a range of crackers which have a hint of flavour to complement specific cheeses, as well as some with a neutral taste to let the cheese shine, and in July we're launching a new fruit and nut torta – we've combined fig, prunes, almond and walnuts with a hint of aniseed to serve on a cheeseboard.

Retailers can't be on-hand in the shop constantly, and what we at Fine Cheese Co have learned to do is to 'auto-suggest' – simply put a matching cracker or chutney together with a cheese on the counter, ready to be tried by the customer. This also works well as a reminder to the person behind the counter to recommend the pairing. This is effortless; no matter how good your staff are, they don't always remember to upsell.

## Kate Nicholson, sales/marketing manager at Hawkshead Relish provides some pairing suggestions



Hawkshead Relish offers a profusion of preserved handmade accompaniments to complement the wealth of contrasting artisan cheeses available today. Any given chutney or pickle can alter a single cheese and offer a new culinary experience. With such a varying array of preserves offering different levels of sweetness, acidity, fruit density and complexity, it is possible to find the perfect partner.

- When coupled with Hawkshead Relish's Westmorland Chutney, Rustic Cheddar provides the quintessential ploughman's lunch. Also the chunky Piccalilli bursting with flavour is a complementary match for this noble cheese.
- A soft goats cheese with its earthy undertones attracts a partner of a sweeter nature. Our rich Red Onion Marmalade is excellent for this purpose, as is the

Beetroot & Horseradish Chutney which also adds vibrant colour.

- Blue cheeses have an acidity of their own. Subtle fruit-based preserves such as Pear & Date Chutney provide sweetness to cut through the sharpness of the veining, but a delicate flavour so as not to overpower the creaminess of the cheese.
- Continental cheeses such as Manchego celebrate their Mediterranean heritage brilliantly when paired with our rich and fruity Fig & Cinnamon Chutney or Sun Dried Tomato & Garlic chutney; simply serve with crusty ciabatta.
- Brie and Camembert-style cheeses benefit from a little sweet fruitiness. Hawkshead Relish's Cranberry Relish offers a wonderful hint of citrus, while Spiced Apricot & Cranberry Chutney offers an alternative, with a wonderful blend of spices ensuring the perfect balance.

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# THINK YOU KNOW CHEDDAR?

*Often overlooked but never forgotten, Cheddar deserves its time in the spotlight. Juliet Harbutt shares the story of the king of British cheeses*

**T**he method of preserving milk reflects the historical background of a country in relation to its agricultural, social and economic conditions through the ages. The story of Cheddar can be traced back to the Romans, who introduced hard cheeses to Britain which were later improved on by the Normans. The next few centuries were turbulent and disruptive, with plagues, famine and endless wars. The feudal system placed the majority of land in the hands of a few great landowners, and the high-yielding cow gradually replaced the sheep as the main source of milk.

## NEED TO KNOW

### Traditional Farmhouse Cheddar

Made with the majority of the milk coming from the home farm. Firm body, buttery mouth feel, strong and assertive with distinctive flavours that explode onto the palate. A full-bodied, well balanced complexity of flavours from spicy green grass acidity to nutty creamy notes, finishing on a lingering savoury tang reminiscent of cheese and raw onion.

### Modern Cheddar

Retains the authentic Cheddar texture, and often encouraged to develop crunchy calcium carbonate crystals. With the addition of Helvetic cultures develops a sweet, fruity pineapple taste that carries through to the finish with a hint of savoury notes.

### Block Cheddar

Some are made with traditional starters and barely distinguishable from clothbound, while others are almost unbearably sweet. The vast majority have improved enormously in recent years, but can never achieve the same hardness and depth of flavour as those made by hand with the unpasteurised milk of one farm and matured in cloth.

It was not until the 16th century, however, that the hard cows' milk cheese made in the Mendip Hills near Cheddar Gorge in Somerset became known as Cheddar. With large, well-kept herds, many were as large as 90–120lb and required 2–5 years to mature – as affirmed by Camden in his *Britannia* (1586), "West of Wells, just under the Mendippe Hills, lies Cheddar, famous for its excellent cheeses, some of which require more than a man's strength to put them on the table, and a delicate taste, equalling if not excelling that of Parmesan." Probably the biggest Cheddar ever made, weighing eleven hundredweight and measuring nine feet four inches in circumference and 20 inches high, was presented to Queen Victoria in the late 18th century.

English cheese was not always given good press. Ben Johnson's character Abel Druggier, a tobacconist in *The Alchemist* (1610), is accused of foul breath and having an exceptionally bad case of worms as a result of eating too much cheese. Shakespeare was also hard pushed to find a complimentary word, and Mrs Beeton was very dismissive in her *bible Book of Household Management* (1861).

By the early 1700s the types of English cheese as they exist today were broadly established, and cheeses were shipped from ports around Britain, carried by coach or packed on barges and transported up and down the country. Oddly, the advent of the railway proved to be a retrograde step for farmhouse cheeses in Britain. Suddenly liquid milk could be transported from farm to city, and the necessity of preserving milk by the labour-intensive process of converting it into cheese was no longer necessary. This coincided with the establishment of cheese factories and the large scale emigration from the farming community.

The factories provided a steady income for dairy farmers, many of whom turned their backs forever on cheesemaking, and by the end



of the 19th century, a third of the Cheddar consumed was being imported from Canada, New Zealand, America and Australia. The First World War (1914 – 1918) and the post-war economy were not conducive for small scale cheesemaking, but it was the Second World War that had the most damaging effect on British farmhouse cheesemaking.

With labour and food in short supply, the Ministry of Food was created to make the most of national resources. Regrettably, in

their wisdom, they decided all milk should be transported to the factories and made into hard cheeses. In retrospect, this was an uneconomical use of fuel and milk, as the labour force, mainly women, was ready and able to make cheese on farms and transporting a shipment of cheese made more sense than transporting its much bulkier and more fragile equivalent in milk to a distant factory to make cheese.

Cheese finally came off the rations books in 1954, but the

## Paul George: "Time for a change"



The Cheddar elephant still sits on the room, and continues its 40 year cycle of decline to around 53% of the market. Considering the commercial knock-about behaviour of many devalued premium brands, it's surely time for others to rise in the specialist markets, creating a unique demand potential for stockists.

The consumer has defected to sweeter, nuttier Cheddars, and although the loyalists of Farmhouse remain vocal and significant, I believe the younger generation is on the move – that can be ignored or harnessed as each maker chooses.

Some mid-range Cheddar makers are capable of producing unique and fashionable tastes,

with realistic prices, manageable volume and a true provenance story. Amongst these are Isle of Man Vintage Cheddar, Cricketers and Alvis.

The challenge for the independent retail and food service trades is to focus on and feature a credible, top quality, provenance-based Cheddar not hacked to death in the price bear pit of major retail. I believe the options available will find a secure home in this sector, and maybe not just in their homeland. Similarly, in hard territorialities there has been a heartening return to original values in which Belton's Red Fox has been a leader. They have been rewarded with almost immediate success for their bold and timely move, as the customer has voted with their purse here and abroad.



revival of farmhouse cheeses, despite efforts from the government to put things right, would not take place until the late 1980s. Of the 333 traditional Cheddar makers recorded in 1939, after the Second World War there were 57 and today there remains but six. Using the same methods, they each produce Cheddar of distinction and individual character. Although the quality and texture of the block Cheddars has improved enormously in the last five years, they can never, like huge wine producers, match the individuality obtained by making cheese by hand and wrapping it in cloth.

The flavour is built up over months of silent activity. Tiny bacteria, enzymes and acids breaking down the billions of molecules to create the flavours. Watching cows munching their way through the grasses of an English pasture, one can see why British Cheddar has a reputation for its sweet, creamy, rich and complex scents and flavours.

For this is the greatest of Britain's famous Territorials. Copied the world over but nowhere is it really cheddar unless it comes from

the green and verdant hills of England and more especially Dorset, Devon and Somerset. For generations it has been an integral part of the English diet, in sandwiches, as quick snacks, ploughman's lunches or as the solid dependable chunks proudly displayed on an oak sideboard or simple platter, embellished with Cox's Pippins, celery and the occasional oat cake.



KEENS: ONE OF THE GREAT CHEDDAR MAKERS

To taste an unpasteurised, handmade, clothbound Cheddar made from the milk of cows whose daily diet is fresh green grass, clover and meadow flowers, is to taste a piece of England. The bite is like chocolate, firm and yielding; the aroma is fresh, nutty and slightly savoury; the flavours differ from farm to farm but there is always the rich sweetness of the milk, a classic acid tang and a long lingering

kaleidoscope of flavours normally only associated with a fine wine. Best with a Merlot or Pinot Noir; Clarets have too much tannin.

To achieve its unique texture, the mass of curd must be cut in brick-sized blocks and piled two bricks high the length of the vat. This process is repeated every 15–20 minutes and gradually the bricks flatten out and the acidity rises as more whey is forced out. The curd is ready for the next stage when it is dry, firm mellow and has the texture of cooked 'chicken breast'.

Like wine there are very distinct variations between producers and just as we have learned to ask for our favourite Bordeaux by name so we need consumers to do the same with Britain's great territorials like Cheddar (which are easy to remember as there are now less than 10).

There are also now two very distinct styles of Cheddar: the traditional savoury cheddars made by the 'grand crus' of the Cheddar world, and the modern styles of Cheddar made with the addition of Helvetica starter cultures producing a sweet, fruit cheese that seems a long way from Cheddar.

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# UNUSUAL BEDFELLOWS

*Cheese and whisky pairing can be an effective sales tool for both lines*



**C**heese and wine pairing is not only a pleasing recreational pastime but a useful sales tool, too. But wine isn't the only alcohol which teams perfectly with cheese. Recent years have seen cheese and whisky pairing becoming increasingly popular and from a retailer's point of view, it's an activity which should be fostered and promoted. According to the British Cheese Board, serving whisky with cheese works well because "the high level of alcohol in the whisky serves to cut through the fat of the cheese and allows the flavours to be released." Whisky has a number of flavours "which cannot be found in wine but which are found in cheese, including grassiness, barrel fermented notes, and even saltiness."

Steve Parker of The Cheese and Wine Company holds a single malts and cheese tasting three times a year and, he says, "it is always fully subscribed." The key to pairing whiskies with cheese, Steve says, "is to identify the different styles of whiskies. The Scotch whisky flavour map is a great help in doing this. From the light floral aromas and tastes of unpeated Lowland malts to the smoky, peaty heavyweights from Islay, with Highland, Speyside and Island malts in between, there is a wealth of aromas and flavours. The other key factor in the malts is whether they have been

matured in sherry or bourbon casks."

Those more used to pairing wine with their cheese may be reassured to find that "many of the tasting notes used to describe whiskies are the same as those used to describe wines – floral, grassy, smoky, nutty, citrus, fruity." Here, Steve offers a few of "the outstanding pairings" which have proved popular, even with non-whisky drinkers.

"Glengoyne 10 year old (unpeated and matured in sherry casks). A light, floral-style malt, this is fantastic with any triple cream cheeses that Burgundy and

Champagne are famed for, e.g. Chaource, Vignette, Delice de Bourgogne. Matured in

bourbon, olorosso and pedro ximinez casks, Auchentoshan Three Wood is light but has a deep richness, particularly from the PX casks, and is amazing paired with top quality Swiss Gruyere. We used Le Cret and it was voted the best combination by almost all of our customers: nutty, rich, grassy, complex. Highland Park 12 year old (matured in sherry casks on Orkney) is rich and peaty without being too smoky. We found that an aged Gouda was a great match for this Orcadian smoothie. With Ardbeg 10 year old, the rich complexity of this great malt worked like a dream with salty Roquefort (we used Vieux Berger)."



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SUGGESTION:  
EXTRA MATURE CHEDDAR

The British Cheese Board suggests that "those who are relatively new to such pairings may wish to start with softer flavours, perhaps a Creamy Lancashire with Glen Elgin 12 year old." Why? "This whisky has a fruity, sweet taste and produces subtle, pleasant notes when combined with the cheese." More adventurous tasters, says the Board, "can match the Glen Elgin 12 year old and Compass Box Peat Monster with an extra mature Cheddar, producing a balanced yet rich result." A suggestion for more experienced whisky connoisseurs is "a Balvenie 21 year old Port Wood and a Blue Stilton."



**Richard Veal,**  
senior advisor  
for private  
events at Berry  
Bros & Rudd,  
London's premier

wine merchants, says that "as with pairing anything, it is the mutual benefit each partner derives from the other, creating an entirely new and better experience, that makes it worthwhile. In their own right, a cheese or whisky might be world class and delicious, but then paired well you get something altogether more special, different and arresting. It's gastronomic synergy."

Whisky and cheese pairing can be experienced either as an aperitif or digestif. "If you normally have whisky as an aperitif,



**THE BALVENIE - PAIRING  
SUGGESTION: BLUE STILTON**

## Juliet Harbutt: "Matching is fun"



"Matching wine with cheese is fun, fascinating, an endless source of debate, and considered by some passé!" says Juliet Harbutt. Cider, beer and perry are also great traditional companions to cheese, and when you taste Cropwell Bishop Stilton with Sloe Gin, you will wonder why you ever bothered with Port. But even I, who has tried tea and cheese, honey and cheese and endless chutney and cheese pairings, blanched when offered a commission to find a cheese to match with seven great whiskies. However, here are some lovely combinations that scored eight or more out of a possible 10 for me.

Fresh cheese (eg, Windrush, Cerney Ash, Perroche, Rosary

Plain) and Gentleman Jack Tennessee Whiskey. The fresh, lemony, citrus zing and mild aromatic character of the fresh goats cheese absolutely fell into the arms of the sweet heady vanilla and honey notes of this whiskey. From the same stable as Jack Daniels but filtered through charcoal twice to produce a smoother, silkier drink with gentle fruit and spices.

Soft white cheese (eg, Capricorn Goat, Golden Cross) with Clynelish 14-year-old single malt. The creamy texture and subtle aromatic taste of the goats' milk with hints of almond on the finish was a wonderful match of textures and flavours and highlighted the soft, woody notes and long bitter sweetness of the whisky, which also worked well with the mushroomy finish of the cheese.





**BUNNAHABHAIN - PAIRING  
SUGGESTION: WELSH RAREBIT**



**GLENROTHES - PAIRING  
SUGGESTION: CHEESE STRAWS**

perhaps have some cheese or cheese-based snacks before dinner. Gougère or parmesan straws with a lighter Speyside works well such as The Glenrothes, Vintage Reserve," Richard suggests. "I prefer it as a digestif, so tend to have a cheese course in place of dessert. Or what about rediscovering the savoury course? Welsh rarebit is a forgotten, but fantastic, way to finish a formal dinner and wonderful with the right whisky accompaniment."

Richard's suggestion:

Bunnahabhain, 12-year-old, Islay.

"The principles of pairing whisky are no different than with wine," Richard says. "The considerations are intensity, weight and flavour profile. If you like it lighter, Auchentoshan, 12-year-old with some Lincolnshire Poacher and Appleby's Cheshire. For something more intense, a bottle of Caol Ila, 12-year-old, and an Epoisses, alongside Montgomery's Smoked Cheddar, is a great beginning."

Cheese and whisky pairing needn't break the bank, Richard says. "Grain whisky tends to be cheaper than single malt and grain blended with some malt makes it more special on a budget." For those of a strict budget, Richard suggests they try Famous Grouse

Blended Scotch and a cheese like Comté or Gruyère. All readily available and great together." And for those with a little more to spend? "Isle of Mull Cheddar and Tobermory 15-year-old, Isle of Mull Single Malt. The mash waste from this local distillery is fed to the cows on the blustery, exposed dairy and the cheese has a rugged, saline, unpolished character that pairs very well with whisky in general and its island neighbour excellently."

Whisky and cheese pairing can be used to encourage cross-selling of both products. "With so many people fanatical about food," Richard says, "there is a huge market in teaching people more ways to enjoy quality products."

They, in turn, try the combinations out at their dinner parties and experiments turn into habits. I've had very successful nights hosting whisky and cheese tastings, and there is no reason whisky shops and cheese shops shouldn't be sampling the two in partnership to give people ideas of what to try at home."



**CAOL ILA - PAIRING  
SUGGESTION:  
MONTGOMERY'S  
SMOKED CHEDDAR**



**LANCASHIRE AND GLEN ELGIN 12-YEAR-OLD: AN IDEAL  
MATCH FOR THOSE NEW TO CHEESE AND WHISKY PAIRING**

“Many of the tasting notes used to describe whiskies are the same as those used to describe wines – floral, grassy, smoky, nutty, citrus, fruity”

When I tried the soft white cheese made with cows' milk with this whisky, however, the results were totally the reverse; the bitter notes in the cheese and whisky came to the fore, the creamy smooth texture was lost and the sea-breeze salty tang from the whisky prevailed.

Semi-soft washed rind cheese (eg, Tornegus, Oglesfield, Ardahan) with Talisker 10-year-old single malt. The strong, meaty, savoury rather than sweet taste of these bold washed rind cheeses along with their supple elastic texture produced a really interesting marriage that brought out the best in both – emphasising the peppery, smoky notes of the whisky and underlining the meaty, savoury taste of the cheese and finishing with a subtle sweetness.

Hard cheese (eg, Gouda, Cheddar with sweet notes and crunchy crystals) with Chivas

Regal 12-year-old. This whisky worked best with aged, very hard, crystalline cows' milk cheeses like aged Gouda or Coastal Cheddar with their wonderful crunchy feel, rich milk taste and sweet, fruity tang on the finish. Together the complexity of the cheese with their savoury, fruity and sweet notes were highlighted while the cheese emphasised the sweet smokiness of the whisky.

Hard goats cheese (eg, Pennard Vale, Nanny's Cheddar, St Helen's Goat) with Dalmore 12-year-old Highlands Single Malt. The toasty, coffee notes of the Dalmore with its hints of marmalade and sherry and full mouth feel proved to be a wonderful partner for the hard, aromatic goat cheeses with their almond and marzipan notes.

The result was honey notes and smoky overtones.

Blue cheese (eg, Shropshire Blue, Blackstocks Blue, Highland



**BLUE CHEESE: PERFECT WITH  
BALVENIE 12-YEAR-OLD SINGLE MALT**

Blue) with Balvenie 12-year-old single malt. My favourite whisky, aged in sherry and bourbon casks, the Balvenie worked superbly with the Shropshire Blue and Highland Blue with their nutty, mellow warm spicy flavours and a hint of orange, but proved disastrous with the Stilton and Yorkshire Blue. I have no idea why and will have to try it with a wider range of blues next time.

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**O**ne difference between the cheese industries here and in the UK could be that NZ has a culture of industrial dairy farming and production, which means that sometimes there is a perception that cheese should be 'cheap' as we produce so much of it. We are constantly needing to educate our customers that the cheese we sell is very different to the processed cheese that most NZ milk goes into making.

**When we started cheese retail in 2000 we were very unusual, as in NZ food shopping culture was all about going to the supermarket once a week.** This was pre-farmers markets or speciality food stores. Even butchers were few and far between. This is one of the reasons that we decided to start up in NZ, as we knew we would attract a lot of attention for our different style of retailing.

**With the confidence that we were bringing a new style of food retailing to NZ, we relied on word of mouth and have always managed to get a lot of good editorial coverage.** During the upheaval of the



## Sarah and Martin Aspinall, Canterbury Cheesemongers, Christchurch, New Zealand

Christchurch Earthquakes we started using Facebook to keep our customers up to date. We now use social media, our website and email newsletters.

**We probably sell the most volume of NZ-made Dutch-style cheeses.** There are several Dutch cheesemakers who we think make the best Gouda outside of the Netherlands. We also sell a large amount of European cheeses to our local regular customers, who appreciate the choice of raw milk cheese we can stock.

**It's a pity that NZ cheese is only really known for its industrially produced Cheddar and butter in the UK.** However, this is understandable as, in most parts of the world, the

very best cheese is sold to the local community with a good margin for the producer. As well as the previously mentioned Dutch-style cheeses, NZ is also very strong in blue cheeses and we also have some excellent new cheesemakers making interesting sheep, goat and washed cheeses that are so special they would never be exported.

**We sell lots of British cheese.** Our special relationship with Neal's Yard Dairy (having worked there in the 1990s) means we have imported from them since 2001 and until recently have been the sole importer into NZ of their high quality range of UK territorial cheeses. Martin is a Yorkshireman so has a soft spot for Wensleydale and Lancashire and Sarah especially loves Stilton and Stichelton.

**We sell a number of cheese accompaniments.** We have a bakery and make properly fermented bread, as well as pastries that go well with cheese. An Eccles cake and piece of Wensleydale or Lancashire has become a Christchurch staple.



CANTERBURY CHEESEMONGERS: A RICH SOURCE OF DUTCH-STYLE CHEESE



## JULIET HARBUTT:

### "My perspective of retailing in NZ"

**Displays of fruit and vegetables in NZ look lush, ripe, fresh and natural, but the cheese looks like someone filled a wheelbarrow with a shedload of cheese and tipped it onto the counter.** Some effort is made to group similar cheeses together but there are just too many of the same and the shelves are so close together you can barely see where one ends and the next begins. If it weren't for the blindingly bright lighting and colourful branding you probably couldn't find your favourite cheese. However, it isn't the chaotic, busy, overloaded shelves of pre-cut cheeses that is so off-putting and keeps New Zealand consumption figures so low compared with other countries, but the staggeringly high prices. Using Farmhouse Cheddar as a comparison, in NZ it is around \$48/kg (£24/kg) compared with £16.00/kg in the UK, and so cheeses imported from Europe are the same or less in price than NZ cheeses!

The main reasons for this are the milk prices and the fact that New Zealand – unlike most other

countries – adds 15% GST (like VAT) to food which, as we know, works its way through the many stages from the milk to the cheesemaker, the distributor, retailer and finally the cheese lover. A premium milk brand in New Zealand sells at around \$2.30 per litre (£1.10) and a budget brand on special about 88p per litre, whereas in the UK a supermarket brand is around 44p per litre (SNZ 0.86).

The other major difference is that in NZ the cheesemakers not the retail staff do most of the restocking of the shelves and the pre-cutting – this means they have to have someone going to every store which, considering the distance between stores and the limited population, adds a huge cost to distribution.

Why can't we get New Zealand cheese over here? Because when the UK joined the EU, non-EU countries were subject to heavy importation tax which makes it prohibitive to import NZ cheese, so Anchor Cheddar and butter are made in the UK.

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**S**elling cheese in Italy has transformed radically in the past few decades, as many consumers have become more interested in and educated about dairy products in a quest for genuine examples of quality and skill. At the same time, we have witnessed a change from a network of tiny shops with an excessive local appeal to nondescript 'melting pot' shops and the large-scale retail trade. However, between cheese seen just as groceries and cheese valued as valuable food, there has been a surge of interest towards some important – albeit small – specialist shops that have managed to keep their identity intact and have increased their professional skills over the years.

**Our role as specialist retailers must be embraced with great passion and determination.** We have been engaging in 'product education' for many years, organising themed evenings and courses, but also enticing our customers to have cheese tasting dinner parties. These events provide excellent feedback and



**Erasmo Gastaldello of  
Famiglio Gastaldello, Marostica, Vicenza**



promote interest. We provide customers with cheese boards displaying various selections,

already cut in correct portions to be sampled in the right order, together with accompaniments. We also supply professionally presented written information on every cheese to be sampled in order to enhance the experience, to educate the palate and to make what is a convivial moment an altogether more enjoyable, richer experience.

**In the past few decades the Italian cheese market has been favouring fresh products with milder flavours, but our passion definitely goes against the grain.**

Our best-selling cheeses are Parmigiano Reggiano at various stages of ageing (40, 60, 96 and 120 months), aged Asiago, Vezzena, Morlacco, Pecorino di Farindola, Caciocavallo Podolico, Ragusano and, more recently, various medium/long-aged goats cheeses. Our passion defined us in the '90s, too, as insisting on

historic cheese and shunning an easier market contributed further to strengthening our core identity.

**Amongst the new Italian cheeses, our preference is mainly for goat cheeses produced by very small dairies.** There's also an interesting buffalo's milk blue cheese made in the province of Bergamo, which we also love. We are not excited by any of the new industrial products. Interest is growing for cheese produced with vegetable rennet, for vegetarians, but in this field the path is a long one. Meanwhile, vegetarian cheese production in the United Kingdom leads the way and should be followed.

**Italy can boast a great wealth of cheeses, and among them the true gems all belong to niche productions:** Monte Grappa's Morlacco, Sardinia's Casizolu, Enna's Piacintinu, Moena's Puzzone, Valtorta's Agri, together with the many blue cheeses of the small mountain valleys.

**My experience at the British Cheese Awards enabled me to delve deeper into the UK's rich variety of dairy production,** but in Italy it is not yet easy to sell British cheese. Despite the existing prejudice to overcome, we are not giving up and, little by little, our customers have now been introduced to Stilton, Shropshire Blue, Cashel Blue, St. Tola, Gorwydd Caerphilly, Stinking Bishop, Millens, Montgomery's Cheddar, Isle of Mull Cheddar, Hafod, Ardahan, Gubbeen, Cratloe Hills Gold, Barkham Blue, Blue Stone, Sparkenhoe Red Leicester, Cheshire, Harbour Blue, Beenleigh Blue and Crozier Blue.

For some of these cheeses, the wheels are rather large and I imagine that if it were possible to purchase them in smaller units (half a wheel, or even a quarter of a wheel) it would possibly encourage many more shops to stock them.

“ In Italy it is necessary to focus on three key words: specialisation (requiring constant, careful research); quality (as a real, tangible element of the equation) and authentic tradition (that is to pass on news, memories, narratives of flavours and taste from one generation to the next) ”



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# AGEING GRACEFULLY

*Experts talk cheese care, ageing and storage*

## HOW TO KEEP CHEESE



**HERO HIRSH, MANAGER,  
PAXTON & WHITFIELD**

**Keeping cheese fresh: the first piece of advice that I was given when training to be a cheesemonger was to only open a cheese when you need it. As soon as it is open, it loses moisture and shelf life and the quality quickly deteriorates.**

Ideally, we'd wrap all our cheese in waxed paper when it's out on display, as wax paper is best for keeping the cheese fresh. However, it doesn't give an attractive display. We compromise by wrapping cheeses on our display in cling film. The film is wrapped closely around the cut face of the cheese, leaving no air bubbles, so that customers can see the quality of the cheese. To ensure that the moisture inside the cheese is regulated, we change the cling film every time we cut from the cheese and at least every two days. In terms of keeping cheese fresh during its storage in your back of house cellar, I would recommend that you turn all your cheeses at least every week. You may want to turn your younger, fresher cheeses more often to ensure there is a consistent spread of moisture and to avoid the cheese getting a 'soggy bottom'.

### Wrap cheese

As I've said above, for display purposes we use cling film. However, wherever possible, we only apply this over the cut surface of the cheese and leave the rind of the cheese exposed. Doing this means that you can let the cheese breathe and keeps the surfaces looking fresher, for longer. Having cut cheese for sale, we always wrap it in waxed paper. Waxed paper is the ideal way to wrap cheese as it allows it to breathe. We always recommend that our customers keep the cheese wrapped in this paper at home. Also, it's a good

branding exercise: the paper we use has our company name printed on it in our house colours.

### Cutting cheese

Another important lesson I learnt when training was how to cut cheese. In the shop we always use a board and wire. This means we can cut through the cheese and maintain clean sharp edges. Beyond that, you are trying to cut the cheese to ensure that it looks attractive, and in such a way that you are left with a piece that has a fair balance of rind and paste.

If a customer is looking for a small piece of cheese, it's counter-intuitive, but often better, to cut a small piece from a larger piece, rather than to split a small piece in two. Every piece needs to look attractive and as soon as a piece is too small it starts drying out and looking unattractive. Small, individual cheeses should be sold as such. Be clear with your staff which individual cheeses can be cut down and which can't. As soon as you start cutting down

“  
**Every piece needs to look attractive and as soon as a piece looks too small, it starts drying out and looking unattractive.**  
”



individual cheeses, you have issues with what price to charge the customer and also issues of wastage. Finally, do ensure you train your staff in what is expected. When you're used to cutting and wrapping cheese you take it for granted. It is an art and only comes with practice.

### Cheese temperature

Hard cheese should be kept at 10 to 12 degrees centigrade, with soft and blue cheeses kept below 5 degrees centigrade. Do remember that cheese needs high humidity. There are times when you can't necessarily do much about it, but times when you can. For example, at night, we cover our goat's milk cheeses on the counter with clean, damp cloths. Given the importance of the humidity, we regularly measure the humidity in the cellar and when it drops, we use a humidifier or added water. Not only does the humidity help the quality of the cheese but commercially, too. You want to minimize the weight wastage that will inevitably happen as cheeses wait to be sold.

### Appearance

Apart from ensuring that sure you keep the cheese moist, make sure that you inspect each cheese on display on a daily basis. Are there any dry edges that should be cut off? Does the cling film need to be changed? Is the cheese looking a little off-colour, i.e. does it need to have its surface cleaned with a cheese plane to let the fresher cheese underneath show? Is each and every piece of cheese well wrapped? This daily check also enables you to check the dates on all your cheeses and take action

## EQUIPMENT

**This is an interesting question as when I started out as a cheesemonger I thought that you needed a lot of equipment, but the reality is that you don't. To service your cheese counter successfully, I've found that you need the following:**

- **A cheese plane** – a slicing plane to use to give samples of cheese to customers to try before they buy and to help clean the surface of hard cheeses.
- **A good quality stainless steel cheese knife** – it's well worth sourcing commercial quality knives rather than domestic knives; they cut better and last longer.
- **A cheese wire and board** – the most important piece of kit for cutting large pieces of cheese cleanly and attractively.
- **Cheeseboards** – for 'on taste' cheese, so that customers can try samples of the cheeses you sell.
- **Labels** to display the mandatory information required by law. Do make sure you understand what is required since the recent labelling changes last year.
- **Waxed paper and paper or plastic bags** – waxed paper to wrap the cheese in once it has been selected and cut. A paper bag to put the cut cheese in if your cheese counter is part of a wider food offer in a farm shop/deli or a larger plastic bag if you are setting up or running a dedicated cheese shop.
- **Scales** for weighing the cheese and a till to process payment.





SELLING CHEESE AT  
PAXTON & WHITFIELD

early to push through those cheeses that are heading towards their BBE/UB dates and enables you to check that all your labels are in place.

### Cheese sizes

If you're just starting out, this is really tricky since you don't know

what your rate of sales will be and therefore what size cheese you can purchase to ensure you sell through before its end date. As a general rule, I would say less is more. Much better to have a few fantastic-looking cheeses which you are passionate about than lots of bits and pieces. Talk to the cheesemakers (or wholesaler) whose cheese you want to stock, as, more often than not, there will be a number of different sizes. For example, there are different sized truckles of Cheddar, from 25kg down to 500g. Be aware that some cheeses will have different reactions when displayed on a cheese counter. Some of the more open-textured, crumbly cheeses are prone to blueing when on display, so look at buying smaller versions so that you can sell through quicker. The other thing to consider is what your storage is like back of house. If you have a dedicated cheese storage room, and can stock any size of cheese, that's fantastic. However, if your storage is your chiller cabinet/cheese counter on the shop floor, you'll need to think about size and quantity more carefully.

### Final points

We segregate our blue cheeses from our other cheeses to prevent cross-contamination. We also have separate knives and boards for cutting blue cheeses and any other cheeses that contain other allergens than just milk. (NB you don't need separate utensils for pasteurised/unpasteurised cheese). Train your staff well and keep reminding them of your standards. Of course, it's important that they know about the products, their provenance and their taste. It's also important they

know about cutting/wrapping/presentation, because the customers won't even get to talk to your passionate staff if they don't think the cheese looks good. Finally, good luck with setting up your cheese counter. It makes a great addition to a deli/farm shop's food offer and there are so many fantastic artisan cheeses to stock it with!

**Hero Hirsh is an award-winning cheesemonger and manager of Paxton & Whitfield's London cheese shop on Jermyn St.**  
[paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk](http://paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk)

## HOW TO AGE CHEESE



### ANDY SWINSCOE, OWNER THE COURTYARD DAIRY

**Cheese shops across the land will claim that they 'mature' or 'age' cheese. But what does this mean, and can you do it yourself on a small scale?**

A genuine cheese maturer (French 'affineur') will actually alter the cheese product and, hopefully,

improve it significantly. Good examples of affineurs in the UK are James McCall of James's Cheese, who takes very young Stony Cross made by Lyburn Farmhouse, and by his method of maturing, changes it into a very different cheese: the fruity, supple Francis. Another true >



G R E A T   Y O R K S H I R E   C H E E S E