

The Cheese Club

Cheese Notes Offer

04 / 04

gratte paille*

cow's milk, white mould double cream

Ile-de-France, France

Indulge yourself this winter with the double cream Gratte Paille. A relatively young cheese, it was first produced in the 1950's by the famous Tournan family of *affineurs*, Rouzaire, one of the few remaining *affineurs* of soft-ripened cheeses in France.

Gratte Paille is produced in the department of Seine-et-Marne, and was named after a lane in Tournan so narrow that the straw wagons used to leave some of their straw stuck to the walls of the houses. A hand moulded artisanal cheese, Gratte Paille is produced in deep rectangular units of approximately 350 grams. It is produced at a raised temperature from whole milk that is enriched with cream. As with all white mould cheeses, it ripens from the outside in and has an *affinage* of three weeks.

Gratte Paille is an uncooked and unpressed cheese with a soft pate and a mottled rind. Firmer in the centre, it has a slightly oily texture and a luscious and creamy taste that strengthens as the cheese ages. Best eaten whilst young, a whole unit of Gratte Paille is a spectacular centrepiece on your cheese platter. Enjoy with a loaf of crusty bread, or with berries as a dessert cheese. Try it with a glass of Chenin Blanc or bubbles.

*Please note we have limited numbers of this cheese.

gubbeen

cow's milk, washed rind

West Cork, Ireland

The name Gubbeen comes from the Gaelic word gobin, which means small mouthful. It refers to the small bay west of Schull in West Cork where the Gubbeen farm is located. The Ferguson family have run this dairy farm for five generations. Tim and Giana Ferguson have now been producing cheese at their farm for over two decades.

The production of the cheese starts with the milk. The quality of the milk used is carefully controlled through such measures as the choice of grasses for the pastures, use of no pesticides or heavy fertilisers, and serious cattle husbandry and milking methods.

The milk used in the production of Gubbeen comes from Friesian, Guernsey, and Simmenthal cattle as well as the local rare black Kerry cattle. Kerry cattle are one of the oldest breeds in Europe and are said to be derived from the Celtic Shorthorn brought to Ireland in Neolithic times.

Starter cultures and rennet are added to the milk. It is then stirred and cut, and the curds placed into moulds. In the production of Gubbeen, as with all washed rind cheeses, it is the daily washing of the rind and the regular turning of the cheese which develops the surface bloom and gives the cheese its distinctly characteristic flavours.

Gubbeen is earthy in flavour, with an aroma reminiscent of the farmyard. The rind is quite crusty and thick, and the pate is dense and sticky on the tongue. Enjoy Gubbeen with an Irish ale or with a Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier.

swiss gruyère

cow's milk, cooked curd, hard

Gruyère, Switzerland

The first of our selection of four cheeses that hail from the mountainous regions of Switzerland and France is Swiss Gruyère. Gruyère cheese has been produced for centuries in both the Swiss and French Alps. It has been made in the area surrounding the town of Gruyère in the canton of Fribourg for over 1000 years, and is still made to a traditional recipe. This name comes from the pine forests that lie just below the snow line. In the days of the Holy Roman Empire these were managed by corps of *officiers gruyers*. Wood from the forests was traded for mountain cheese, and was in turn used in the production of the cheese.

Swiss Gruyère is produced in 32 kilogram wheels. It takes 400 litres to make just one . The cheese is still made on a regional co-operative basis, with milk pooled from small herds of cattle to make each wheel of cheese. It is, however, strictly controlled by a national council. Once made only from alpine milk high in the mountain pastures in summer, it is now made throughout the year. Cows must be fed on natural fodder, silage is not allowed and there must be no chemical additives. The cheese undergoes no thermatic treatment, thus guaranteeing the preservation of the flora which give Swiss Gruyère its unique taste.

The wheels are turned and rubbed with brine daily for the first ten days, then twice a week for three months, and then weekly until the cheese is sold. Maturation lasts for a minimum of 5-12 months. The wheel we have for this Cheese Club Offer has been aged for over eighteen months. As with Comté, Swiss Gruyère is one of the few raw milk cheeses imported into Australia. Importation is allowed because the cooking process it undergoes is regarded as equivalent to pasteurisation.

Swiss Gruyère has a brown, naturally pebbled rind. Its interior is dense and smooth, moderately firm and can have small pea sized holes formed by propionic bacteria and small horizontal fissures known as lenures. Swiss Gruyère tends to be slightly less salty and full-flavoured than French Gruyère. It has condensed sweet flavours that linger on the palate. Buttery and nutty and full of alpine flavours, it melts on the tongue.

Comté AOC

cow's milk, semi-hard

Franche-Comté, France

The French make two gruyères – Beaufort and Comté. Comté is only made in the region of France-Comté and along with Beaufort, is the richest and most popular cheese in France.

The mountainous region of the Franche-Comté lies at the foot of the Alps bordered by Switzerland, Alsace, Haute-Savoie, Burgundy, Champagne and Lorraine. Each summer the cattle are led up the mountains to feed upon the new grasses which produces milk that is excellent for this style of cheese. The milk is carted down from the mountains to the *fruitiers*, the local co-operatives managed by groups of villages in the region. The curds are cooked in large copper vats – a process that results in the sweet, piquant, fruity flavours that develop with age. It takes 530 litres of milk (the equivalent of the daily production of 30 cows) to make each one of these enormous wheels of cheese. These large, hard crusted cheeses traditionally provided a safe means of storing surplus production for sustenance throughout the winter.

The AOC regulations for the production and the maturation of Comté and which differentiate this cheese from its close cousin made across the Alps in Switzerland, are strict and are based on traditional methods, the type of cow and even extend to the feeding of the cows. Correct maturation of this cheese is vital – cool temperatures of around 10°C with a relative humidity of up to 90%. Quality is strictly controlled and each cheese is labelled with the maker's name and date of manufacture. Each year 5% of cheeses fail AOC tests.

At RHCL we choose only summer and spring cheeses, or high alpage cheeses, when the white-faced Montpeliard cows of the region produce the year's best milk after feeding on the lush spring pastures covered in wildflowers and rich herbage. We think 18-24 months maturation is needed for a cheese of this size to develop its full flavour potential.

A mature Comté is something truly special. It has the aroma of freshly cut grass, the farmyard, and sweet milk. The rind is brown and thick and the curd, yellow if made in the summer and whiter if it is a winter cheese, will often have several tiny holes. The texture is firm and supple, slightly pliable and may have the occasional crunch of an amino acid crystal. The palate on this cheese is mellow, long and utterly delicious with a characteristic nuttiness and a sweet aftertaste. It has a flavour that is both fruity and floral with balanced salt and a long savoury finish. Enjoy Comté with a glass of sauvignon blanc and the crisp bite of a Granny Smith apple.

french raclette

cow's milk, semi-hard

Savoie, France

The Raclette cheese we have for this Cheese Club Offer is from the Savoie region of France and is made by the Perrin family of *affineurs*. It is an artisanal cheese produced in eight kilogram wheels which we have been maturing here at Richmond Hill for several months.

As an eating cheese it has a smooth, firm texture and is mild, creamy and slightly sweet in flavour. The characteristic flavours and aromas of the cheese

are enhanced by heat. When melted it is full-flavoured with a big meaty aroma, and it is as a melting cheese that Raclette is best known. In fact, its name derives from *racler*, meaning to scrape, describing the traditional way it was prepared and eaten in the mountains.

In traditional preparation of the raclette dish, the brown rind was cut away and the face of the inner pate placed in front of an open fire. As the surface crinkled the warm cheese was scraped off and served with boiled potatoes. It is also served with pickles, fresh vegetables and sliced meats.

roche baron

cow's milk , blue mould

Auvergne, France

Our final 'mountain' cheese for this Cheese Club Offer, the very moreish blue, Roche Baron, is from the Auvergne region of France. The Auvergne has a long history of producing some of France's most acclaimed cheeses, Roquefort, St Nectaire, and Laguiole to name but a few. *Terroir*, the relationship that exists between the seasons, earth and milk-giving beasts, plays a very important role in the consistent high quality of cheeses from this region and Roche Baron is no exception. Taking its name from castle ruins left by crusaders during the 11th Century, the texture and flavour of Roche Baron can be partially attributed to the mineral rich, high altitude volcanic pastures on which the animals graze.

Roche Baron is a mild and creamy blue that is produced in very small quantities by an artisanal dairy in the centre of the Auvergne. After two weeks maturation, thin discs of curd have *penicillium roqueforti* introduced before being smothered in charcoal. This is quite a traditional method of protecting the curds and provides a base for a light layer of white moulds, *penicillium candidum*, to develop. A further 4-5 weeks of maturation produces a luscious soft texture, with small spots of blue mould dotted throughout the pate. The cheese does not exhibit the normal veining associated with blue cheese, due to the absence of the copper spiking process which allows the air into the cheese required for the growth and spread of the blue mould.

Roche Baron is appreciated both by new blue eaters and those with seasoned palates alike. It has a wonderful sweet earthy smell and a deliciously oozing texture. Rich and creamy with a hint of spice, treat yourself and enjoy the subtle blue flavours.

cheese essentials...

cheese knife

A cheese knife for every type of cheese – soft, hard, parmesan and a cheese wire. Available at half price only for Cheese Club members.

RHCL cheese cloth

Made specially for us to keep your cheese at its best, our Cheese Cloth is designed to provide continued moisture and protection for your cheese. When damp, hemp is an ideal fibre for retaining moisture and provides a micro-climate for your cheese to help keep it in peak condition.

microplane grater

The original and still the best! The perfect cheese grater – you will never need to buy another. Available in four sizes – medium ribbon, fine grater, coarse grater and small shaver.

The Cheese Club Recipe

Stephanie's gruyère tart

from Stephanie Alexander's *The Cook's Companion*

Ingredients:

Pastry

180g unsalted butter
240g plain flour
pinch of salt
3 tablespoons water

Filling

250g gruyère cheese
1 cup cream
salt
freshly ground black pepper
freshly ground nutmeg
2 eggs
1 egg yolk

Method:

Make the pastry. Remove butter from refrigerator 30 minutes before making pastry. Sieve flour and salt onto a marble pastry slab or workbench. Chop butter into smallish pieces and toss lightly in flour. Lightly rub to combine partly. Make a well in centre and pour in water. Using a pastry scraper (and being mindful of the technique you have observed of mixing cement), work paste to a very rough heap of buttery lumps of dough. Using the heel of your hand, quickly smear pastry away from you across the workbench. It will combine lightly. Gather together, then press quickly into a flat cake and dust with a little flour. Wrap pastry in plastic film and refrigerate for 20-30 minutes. When required, roll out pastry, dusting generously with flour as necessary.

Wrap it around the rolling pin and unroll it over a 22cm loose-bottomed flan tin. Press it into the edges of the tin well and cut the edges 1 cm above the edge of the tin. Chill or freeze the pastry case for at least twenty minutes before baking. (It can be baked when frozen.) Line the pastry with foil and fill with dried beans or chickpeas or pastry weights. Bake at 200°C for 15 minutes, then remove foil and weights and bake for another 5 minutes. Allow to cool.

Scatter cheese over pastry case. Warm cream and season it with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Mix eggs and egg yolk into cream and pour gently into pastry case. Bake at 200°C for 20 minutes. Allow to cool for a few minutes before cutting.

Available from the RHCL Larder:

Gruyère cheese (Comté & Swiss Gruyère are on the Cheese Club Offer. Heidi Gruyère is also available from our Cheeseroom)

Brisee (or shortcrust) Pastry

RHCL pepper mix

Murray River salt

things to enjoy with your cheeses in winter....

bread...

oatcakes

A larder essential and a favourite with many of you, we felt it was time to highlight these wonderfully buttery oatcakes, made to a recipe of Stephanie Alexanders. An ideal accompaniment to hard and blue cheeses.

wine...

2003 Heggies Vineyard Riesling

Eden Valley, South Australia

This dry and elegant wine is from the Eden Valley, well-known for producing some of Australia's finest rieslings. Crisp and fresh, this full-flavoured wine can be enjoyed with any of our gruyère and raclette cheeses.

2003 Ten Minutes by Tractor Sauvignon Blanc

Mornington Peninsula, Vic

The three vineyards in question are situated 'ten minutes by tractor' from each other at Main Ridge, the highest point of the Mornington Peninsula. A long, slow ripening season has resulted in a complex and elegant wine with good balance and an intense length of flavour. Enjoy with the Comté or Swiss Gruyère – also the perfect wine to enjoy with your fondue.

2002 Kingloch Pinot Meunier.

Central High Country, Victoria

Another cool climate wine, this time from central Victoria. From a small, family owned vineyard, the Pinot Meunier has been matured in old oak barriques. Full of ripe berry and spice flavours. Enjoy this high country wine with any of our 'mountain' cheeses.

2002 Chapel Hill 'il Vescovo' Sangiovese Cabernet

McLaren Vale, S.A.

Named after the Bishop who enjoyed the odd glass of Sangiovese, this Italian style wine is dry and savoury with rich raisiny fruit flavours and a long, soft finish.

good things...

french cornichons

The tartness of the cornichons complements the sweet flavours of the gruyère and raclette cheeses on offer for this Cheese Club. Perfect with a fondue to cut through the richness of the cheese.

walnuts

The first of the new season's walnuts. The kernels are sweet without any of the bitterness that develops when the nuts are old and stale. Toss through a salad, or serve with a nutcracker in their shells as part of your cheese platter. To keep them fresh, store in the freezer until you are ready to use them.

The Cheese Club Cheese Class

4. Blue Cheese

Blue cheese has been made since Roman times, probably the result of accidental contamination by mould spores. Today, the blue mould is usually introduced into the milk during production. This is done in the form of dormant mould spores.

After salting the cheese is usually punctured with needles to allow oxygen to enter the cheese. These reactivate the blue mould cultures added to the milk. The mould then grows in these needle 'tracks' and in the tiny air pockets between the curds. The oxygen activates the mould spores, which start to grow and ripen the cheese, in the same way that white mould breaks down the cheese. Soft blue cheeses are therefore difficult to make because as the curd softens it closes the air pockets and suffocates the blue mould.

Unlike other cheeses, blue cheese ripens internally from the centre to the outside. The right conditions are paramount – there must be the right amount of moisture and humidity, and balance of salt and acidity. A well-made cheese should have veins that spread out from the centre towards the rind. For this reason and unlike other traditional cheeses, many blue moulds are cut in half by the cheesemaker to ensure the cheese has matured evenly.

Blue cheeses have three different rind types:

Natural rind: A naturally crusted rind allows the cheese to breathe and the moisture evaporate. This results in a creamy buttery texture, and a sweetness along with the distinctive blue mould flavour.

Scraped rind: These are often industrial cheeses covered in wax or tight foil. The lack of rind allows greater control over the shelf life. The texture is often crumbly, with a quite sharp and salty, slightly fruity flavour.

White rind Blue mould: The mildest type of blue cheese. The inner blue mould develops quickly. Once the external mould has grown, oxygen is limited which halts the blue mould growth. Milder in flavour (such as Roche Baron) they are often enhanced with cream.

Wines to try with blue cheeses

Tokay, Muscat, Port, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris, Aromatic fruity whites, Mature/aged dry reds

Breads to try with blue cheeses

Sourdough, Rye, Walnut

Good Things to try with blue cheese

Walnuts, Quince Jam, Seville Marmalade Paste, Burnt Fig Jam, Fresh Figs

