



Notes from... *the Cheese Chicks*

A *Talula's Table* initiative to educate and share our passion for the diverse, dynamic, and ever-enthralling world of Cheese.

WINTER IS HERE!

Finally, Winter is upon us here in Kennett Square and for the Cheese Chicks that means a few things: The market is all decked out for the Holidays in true "Talula's" fashion. Temperatures are dropping, snowflakes are falling (occasionally, at least), the sun is setting even earlier, and our palates are changing. We are craving the warm, toasty, earthy, full flavors of the season. We're dreaming about warm crocks of

soup and bubbly, molten pockets of gooey cheese on top of all of our favorite gratins. And so, in honor of the flavors of Winter, we are going to shed some light on some of our more full-flavored, "stinky" cheeses, highlight our favorite melting cheeses, and give you lots of other tasty tidbits that will get your palates ready for the season!

"WHAT'S THAT SMELL?!" The Scoop on Washed-Rind Cheeses

With washed-rind cheeses, the age-old adage "don't judge a book by its cover" rings more true than ever. Behind the pungent, full-force aroma of this often misunderstood family of cheeses lies beautiful textures and addictive, complex flavors. Don't be turned off by the smell: that is precisely what makes washed-rind cheeses so amazing!

So you might be wondering how washed-rind cheeses are made....

After the cheese is formed and the curds are pressed and set into a mold, the cheese is periodically (depending on the type) washed in a solution of brine which helps to foster the growth of *brevibacterium linens*, a very special bacteria. For some washed-rind cheeses, alcohol is added to this solution, called *murge*, which imparts a very distinct flavor. The most famous examples of this special class of washed-

rind cheeses, which we routinely carry in our shop, are the French Epoisses (washed in Marc), Chimay (washed in Chimay Beer), and Clisson (washed in Muscadet and Sauternes).

As the *brevibacterium linens* (called *b-linens*, for short) begin to develop on the outside of the cheese, it develops a distinctive orange flavor, a pronounced aroma, and a truly beautiful texture. Much like soft-ripened cheeses (think brie and camembert) *b-linens* help a cheese to ripen from the outside in, so when it is perfectly ripened you can end up with a decadent, beefy, gooey little cheese.

So, our advice is to get past the stink, trim off the rind (or not, if you are feeling particularly brave), and dig in to this beautiful class of cheese!



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Inside this issue:

<i>Winter is Here!</i>	1
<i>The Scoop on Washed-Rind Cheeses</i>	1
<i>The World of Honey</i>	1
<i>Melting Cheeses</i>	2
<i>Winter Blues</i>	2
<i>Spotlight on Beehive Creamery</i>	2
<i>Holiday Cheeseboards</i>	2

The World of Honey

In many ways, honey has much of the same allure that cheese and wine do. It is subject to an infinite number of variations. It is radically different, depending on what the bees are eating, where they are buzzing around, and the time of year when the honey is harvested. In the Market, we stock a beautiful array of honeys for you to try. Not only do they pair beautifully with your favorite cheeses (especially with fresh chèvres and bold blues), but they also reflect the *terroir* from which they came!

STAFF PICKS...CHEESES FOR MELTING

This is the season to experience the versatility of cheese and cook with it! We have stocked our cheese case with a variety of cheeses that are perfect for melting. Here are our favorites:

Le Marechal: Get past the smell of this hearty Swiss mountain cheese and you will fall in love just like we did! As they age, wheels of Le Marechal are brushed with a mixture of hard cider, black pepper, and herbs, which helps develop complex earthiness. Heavy undertones of garlic and onion make this a perfect choice for bubbling crocks of French Onion Soup!

Abbott's Gold: It takes a lot to sell us on "flavored" cheddars, but this one is just impossible to resist. A beautiful, creamy Cheddar from Hawes Creamery in England, loaded with pockets of caramelized onions, this cheese will take your average burgers (which are amaz-

ing with our house-smoked bacon!) to the next level.

Roth Käse "Grand Cru" Gruyère: This cheese is a testament to the beauty of doing things "the old fashioned way." In order to get permission to use authentic copper vats at their Wisconsin plant (which have been used in Switzerland for years in cheesemaking), they flew USDA inspectors to their homeland to convince them the superiority of the technique. They won the debate and have been making amazing cheese ever since. Their Gruyère ranks right up there with any of its Swiss or French counterparts: it's earthy and ever so slightly spicy, with pleasant little pockets of protein crystallization (think of the "crunch" you get in a good aged Gouda), and a residual sweetness.



A CASE OF THE WINTER BLUES

From the day the market opened, we have made our passion for blue cheeses known. Blue cheeses really prove the infinite amount of flavor and texture possibilities in the cheese-making process. As the temperatures continue to drop, why not warm up by kicking back at home on a chilly winter night with a nice glass of wine and a piece of one of our cherished blues?

Bleu des Causses: This blue comes from "Les Causses," a region in south-central France known for its limestone caves. Think of it as a cow's milk version of the legendary Roquefort, which is made nearby. It is densely creamy and bold, with a pleasant level of salt. Perfect with your favorite desert wine or as a welcome

addition to your next béchamel.

Rogue River Blue: It felt like Christmas morning all over again when the wheels of this amazing blue arrived in the market! Everything coming from Rogue Creamery in Central Point, Oregon is amazing, but this cheese truly stands out. It is rare, hard-to-get, and very seasonal. But it is worth the wait and worth every penny. Peppery and sweet, this cheese literally just melts in your mouth. As if it couldn't get any better, it is soaked in a local pear brandy and wrapped in fresh grape leaves from a nearby vineyard. Get a piece while it lasts!



Looking Forward:

HOLIDAY CHEESE BOARDS

If you need an amazing centerpiece for your Holiday Table, we can help! We make beautiful, custom cheese boards of any size that will impress your guests and, more importantly, keep them well fed! Stop in to the market or call us to order your cheeseboard, which will come complete with an assortment of crackers, dried fruits, nuts, and other perfectly paired accoutrements (and some of our homemade salamis too, if you wish). We can also prepare it on a serving platter from your own personal collection.

As you know, we always love hearing your cheese tales, feedback, questions and comments. Our new e-mail for the cheese counter is: talulascheese@gmail.com

Highlighting American Artisan Cheese:

Beehive Creamery

After a weekend full of tasting cheddars at the 2007 Seattle Cheese Festival, this cheese chick was not jazzed about tasting yet another cheddar. But, Beehive Cheese's **Barely Buzzed**, a sharp, creamy, complex cheese rubbed in espresso and lavender, really stood out! Ever since, we have been working with the talented team of brother-in-laws, Tim Welsh and Pat Ford, to keep their line of cheeses stocked in the market. Hailing from Utah, these guys use the finest single-herd Jersey Cow milk and know how to work with it. Stop by to taste their line of amazing cheddars, including a brand-new one called **Seahive**, rubbed in local honey and sea salt. Yum!



A labor of love: cutting the curds at Beehive Cheese

Want to stay in the know about what's happening in the world of American Artisan Cheese?

Here are some ways how:

- Sign up for a newsletter from some of our favorite dairies: Rogue Creamery (roguecreamery.com), Coach Farm (www.coachfarm.com), and Beecher's (www.beechershandmadecheese.com) are worth checking out.
- Check out the American Cheese Society's website, newsletter, industry tidbits, and results from the annual ACS Competition at their website: <http://www.cheesesociety.org>
- Surf around our friend Anne Saxelby's (fellow cheese-lover, advocate of American Artisan Cheese, and cheesemonger extraordinaire) website and blog at www.saxelbycheese.com