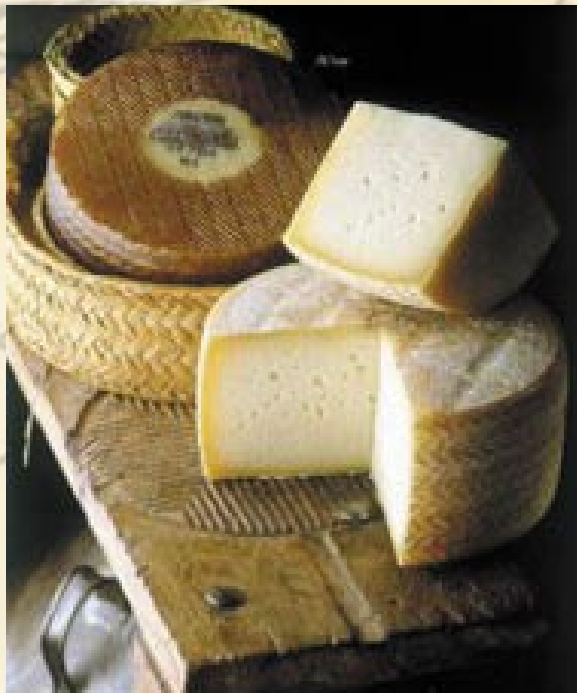


CO-OP CHEESE

Monthly Newsletter

February 2009



It's February, and it's really cold, so for this month's newsletter, the Co-op invites you to the beautiful, and warm, country of Spain! Even if you can't travel to Spain, we have a great selection of Spanish cheeses that will help you enjoy the tastes and atmosphere of Spain in your very own home. In this month's newsletter, you will learn about Spanish cheeses and culture, add a new recipe to your repertoire and be introduced to our cheese of the month.



Introducing...Spanish Cheese!

Have you ever thought of traveling to Spain? Perhaps you are attracted to the celebrated Flamenco music and dance, the beautiful beaches or the notorious bull fights. On the other hand, maybe you have no interest in traveling such a distance. In actuality, Spain has impressed upon Americans a great deal of their culture which many of us already enjoy in the comfort of our own surroundings. From the famous artwork of Pablo Picasso to the invention of the guitar, Spain has a lot to offer.

Spanish food and wine is something we have all undoubtedly experienced at some point. Foremost, every Spaniard has their choice *tasca*, where they go to eat, drink, and mingle with others for business or pleasure. Tascas are known as the *tapas* bars. Now, you may wonder what *tapas* are? It is not one particular food, drink or place; *tapas* can be any type of food as long as it is served with a drink. However, one of the most “Spanish” of all food is *jamon serrano*, which is a dry-cured country ham treasured by all Spaniards. Although it is similar to Italian prosciutto, it is much firmer in texture and has a deep flavor. So, what pairs well with *jamon serrano*? Cheese is the perfect compliment to this delicious ham. Since we are discussing Spain, why not delve deeper into cheeses that originate from this country?

Spain has about 100 types of cheese, all created in different regions of the country. Just as any other cheese is developed throughout the world, the final product of Spanish cheese also depends on climate, location, milk type and method. Therefore, the cheese of Spain comes in all varieties; aged or fresh, soft or hard, and from cow, sheep or goat milk. Cheese made of goat’s milk is usually made along the regions of the Mediterranean coast while cheese made of cow’s milk is found north along the Cantabric coast. Last, sheep’s milk cheese is usually produced inland from the North. Regardless of the region in which it was created, all Spanish cheese is delicious and worth learning about. These cheeses not only compliment *jamon serrano* well, they also go with Spanish nuts and Spanish sides such as wild lavender honey.

After gaining some brief knowledge on Spanish culture and cheese, you may not immediately start planning a trip to the wonderful country. That does not mean you can’t create your own little *tasca*. Plan something with friends and family where you can enjoy the rich flavors of *jamon serrano*, Spanish cheese, rich wine and endless conversation. How about some Flamenco music and dance as well? There is no need to travel half way across the world in order to capture the culture of Spain; you can capture it right here.



CHEESE OF THE MONTH

Manchego



Manchego is the most famous of the Spanish cheeses, therefore it is widely available. The cheese was originally made from only the milk of Manchego sheep. There are two types of Manchego cheese, the one made from pasteurized milk and the other made from unpasteurized milk; they are both available and delicious. Still, the real cheese is made from the milk of Manchega sheep, which are raised in the region of Castillo La Mancha, just south of Madrid, Spain. The production of Manchego is controlled by Denominación de Origen. This guarantees that only the milk of Manchega sheep is used.

The flavor of Manchego is unique; it is rich and leaves you with the likable aftertaste of sheep's milk. In appearance, it is covered with a golden colored, zigzag patterned rind and the inside is white. Its texture is slightly grainy with a few air pockets.

Manchego pairs well with Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Merlot. It is complimented by the wild lavender honey from Spain. When serving Manchego, it is very simple. You may remove the rind and cut the cheese into strips. Serve it with jamon serrano, olives, wild lavender honey and your wine of choice.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Featuring Manchego

Catalan Tomato Bread with Manchego cheese

- 1 French baguette, cut into 1/2 " slices
- 34 slices (about 1/4 pound) Manchego cheese, made with a cheese slicer
- 10 cherry tomatoes (about 1/2 pound), sliced horizontally into thin slices
- 3/4 cup coarsely grated Manchego
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 30 small basil springs for garnish

Toast bread slices under a preheated broiler about 4 inches from the heat turning them once, until they are golden. Top each piece with a slice of Manchego and two or three tomato slices. Drizzle with olive oil, season with salt and pepper to taste, and sprinkle with a generous teaspoon grated cheese. Broil the rounds under the preheated broiler about 4 inches from the heat for 2 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly. Garnish with basil springs.

Serves 8 -10

Recipe compliments of www.cheesefromspain.com

Resources: www.gourmetfoodstore.com ; http://www.spanish-hams.co.uk/cheeses_types.htm ; <http://www.proper-spanish-tapas.com/manchego.html> ; *Gourmetsleuth-wine and cheese pairing;*



Cheese Fun Facts.....

CHEESE HOLES: The most recognizable characteristic of Swiss cheese is its holes which punctuate the pale yellow exterior. These holes, also called “eyes,” are caused by the expansion of gas within the cheese curd during the ripening period.

MOLD: Mold may develop on the surface of cheese. Although most molds are harmless, to be safe, cut away 1/2 inch of cheese on all sides of the visible mold. Use remaining cheese as quickly as possible.

Did you know that what appears to be the remains of cheese has been found in Egyptian tombs over 4,000 years old!

Cheese takes up about 1/10 the volume of the milk it was made from.

The terms “Big Wheel” and “Big Cheese” originally referred to those who were wealthy enough to purchase a whole wheel of cheese.

Almost 90% of all cheese sold in the United States is classified as a Cheddar type cheese.

Americans are eating more cheese than ever. In 2003, Americans consumed 8.8 billion pounds of natural cheese. On a per capita basis, the average American ate 30.6 pounds of natural cheese in 2003. That’s four pounds more per person than in 1994 and 19.5 pounds more than in 1970.

Cheddar, Cheshire and Leicester cheeses have been colored with annatto seed for over 200 years. Carrot juice and marigold petals have also been used to color cheeses. Coloring may have originally been added to cheese made with winter milk from cows eating hay to match the orange hue (from vitamin A) of cheeses made with milk from cows fed on green plants.

A giant wheel of Cheddar cheese was given to Queen Victoria (1837-1901) for a wedding gift. It weighed over 1,000 pounds. A normal Cheddar wheel weighs 60-75 pounds.

Americans purchased \$40 billion worth of cheese last year. The market value of all cheese consumed in the U.S. was nearly \$40 billion in 2003. In addition to supermarket sales, this includes cheese sold through restaurants and fast food outlets, as well as the cheese sold as ingredients in frozen and packaged foods.

