

CO-OP CHEESE

Monthly Newsletter

January 2009



The New Year has finally arrived and there is no better time to expand your knowledge of cheese and try new selections available at the Swarthmore Co-op. There are so many cheese options available. Even more, the ways to enjoy cheese are endless. In this month's issue, try our cheese of the month, learn about the aging process of cheese and discover how to create and serve your own cheese platter and so much more!



“Age is not important unless you are cheese.”

Aging a cheese means that you are allowing a natural transformation to take place. Importantly, one who ages a cheese needs extensive knowledge and care when planning the process. Constant surveillance and an adapted environment are necessary because the cheese is influenced by temperature, moisture and ventilation.

What exactly is aged cheese? You may not consider yourself an “affineur” or one who cares for the aging of cheese, however, most have probably experienced the more pronounced and full flavor of an aged cheese. The aging process is one of the most important steps in cheese making. Even though the process may be almost lacking, as in the case of fresh cheese, the majority of cheeses endure various lengths of aging

The time period of aging a cheese ranges from two weeks to two years or more. Essentially, the longer a cheese ages, the sharper and firmer it becomes. For instance, Parmigiano Reggiano is aged 24 to 36 months, while cheese such as Ricotta is consumed fresh.

During the aging process, cheese is stored in cave or cellar environments. For a firm cheese, a warm environment is necessary to bring out the moisture. On the other hand, a cooler temperature is needed for a soft cheese. In general, the temperature when aging cheese ranges from 10 - 15 degrees Celsius and moisture is common.

There are two techniques used to produce the delicious cheeses we enjoy; interior ripening and surface ripening. First, with interior, the ripening begins on the inside of the cheese and moved out and examples include swiss and cheddar. Interior ripened blue cheeses are introduced to additional bacteria, such as Penicillin, during the aging process. This creates blue/green veins, crumbly texture and sharp flavor.

Conversely, surface ripening begins on the outside, then evolves inside the cheese. They are often rubbed with microorganisms to promote the growth of a rind which is evident in brie and camembert. This brine is often seasoned creating different flavors and odors within the cheese



CHEESE OF THE MONTH

Locatelli



Pecorino Romano is one of the world's oldest recorded cheeses. Probably one of the most famous brands in the United States is Locatelli. The cheese is aged for a minimum of nine months. If you are looking to purchase Locatelli, it is pale yellow in color with a black rind that reads "Locatelli". The cheese can be classified as hard and dense. The flavor is sharp and strong. Generally, Locatelli cheese is grated over pasta or any other food desired. The strong, sharp salty taste accentuates any meal. If you're looking to pair Locatelli with a favorable wine, a Red Bordeaux works best. However, many red wines such as Barbera, Chianti, Valpolicella, Vino Nobile and Montepulciano work well. Although Chardonnay can be paired with Locatelli, it is recommended to enjoy this cheese with richer and expressive styles of wine.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Featuring Locatelli

Artichoke Casserole

4 pkgs. frozen artichokes
1 c grated Locatelli cheese
1 c grated Italian bread
2 tbsp parsley
2 cloves garlic (chopped)
1 c olive oil (more or less)
salt and pepper
1 c water

Put artichokes in salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain artichokes. Cover bottom of a 9 inch Pyrex dish with olive oil and a layer of artichokes, salt and pepper, then add bread crumbs, grated cheese, parsley, chopped garlic. Sprinkle olive oil and a little water. Repeat in the same order for a second layer. Cover and bake at 350 degrees over for 1 hour.



How to build your own cheese platter....

What to buy:

If serving your platter as an appetizer, provide 3 ounces of cheese per person. If your platter is for a main course, provide 6 ounces of cheese per person. Ensure that your platter includes a variety of cheese. Different textures, flavors and milks allow for an array of choices for your guests.

How to serve it:

Arrange your cheese on a platter from mildest to strongest.
For the fullest enjoyment of flavor, serve at room temperature.

What to pair it with:

Serve with plain bread or crackers. Flavored crackers will interfere with the flavor of the cheese. Fruit is the perfect compliment when serving cheese. Try fresh pears, figs and berries. Also, jams and chutneys pair well with cheese. Riesling goes well with most cheeses. However, it is best to discover which beverage goes best with the cheese you plan to serve. Nothing is better than a classic wine at bringing out the full flavor of the delicious cheeses you plan on serving to your guests.

How to store it:

Afterward, it is best to store your cheese in parchment paper or waxed paper. It will stay fresh and you will avoid the smell and taste of plastic wrap.

