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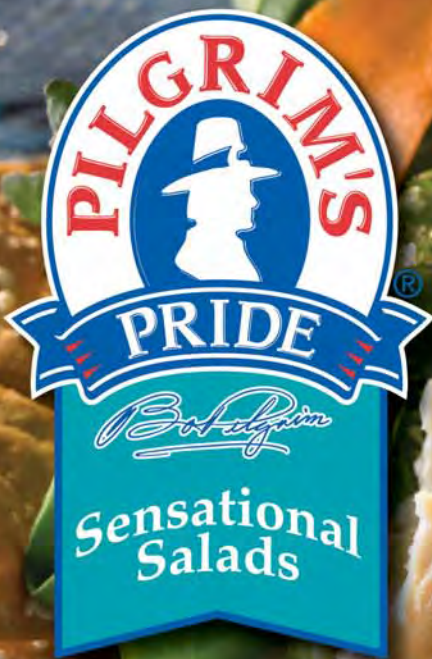
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DELI BUSINESS QUIZ



KEVIN MICHAELS
Purchasing Agent
Ohio Farmers Inc.
Cleveland, OH

Kevin Michaels has been a purchasing agent at Ohio Farmers Inc., a 54-year-old foodservice distributor owned by the Gelb family, for the past five years.

About 90 percent of the operation's business is with restaurants — both local and chains — and the remaining approximately 10 percent is with the foodservice end of supermarkets — kitchens, catering, etc. Kevin buys proteins, dairy and bakery.

Prior to joining Ohio Farmers, he spent 20 years with Stop & Shop (now Giant Eagle) in Cleveland.

He has been reading DELI BUSINESS since its inception because, "I love it. I even have a file where I keep the issues because I refer to them a lot. I always learn new things when I read it."

As the winner of the DEL BUSINESS quiz, Kevin wins an iPod Nano.

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To win the DELI BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page and send your answers, along with a business card or company letterhead, to the address listed below. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of the April/May 2007 issue of DELI BUSINESS. **The winner must agree to submit a photo to be published in that issue.**

Quiz Questions

- 1) What is the street address for Epicure Foods Corp? _____
- 2) Whose Brie was the first to arrive in the United States in 1936? _____
- 3) What is the web address for Grana Padano? _____
- 4) What is the toll-free number for DeLallo? _____
- 5) What is the reader service number for Stella? _____
- 6) What is the phone number for MDS Foods? _____

This issue was: ☐ Personally addressed to me ☐ Addressed to someone else

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Reaching The People



By
Jim Prevor
Editor-in-Chief of
DELI BUSINESS

Make sure you catch Paula Deen's guest column on page 57. Paula, of course, is the Food Network TV star, founder of The Lady & Sons and other restaurants, author, magazine personality, endorser of cooking products.

Her closest collaboration is with Smithfield to encourage families to eat their meals together.

Perhaps, the most important thing the deli industry can learn from Paula is not based on anything

she is or has done — but on what she is not and has not done. Paula is a good cook, but she never went to culinary school and is not a chef.

There has been a shift in how the food culture intersects with popular culture. For a while, the Food Network was making celebrities of chefs, such as Wolfgang Puck and Emeril Legasse. This still happens, but there is a shift to more approachable meals made by people more like Paula.

The most popular star ever to come out of the Food Network is Rachel Ray, who cut her eyeteeth working at Macy's, first at the candy counter, then as manager of fresh foods. She became a star not by showcasing elaborate cooking techniques but by championing *30-Minute Meals* — right before your eyes she would actually make a fresh, healthful, delicious dinner for a family in just 30 minutes.

The popularity of the concept is emblematic of a feasible and desirable focus for deli operations. It is easy to be a fan of Whole Foods and HEB's Central Market. You just have to look at the *Specialty Cheese Guide*, starting on page 15, to realize how exciting the culinary world can be. Yet, Paula expresses the way a lot of Americans feel when she writes:

"Nothing is better than a good ham-and-cheese sandwich. In fact, some folks don't even need the bread. Lots of times when I'm home, I'll take a slice of ham and Swiss cheese, roll them up, dip it in mustard and that's a meal for me. But it has to be really good ham and cheese."

Fair enough and, for deli operators, it's a reminder that to improve the meal experience of consumers, and get more business, there are a lot of things that can be done short of building a world-class food emporium.

Start with, as Paula mentions, selling good stuff. One very large retailer was bemoaning to me that a big brand wouldn't sell him for competitive reasons. He was crying because he couldn't banner this one brand over his delis. He didn't realize it but, actually, he had been done a great favor — if he will seize the opportunity.

No one brand is best at every price point for every product. Not being able to yoke his operation to that one brand, he was free to select superior products at various price levels.

This is a continuous process we all should do. Another retailer mentioned his rotisserie chicken sales were down and theorized about people looking for healthful food and

wanting breasts cooked without skin. It is a theory, but he had forgotten his rotisserie program was exactly the same as the one he ran 10 years ago. Chicken only, one flavor only, even the container had the same decade-old graphic.

Maybe his chicken was tops in his market 10 years ago — maybe it isn't today. Maybe tastes have changed, and people want "lemon-pepper" rotisserie instead of what he decided on so long ago. He needs to do tastings, competitive studies and look at the whole offer anew.

Selecting the best products is key, but it is just a start. Too many delis are run like a secret society. There is a massive display case of all kinds of meats and cheeses in the service deli — and scarcely any signage or explanation why one might be better or different than another.

If you don't know the difference between Jarlsberg and Swiss, nothing will tell you. If you don't know the difference between Genoa salami and kosher salami, there is no way to find out. Much less, is anyone actually trying to sell any of these fine products? They just sit there for those who know them to buy them.

We can urge better training of personnel — at the very least, every counter person should have tasted every product. But the nature of mass-market retailing, with rapid turnover and thus inexperienced employees, means we are not going back to the day of the old "appetizing specialist" who knew how to slice nova, de-bone herring and explain the difference between pastrami and corned beef.

Sitting around and bemoaning the shortcomings of our staff won't get the job done. We have to look for new tools.

We have to start with information. Every deli operation should have a website with a page about each product. Nutritional information, flavor profiles, usage information, storage information, etc.

Then, most important, there needs to be a little section on why you, the retailer, selected this product and this brand to offer your customers.

Once we've got the information, we have to make it accessible at the point of purchase. With today's inexpensive wireless networks, that shouldn't be that hard to do.

The real win is going beyond making information available to using information as a selling tool. Every deli should have a meat, cheese, salad and specialty product of the week. These have to be chosen not because a manufacturer funded a sale, but because the retailer is proud of the product and wants to introduce it to his customers.

Manufacturers have to help with samples and literature. It is, after all, their products that are being pushed. But, at core, this is about the relationship between the store and its customer and about increasing customer satisfaction by making sure the consumer knows how to buy the ham and the cheese that are "really good."

DB

To improve the meal experience of consumers, and get more business, there are a lot of things that can be done short of building a world-class food emporium.

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Is Produce Hazardous To Your Health? No, But The Processing Might Be



By
Lee Smith
Publisher of
DELI BUSINESS

This was the year produce turned into a hazardous food. The country saw people dying from fresh spinach and getting sick from carrot juice or eating at Taco Bell. Recently, U.S. watercress distributed in Ireland was recalled for *Salmonella*.

It sure seems easy to blame the farmers. It is even easier to use this as an excuse to stop using fresh produce in recipes. But, is it right?

No. Before the country jumps to conclusions about the safety of fresh produce, we all need to remember it is a raw product that grows in the ground. Fresh fruit and vegetables come into contact with dirt throughout their growing period. In the fields, birds fly overhead, rodents live, deer roam and occasionally farmhands need to relieve themselves. I have friends who are farmers and when they go out into the fields with harvesting equipment, they always bring a roll of toilet paper because it just isn't practical to drive back to the farmhouse every time you need to "go." Then there is the dirt. Dirt is dirty.

Food retailers and consumers need to remember produce is dirty. In foodservice, it is very important, because the foods prepared may not be immediately consumed. Just as employees are trained not to prepare chickens for the rotisserie on the same table as they prepare party platters, employees should be trained not to open a bag of potatoes and then slice tomatoes without sanitizing the table between uses.

At this point, readers are probably agreeing — with a big "but" at the end of the sentence. The "but" is that a lot of produce is bought ready-to-eat and/or pre-washed and assumed to be free of bacteria and safe to consume.

The produce industry is in transition from choppers to fresh food processors and manufacturers. To blame growers for the problem the industry is facing is ludicrous. It would be the same as if the chicken farmer were blamed for an outbreak of salmonella from chicken. Yes, we can reduce the pathogens in raw foods, but we can't eliminate them. Yes, every precaution should be taken to reduce risk at the grower level. The new vaccine for *E. coli* in cattle is a good example.

But, when talking about processed foods claiming the product is ready to eat, the task of assuring a safe food supply rests, first and foremost, in the hands of the manufacturer. Roast beef and turkey are not supposed to have pathogens ready and waiting to make consumers ill, and neither should packaged spinach or juice or lettuce.

While fresh food manufacturers have dealt with the food-

safety issues for a long time, produce processors still think of themselves as the fresh fruit and vegetable guys. We all know of instances when one package tested positive for a pathogen, and the manufacturer issued a complete recall only to find the problem could not be verified in the plant, the product or anyplace else in the food chain. Many manufacturers have made it through recalls by the skin of their teeth, and others have perished. However, not to do anything

is immoral. As one meat manufacturer told me, "I'd rather lose my business than be responsible for one death."

Yet, when we hear of a large produce recall, it is in the news for months with everyone looking to place blame — on the growers, cattle, compost, local deer popu-

lation, water. The problem rests solely on the processor who assured the public and foodservice buyers the produce didn't need to be washed and could be eaten as is. If the amount of time needed to test produce before delivery isn't enough to insure the product is safe, then the industry needs to develop new test methods before it is called ready-to-eat.

Is the problem easy to solve? No, mainly because attitudes have always made light of food-safety concerns regarding fresh produce. The produce industry, retailers and the public have always had a casual attitude about produce. The industry has almost expected that occasionally people will get sick from cantaloupes or tomatoes or scallions. We have just never seen it on this scale or this frequently.

It is in all probability true that people will get sick from produce because most people still don't believe in the seriousness of washing produce. But, at the same time, produce processors should not say their products are safe to eat and/or don't need to be washed unless they are willing and able to take the responsibility if they are not.

There is not a fresh food company that has not wrestled with the same concerns. That is why the fresh prepared food industry has been so hesitant to do away with preservatives. It is why the shelf life of salads is often weeks before they are expected to go bad.

This is a relatively new problem for produce, all the more apparent when a relatively small growing area supplies the majority of product. It has been said there were just as many foodborne illnesses attributed to fresh produce when produce was locally produced on small farms. That may be true, but no one ever said it was safe to consume without washing.

The responsibility for food safety still rests with the companies claiming their products are safe and ready-to-eat. **DB**

To blame growers for the problem the industry is facing is ludicrous.

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DELI WATCH

Transitions



Keith Lyon has been appointed president and COO of Soup Kitchen International, Inc. (SKI), New York, NY. He will be responsible for building the corporate infrastructure and ensuring the premium branded gourmet soups are available to consumers throughout North America. SKI makes the Zagat-rated soups of Al Yeganeh, who inspired the "Soup Episode" on *Seinfeld*. Visit www.originalsoupman.com



John Minahan was appointed president of Belleville, WI-based Federal Industries, a manufacturer of specialty display cases. Previously the director of sales and marketing, he has assumed responsibility for the management of operations and products worldwide. For more than 65 years, Federal Industries has created customized bakery cases, deli cases and candy cases. Visit www.federalind.com

Announcements



Top International Honors

Norseland, Inc., Stamford, CT, exclusive importer and distributor of Jarlsberg cheese, was awarded first prize in the Great Jarlsberg Challenge sponsored by parent company Tine, B.A., of Oslo, Norway. Judging took place at the October SIAL Fair, held biennially in France, where tallies showed Norseland's cumulative sales and imaginative strategies exceeded those of competitors in other Jarlsberg markets around the globe. Visit www.norseland.com

Reader Service No. 401



Actor Launches Food Company

Actor Paul Sorvino is launching a new specialty food company, Paul Sorvino Foods, Inc., located in Greenville, DE, to produce a variety of specialty retail-branded food products. The company will begin with two product lines — three varieties of bulk-packed seafood items and four varieties of retail-ready packages of Italian sausage. Visit www.paulsorvinofoods.com

Reader Service No. 402

New Products



New Special Reserve Swiss

Finlandia Cheese, Inc., Parsippany, NJ, announces the addition of Black Label, a 12-month aged Swiss Emmentaler, to its line-up of fine specialty and deli cheeses. Now available for the first time in the United States, the new specialty Swiss offers cheese lovers a uniquely robust "bite" with a wonderfully rich and balanced finish. Visit www.finlandiacheese.com.

Reader Service No. 403



Boska Tapas Fondue

Boska USA, Mount Kisco, NY, introduces the Tapas Fondue, designed to be served alongside a variety of small dishes for a tapas-style dinner party. The small sets use inexpensive tea lights that will not overheat and burn your cheese. Boska USA was created by Boska Holland and Best Cheese Corporation to improve service and distribution to American customers. Visit www.boskaholland.com

Reader Service No. 404



Mashed, Sweet & Twice Baked

Great American Appetizers, Nampa, ID, introduces a new line of frozen and refrigerated potatoes: Betty Crocker Mashed Homestyle, Sweet and Gourmet Twice Baked. All three potato varieties may be prepared in the oven or microwave. Great American Appetizers has been providing premium appetizers and potato products to the foodservice trade for more than 40 years. Visit www.appetizer.com/appetizer

Reader Service No. 405



Advanced Steam Technology

Henny Penny, Eaton, OH, introduces its next generation SmartCombi combi-ovens. SmartCombi incorporates several significant upgrades, including the integration of Advanced Steam Technology, which utilizes an integrated heat exchanger to create large amounts of steam as fast as traditional boiler technology. This enables SmartCombi users greater control of relative moisture and cooking climate. Visit www.hennypenny.com

Reader Service No. 406



New Flavors

PotatoFinger Snack Foods, Inc., Decatur, GA, introduces PotatoFinger Caramel Corn Puffs and adds three new PotatoFinger Potato Chip flavors — jalapeño, cracked pepper & salt, and cheddar & onion. These new products will be available in stores in February. PotatoFinger chips are made without any hydrogenated oils or trans fats, and each flavor recipe is also kosher. Visit www.potatofinger.com

Reader Service No. 407



Naturally Aged Cheddar

Kiel Cheese, LLC, Kiel, WI, introduces a nationally distributed product, Kiel Select Classic Wisconsin Cheddar cheese available in two varieties — sharp and extra sharp. It has a rich, complex flavor with a smooth and tightly knit texture. An ideal cheese to eat by itself or in a sandwich, Kiel Select Cheddar is available in 10- and 32-ounce chunks.

Reader Service No. 408



DELI WATCH is a regular feature of DELI BUSINESS. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: **Editor, DELI BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810217 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217 • Phone: 561-994-1118 • Fax: 561-994-1610 • E-mail: DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com**

TRENDS 2007

New Flavors, New Concerns

Power to control the marketplace is shifting from the retailer to the consumer.

BY LEE SMITH

Each year, DELI BUSINESS takes a look at the new trends, flavors and industry concerns that are going to dominate the upcoming year. Predictions are that 2007 will be a year of significant changes — changes in products, attitudes and management.

For years the industry has talked about the “year” of the consumer, but it looks as if 2007 will be the year the tables turn from talking about what consumers want to consumers having the ability not only to vote with their pocketbooks but also to make their thoughts known powerfully and without ambiguity.

Unlike many past years, when the changes revolved around products and product categories, 2007 is a year in which consumer attitudes are going to dominate and force retailers to rethink their strategies and communication

plans. Suffice it to say — if you are not looking to improve the way you communicate, the world will leave you behind.

NEW FLAVORS AND PRODUCT TRENDS

First, retailers need to look at the food they are selling. New flavors and food trends are often forgotten by retailers who are more concerned with competition and operational issues and who are dependent on suppliers offering them new products. However, the life span of new products is shortening and as competitors include restaurants and other foodservice outlets, it makes sense to know what flavors and products customers are looking for. It's all part of developing more of a foodservice mentality.

Each year McCormick & Company, located in Hunt Valley, MD, publishes a list of hot new flavors. For 2007, flavor combinations are going to be popular. The following is a list of McCormick's predicted favorites:

- Clove & Green apple
- Thyme & Tangerine
- Tellicherry Black Pepper & Cherry
- Sea Salt & Smoked Tea
- Crystallized Ginger & Pistachio
- Cumin & Apricot
- Toasted Mustard & Fennel Seeds
- Wasabi & Maple
- Caramelized Garlic & Riesling Vinegar

While the flavors listed may seem to be too exotic to apply to most chain-store deli departments, they point to flavors that are clean and bright, combinations of bold, savory spices and fruit, and salt and smoke.

Interestingly, interior designers are predicting similar "flavors" for 2007. Predictions include:

- Green designs that include more environmentally friendly fabrics and decorating materials.
- Bold uses of color, especially warm colors such as greens and apricot.
- Global, exotic styles that include influences from the entire world combined into easy living and natural motifs.
- Bringing nature indoors, including plants, natural lightings, floral designs and natural materials.
- Comfortable rooms that people want to live in as opposed to show off to

friends.

Effective display techniques should reflect consumers' attitudes — bold, clean, fresh and natural. Ethnic is no longer reserved for only those stores in ethnic areas. Depending on where stores are located, the flavors may be exotic and unusual, but in very conservative areas, the same profile can be achieved with more traditional ingredients.

Unlike past years, when criticism could be whitewashed and made to look like the complaints of a group of disgruntled employees, in 2007 industry analysts will have their opinions out in the open, transmitted to thousands of people who subscribe to a multitude of blogs. These people will influence retail and consumer decisions as well as government regulations and the media.

Groups of consumers can get together and easily find like-minded people who can quickly blast their message across the globe in very little time – and with significant results.

Organic and natural are still going to play a big role in new product development, as are more natural foods and regional and local products.

TRANSPARENCY

The Internet has changed the way stories are told. Introduce a new labor scheduling idea, the way Wal-Mart did, and within 24 hours it is critiqued on hundreds of websites and blogs.

And whatever you do, don't forget the individual consumer. Unlike in the past, an individual doesn't have to be well known to be well heard. Groups of consumers can get together and easily find like-minded people who can quickly blast their message across the globe in very little time — and with significant results.

Retailers and manufacturers need to think about getting brutally honest, helping their customers and forgetting about the spinning of



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tales. Point out what products have trans fat, be proactive in food safety, give customers information and choices, and you will be respected. Don't — and you may find a public relations nightmare along with your morning coffee when you walk into your office.

GLOBAL WARMING

The message that global warming is going to be a factor in everyone's life is getting through loud and clear. As the warnings about the future of planet earth become direr, people will become more aggressive in searching for planet-friendly solutions. Organic and free-range products, eco-friendly packaging, alternative fuel sources, regional foods and local products will continue to become more important. Consumers will be looking for companies that are taking care of the environment and avoiding those that don't.

NEW PACKAGING

Better graphics, value added, higher quality, but less actual food will become the packaging mantra. People are getting older, metabolisms are slowing down, the workplace has turned into desks and computer screens instead of factories and farms, and the population is stabilizing or declining. The country is not going to consume more food.

Regardless of how much actual food people can consume, companies must grow revenue, and if quantity isn't going to increase, then price must. But, the marketplace is too competitive for food prices to rise without value. The value will come in packaging and convenience. Of course, it also will come in better-quality foods that command a higher price, such as organics.

Europe is already facing an older and declining population; products on display at the 2006 SIAL Fair in Paris, France, were a reflection of the new marketing reality. New products included a plate of 10 small goat cheese balls, each with a different garnish, shrink-wrapped and ready to be sold. There were pre-cut and wrapped specialty cheeses — all packaged in ways to enhance the appeal of the cheese, add value — and price.

There were iced desserts with several layers packaged in upscale transparent plastic glasses; cheese in a butter tray for multiple uses as a spread, an appetizer or in a sandwich; a tapas package with tidbits of fresh cheese on top of dark wheat cake for entertaining; baby food in squeeze tubes and sweetened whole milk yogurt with fruit marketed to children; and small trays of flavored, solidified olive oil to use as a substitute for butter and ready to put on the table. Upscale pump dispensers of premium Madagascar vanilla paste were getting a lot of attention. A fresh appetizer of smoked salmon with fresh cheese marinated in olive oil and a combination package of fresh appetizer-

size seafood entrées sold in glass dishes were included in the award section.

Another trend to be aware of is the greening of packaging. Companies aware of consumers' desire for fresh, wholesome and natural foods are changing packaging to make their products "seem" more natural. Look for lots of green, yellow and shades of wheat. You'll see grain, pastures, cute animals and farm scenes on many products, but what the consumer reaction will be is unknown. Will consumers pick up on the packaging ruse? Will they gravitate to products that look good but don't deliver on implied promises?

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

The seamless integration of physical and virtual realities is now possible and inevitable. New "phones" that can receive e-mails, take pictures and transmit data will soon be able to pay for purchases, easily access the Internet and scan bar codes so consumers can find out more about the product, download coupons and possibly compare competitors' prices. Of course, there is a big question about how many people, even if they have the ability to do in-depth research into every product they buy, will do so.

Strategically, the possibilities for retailers are endless. Imagine a store that sends sales and promotions — perfectly targeted to the customer — directly to his or her cell phone. Imagine a customer getting a message, "Just in today, three new cheeses," followed by the description and pricing along with the option of placing an order to pick up or have it delivered to office or home.

Or, a customer goes into his or her favorite retailer to do the weekly shopping and wants to buy an expensive bottle of 35-year-old balsamic vinegar. While there, he or she goes a kiosk and places an order with a choice of several delivery locations and options. The product is then shipped directly from the store's warehouse or from the importer/distributor, saving inventory costs, handling costs and potential shrink from theft or breakage. Products could include everything from specialty cheeses produced by artisanal farmstead operations to gift baskets, fine oils, dried fruit, flowers and specialty meats. Any product that doesn't make sense for the retailer to carry in the brick-and-mortar store can be ordered from or shipped to any place in the United States from a cell phone.

MEAL ASSEMBLY CENTERS

This is a new concept that is quickly growing around the country, offering people the option of preparing fresh foods and customizing recipes to fit an individual family's tastes. Food is then taken home and put in the freezer for the next couple of week's meals.

For the most part, Meal Assemble Centers



Layered desserts in upscale packaging.

(MACS) are independent, freestanding units owned by individuals or part of franchise operations, and the concept is too new to have reliable profitability information. However, the concept is intriguing, and consumer acceptance seems to be high.

For retailers looking to compete with restaurants and offer more services to their customers, it is an interesting concept. Granted, it does take a fair amount of additional space, but it also offers differentiation. For a chain retailer, the cost of food is going to be much less than for an independent operator who is buying product from a local foodservice distributor or possibly the local supermarket or club store. In addition to being the low-cost provider, retailers, due to the large quantity of food and supplies on hand, don't have to be as precise with their ordering and can offer customers more flexibility.

Tie the concept in with nutritional counseling and weight-control programs, and retailers can make a real difference in the health of their customers. Other space utilization opportunities include cooking schools and menu preparation for the deli and in-store foodservice venues.

TRANS FAT

Trans fat is a health issue. Unfortunately, it is ubiquitous in many foods and even foods that are labeled "trans-fat free" often have trans fats in them, but in limited quantities. The issue is not going to go away, and more cities are going to institute trans-fat bans, so it will better to be proactive than reactive.

So, what's a retailer to do? Don't preach and just be honest. Have brochures explaining the danger of trans fat, and explain that some foods contain them for reasons of shelf life, taste and price. Make sure your store has alternative products available. Let customers know that manufacturers are working hard to find substitutions and your buyers are aggressively searching for trans fat-free foods that taste good.

This is an opportunity to make it very clear that you have your consumers' best interest at heart.

DB

2007 SPECIALTY CHEESE GUIDE



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2007 SPECIALTY CHEESE GUIDE



One of the darlings of chain-store deli departments is the specialty cheese section, where the selection ranges from factory-made specialty cheeses to cheeses from small farmstead operations that produce handmade product in small batches from the milk of their own animals.

The beauty and business of selling specialty cheeses are one and the same. Consumers are looking for the foods they find during their restaurant adventures, for regional, organic and natural foods they perceive as healthful alternatives to the processed foods that seem to dominate supermarket shelves and for products reflecting the growing community concerned with the environment and sustainable agriculture.

Specialty cheese offers an opportunity to introduce organics and regional or local promotions as well as to highlight celebrity cheesemakers. As a department, specialty cheese can add intrigue plus a continual learning experience for consumers. Specialty cheese is becoming a hobby food, much like wine, with consumers following the results of cheese competitions, collecting books on the subject and sharing articles published in leading newspapers and magazines around the country. Cheese clubs are attracting new members, and even myspace.com has profiles of people looking to learn more about cheese and make new cheese-loving friends.

Within the abundance of options that make this category so attractive comes the challenge of understanding the literally hundreds of cheeses available to every buyer. For the second year, the *Specialty Cheese Guide* also includes a section on American cheesemakers along with an expanded list of the cheeses they produce. American cheesemakers are gaining stature in the international community, their wares are being exported to most areas of the world, and their products make a worthwhile addition to any cheese lineup.

As with the *Specialty Cheese Guides* in the past, the description of each cheese includes the name, classification, country of origin and type of milk traditionally used for that individual variety plus a brief description. Also included in this year's list is the addition of more Protected Denomination of Origin (PDO) cheeses.

The *Specialty Cheese Guide* also includes a category listing signified by the letter A, B, C and D. It can be used to give buyers a feeling about what cheeses should be carried based on consumer demographics as well as the level of expertise and service a retailer can offer. This year, many cheeses have changed their classification since once uncommon cheeses have gained widespread appeal. Depending on demographics and the sophistication of the stores, the clientele and the store associates, the type of cheeses any store should carry varies.

A — Basic cheeses that appeal to a wide range of consumers, usually available in pre-cut and wrapped versions, with long shelf life and a mild flavor.

B — Specialty cheeses not usually found in the dairy case. More expensive than "A" cheeses and requiring a more sophisticated audience. Usually well known and available pre-cut and wrapped.

C — Require not only a knowledgeable consumer base but also an educated sales staff. Often quite expensive and usually not available pre-cut and wrapped.

D — Unusually exceptional cheeses that are expensive, require an educated staff and sophisticated clientele, and may be difficult to purchase. Sometimes pungent, fragile or difficult to handle.

BY LEE SMITH



Abbaye de Tamie

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Semi-firm raw milk cheese made by Trappist monks from the Savoie region of France. Washed in brine twice a week until it is ready to be sold, it is fruity and full flavored. Usually sold at one month, pasteurized milk version for U.S.

Abondance

Category: D **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Pressed curd cheese with a natural brushed, inedible rind. Creamy brown exterior with creamy beige interior. Complex cheese reminiscent of Comté with a buttery, fruity and nutty flavor.

Adrahan

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Pungent rind that make this cheese fall into the smelly cheese category. Semi-soft paste that is fresh, fruity and a little acidic. Made from pasteurized milk and sold between three and four months old.

Allgäuer Bergkäse

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Germany

PDO. Similar to Allgäuer Emmentaler, Bergkäse is smaller, more aromatic and produced only in summer in mountain pastures in the Allgau region.

Allgäuer Emmentaler

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Germany

PDO. Bavarian Swiss. Raw milk cheese made from a recipe brought to Bavaria in 1821 from the Emmentaler region of Switzerland. Yellow paste with regular, cherry-size holes and a nutty taste.

Appenzeller

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Natural, raw milk cheese with a grained, yellow to reddish brown rind. Ivory to yellow interior with a few pea-sized holes. Full-flavored to very robust cheese with a unique spicy flavor.

Asadero

Category: B **Type:** Pasta Filata
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Similar to young provolone with its white color and shiny exterior. Often referred to as Mexican mozzarella because of its superior melting quality. Can be found in balls, loaves and braided. Primarily domestically produced.

Asiago

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** USA

Made from fat-free milk. Nutty flavor and pale color when young. As it ages, texture becomes drier, more crumbly, and flavor is sharp and pronounced. Color deepens with age. Tastes like a cross between Cheddar and Provolone.

Asiago d'Allevo

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Light beige inside and out with many small holes throughout. Mild flavor. Produced in large wheels about 20 pounds, seven to nine inches high, from partially skimmed milk. Taste and texture vary greatly with age.

Azeitço

Category: D **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Portugal

PDO. Prized table cheese similar to Serra da Estrela from the Beija region. Sweet, earthy, aged wheels. Beige, pinkish rind. Cream colored paste can flow. Supple paste and distinctive taste are typical of cardoon (thistle) coagulated raw ewe's milk cheeses from Portugal and Spain.

Ballyoak

Category: D **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Made from pasteurized milk. Made in small traditional cheese vats, mold-ripened, then placed in a kiln where oak chip smoke slowly imparts unique flavor and texture to each individual cheese.

Banon

Category: D **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Goat, Cow **Origin:** France

Beautiful soft cheese wrapped in chestnut or grape leaves and tied into a little bundle. Runny and intense interior with winy, fruity, nutty taste.

Beaufort

Category: C **Type:** Hard/Firm
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Superb mountain cheese similar to a fine Swiss Gruyère. Excellent melting characteristics. Smooth creamy texture with occasional fissures. Mild, sweet, fruity flavor.

Beenleigh Blue

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** England

From the British Isles. A rich, sweet, gentle blue made from pasteurized milk that has less blue veining than many blues. An excellent cheese that is consistent and mellow.

Bitto

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow, Goat **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Semi-cooked wheel aged 70 days and up to 10 years. Ten percent goat milk is allowed. Straw-yellow rind with a white to straw-yellow interior, depending on age. Sweet delicate flavor becomes stronger with age. Produced in Lombardy.

Blarney

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Semifirm, part skimmedmed-milk cheese. Golden interior with large eyes. Mild and mellow, especially popular for St. Patrick's Day. Now available in smaller 5- to 10-pound waxed wheels. Also available smoked.

Bleu d'Auvergne

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Semisoft, moist, sharp blue with pungent aroma. Made with traditional Roquefort recipe. Pale yellow interior with defined, dark blue veins. Very creamy and more subtle than Roquefort.

Bleu de Bresse

Category: B **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Made in Bresse, near Burgundy. Well known with a dedicated following. Originally French competitor to Italian Gorgonzola. Basically Brie-style cheese. Should have mottled bloomy rind or interior may be chalky. Domestically produced version known as Bresse Bleu.



THE GREAT CHEESE ROBBERY



ONG, LONG AGO a group of Swedish warriors descended upon their Danish neighbors and stole everything in sight including a cheese with a legendary reputation. The Swedes were elated but little did they know that the cheese they had stolen from the Danes wasn't the legendary FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA. It was merely a copy of the cheese that the Danes had stolen from the Italians; and not a very good copy at that. The Danish Fontina lacked the firmness, suppleness and subtle flavor of the original FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA—a flavor that reflected the lush Alpine meadows and pure glacial streams of the Italian Alps.

And the Swedish Fontina? To be kind, it bore little if any resemblance to FONTINA VALLE D'AOSTA—a regrettable situation for many.

Namely, those who continued to pay for the original.

And only got a copy.



Bleu des Causses

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Made in the area around Roquefort from raw milk. White interior with liberal veining. Aged in caves. Sharp spicy flavor. Less salty than Roquefort.

Bleu du Haut-Jura, de Gex, de Septmoncel

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Hard, uncooked large flat wheel, less crumbly than most varieties. Mild flavor with a hint of hazelnuts. Made in small mountain dairies in Franche-Comté from milk of Montbéliard cows.

Bleu du Vercors/Sassenage

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Mild blue with delicate flavor, subtle fruitiness and mild aroma, first produced by monks in Rhône Alps. The Baron de Sassenage, in the 14th century, allowed his subjects to freely sell the cheese they produced.

Blue Castello

Category: B **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Denmark

Rich triple creme blue with 70 percent fat content. Mild and very creamy. Brie-like texture and fresh, woody aroma.

Blue Des Basques Brebis

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** France

Made in the Pyrenees Mountains. Complex cheese that is subtle but not heavy. Spicy and earthy.

Bocconcini

Category: A **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

Fresh mozzarella in small, egg-shaped balls. Translates as "little mouthfuls." Delicious when teamed with herbs, spices and olive oil. Often served with melon and prosciutto. Common domestic cheese. Water buffalo-milk version now being imported from Italy.

Boerenkaas

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Netherlands

Natural rind, unpasteurized, ranges from firm to very hard. Golden rind with beige-yellow interior. Pleasant nutty aroma with a rich, sharp, complex taste profile.

Boilie

Category: C **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Hand-rolled balls of soft, creamy cow's milk cheese preserved in sunflower oil, herbs and garlic. Made from pasteurized milk and packed in glass jars. Goat's milk version is mild but with slightly more pungent taste.

Bonne Bouche

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Vermont

A small flat ash-coated disk inspired by Selles-sur-Cher from the Loire Valley. Lemony and tangy, it becomes runny as it ages.

Borough Market Cheddar

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** England

Traditional farmhouse Cheddar from Devon, made from pasteurized milk. Dense, smooth, close texture. Aged 12-13 months. Rich, nutty, slightly sweet. Caramel flavor, very balanced and mellow.

Boursault

Category: B **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Bloomy-rind triple creme with light yellow interior and a mild, rich, creamy taste. Name of cheese and brand are the same. Individually wrapped and boxed 8-ounce cylinders.

Bra

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Pressed, part-skimmed wheels originated in 14th century Piedmont. Named for a city. Three varieties: soft (Tenero), hard (Duro) and summer-only alpine (d'Alpeggio). Small amounts of sheep and/or goat milk allowed.

Bra Tenero

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

From the Piedmont area. A dense full-flavored cheese that is younger than and not as hard as Bra Duro.

Brica

Category: D **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

Raw cow's milk cheese with a strong flavor and mild sweet aroma. Relatively new to the market.

Brie

Category: A **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

One of most popular specialty cheeses. Completely edible white rind. Soft, buttery color interior with mild flavor that deepens with age and creamy texture that becomes lusher with time. Excellent domestic Bries available. Many artisanal cheese producers making Brie with goat's and sheep's milk. Flavored Bries also popular.

Brillat-Savarin

Category: D **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

More like a dessert. Rich and creamy with minimum 75 percent butterfat content. Triple creme, Brie-style cheese. About six ounces each.

Brin d'Amour

Category: D **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Sheep, Goat **Origin:** France

Soft cheese usually made from sheep's milk but occasionally a mixed milk cheese. Characterized by herb-coated crust that is bitter and usually not eaten. White, moist to runny interior. Uniquely herbaceous flavor.

Brocciu Corse

Category: C **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Sheep, goat **Origin:** France

PDO. Soft, white whey cheese from Corsica, eaten fresh or salted and aged several weeks. Flavor varies according to where the sheep and/or goats grazed.



Bündnerkäse

Category: B **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Made from organic cow's milk. Yellowish-brown to reddish rind. Ivory to light yellow interior. Soft, delicious and rich with clean finish. When three to four months old, very mild. Aged six to nine months, pleasantly tart.

Burrata

Category: C **Type:** Pasta Filata
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

Handformed delicate pouch filled with stretchy mozzarella curd amalgamated with cream. Interior consistency resembles creamy mozzarella shards or sweet cream butter. Sweet, fresh, milky aroma. Originated in 1920s in Puglia. Best at cool room temperature, plain or with olive oil, salt and pepper.

Butterkäse

Category: A **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Germany

Made throughout Germany and Austria as well as in the United States. Name means "butter cheese" and is reflective of taste. Mild, excellent melting cheese. Children's favorite.

Cabanon

Category: D **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Canada

Made in Quebec. Slightly aged, sheep's milk disk wrapped in eau-de-vie soaked maple leaves and tied into a bundle. Soft texture, rich flavor blending hazelnut, spice, pure milk.

Cabecou Feuille

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Goat **Origin:** France

Fresh and mild, a small 10ounce disk dipped in plum brandy, sprinkled with black pepper and then wrapped in chestnut leaves. Smooth, creamy and tangy with overtones of brandy. Beautiful addition to a fine cheese department.

Cabot Clothbound Cheddar

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Vermont

Twenty-five pound clothbound wheel from Cabot Creamery Cooperative, made from pasteurized milk, aged 12 months at Jasper Hill Farm. Sharp, creamy, with notes of caramel.

Cabrales

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow, Goat, Sheep **Origin:** Spain

PDO. Made from raw, mainly cow's milk. Since most farmers keep mixed herds, often blended with goat's and ewe's milk in spring and summer. Cave-aged with deep blue veining, thick texture and creamy, piquant flavor.

Caciocavallo

Category: B **Type:** Pasta Filata
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

Provolone-style cheese. Table cheese when young and grating cheese when aged. Pear-shaped with full, mellow flavor. Firm texture, intense aroma and pale yellow color.

Caciotta al Tartufo

Category: D **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

Pasteurized mixed-milk cheese made with slivers of Umbrian black truffles in the paste. Sometimes a mixed milk cheese made with cow's milk. Compact cheese with intense flavor of truffles.

Caerphilly

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** England

English "crumbly." Only lightly pressed and very moist. Ready to eat as young as six to 10 days although can be aged up to four or five months. Fresh, clean, grassy taste and firm, elastic, school-eraser-type texture when broken.

Cambozola

Category: A **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Germany

Very mild and creamy with subtle flavor. Subtle blue veins with downy white rind. Rich flavor overtones of fresh cream and piquant woody blue.

Camembert

Category: A **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Now made in many countries and available in cow's, goat's and sheep's milk versions. Similar to Brie but smaller and more fluid texture. Edible, thin, white rind sometimes has rusty-colored flecks. Delicate golden interior. Mild to pungent taste. When ripe, should feel plump and yield to gentle pressure.

Cana de Cabra

Category: D **Type:** Semi-soft
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Spain

A bloomy-rind soft-ripened cheese log similar to Bucheron from the area around Murcia. Creamy and mild yet full-flavored.

Canestrato Pugliese

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Tangy grating cheese from Puglia. Basket-ripened two to 10 months. Woven rushes mark the rind, which is treated with olive oil, and sometimes with wine vinegar. Gold exterior, straw-yellow interior with small eyes.

Cantabria

Category: C **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Spain

PDO. The full name, Queso de Nata de Cantabria, means Cantabria's creamy cheese. Made in northeastern coastal Spain from pasteurized milk, aged one week to two months, it melts in the mouth. In Cantabria it is used in fish dishes, soups, stews, with chicken or enjoyed with bread.

Cantal

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Pressed, uncooked, dense, pleasantly sour taste. An aluminum badge on the nearly 100-pound wheel identifies the maker. Best made in summer and aged six months: look for a thick, gray rind. Made in Auvergne for 2,000 years. Cantalet: modern, smaller, barrel-shaped.

Caprini

Category: D **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Italy

Traditionally goat cheese but often made with cow's milk. Name means "little goats." Cylinder shape. Should be very white, soft and taste like tart, fresh sweet cream.

Casciotta of Urbino

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep, cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Pressed, semi-cooked whole milk cylinder; 70 to 80 percent sheep milk and 20 to 30 percent cow milk. From central Italy's Marche region and appreciated by Michelangelo. Mild, sweet, with a thin, yellow rind and yellowish, crumbly paste.



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Cashel Blue

Category: C

Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft

Origin: Ireland

Made from pasteurized milk. Firm and relatively moist with fresh, slightly sharp flavor when young. Less salty than other blues. With age, develops melt-in-the-mouth creaminess and round, sweet, mellow flavor. Can be matured up to six months.

Castelmagno

Category: D

Milk: Cow

Type: Blue

Origin: Italy

PDO. Pressed, semi-hard skimmed-milk cylinder aged up to six months. May contain sheep or goat milk, and may be pierced or not. Small production. Originated in 12th century Piedmont around the same time as Gorgonzola. Some consumers prefer Castelmagno with little or no mold development.

Castelo Branco

Category: D

Milk: Sheep, Goat

Type: Semisoft

Origin: Portugal

PDO. Three mixed milk cheeses from Beira Baixa are protected under the name Queijos da Beira Baixa: Queijo de Castelo Branco, Queijo Amarelo da Beira Baixa, and Queijo Picante da Beira Baixa. The milk echoes the characteristics of the breeds and the high quality of the pastures they graze.

Chabichou du Poitou

Category: C

Milk: Goat

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: France

PDO. Tiny cylinder with a firm, white paste, mottled rind and classic taste: milky, a little sour, a bit of nuttiness. Goat in Arabic is chebli, and the name is a reminder that Arabs migrating from Spain established goat milk cheesemaking in the Loire Valley during the 7th century.

Champignon

Category: A

Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened

Origin: Germany

Double creme, Brie-like cheese with hand-picked mushrooms throughout. Mushroom flavor, mild and woody when young and intensifies with age. Very creamy.

Chaource

Category: D

Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened

Origin: France

PDO. From Champagne area. Small, bloomy rind very similar to Brie, but with richer more acidic flavor. Always rich and tart, but with variances from young to aged.

Cheddar, Domestic

Category: A

Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: USA

No. 1 cheese consumed in the United States; accounts for over half of cheese produced. Flavor, size and color vary among cheesemakers. Also made from sheep's and goat's milk. Young Cheddars mild and creamy. With age, become drier and flavor deepens. Made all over the United States.

Cheshire

Category: B

Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: England

English "crumbly." Bound in calico and then sometimes waxed. Crumbly yet moist texture. Savory taste with gentle bitter tang and slightly salty. Distinctive character results from salt marshes where cattle graze.

Chèvre

Category: A

Milk: Goat

Type: Fresh

Origin: France

Goat cheese. Mild, dense and smooth when fresh. In the United States, herbs and spices often added. Flavor strengthens with age. Most fresh Chèvre domestically made.

Chèvre Noir

Category: B

Milk: Goat

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: Canada

Made in Quebec. Ivory-colored goat Cheddar, smooth and mellow, with persistent nutty and buttery flavors. Caramel finish when aged.

Colby

Category: A

Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft

Origin: Wisconsin

Originated in Colby, WI. Very mild, Cheddar-like, rich orange color. Higher moisture content than Cheddar makes it soft and light. Excellent melting cheese. California also is very large producer.

Comté

Category: C

Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: France

PDO. Extraordinary French mountain cheese that owes its special flavor to unique conditions of Jura Mountains. Shift in feeding patterns throughout year explains subtle differences in color and flavor from one season to next. Type of Gruyère. Creamy, rich, piquant with a sweet, fruity flavor.

Constant Bliss

Category: C

Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened

Origin: Vermont

From Jasper Hill Dairy, a small raw milk cheese that will retain a dense tangy center. Very clean taste, rich and creamy with a hint of earthiness as it ages.

Cooleeney

Category: D

Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened

Origin: Ireland

White mold, soft-ripened cheese made from raw or pasteurized milk in 200 g and 1.7 kg sizes. Robust flavor when ripe. Soft/creamy to buttery texture with mushroom-like tang unlike other soft-ripened cheese.

Cotija

Category: B

Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard

Origin: Mexico

Now primarily domestic. Used in Mexican cuisine same way Parmesan is used in Italian. Excellent grating cheese with sharp flavor and firm texture. Gaining popularity in mainstream cooking.



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Coulommiers

Category: C **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Similar to Brie. Uneven rind with brown mottling and straw-colored interior. Full, rich, buttery flavor.

Crater Lake Blue

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Oregon

Made by Rogue Creamery and somewhere between a Roquefort and Blue d'Auvergne. Sweet, rich and mild, it is not as intense as Roquefort but still has a bite. Slightly crumbly, it is an American classic.

Cream Cheese

Category: A **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** USA

Soft, very mild. Made from light or heavy cream. Velvety texture and rich nutty, slightly sweet flavor. Comes in different flavors, oftentimes with fruit, salmon, nuts or herbs added. Artisan cream cheese is very special, not at all like what is found in most dairy departments.

Crescenza

Category: D **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

A member of the stracchino family, a generic name for a group of cheeses from Lombardy that are soft and square-shaped. Luscious and tangy, best eaten very fresh.

Crottin

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Goat **Origin:** France

Many domestic versions. Usually sold as very young, fresh cheese, although aged versions available. Versatile little cheeses. Should be moist and creamy, mild and snow white. Aged versions can be quite pungent. Added herbs, spices, nuts and edible flowers are popular.

Danish Blue

Category: A **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Denmark

PGI. Easy introduction to new specialty cheese consumers. Mild and creamy. White with distinctive blue veins and salty taste.

Double Gloucester

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** England

Color ranges from pale orange to deep red-orange. Firm body and creamy texture, although not as firm as English Cheddar. Round, mellow flavor with orange tang upon finish.

Dry Jack

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** California

Sweet and fruity with hints of wine. Rich brown rind and pale golden interior. Excellent grating cheese. Can be used in dishes that call for good Parmesan or eaten as table cheese with salami, dry ham, fruit or nuts.

Dubliner

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Relatively new. Naturally balanced sweet taste is cross between nutty Swiss and Parmesan. Matured for more than 12 months. Packaged in distinctive parchment-like film.

Durrus

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Ireland

Handmade in town of Coomkeen Durrus by Jeffa Gill. Outstanding raw milk cheese similar to Tomme. Light hay color interior oozes rather than runs. Sweet and milky with complex undertones of green leaves and forest undergrowth.

Edam

Category: A **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Holland

Made from reduced-fat pasteurized milk. Smooth but supple texture with waxy feel. Mild yet tangy taste and golden color. Excellent melting cheese. Good introduction to specialty cheese world. Smoked and caraway versions available.

Emmentaler, Domestic

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** USA

Also known as domestic Swiss. Milder than Swiss counterpart. Pale creamy interior. Often-sold in blocks. Good all-around cheese, especially popular for sandwiches.

Emmentaler, Swiss

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Real Swiss cheese. Made in 200-pound wheels. Natural, firm, dry, yellowish-brown rind. Ivory to light yellow interior with firm texture and cherry-sized eyes. Nutty, mild-to-flavorful taste. Made in many countries including the United States.

English Cheddar

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** England

Considered the original Cheddar, produced in Somerset, Dorset and Devon counties. Firm, dense, almost chewy. Tangy, wonderfully complex aromas and taste with nutty rich hints of fresh hay.

Époisses

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Renowned cheese from Burgundy region, washed with brine, then Marc de Bourgogne. Orange coloration develops naturally from growth of *brevibacterium linens*, not a dye. When ripe, the elegant, flavorful, buttery paste can be eaten with a spoon.

Esrom

Category: B **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Denmark

PGI. Known as the Danish Port-Salut. Rich and aromatic. Yellow interior with irregularly shaped holes. Can become quite pungent and spicy as it ages.

Evora

Category: D **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Portugal

PDO. A wheel, aged six to 12 months. Few or no holes in the light yellow paste. Cardoon used to coagulate raw ewe's milk.

Explorateur

Category: B **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Bloomy rind, triple creme. Very creamy, slightly grainy and salty. Should have pleasant aroma and slightly earthy taste, reminiscent of mushrooms.



Feta

Category: A **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Sheep, Goat **Origin:** Greece

PDO. Traditional Greek cheese. White, soft cheese ripened and brined at least two months. Made with 100 percent ewe's milk or up to 30 percent goat's milk. Majority of U.S. feta made from cow's milk. Mild, tangy, slightly salty taste. Crumbly texture with small uneven holes. Usually packed in brine that should be washed off before eating.

Fiore Sardo

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. More than 2,000 years old, uncooked Fiore Sardo was made from raw sheep milk in mountain huts in Sardinia, suspended over the fire-place during the primary aging. Today, some is made from pasteurized, blended cow and sheep milk. Aged two to eight months.

Fog Light

Category: C **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Goat **Origin:** California

From Mary Keehn, a small cheese made at Cypress Grove. A layer of ash covers each wheel on top of which sits a fluffy white bloomy rind. Moist with a clean lemony taste characteristic of a fresh goat cheese.

Foin d'Odeur

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Canada

Made in Quebec. Small wheels with a cultured, washed rind. Named for the herb "sweetgrass" that adorns it. When ripe, paste is runny.

Fontina, Domestic

Category: A **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** USA

Good all-around cheese with superior melting qualities. Also slices and grates easily. Excellent table cheese. May have thin rind or no rind at all. Mild and nutty. When aged, dry and dark with pronounced nutty flavor.

Fontina Val d'Aosta

Category: C **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. One of the world's greatest cheeses, heavily imitated, but never copied. Light brown, cocoa-colored crust with warm ivory interior. Softens at room temperature but never runny. Warm, butter-nut flavor of great Emmentaler, but with tang.

Fougerus

Category: D **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

U.S. version made with pasteurized milk. From Robert Touzaire. Produced in the Ile-de-France region. This bloomy-rind cheese is similar to a Coulommiers and gets its name from the fern that is draped over the cheese. Produced in small 1.5 pound wheels.

Fourme d'Ambert

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Tall blue-veined cylinder, from same region as Bleu d'Auvergne but more ancient lineage. Gray down covers dry, yellowish rind. White paste, profuse veining and caverns. Creamy texture, blue mold aroma, mild, fruity taste.

Fromage Blanc

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow, Sheep, Goat **Origin:** France

Made by coagulating milk with bacteria. Very mild with tangy finish. Fat content can range from double creme to triple creme. Soft, creamy texture similar to yogurt.



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Gabietou

Category: D **Type:** Semi-soft
Milk: Cow, Sheep **Origin:** France

A natural rind cheese made from a blend of raw cow and sheep milk in a traditional Pyrenees style. Rich and dense, fruity and slightly acid.

Gailtaler Almkäse

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Austria

PDO. Wheels of raw milk mountain cheese have been made in Austria's Gailtal region (east of Tyrol), since the 14th century. Dry, golden rind, smooth yellow paste with a small number of uniformly distributed round eyes. Up to 10 percent goat milk is allowed.

Gamonedo

Category: D **Type:** Semi-soft
Milk: Cow, Goat **Origin:** Spain

A mild smoky cheese produced in the high meadows of the Asturias and matured in natural caves for a minimum of two months. Natural rind with a gray mold. Buttery and spicy at the same time.

Gaperon

Category: C **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Bloomy-rind, soft, pressed-curd cheese with bits of garlic and cracked peppercorns throughout. Firm when young and runny with almost overwhelming garlic and peppercorn essence with ripened. Very Brie-like.

Garrotxa

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Spain

Small Pyrenees cooperative revived this regional cheese, manufactured long ago. Mild, buttery, clean taste. Gray blue rind, white paste. Aged a minimum of three weeks.

Gjetost

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Norway

Made from whey, milk and cream, rindless. Dense. Carmelization during manufacturing, creates characteristic color and sweetness. Sliced thin and served with waffles in Norway.

Gorgonzola

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Sharp, spicy blue with wonderful, creamy texture. Some of finest Italian Gorgonzolas still aged in caves. American Gorgonzola more creamy, less sharp and similar to sweet milk "dolce latte" Gorgonzolas of Italy.

Gouda

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Holland

Classic specialty cheese. Red or black wax coating surrounds deep yellow rind and golden interior. When young, mild and fruity flavor. When aged, becomes drier with more pronounced flavor — nutty and rounder — but always with sweet undertone. Excellent domestic Gouda available.

Gran Canaria

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Mixed **Origin:** Wisconsin

Olive oil cured blend of cow, goat, and sheep milk from Carr Valley Cheese Company. Fruity, nutty, intense, sweet and pungent after two years.

Grana Padano

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. A grana in the style of Parmesan from the Po valley. An excellent grating and table cheese. Very good value.

GranQueso

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Wisconsin

Handcrafted by Roth Käse USA Ltd., style similar to Manchego. Aged 6 months. Basket-weave rind, full flavored ivory paste has a bite and a lingering sweet finish.

Gratte-Paille

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Made from pasteurized milk for the U.S., this double-creme cheese is aged for about three weeks. From the Ile de France region and Robert Touzaire, the cheese is a golden color and wrapped in paper. Hand ladled into a brick shape and aged on straw mats. Milky, rich and very special.

Graviera of Crete

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Greece

PDO. Made exclusively in Crete from ewe's milk or mixtures of goat's milk. Ripened for at least five months. High-quality hard cheese with slightly sweet taste.

Graviera of Naxos

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Greece

PDO. Similar to Graviera of Crete, but made with either cow's milk or cow's milk and small amounts of ewe's and/or goat's milk. High-quality, hard table cheese that must be aged a minimum of three months.

Gruyère

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Semifirm, moderate fat. Superior melting and table cheese. Classic French onion soup cheese. Nutty flavor with sweet fruity undertones. Evenly spaced, medium-sized holes or eyes. Domestic Gruyère also available.

Gruyère de Savoie

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Milder, sweeter and softer in texture than Swiss Gruyère, it has a soft butter-colored paste. Made from raw milk.

Gubbeen

Category: D **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: cow **Origin:** Ireland

Pungent, semi-soft cheese made from pasteurized milk. Like many washed rind cheeses, it has a pungent rind and but flavor does not reflect its aroma and is fruity and clean.

Haloumi

Category: B **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Cyprus

Originally flavored with mint. Sold in small squares. Supple with no rind and almost rubbery texture. Salty but less so than feta. Mild flavor and aroma. Originally made with sheep's and goat's milk. Excellent frying cheese.

Havarti

Category: A **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Denmark

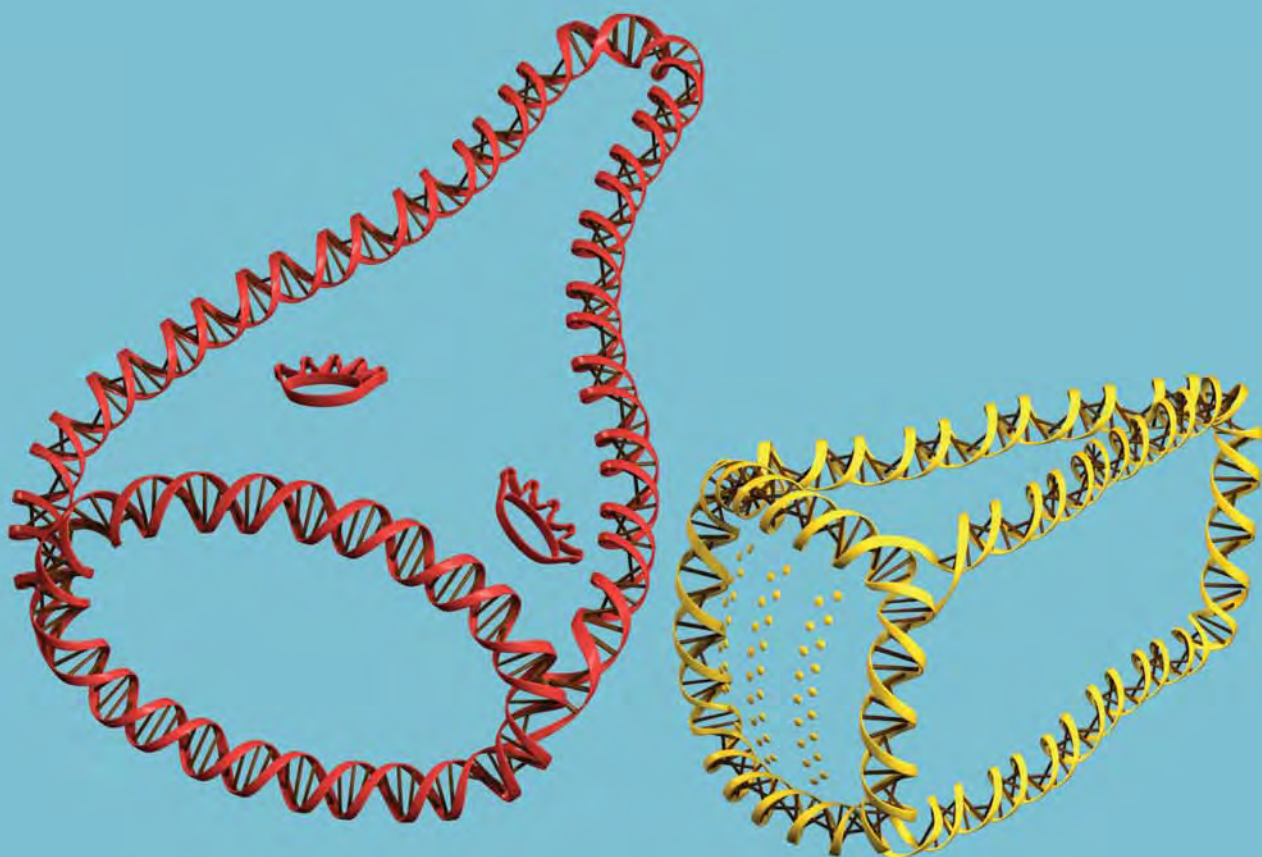
Popular specialty cheese that is also domestically produced. Uneven holes and smooth creamy texture. Pale yellow to almost white. Very mild. Often flavored with herbs.

Hoch Ybrig

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Prized modern raw milk alpine cheese inspired by fine Swiss Gruyère but in much smaller wheels. Named for a mountain near Zurich. Light red wine-washed rind, pale to yellowish paste. Dense, smooth texture, concentrated, lingering flavor.





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Hoja Santa

Category: C
Milk: Goat
Type: Fresh
Origin: Texas

From the Mozzarella Company, delicate goat cheese wrapped into small bundles wrapped with the leaves of the hoja santa plant that infuses the lemony cheese with refreshing notes of mint and saffrafras.

Humbolt Fog

Category: C
Milk: Goat
Type: Soft
Origin: California

From Cypress Grove, it is a beautiful five-pound wheel of wonderful, tangy, lemony fresh cheese characterized by the thin layer of vegetable ash that runs through the center of the cheese. The cheese is sprinkled with a vegetable ash and left to develop a soft bloomy white rind on top.

Ibores

Category: C
Milk: Goat
Type: Semisoft
Origin: Spain

PDO. Made with unpasteurized milk from Serrata goats. Medium aged. Direct, creamy and very buttery on tongue. Rind is rubbed with olive oil or smoked paprika.

Idiazábal

Category: C
Milk: Sheep
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Spain

PDO. From Basque region. Unpasteurized, whole-milk cheese ripened for a long period. Dry and crumbly. Strong, pronounced, slightly acidic, piquant, buttery taste. Made in varying size wheels. Normally smoked, although unsmoked available.

Jarlsberg

Category: A
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Norway

Whole-milk cheese often substituted for Emmentaler. Pronounced nutty, buttery, mild, slightly sweet flavor. Yellow rind and pale golden interior with well-spaced eyes.

Imokilly Regato

Category: C
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Ireland

PDO. Produced in Mogeely — in ancient Gaelic, Ui MacCaille — in Cork. The exceptionally long grazing period — from March to October — gives the milk distinctive color and flora, reflected in the taste and color of the cheese.

Kanterkaas

Category: C
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Holland

PDO. Kanter refers to angular shape of Friesland cheeses. Pleasant sharpness intensifies with age. Kanternagelkaas: with cloves. Kanterkomi-nekaas: with cumin. Exported since 1500s.

Kasseri

Category: B
Milk: Sheep, Goat
Type: Pasta Filata
Origin: Greece

PDO. Made from ewe's milk or mixtures of ewe's and goat's milk. Mild and buttery but full-flavored and salty. White or slightly off-white with smooth, dry consistency. Domestic kasseri is usually 80 to 100 percent cow's milk.

Keen's Farmhouse Cheddar

Category: C
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: England

Clothbound raw milk cheese made by Keen family in West Country. Aged for minimum of 12 months. Sharp, grassy, spicy.

Kefalotiri

Category: D
Milk: Sheep, Goat
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Greece

Made from ewe's or goat's milk or mixture of the two. Salty, piquant taste and unique rich aroma obtained after ripening for at least three months.

Ladotiri

Category: D
Milk: Sheep, Goat
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Greece

PDO. Exclusively manufactured on Mitilini Island from ewe's milk or a mixture of goat's and ewe's milk. Preserved in olive oil. Strong flavor, hard texture and slightly salty taste. Also known as kefalaki.

Laguiole

Category: D
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: France

PDO. Made in Aubrac since the 4th century. Similar to Cantal. Pressed, uncooked cylinder aged four months. Tangy, herb-inflected flavor. During the Middle Ages, made by religious orders for pilgrims bound for Spain. Image of a bull and "Laguiole" are stamped on the rind.

Langres

Category: D
Milk: Cow
Type: Washed Rind
Origin: France

PDO. Small, soft cylinder with a hollow on top. Although aged only three weeks, it has a strong aroma, tangy flavor, and melts in the mouth. Named for the city in its home region of Champagne. Wine is sometimes poured in the hollow before eating.

L'Ariegeois Vache

Category: D
Milk: Cow, Goat
Type: Washed Rind
Origin: France

A mountain cheese from the Midi-Pyrenees region. Creamy white interior with a lovely pink washed rind with a dusty or powdery white mold. It has the power of an aged goat cheese but offset by the addition of cow's milk which adds a sweet milk flavor and a creamy texture.

La Serena

Category: D
Milk: Sheep
Type: Semisoft
Origin: Spain

PDO. One of the most sought-after, highly valued and expensive cheeses in Spain. Made from milk of Merino sheep. Minimum 50 percent fat content. Aged minimum of eight weeks. Very buttery flavor.

L'Étivaz

Category: C
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Switzerland

Prized traditional raw milk alpine cheese, similar to a fine Swiss Gruyère. Aged six to 12 months in mountain caves. Light brown natural rind. Dense, exceptionally buttery, spice and sweetness, delicate smokiness.

Leyden

Category: B
Milk: Cow
Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Netherlands

PDO. Flavored with caraway and/or cumin. Natural inedible rind. Light yellow interior when young, creamy brown-orange interior when aged. Spicy. Large 16-pound wheels about six inches thick. Aged versions are very special.



Livarot

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Washed Rind
Origin: France

PDO. Small round cheese encircled by five bands, made in Normandy. Annatto added to brine for final wash to color rind orange. Aged about four weeks. Creamy interior. Smelly but spicy and flavorful, persistent finish.

Mahón

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Spain

PDO. Name given to all Spanish cheeses produced on island of Menorca. Square with rounded edges. Size varies. Smooth, closed rind is oily and yellow or slightly orange due to treatment with paprika. Compact interior with different size holes.

Majorero

Category: C
Milk: Goat

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Spain

PDO. Young cheese has white rind. Aged cheese has brownish-beige rind with somewhat scratchy touch. Interior is compact but open with eyes spread evenly and slightly gummy texture. Acidic, slightly piquant and buttery, but not salty taste. Made only from unpasteurized goat's milk.

Manchego

Category: C
Milk: Sheep

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Spain

PDO. Closed, clean, engraved rind is yellow to brownish-beige. Firm, compact interior is closed with few small air pockets unevenly spread. Ivory to pale yellow color. Well-developed but not too strong taste. Buttery and slightly piquant with sheep's milk aftertaste.

Manouri

Category: B
Milk: Sheep, Goat

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Greece

PDO. Soft, whey milk cheese enriched with milk or cream for melt-in-the-mouth flavor. Excellent for dessert with fruit and nuts. Very mild and creamy. Melts well.

Maroilles

Category: D
Milk: Cow

Type: Washed Rind
Origin: France

PDO. Not for beginners. One of the world's smelliest, strongest-flavored cheeses. Rind covered with brownish-yellow mold. Straw yellow interior.

Mascarpone

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Fresh
Origin: Italy

Seventy percent triple creme. Very rich and creamy with velvety texture. Taste should be mild and almost sweet, never bitter, lumpy or salty. Primary ingredient in tiramisu. Excellent domestic versions available.

Midnight Moon

Category: C
Milk: Goat

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Netherlands

Nutty, brown-buttery, with caramel notes. Gouda-style wheel aged one year, made for Cypress Grove Chèvre. Smooth, with the slight graininess of long-aged cheese.

Mimolette

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: France

Looks like a cantaloupe inside and out. Rough rind with bright orange interior and exterior. Firm texture with small holes and cracks. Mild flavor.

Mirabo Walnut

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: Germany

Brie-like cheese in distinctive blossom shape. Speckled with finely crushed walnuts for subtle, sweet, nutty taste profile. Very creamy. Excellent dessert cheese.

Mizithra

Category: C
Milk: Sheep

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Greece

Hard, white whey cheese. Mild, salty and shaped like ostrich egg. When young, smooth and nutty. Aged version most often found in the United States is firm, pungent and excellent for grating.

Monte Veronese

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Italy

PDO. Semi-cooked, whole- or skimmed-milk cylinder with a thin, elastic rind. The yellowish paste is fruity with a hint of sharpness. Although the name Monte Veronese originated in the early 1900s, Verona's cheesemaking extends from medieval times.

Montenebro

Category: D
Milk: Goat

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: Spain

Flat, wide loaf shape. Surface-ripened external blue rind, blue-gray-charcoal in color, bumpy. Aged 30-45 days. Dense bone white paste ripens from outside in. Creamy, tangy, rich flavor.

Monterey Jack

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: California

Created in Monterey, CA. Rich and buttery. Commonly found in flavored varieties. When young supple and soft. Becomes firmer with age. Excellent melting cheese.

Montasio

Category: B
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Italy

PDO. Partially skimmed milk, unpasteurized hard cheese from Friuli area. Mild and tangy with butterscotch flavor. Grayish-brown rind with cream-colored interior.

Montrachet

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Fresh
Origin: France

Commercially-produced fresh Chèvre from Burgundy. Mild flavor. Sold in pre-wrapped logs. While there are far better Chèvres, both domestic and French, it is very well known and generally sells well.

Morbier

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft
Origin: France

PDO. Characterized by thin layer of ash in middle. Complex with pungent, pleasing and earthy aroma with overtones of fruit and nuts.

Mozzarella, Buffalo

Category: C
Milk: Buffalo

Type: Fresh
Origin: Italy

PDO. The original mozzarella. Sweet and milky taste with a distinct tang. As with domestic mozzarella, should never be bitter.



Mozzarella, Fresh

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Fresh
Origin: Italy

Texture should be very moist. Tender and milky. Sweet taste ranging from slightly salty to no salt at all. Described as tasting like fresh milk. Often marinated and used in salads. Primarily a domestic cheese.

Mozzarella, Ripened

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Pasta Filata
Origin: Italy

Mainly domestically produced. Second in consumption only to Cheddar. Unlike fresh, ripened has lower moisture content. Available in balls, loaves or as string cheese.

Munster

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Washed Rind
Origin: France

PDO. Original Munster from France is big-flavored and nutty with an aromatic rind. German and Danish Muensters milder in flavor. American Munster is not washed rind and is usually made into loaves instead of wheels.

Murcia al Vino

Category: C
Milk: Goat

Type: Washed Rind
Origin: Spain

PDO. "Queso de Murcia curado" (which means aged Murcian cheese) is made of pressed paste, washed and not cooked. Intense white color and creamy, elastic texture. During ripening, bathed in red wine for variable lengths of time, giving rind its characteristic color and imparting strong floral bouquet.

Murazzano

Category: C
Milk: Sheep, cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: Italy

PDO. From Piedmont, a variant of Toma. Similar to Robiola de Roccaverano but prized for higher sheep milk content, only 40 percent cow milk allowed. Soft, dense, slightly springy, mellow, delicately aromatic and highly agreeable flavor. Serve alone or with pepper and extra virgin olive oil.

Neufchatel

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: France

PDO. Rich, creamy, pleasantly sour, tangy flavor, from Normandy. Often, but not exclusively, heart-shaped. One of France's oldest cheeses, dating back to 1035 A.D.

Nisa

Category: D
Milk: Sheep

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Portugal

PDO. Supple, yellowish paste, small eyes. Robust, earthy and pleasantly acidic. From Alentejo, where the Merino sheep graze under a cover of oak groves. Excellent table cheese.

Odenwälder Frühstückskäse

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: Germany

PDO. Odenwald breakfast cheese, made from pasteurized milk of cows grazing rich hillside pastures. Created in the Hessian Odenwald, part of the rent feudal lords demanded from farmers. Brownish-yellow rind, yellowish paste, spicy to piquant.

Oka

Category: B
Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Quebec

Semi-soft, surface ripened 5-pound wheel, tinted orange rind, 30 percent FIDM. Classic Oka is aged 60 days. Trappist monks brought Port Salut recipe with them upon emigrating to Canada, establishing cheesemaking near village named Oka. Now made commercially.



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Orkney

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Scotland

Mature creamy, mellow Cheddar made in the highlands of Scotland.

Ossau Iraty

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** France

PDO. Made in the Basque region during summer, when the sheep are in the mountains. In fall, shepherds bring the cheese to the farm to finish aging. Thick rind varies from orange to gray. White interior is firm, creamy, smooth.

Paneer (Panir)

Category: A **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** India

White semisoft cheese similar to firm farmer's cheese. Grated, stuffed, simmered or stir-fried in vegetable dishes.

Parmigiano-Reggiano

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Aged average of 24 months. Seasons influence flavor directly. Spring made has soft yellow rind, delicate flavor and herbal scent. Summer cheeses are drier and more pungent, perfect for grating. Fall cheeses' higher casein content suitable for longer aging. Due to cows' dry hay diet, winter-produced Parmigiano-Reggiano may carry aromatic notes of exotic fruit and pineapple.

Parrano

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Netherlands

An original cheese, pliant and buttery as a Gouda, nuttiness reminiscent of a Parmesan, aged five months, 45 percent FIDM, from Uniekaas, several versions available.

Pecorino Romano

Category: A **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Sharp-flavored grating cheese. Pronounced, salty, nutty flavor. Classified as grana. Can be substituted for Parmesan when more pronounced flavor is desired. Comes in large cylinders. Very hard rind and yellow-white interior.

Pecorino Sardo

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Also called Sardo. Made on the island of Sardinia from fresh, whole sheep's milk. Milder than Pecorino Romano. Two versions: sweet — which is soft; and ripened — which is hard. Served as a table cheese or added to sauces, pastas and salads.

Pecorino Siciliano

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. The oldest cheese in Sicily, written about by ancient Greeks. Cylindrical, uncooked hard cheese made from sheep milk, ripened four months. Pungent and pleasant aroma and sharp taste. Use as a table cheese or for grating.

Pecorino Tartufo

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

From the Umbrian region of Italy, a sheep's milk cheese combined with truffles to make a unique cheese.

Pecorino Toscano

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

PDO. From Tuscany. Natural rind with ivory interior that darkens and gets oilier with age. Flavor ranges from mild to piquant, but always with nutty olive flavor.

Perail

Category: D **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** France

Made in Midi-Pyrenees region. Whitish, yellowish disk covered with bloomy rind. Ivory colored soft paste. Aroma of ewe's milk. Velvety, smooth like very thick cream.

Petit-Suisse

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Small fresh cheese with pudding-like consistency. Should be sweet, fresh, slightly tart. Fat content ranges from 60 to 75 percent.

Piave

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

Named after the Piave River in the northern area of Veneto. Intense, full-bodied flavor similar to Parmigiano Reggiano, but absolutely unique. Excellent table cheese that is rapidly gaining a strong following.

Picón Bejes-Treviso

Category: D **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow, Sheep, Goat **Origin:** Spain

PDO. Today, term "Picón" reserved for blue cheeses made from mixed raw milk and ripened in natural caves in the Liébana region. Aged a minimum of three months. Cylindrical shape with coarse rind. Developed, intense and very buttery taste with fresh mold aroma.

Pierre Robert

Category: D **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

From Robert Rouzaire, this triple-creme, similar to a Brillant-Savarin, but aged longer to develop an even richer texture. Buttery, smooth with a snowy white rind, this cheese is absolutely decadent and incredibly rich.

Pleasant Ridge Reserve

Category: D **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Wisconsin

Fruity, nutty, complex, long, sweet finish. With age, toasted nuttiness, butterscotch. Aged, 10-pound wheel from Uplands Cheese Co. Farmstead, unpasteurized milk, pastured herd.

Pont-l'Évêque

Category: C **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Washed rind cheese made from pasteurized milk. Comes in a square and packed in a wooden box. Very popular French cheese, creamy and a little smelly, but not unpleasant.

Port-Salut

Category: B **Type:** Washed Rind
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

Trappist or monastery-style cheese. Mild, creamy and butter-like. Originally made by Trappist monks in Entrammes. Name sold to large factory producer in Lorraine.





Now available in shreds and slices.

Provolone

Category: A **Type:** Pasta Filata
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Specialty cheeses bear almost no resemblance to dairy case varieties. When young, very mild, supple and white in color with a spicy overtone. With age, aromatic, yellower with small fissures or cracks. Flavor gets more pronounced, spicy with a salty bite. After 18 months, very assertive. Domestic versions range from blah to outstanding.

Quark

Category: C **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Germany

May be made from whole, reduced-fat or fat-free milk. Very moist white cheese with very smooth, soft texture. Should be mild and tangy with bright, fresh taste. Often described as lemon tasting. Most often domestic.

Queso Blanco

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Literally "white cheese." Latin American favorite made from fresh pressed curds molded into shapes. Mild, firm, slightly crumbly cheese. Excellent frying cheese. When heated, softens without melting. Most often domestic.

Queso Fresco

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Made from fresh pressed curds. Mild, soft with crumbly texture. Slightly grainy and salty. Excellent for salads or topping Mexican dishes. When heated, softens without melting. Most often domestic.

Queso Oaxaca

Category: B **Type:** Pasta Filata
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Stretched curd, pasta filata-style cheese wound in a ball. Can be pulled apart like string cheese. Similar in taste to ripened mozzarella. Excellent melting qualities. Also called quesillo. Most often domestic.

Queso Panela

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Mild, soft, white, often carrying imprint of basket it was molded in. Easily absorbs other flavors. Often coated/wrapped with herbs, spices and leaves. Lovely and delicate. Most often domestic.

Quesucos de Liébana

Category: D **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow, Sheep, Goat **Origin:** Spain

PDO. From Liébana region. Aged minimum of two weeks. Regular variety is smooth with sharp and buttery taste. Smoked is more developed.

Raclette

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Switzerland

Firm, uncooked, pressed cheese, nutty flavor, silky texture. Originated in canton of Valais. Now also made in the Fench regions of Savoie, Franche-Comte and Brittany. Traditionally cheese is heated in front of a fire or with a special machine and then scraped onto bread or fingerling potatoes. Delicious as table cheese served at room temperature.

Ragusano

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Italy

PDO. Uncooked whole milk cheese. Sweet, delicate, pleasantly sharp when matured a short time for table use. Cheeses matured for grating are sharper and more savory. Smooth, thin rind, close textured white to yellow paste and pleasant aroma.

Red Leicester

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** England

Cloth-bound. Firm, flaky, buttery texture and slightly sharp butterscotch richness, rather nutty and medium-strong flavor. Marvelous deep orange color. Best eaten after six to nine months when the flavor has intensified.

Requeson

Category: B **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Mexico

Texture very similar to ricotta, but slightly looser. Very mild fresh milky taste that is never salty. Used for enchilada fillings. Most often domestic.

Rembrandt

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Netherlands

Gouda from Friesland, aged 12 months. Wheel approximately 22 pounds, natural rind, golden cream color paste, rich, tangy, with slight crystallization, 48 percent FIDM. Highly recognized in international competitions, Nantwich and London.

Ricotta

Category: A **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Sheep, Goat **Origin:** Italy

Traditionally made from whey. Domestic versions commonly made with cow's milk. May also be made from sheep's or goat's milk. Mild sweet nutty flavor. Texture should be grainy with small grains and slightly dry. Baked, smoked and dried versions available.

Ricotta Salata

Category: B **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Italy

Rindless, firm but tender whey cheese. Pure white interior and nutty, milky flavor. Very dense. Domestic versions sometimes made with cow's milk.

Ridder

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Norway

Ridder is Norwegian for knight, inspired by Port Salut, produced since 1969. Distinctive, sharp taste, smooth texture without eyes, and edible rind. 38 percent FIDM.

Robiola Bosina

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Cow, Sheep **Origin:** Italy

From the Langhe region in northern Italy, this little square of mixed milk cheese is delicate and perfect when it ripens to a delicious runny, mild, sweet interior. The rind is strong enough to hold it together and a taste treat by itself.

Robiola Castagna

Category: D **Type:** Soft
Milk: Goat **Origin:** Italy

A mixed milk cheese primarily from goat's milk. Seasonal cheese from the Langhe region. A small round disk fresh cheese usually ripened for about two weeks, it is wrapped in chestnut leaves, which gives it an earthy flavor with a pure white interior. When young it has a chalky texture that give way to a creamier texture as it ages.



Robiola di Roccaverano

Category: D **Type:** Fresh
Milk: Cow, Sheep, Goat
Origin: Italy

PDO. White cylinder, neither ripened nor aged. Skin develops over the fine paste. Prized for delicate aroma and lightly sour, savory taste. Originated in Piedmont in the time of the Celtic Liguri tribes. Up to 85 percent cow milk, at least 15 percent goat or sheep milk.

Rogue River Blue

Category: C **Type:** Blue
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Oregon

Selected in 2004 as the Best Blue Cheese at the World Cheese Awards in London, the first time in history an American cheese has beaten the time-honored Stilton and Roquefort. Very rich, it is covered in Syrah grape leaves and macerated in Clear Creek Pear Brandy.

Roncal

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Spain

PDO. From Navarre in Pyrenees valleys. Made from unpasteurized sheep's milk and aged minimum of four months. Cylindrical with dark gray or straw-colored rind. Well developed, structured, buttery flavor with aroma of straw, dried fruit and mushrooms.

Roquefort

Category: B **Type:** Blue
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** France

PDO. Most famous French blue. Significant in any cheese lineup. Soft, but crumbly and moist. Abundant blue-green veining. Powerful, full-bodied butterscotch-sweet yet spicy with distinctive aroma. Powerful and highly prized.

Saint Marcellin

Category: D **Type:** Soft-Ripened
Milk: Goat, Cow **Origin:** France

Small disk, about 2¾ inches in diameter and 1 inch high. Made with goat's milk, cow's milk or a blend. Natural rind is white. Best when runny.

Saint Nectaire

Category: C **Type:** Semisoft
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. A Tomme-style, uncooked pressed cheese. The longer the cheese ripens, the greater the flavor intensity. A combination of white, yellow, red or brown flora may cover the rind. Body is supple, creamy to soft. Slight acidity, strong lactic taste and hazelnut flavors.

Salers

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** France

PDO. Similar to Cantal and from the same region. Farm made from raw milk, spring through fall only. Aged three to 18 months, complex, fruity and supple. Wheels marked "Tradition Salers" are exclusively from milk of the Salers breed.

San Simon

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow **Origin:** Spain

Soft to very firm depending on age. Polished, walnut-colored rind and golden interior. Creamy, delicately smoked flavor ranges from milky to piquant depending on age. Duncce-cap shape.

Sao Jorge

Category: C **Type:** Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep **Origin:** Portugal

PDO. Unpasteurized whole milk cheese from Sao Jorge in the Azores. Edible rind, firm, yellow paste, small, irregular eyes. Tangy, peppery taste. Used as an ingredient or eaten with bread.

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Sbrinz

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Switzerland

Bouquet of flowers aroma — the older it gets, the more flowers are in the bouquet. Firm, dry, light to golden brown, smooth rind. Ivory to light yellow interior. Salty, sour-sweet, pure clean taste and nuances of roasted chicory.

Scamorza

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Pasta Filata
Origin: Italy

Mild ivory-colored cheese similar to mozzarella, but drier and chewier. Very good domestic versions available. Scamorza Afumicate, a version smoked over pecan shells, produced domestically.

Selles sur Cher

Category: D
Milk: Goat

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: France

PDO. From Loire and Cher river valleys. Best in spring through fall. Vegetable ash covering protects paste from drying while ripening. At peak when bloom on top of the ash develops blue mold. White interior, hazelnut flavor.

Serpa

Category: D
Milk: Sheep

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Portugal

PDO. Raw milk of Merino sheep from the Alentejo region. Aged six months. Strong aroma, buttery consistency and sweet peppery flavor. It goes particularly well with a good bread and red wine.

Serra da Estrela

Category: D
Milk: Sheep

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Portugal

PDO. Handmade aged wheel from the Beira region that inspired Azeitão. Similar to Spain's La Serena. Beige, pinkish rind, cream-colored paste with smooth, buttery consistency. Raw milk coagulated with cardoon. Rich, sweet, sheep milk flavor.

Shropshire Blue

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Blue
Origin: England

Cylindrical with bright orange, crumbly interior, rough, brown rind and generous beautiful blue veining. Sharp, rustic flavor. Exceptional blue.

Single Gloucester

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: England

PDO. Made from skimmed milk. Firm-bodied but moist with more open texture than Double Gloucester. Not colored with annatto. Delicate creamy taste with pleasant slightly sharp freshness on finish.

Snofrisk

Category: A
Milk: Goat, cow

Type: Fresh
Origin: Norway

Smooth, soft, spreadable cream cheese, 80 percent goat milk, 20 percent cow cream, 25 percent FIDM. Introduced in 1994, for the Lillehammer Olympic Games.

St. André

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: France

Bloomy rind triple creme. Wonderful dessert cheese very soft at room temperature, mild yet extremely rich with cream sweetness. Pleasant aroma. Wonderful with fresh fruit. Crowd pleaser.

St. Killian

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: Ireland

Hexagonal Camembert-style cheese handmade made on Carrigbyrne Farm in County Wexford. White rind. Very mild when young but develops clean, aromatic flavor when older.

St. Tola Crottin

Category: D
Milk: Goat

Type: Fresh
Origin: Ireland

Fresh buttons of farmhouse melt-in-the-mouth goat cheese. Smooth texture and rich, sweet, organic milk taste. As it matures, flavors become more pronounced and texture firmer. Natural rind develops with aging.

St. Tola Log

Category: D
Milk: Goat

Type: Fresh
Origin: Ireland

Original St. Tola product. Organic. Smooth, fine-grained texture. Creamy, sweet taste with many subflavors. Flavor develops and texture gets more compact with maturity. Natural rind develops with aging. Eaten fresh through to maturity.

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Stilton

Category: B
Milk: Cow

Type: Blue
Origin: England

PDO. Good Stilton rind exudes wonderful aromas of cellars, stonewalls and molds. Perfect Stilton is rich and creamy, not dry and crumbly, with clean, lasting, tangy finish. Should not be sold too young, when it can be bitter and dry. Classic blue.

String Cheese

Category: A
Milk: Cow

Type: Pasta Filata
Origin: USA

Many countries claim ownership, but majority is U.S. produced. Handmade string cheese is usually braided and in Middle Eastern style. Delicious, very mild and milky. Great for melting or eating out of hand. Don't confuse with bland dairy case item.

Svevia

Category: B
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Sweden

PGI. Produced since the 13th century. Firm, resilient yet tender. Matured two months or more, becoming mildly acidic and full-bodied with age. Uniform yellow paste contains evenly distributed, small, irregular holes.

Taleggio

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Washed Rind
Origin: Italy

PDO. Soft and creamy with rough, rosy crust. Mellow taste with slight edge and pleasing aroma. Edge sharpens as cheese ripens. Most imported Taleggio is older and beefier in taste.

Teleme

Category: B
Milk: Cow

Type: Soft-Ripened
Origin: California

Smooth, creamy, and similar in taste to Monterey Jack. Texture and interior of good Brie. Slightly tangy. As it ages, flavor deepens and texture becomes runnier and very spreadable. Large pieces may have rice flour crust.

Tête de Moine

Category: D
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Switzerland

Strongest Swiss cheese. Sophisticated, complex raw-milk cheese. Sweet, tangy, woody, flowery and herbal. Straw-colored interior darkens with age. Typically shaved into rosettes, not cut with knife.

Tetilla

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Spain

PDO. Tetilla translates to "nipple." Traditionally flattened, pear-shaped cone with small nipple on top. Easily recognized by shape and smooth, fine, straw-colored rind. Soft and creamy with mild flavor.

Tilsiter

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Semisoft
Origin: Switzerland

Made in flat round loaves with natural reddish-brown rind. Ivory to light yellow color. Interior has small sparse holes. Taste ranges from full-flavored to strong.

Toma Piemontese

Category: C
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: Italy

PDO. Pressed, semi-cooked cylinder made throughout Piedmont since Roman times. Varied appearance, softness and taste result from use of whole or skimmed milk, hoop size and maturation period. Flavor is sweet to deep and savory

Tomme de Savoie

Category: D
Milk: Cow

Type: Firm/Hard
Origin: France

PGI. Pressed, uncooked raw milk wheel aged three to six months. Rough gray rind develops flora and cellar aromas, but paste has subtle, creamy flavor. In this region, Tomme refers to cheese made with leftover milk, which may be whole or skimmed.

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Tomme des Pyrénées

Category: D Type: Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow Origin: France

PGI. Mild, buttery-flavor, aged about three months, manufactured since the 12th century in the St. Giron region.

Torta del Casar

Category: D Type: Semisoft
Milk: Sheep Origin: Spain

PDO. Spectacular Extremadura cheese similar to La Serena. Flat, fragile-rinded cylinder, intensely creamy texture, rich, nutty and tangy flavor, floral and herbal aromas, slightly bitter finish. Slice chilled, or cut top off as if it were a lid and spread cheese onto bread.

Urgelia

Category: D Type: Semisoft
Milk: Cow Origin: Spain

PDO. Queso de l'Alt Urgell y la Cerdanya, this soft cheese is produced from whole pasteurized milk. Creamy texture and buttery taste. From Lleida and Girona in the Catalan Pyrenees. Use in light dishes.

Vacherin Fribourgeois

Category: D Type: Semisoft
Milk: Cow Origin: Switzerland

Classic fondue cheese, although also delicious raw. Reddish brown rind and light golden interior. When young, mild and fresh. Becomes flavorful with age.

Vacherin Mont d'Or

Category: D Type: Semisoft
Milk: Cow Origin: Switzerland

Creamy mild and delicate. Comes tied with fir bark and packed in fir wood box that imparts hint of tannin to cheese. Bloomy, soft, raised rind, amber to reddish-brown in color. Ivory-colored interior.

Valdeón

Category: C Type: Blue
Milk: Cow, Goat, Sheep Origin: Spain

PGI. Like Cabrales, may blend cow's, goat's and/or ewe's milk, cave-aged. Unlike Cabrales, milk is pasteurized, wheel is wrapped in leaves and ripens from heart outward. Dense deep blue veining, buttery texture. Heady aromas and flavors. Spicy, piquant, sweet undertone. Persistent finish.

Valencay

Category: D Type: Semisoft
Milk: Goat Origin: France

PDO. Natural light-brown rind. Small pyramids about 3 1/2 inches high. Ashed versions available. Texture ranges from soft to firm depending on age. White interior. Flavor also varies with age. Highly prized aged versions are too strong for most palates.

Valtellina Casera

Category: C Type: Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow Origin: Italy

PDO. Evolved in 18th century Lombardy from popular Bitto. Semi-cooked wheel, semi-skimmed milk. With age, pale yellow rind and white paste darken, delicate sweet flavor intensifies. Enjoyed fresh or medium mature.

Vorarlberger Alpkäse and Bergkäse

Category: C Type: Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow Origin: Austria

PDO. Aromatic, piquant large wheel aged three to six months. Partly skimmed, raw milk of grass-fed cows. Produced for centuries by independent alpine Vorarlberg dairies, now cooperatively marketed.

Wensleydale

Category: B Type: Firm/Hard
Milk: Cow Origin: England

Traditional use of sheep milk now being revived. White crumbly body, firm but supple with moist texture similar to young Caerphilly. Sweet like wild honey balanced with fresh acidity.

Zamorano

Category: D Type: Firm/Hard
Milk: Sheep Origin: Spain

PDO. From Castile-León plateau. Dark gray, oily rind. Closed, compact interior with tiny crystal-like dots spread evenly throughout. Intense, although not too strong, slightly piquant and buttery taste.

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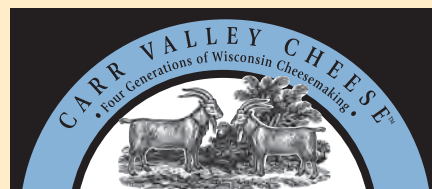


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2007 AMERICAN CHEESE GUIDE



F

or American cheesemakers, 2006 was a year of robust growth and international recognition. For the first time, American raw-milk cheeses could be exported to Europe and American cheeses continued to show an impressive winning record in international cheese competitions.

New American cheesemakers are turning up in all parts of the country. Most are local producers who are catching on that making cheese is a way of adding value to their dairy operations and stabilizing them from the global pressures of the commodity milk market. Just as important, many cheesemakers are starting to see their business grow to the point where they are past the early introduction phase and thus stable enough to explore marketing and promotional opportunities.

While cow-milk cheese is still the most prevalent, goat-, sheep- and mixed-milk cheeses are gaining in popularity. Fresh cheeses are also finding an important niche in the market, especially those that have a very short shelf life and cannot be imported easily.

Also becoming more popular are unique cheese names for the hundreds of new varieties being produced that cannot be easily compared with European cheeses. Then again, Americans have never felt happy with just imitating, and American dairy men and women are showing off the independent heritage that has always made American products exceptional.

Retailers are finding that adding an American cheese section is a way to support local agriculture and present cheeses many consumers are not familiar with. As more consumers see cheese as the new "wine" of entertaining, new varieties, including seasonal cheeses, are being added to the line-up.

The organization responsible for supporting and educating professionals in the United States is the American Cheese Society, based in Louisville, KY. Additional information can be obtained by called 502-583-3783 or going to their Website at www.cheesesociety.org.

BY KAREN SILVERSTON

Photo courtesy of FireFly Farms

Achadinha Cheese Company

Petaluma, CA

Goat milk. Handmade aged and semi-hard. Capricious — Best of Show, 2002 ACS. Cheeses: Broncha, Capricious, Feta

Andante Dairy

Petaluma, CA

Cow, goat and mixed milk. Handmade, fresh, soft-ripened and triple creme. Cheeses: Nocturne, Pico-lo, Mélange, Rondo, Minuet, Metronome

Bass Lake Cheese Factory

Somerset, WI

Cow and goat milk. Handmade traditional and original recipe cheeses. Cheeses: Colby, Butter Jack with Cinnamon, Green Olive Cheddar, Muenster Delray, White Gouda

Beechers Handmade Cheese

Seattle, WA

Cow milk. Seasonal versions of signature Cheddar, cultured fresh farmer's cheese, original recipes. Multiple medals, 2005 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Flagship, Flagship Reserve, Just Jack, Marco Polo, Blank Slate

Belfiore Cheese Company

Berkeley, CA

Cow milk. Artisanal fresh Italian- and Eastern European-style cheeses. Cheeses: Fresh Mozzarella, Traditional Mozzarella, Farmer's Cheese, Feta, Smoked Mozzarella

BelGioioso Cheese, Inc.

Denmark, WI

Cow milk. Traditional Italian-style cheeses made from raw or pasteurized cow's milk. Cheeses: Provolone, Mascarpone, Fresh Mozzarella, American Grana, Gorgonzola, Ricotta con Latte, Parmesan, Asiago, Fontina, Romano, Pepato, Auribella, Italico, Peperoncino, Kasseri, Crescenza-Stracchino, Burrata

Bellwether Farms

Petaluma, CA

Cow and sheep milk. Traditional and original artisan cheese made from pasteurized and raw milk. San Andreas — Gold Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Carmody — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Creme Fraiche, Fromage Blanc, San Andreas, Pepato, Carmody, Crescenza

Bittersweet Plantation Dairy

Gonzales, LA

Cow and goat milk. Artisanal fresh, soft-ripened, triple cream and aged cheeses.

Cheeses: Fleur-de-Lis, Fleur-de-Teché, Evangeline, Gabriel, Feliciano Nevat, Holy Cow, Kashkaval, Bulgarian-style Goat's Milk Feta, Creole Cream Cheese

Boggy Meadow

Walpole, NH

Cow milk. Aged farmstead cheese made with raw milk, vegetarian rennet. Cheeses: Baby Swiss, Smoked Swiss, Salsa Jack, Fiddlehead Tomme

Bravo Farms

Traver, CA

Cow milk. Raw milk, artisanal cheeses handmade with vegetarian rennet. Western Sage Cheddar — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Chipotle, Western Sage and Premium White Cheddar, Queso de Oro, Silver Mountain, Tulare Cannonball, Queso Bravo

Cabot Creamery Cooperative

Montpelier, VT

Cow milk. Farmer-owned cooperative since 1919. Specialty Cheddars aged 60 days to 60 months, flavored and reduced fat. Cabot Clothbound Cheddar Wheel — Best of Show 2006 ACS. Cheeses: Classic Vermont Sharp Cheddar, Vintage Choice Cheddar, Private Stock Cheddar, Mild Reserve Cheddar

Calabro Cheese Corporation

East Haven, CT

Cow milk. Traditional Italian varieties, including organic Mozzarella and Ricotta, kosher Ricotta. Cheeses: Ricotta, Mozzarella Fior Di Latte, Grated Parmesan and Romano Cheese, Scamorze, Caciocavallo, Burrini, Smoked Mozzarella, Fresh Basket Cheeses, Queso Blanco

Cantaré Foods, Inc.

San Diego, CA

Cow milk. Traditional Italian varieties. Whole Milk Fresh Mozzarella Bocconcini — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Whole Milk Fresh Mozzarella, Medaglione Fresca, Mascarpone, Whole Milk Ricotta Fresca with Draining Basket, Burrata

Capriole, Inc.

Greenville, IN

Goat milk. Handmade French-inspired and original cheeses, fresh and soft ripened. Aged raw milk cheeses. Cheeses: O'Banon, Piper's Pyramide, Wabash Cannonball, Sofia, Old Kentucky Tomme, Mont St. Francis, Juliana, Logs, Rounds

Carr Valley Cheese Company

La Valle, WI

Cow, goat, sheep, mixed milk. Varied ages and styles of Cheddars, originals and classics. Five 2006 World Cheese Awards. Gran Canaria — Best of Show 2004 ACS. Cheeses: Mobay, Cocoa Cardona, Show White Goat Cheddar, Cave-Aged Mammoth Cheddar, Billy Blue, Benedictine, Menage, Marisa

Cedar Grove Cheese

Plain, WI

Cow and sheep milk. Prairie Premium line, organic Cheddars, flavored cheeses, handmade from GMO-free ingredients. Cheeses: Faarko, Farmer's Cheese, Butterkäse, Colby, Havarti, Cheddar, Cheese Curds

Coach Farm, Inc.

Pine Plains, NY

Goat milk. Farmstead fresh and aged French-style cheeses. Cheeses: Fresh (various shapes), Aged Stick, Green Peppercorn Cone/Pyramid/Brick, Caraway Rounds, Triple Cream

Cowgirl Creamery

Point Reyes, CA

Cow milk. Organic, artisanal, American original cheeses. Soft-ripened, washed rind and fresh cheese varieties. Red Hawk — Best of Show, 2003 ACS. Cheeses: Mt. Tam, St. Pat, Pierce Point

Crave Brothers Farmstead Cheese, LLC

Waterloo, WI

Cow milk. Handcrafted Farmstead Classics line. Petit Frère, wooden-boxed, washed rind, 8-ounce wheel won a Silver Medal, and Mascarpone won a Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Les Frères, Petit Frère, Mascarpone, Fresh Mozzarella, Farmer's Rope String Cheese

Crowley Cheese, Inc.

Mount Holly, VT

Cow milk. Raw milk recipe dates back to 1824. Handmade in factory since 1882. Similar to Colby. Cheeses: Crowley, aged 6-12 months plus

Cypress Grove Chèvre

Arcata, CA

Goat milk. Fresh, soft-ripened and aged artisanal cheeses. Humboldt Fog — Outstanding Cheese Product 2002 NASFT, Cypress Grove Chèvre — Outstanding Product Line Finalist 2006 NASFT. Cheeses: Humboldt Fog, Fog Lights, Bermuda Triangle, Mad River Roll, Pee Wee Pyramid, Mt. McKinley, Purple Haze

Dairy Farmers of America

New Wilmington, PA

Cow milk. Regional milk cooperative. Low Moisture Part Skim Mozzarella — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Mozzarella, Provolone, Reduced Fat Provolone



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Everona Dairy

Rapidan, VA

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Fagundes Old World Cheese

Hanford, CA

Cow milk. Handmade, farmhouse, raw-milk Cheddar and Portuguese-style queijos. Plain and flavored high-moisture Jack and Hispanic-style quesos made from pasteurized milk. Cheeses: St. John, St. Jorge, Hanfordshire Cheddar, Hanford Jack, San Joaquin, Santa Fe, Maria's Quesos

Fair Oaks Dairy Products, LLC

Fair Oaks, IN

Cow milk. Mild and aged Goudas, traditional and flavored Havarti. Emmentaler — 2005 Wisconsin Cheese Maker's Association U.S. Championship. Cheeses: Gouda, Emmentaler, Sweet Swiss, Smoked Sweet Swiss

Faribault Dairy Company, Inc.

Faribault, MN

Raw cow milk. Handmade blue-veined cheese, aged in St. Peter sandstone caves. Cheeses: Amblu Blue Cheese, Amblu Gorgonzola, Amblu St. Pete's Select

FireFly Farms

Bittering, MD

Goat milk. Artisanal soft ripened cheeses, aged about five to eight weeks and fresh chévre. MountainTop Bleu — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards; Bêche Noir — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Allegheny Chévre, MountainTop Bleu, Merry Goat Round, Bêche Noir

Fiscalini Cheese Company

Modesto, CA

Raw cow milk. Handcrafted, aged farmstead bandaged, flavored and plain Cheddars and originals. Multiple medals, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Bandaged Cheddar 18 months+, San Joaquin Gold, Lionza, Horsefeathers, Purple Moon, Garlic Cheddar, Smoked Cheddar, Tarragon Cheddar, Saffron Cheddar

Fromagerie Tournevent (Damafro Inc.)

Chesterville, Quebec

Goat milk. Fresh, soft ripened plain and flavored, and Cheddar. Cheeses: Biquet, Chèvre Noir, Plain Low Fat Deli Chèvre, Capriati, Chèvre Fin

Grafton Village Cheese Company

Grafton, VT

Raw Jersey cow milk. Artisanal Cheddars. Four Star 4 Year — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Classic Reserve 2 Year, Premium Cheddar 1 Year, Vermont Maple Smoked Cheddar, Grafton Gold 3 Year, Five Star 5 Year, Stone House 6 Year, Sage Cheddar, Garlic Cheddar

Matching Crackers And Cheese

Specialty cheeses call for specific types of crackers.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

Wine and cheese pairings get a lot of attention, but how often do you think of pairing cheese with their accompaniments — crackers, chips, breads and toasts? Industry experts will tell you that to get the best experience from specialty cheeses, it is necessary to serve crackers that match, rather than compete. Taste is not the only factor to take into account when pairing the two.

"Texture is one of the most important things, because a different texture of cheese demands a different texture of cracker," says Michael Thompson, vice president international markets, Marblehead, MA-based Dare Foods, Inc., makers of Breton, Cabaret, Vinta, Baguettes, Grainsfirst, Vivant, Bremmer Wafers and Water Crackers. "Taste is also important, because you want the flavors to compliment each other."

Plain crackers work best with most cheeses, according to Karen Riley, corporate sales and marketing manager, Walkers Shortbread Inc., Hauppauge, NY, the U.S. arm of Walkers Shortbread Ltd., Abellour on Spey, Scotland, makers of Highland Oatcakes. "Apart from the black pepper, oatcakes are intended as carrier crackers, so they're quite plain. The nice thing about them is they're not competing with whatever you put on top of them. The flavor really comes through."

That is not to say that crackers should be completely tasteless. For most cheeses, crackers should have some flavor, even if that flavor is described simply as "buttery" or "bread-like."

Thompson recommends pairing creamy cheeses, such as Brie, with a buttery-textured and mildly flavored cracker. "We did a pairing several years ago. Our friends at Boursin loved Cabaret, which is a large, elegant plain cracker with a buttery texture. Nutty cheese is good with sesame," he says. For strongly flavored cheeses, such as blue cheese and sharp Cheddar, he recommends the Vinta cracker, which is made from a blend of eight grains and seeds. "Blue cheese needs a very strong cracker — very plain doesn't work. What you want is for the cheese to meld with the cracker for a combined flavor that's better than the cheese alone."

As whole grain foods gain popularity, more whole-grain crackers are becoming available, such as Dare's new Grainsfirst crackers, made from 12 grains and seeds.

FoodMatch, Inc., a New York, NY-based company that manufactures and imports Mediterranean and Mediterranean-inspired foods, is launching a whole-wheat version of its popular mini toasts, which are a dry, shelf-stable product with a taste similar to fresh baguettes. "Really, I think it's a great way to bring a whole-grain product into your diet," says Kevin O'Conner, national sales manager.

"There are a lot of health and diet benefits to whole grains. Now you can actually satisfy your servings of whole grains for the day by eating these mini toasts," adds Aaron Conrow, FoodMatch marketing manager.

Walkers is already experiencing success with Oatcakes to a large degree because of its whole-grain status. "Oatcakes, in the United Kingdom, are really taking off because of the perceived health benefits of oats," Riley tells us.

Which cheeses pair best with whole-grain crackers has yet to be determined, although there are some thoughts on the matter. "The whole-wheat mini toasts tend to have a slightly sweeter, nuttier profile," says Conrow.

"There's been a bit of a trend toward goat cheese," which is known as much for its healthfulness as for its taste, notes Thompson. "It's very flavorful and spreadable and would be good on a whole-grain cracker."

In addition to texture and flavor, "People like a variety of sizes," says Thompson.

Riley agrees, mentioning that Walkers offers a boxed assortment of crackers especially for cheese, so customers can get several shapes at once. She also believes bite-size crackers are perfect for parties because they will not crumble when bitten into the way a larger cracker would.

Thompson points out the importance of displaying crackers near specialty cheeses for optimum cross-merchandising opportunities. "These are impulse purchases, for the most part. If we can be over by the specialty cheeses, that's where we should be."

"You can put these right in the cheese case or in merchandising baskets at the end of the cheese aisle," suggests O'Conner. Along with placing them among the cheeses, freestanding displays will encourage customers to pick up crackers to complement their purchases.

"Sample cheeses on crackers," to give customers an idea of the possibilities that await them. "And I think that if you go one step further, crackers can be in the full-service deli. They could use it in a tray or with some of their catering," recommends Thompson **DB**



Photo courtesy of Walker Shortbread, Inc.

Great Hill Dairy Inc.

Marion, MA

Raw Guernsey cow milk. Handmade blue-veined cheese produced in 6-pound wheels from unhomogenized local milk, then aged from eight to 10 months. Cheeses: Great Hill Blue

Great Lakes Cheese Company

Hiram, OH

Cow milk. Multiple winners of Wisconsin Cheese Makers Assoc., New York State and World Championship Cheese Competitions. Cheeses: Cheddar, Provolone, Colby, Swiss and Jack. Adam's Reserve New York State Cheddar

Harley Farms Goat Dairy

Pescadero, CA

Goat milk. Handmade, fresh goat cheese, chèvre logs, tortes and festive wheels, decorated with edible flowers. Cheeses: Van Goat, Chèvre in Oil, Monet, Apricot Pistachio Torte

Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy

Longmont, CO

Goat milk. Handmade fresh, soft-ripened, washed rind and semi-hard varieties using pasteurized and raw milk. Sunlight is aged for 60 days and Queso de Mano is aged for four months. Cheeses: Haystack Peak, Sunlight, Queso de Mano, Snowdrop, Red Cloud, Chèvre in Marinade, Boulder Chèvre

Hendricks Farms & Dairy, LLC

Telford, PA

Raw cow and goat milk. Handmade aged, soft-ripened, washed-rind and natural-rind hard cheese and blocks. Cheeses: Cow: Cow Pie, Blue Beard, Pub Cheddar, Cheddar Blue, Telford Reserve, Bavarian Swiss. Goat: Cabriejo, Blue Bells. Blended: Asiagoat

Henning's Wisconsin Cheese

Kiel, WI

Cow milk. Cheddars, Jacks, farmer's cheese. Mammoths up to 12,000 pounds. Colby — Second Place, 2006 WCMA World Championship Cheese Contest. Cheeses: Colby, Jack, Cheddar, Mammoth Cheddar



Hillman Farm

Colrain, MA

Raw goat milk. Aged, farmstead cheeses. Lottie Garris — 2005 World Cheese Awards Gold Medal. Cheeses: Harvest Wheel, Lottie Garris, Hilltown Wheel

Hook's Cheese Company, Inc.

Mineral Point, WI

Cow milk. Aged Cheddars, Jacks, Colby, and fresh cheeses. Cheeses: Cheddar, Swiss, Brick, Colby, Monterey Jack, Parmesan, Queso Blanco

Jasper Hill Farm

Greensboro, VT

Raw Ayrshire cow milk. Handmade, aged cheeses, including Stilton-inspired Bayley Hazen, aged four to six months and Constant Bliss, aged 60 days. Cheeses: Bayley Hazen, Constant Bliss, Winnemere, Bartlett Blue, Aspenhurst

Joe Matos Cheese Factory

Santa Rosa, CA

Raw cow milk. Handmade, farmstead, Portuguese-style table cheese aged 60 days or more. Cheeses: St. George

San Francisco
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Juniper Grove Farm

Redmond, OR

Goat milk. Handmade farmstead cheeses, mostly French-style. Fresh cheese made from pasteurized milk, and raw milk cheese, aged 60 days or more. Cheeses: Tumalo Tomme, Bêche, Redmondo, Oten-tique, Dutchman's Flat, Pyramid

Klondike Cheese Co.,

Monroe, WI

Cow milk. Greek-style Odyssey feta cheeses, plain and flavored. Multiple Best of Class awards, Wisconsin Cheese Maker Association World Championship Cheese Contest. Cheeses: Feta, Brick, Muenster, Havarti

Lactalis USA

Belmont, WI and Turlock, CA

Cow milk. French-style, soft-ripened cheeses and Feta in traditional, flavored, reduced-fat and fat-free versions. Cheeses: Président Brie, Président Camembert, Président Feta with Mediterranean Herbs, Président Feta with Tomato and Basil

Leelanau Cheese Company

Suttons Bay, MI

Cow milk. Handmade Raclette, traditional, aged, and flavored versions. Green Peppercorn — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Raclette — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Raclette

Loleta Cheese Factory

Loleta, CA

Jersey cow milk. Plain and flavored cheeses, over 30 varieties. Cheeses: Cheddar, Jack, Havarti, Fontina, Organic

LoveTree Farmstead Cheese

Grantsburg, WI

Sheep and cow milk. Trade Lake Cedar — ACS Best of Show, 1998. Cheeses: Gabrielson Lake, The Holmes Series, Trade Lake Cedar

Maple Leaf Cheese Cooperative

Monroe, WI

Hormone-free, locally produced cow milk. Cooperative established 1910. Aged and flavored Cheddars, Jacks and yogurt cheese. Cheeses: Cheddar, Monterey Jack, Yogurt Cheese, Gouda, Edam, Colby, Jack and Jill, Queso Blanco, Naturally Smoked Gouda

Marin French Cheese Company

Petaluma, CA

Jersey cow and goat milk. Artisanal soft-ripened Rouge et Noir and Yellow Buck cheeses. World Cheese Awards: 2005 Gold: Triple Creme Brie; 2006 Gold: Le Petit Déjeuner; 2006 Bronze: Marin French Chèvre and La Petite Creme. Cheeses: Triple Creme Brie, Camembert, Le Petit Bleu, Yellow Buck Chèvre, La Petite Creme, Marin French Blue

Maytag Dairy Farms

Newton, IA

Raw cow milk. Artisanal blue-veined cheese made using the same process as in 1941, based on a recipe Iowa State University developed. Aged four to six months. Cheeses: Maytag Blue

Meadow Creek Dairy

Galax, VA

Raw Jersey cow milk. Grass-fed cows, aged cheese from original recipes, seasonally. Cheeses: Appalachian, Mountaineer, Grayson

Meyenberg Goat Milk Products

Turlock, CA

Goat milk. Goat milk producer since 1934. Began producing cheese in 2005. Milk for the cheese is sourced in California. Kosher certified. Cheeses: Jack, Smoked Jack, Aged Cheddar, Jack with Garlic and Chive, Jack with Jalapeno

Montchevre-Betin, Inc.

Belmont, WI

Goat milk (Wisconsin and Iowa). French-style fresh and aged specialty cheeses. Cheeses: Fresh Chevre Log with Fig & Peppadew, Mini-Cabrie, Bucheron, Feta, Chevre in Blue, La Chevrillette, Goat Milk Cheddar, Le Cabrie, Darsonval, Chabis, Crottin, Cabecou, Sainte Maure, La Chevrotine

MouCo Cheese company

Fort Collins, CO

Cow milk. Soft ripened, washed rind and blue. Cheeses: MouCo Camembert, MouCo ColoRouge, MouCo Blü

Mozzarella Company

Dallas, TX

Cow and goat milk. Fresh and aged Italian cheese varieties, original cheeses with Mexican and Southwestern regional influences. Cheeses: Blanca Bianca, Hoja Santa Goat Cheese, Montasio Festivo, Queso Blanco with Chiles and Epazote, Caciocavallo, Deep Ellum Blue, Caciotta, Crescenza, Mozzarella, Ricotta, Mascarpone, Scamorza, Burrata, Queso Oaxaca

Mozzarella Fresca, Inc.

Concord, CA

Cow milk. Traditional Italian varieties. Kosher certified. Fresh Mozzarella Ovaline — Gold Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards; Fresh Mozzarella Cryovac — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Fresh Mozzarella (Bocconcini, Ovaline, Ciliegine, Ball, Log, Perlini, Perles, Medallions, Marinated), Mascarpone, Ricotta (Whey, Traditional, Whole Milk)

Old Chatham Sheepherding Company, Inc.

Old Chatham, NY

Sheep milk and hormone-free cow milk. Fresh and soft-ripened artisanal cheese. Cheeses: blended sheep and cow milk: Hudson Valley Camembert, Nancy's Hudson Valley Camembert, Fresh Ricotta. Pure sheep milk: Ewe's Blue, Shepherd's Wheel, Peppared Shepherd, Mutton Button, Yogurt

Oregon Gourmet Cheeses, LLC

Albany, OR

Jersey cow milk. Handmade fresh, soft-ripened, plain and flavored washed rind cheese. Cheeses: Sublimity, Camembert, Fromage Blanc, Sublimity Herbs de Provence, Sublimity Peppercorn

Organic Valley

La Farge, WI

Cow milk. Traditional European varieties, including mild and sharp Cheddar, raw and pasteurized. Organic Valley Raw Sharp Cheddar — Bronze Medal, 2005 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Colby, Monterey Jack, Raw Sharp Cheddar, Swiss

Park Cheese Company

Fond du Lac, WI

Cow milk. Artisanal Italian-style Casaro line of cheeses. Cheeses: Provolone, Asiago, Fontina, Romano, Parmesan, Pepato, Kasser, Italian Sharp

Pedrozo Dairy & Cheese Co.

Orland, CA

Raw Cow milk. Aged 20-pound wheels. Certified organic pastures. Cheeses: Northern Gold, Black Butte Reserve, Raw Milk Gouda-Style, Topsy Cow, Mt. Lassen

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company

Point Reyes, CA

Raw Holstein cow milk. Handmade blue-veined cheese, aged six months or more. Suitable for vegetarians, certified Kosher. Cheeses: Original Blue

Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery

Sebastopol, CA

Goat milk. Handmade, soft-ripened French-style cheeses, raw milk feta and fresh chevre — traditional and flavored. Certifications: Kosher, HFAC Humane Raised & Handled. Cheeses: Camellia, Crottin, Bucheret, Raw Milk Feta, Chevre

Rogue Creamery

Central Point, OR

Cow and goat milk. Line of six artisan blue cheeses, 2006 NASFT Best Product Line. Crater Lake Blue — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Rogue River Blue, Smokey Blue, Oregon Blue, Crater Lake Blue, Oregonzola, Echo Mountain Blue, Extra Sharp Cheddar, Raw Milk Sharp Cheddar, Rosemary Cheddar



Photo courtesy of Vermont Butter & Cheese Co.

Roth Käse USA, Ltd.

Monroe, WI

Cow milk. Signature European varieties and originals. Surchoix Gruyère — ACS Best of Show, 1999. GranQueso — Gold Medal, 2006 and 2005 World Cheese Awards (WCA). Cheeses: Grand Cru Gruyère, Buttermilk Blue, GranQueso, Vintage Van Gogh, MezzaLuna Fontina

Rumiano Cheese Co.

Crescent City, CA

Cow milk. Specialty: Dry Monterey Jack, aged a minimum of nine months. Low sodium, reduced fat and organic varieties. Cheeses: Cheddar, Mediterranean Jack, Calico, Pepper Jack, Habanero Pepper Jack

Sartori Foods

Plymouth, WI

Cow milk. Traditional Italian varieties. Stravecchio Parmesan — Gold Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Stravecchio Parmesan, Dolcina Gorgonzola, Bellavitano

Shelburne Farms

Shelburne, VT

Raw Brown Swiss cow milk. Farmstead Cheddars. Cheeses: 2 Year Cheddar (Extra Sharp), 1 Year (Sharp), 6-9 Month (Mild), Smoked

Shepherd's Way Farms

Neerstrand, MN

Sheep milk. Handmade farmstead cheeses: fresh, aged, and blue-veined wheels. Cheeses: Big Woods Blue, Friesago, Shepherd's Hope (Original and Herb/Garlic), Ricotta

Sierra Nevada Cheese Company

Willows, CA

Cow and goat milk. Organic cheese and cream cheese, plain and flavored, including Sierra Nevada and Gina Marie brands, and paneer. Cheeses: All Natural Cream Cheese, Organic Monterey Jack, Organic Double Jalapeno Jack, Organic Cheddar

Smith's Country Cheese, Inc.

Winchendon, MA

Cow milk. Farmstead cheese. Plain, aged, smoked and flavored varieties. Cheeses: Gouda, Cheddar, Havarti, Sundried Tomato and Basil Gouda, Cumin Gouda

Spring Hill Jersey Cheese Company

Petaluma, CA

Pasteurized, hormone-free Jersey cow milk. 100% USDA Certified Organic cheese. Cheeses: Fresh Cheese Curd, Jersey Jack, Zesty Italian Jack, Mike's Firehouse Cheddar

Sweet Grass Dairy

Thomasville, GA

Cow and goat milk. Handmade fresh, soft-ripened, semi-soft and firm/hard styles. Young cheeses made from pasteurized milk and a few aged raw-milk varieties. Cheeses: Goat: Fresh Chevre, Georgia Pecan Chevre; Lumiere, Holly Springs. Cow: Green Hill, Thomasville Tomme, Georgia Gouda, Myrtlewood

Taylor Farm

Londonderry, VT

Cow milk. Handmade farmstead Gouda-style cheese, traditional and contemporary. Cheeses: Maple Smoked Gouda, Vermont Farmstead Gouda, Chipotle Gouda, Garlic Gouda, Aged Gouda, Natural Rind Gouda

Thistle Hill Farm

North Pomfret, VT

Raw organic Jersey cow milk. Artisanal aged cheese made in the style of the Savoie region of the French Alps. Cheeses: Tarentaise

Three Sisters Farmstead Cheese

Lindsay, CA

Raw, hormone-free Jersey cow milk. American originals, cloth-wrapped and aged six months or more. Cheeses: Serena, Serenita

Tillamook County Creamery Association

Tillamook, OR

Unpasteurized cow milk. Farmer-owned dairy cooperative. Cheddar aged a minimum of 60 days. Cheeses: Tillamook Medium Cheddar, Tillamook Sharp Cheddar, Tillamook Special Reserve Extra Sharp Cheddar, Tillamook Vintage White Extra Sharp Cheddar, Tillamook Vintage White Medium Cheddar, Smoked Black Pepper White Cheddar, Garlic Chili Pepper Cheddar

Uplands Cheese Co.

Dodgeville, WI

Unpasteurized cow milk. Alpine Beaufort-inspired. Aged four to 12 months. Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. ACS Best of Show 2005 and 2001. Cheeses: Pleasant Ridge Reserve

Vella Cheese Company, Inc.

Sonoma, CA

Cow milk. Bear Flag brand Monterey Jack, Italian-style and Cheddar cheeses. Cheeses: Mezzo Secco, Original High Moisture Jack, Special Select Dry Monterey Jack, Dry Monterey Jack

Vermont Butter and Cheese

Websterville, VT

Cow and goat milk. Fresh European style cow's milk specialty cheeses, fresh and signature aged artisanal goat cheeses. Mascarpone — Gold Medal, 2005 World Cheese Awards. Kosher. Cheeses: Creme Fraîche, Fromage Blanc (fat-free), Mascarpone, Quark, Chèvre, Creamy Goat Cheese, Bonne Bouche, Bijou, Coupole

Vermont Shepherd, LLC

Putney, VT

Raw sheep milk. Pyrenees-style, 7- to 91/2-pound brushed rind wheels, cave aged three to four months, ACS Best of Show 2000. Seasonal, available August to early March. Cheeses: Vermont Shepherd

Westfield Farm, Inc.

Hubbardston, MA

Goat and cow milk. Handcrafted Capri line includes fresh, surface ripened, blue, external blue, flavored and aged cheeses. Hubbardston Blue — ACS Best of Show in 1993. Bluebonnet — ACS Best of Show 1996. Cheeses: Hubbardston Blue, Classic Blue Log, White Buck, Hubbardston Blue Cow

Widmer's Cheese Cellars

Theresa, WI

Cow milk. Handcrafted aged, washed rind cheeses, Cheddars aged 1 to 6 years, and traditional Colby (plain, caraway or with herbs and vegetables). Washed Rind Brick Cheese — Bronze Medals, 2004 and 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Washed Rind Brick, Cheddar, Traditional Colby, Colby with Jalapeno Pepper

Willamette Valley Cheese Company

Salem, OR

Jersey cow milk, sheep milk. Certified organic pastures and production facilities. Traditional European varieties and Perrydale. Cheeses: Brindisi, Farmstead Gouda, Perrydale, Farmstead Fontina; Creamy Havarti, Cumin Gouda, Eola Jack

Willow Hill Farm

Milton, VT

Sheep and cow milk. Original recipes, cave-aged, seasonal availability. Alderbrook — Gold Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Vermont Brebis — Silver Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Mountain Tomme, Summer Tomme, Alderbrook, Vermont Brebis

Winchester Cheese Company

Winchester, CA

Raw, hormone-free Friesen Holstein cow milk. Artisanal, traditional Dutch Gouda-style cheeses. Natural-rind cheeses aged 60 days to more than one year. Sharp Gouda — Bronze Medal, 2006 World Cheese Awards. Cheeses: Gouda (Mild to Super Aged), Garden Herb Gouda, Jalapeno Gouda, Smoked Gouda, Cumin Gouda

Woolwich Dairy

Orangeville, Ontario

Goat milk. Soft unripened, ripened, and firm. Cheeses: Brie

Zingerman's Creamery

Ann Arbor, MI

Cow and goat milk. Handmade fresh and soft-ripened cheeses, some evoking traditional French varieties. Cheeses: Cow: Zingerman's Cream Cheese, Bridgewater, Manchester, Argyle, Liptauer. Goat: Detroit St. Brick, Lincoln Log, Little Dragon, City Goat, Aged Chelsea, Little Napoleon, Goat Cream Cheese

The American Cheese Society

157 producers from 28 states and two Canadian provinces entered an astounding 941 cheeses, almost 200 more than last year's record 749.

Unprecedented entries and attendance characterized the 2006 23rd Annual American Cheese Society (ACS) Conference, held in Portland, Oregon.

"The Annual Conference remains one of the most unique events of its kind in the United States. Rarely does such a large group gather for the purpose of sharing ideas and techniques that help shape and drive the [specialty cheese] industry," states David Grotenstein, chairman, ACS Competition Committee.

The American Cheese Society is an active, non-profit organization that encourages the understanding, appreciation and promotion of farmstead and natural specialty cheeses produced in the Americas and Canada. By providing an educational forum for cheesemakers, retailers and cheese enthusiasts, The Society fills an important gap in today's specialty food world.

Membership in the ACS is constantly growing, with memberships available at the Associate, Individual, Small Business, Corporate Sponsor and Multi-Unit Retail

levels. ACS members identify themselves according to the following professional demographics.

- 25% cheesemakers/buttermakers
- 13% distributors/brokers
- 35% retailers
- 6% academic/technical affiliates
- 3% writers/authors or communications specialists
- 4% restaurant/foodservice specialists, such as chefs
- 2% suppliers/dairies
- 12% enthusiasts, who are mainly consumers or cheese-lovers

Membership in the American Cheese Society is available to anyone involved in the trade or simply passionate about American-made specialty and artisanal cheeses.

For more information about ACS, the next conference or American artisanal cheeses, call the American Cheese Society at 502-583-3783 or visit www.cheesesociety.org

Backing Off Olives — A BIG MISTAKE

From a side show to a destination stop, olives have been embraced by consumers.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

With so many varieties of olives becoming popular, deciding what to buy can be confusing, so taking the time to learn about today's olive options could pay off.

Phil Meldrum, president of New York, NY-based FoodMatch Inc., importer of Mediterranean and Mediterranean-inspired foods, believes olives are gaining popularity in the United States in much the same way olive oils have in recent years. "Olives have always been sold here, mostly industrially processed olives. But what's happened in the past few years — like with wine and cheese and coffee and chocolate — is people are educating themselves about the products," he says.

"It is clear the market is moving from canned to fresh fruit, from highly processed to minimally processed," says Jeffrey Siegel, president, Chloé Foods Corp., olive grower, processor and importer as well as prepared food manufacturing company, Brooklyn, NY.

"The [retail] canned olive market is dying fast," according to Craig Makela, president, Santa Ynez, CA-based Santa Barbara Olive Company, Inc., growers and producers of organic olives and producers of conventional olives. "The American public is getting a little tired of eating a salty, mealy, tasteless, nutritionless canned black olive.

"I think, in terms of tonnage, sales of olives are growing. But what's more important is that people are migrating to quality olives," Meldrum says. "When people go from canned olives to their first 'real' olives, it's kind of an awakening for them."

Adin Hester, president, Olive Growers Council of California, Inc., Visalia, CA, believes the proliferation of olive bars in delis has much to do with the rising popularity. "They're exposing more flavors and process-



PHOTO COURTESY OF KRINOS FOODS INC.

ing styles to the public. People are realizing there's more than just ripe olives in cans, although that's still a huge, huge market."

Eric Moscahlaidis, president, Krinos Foods, Inc., an importer, distributor and manufacturer of Greek specialty foods based in Long Island City, NY, believes perceived health benefits have a lot to do with the growing popularity of olives. "I also think they are influenced by the proliferation of olives offered at restaurants," he observes.

As consumers move away from bland, banal olive offerings found in cans, they are looking for bolder flavors and more variety.

The more people are exposed to olives, the more sophisticated their palates and the more they look for greater variety and bolder tastes, notes Anthony DiPietro, import buyer, George E. DeLallo Company, curer, producer and importer of olives and antipasto items, based in Jeannette, PA. DiPietro also points out that canned olives still represent about 90 percent of total olive sales.

Some industry professionals, including its competitors, credit DeLallo as the U.S. olive merchandising innovator and the company most responsible for the growth of olive sales, because DeLallo introduced the olive bar and

made it a practical for retailers.

Stuffed olives are becoming important, DiPietro says. "Stuffed olives of any kind are very popular items in the United States, although not nearly as popular in Europe. It's very American." It may have started with pimientos and almonds and morphed into bolder flavors like peppers and garlic, "but it was olives stuffed with blue cheese that opened consumers' eyes to the possibilities."

The growing interest in stuffed olives makes these value-added items a great plus. "Everybody's trying to come up with the next thing to stuff an olive with. I've even seen an olive

stuffed with an olive," Meldrum relates. Popular stuffings include jalapeño peppers, onions, garlic, cheese or almonds, he says.

The largest growth, according to DiPietro, is found in olive salads — mixed varieties of olives that may contain marinated vegetables, cheese and/or spices. Vegetables may include artichokes, cauliflower, baby corn, peppers and garlic. The salad trend has caused resurgence in the popularity of marinated vegetables. Very popular and growing, says DiPietro, are Roman-style artichokes with long stems — elegant and upscale.

Varieties of olives that have been around for quite a while are growing in popularity. Niçoise and Picholines from France are becoming more popular, and oil-cured olives, once popular only in ethnic areas and the Northeast, are seeing increased sales nationwide. There are many olives to choose from, but two great additions are Bella di Cerignola from southern Italy and Castelvetro, another southern Italian variety that is round and has a great green color and a mild, buttery taste, according to DiPietro.

Understanding Olive Basics

Sturdy, drought-resistant olive trees are

some of the oldest living things on the planet. "There are trees that grow in southern Italy and Crete that are 2,000 to 2,500 years old," FoodMatch's Meldrum says.

Olive crops vary from year to year. Most fields have an on and an off year, he explains, with yields that vary. "The size of the crop changes, but the quality also changes. Some of the varieties are more bulletproof."

"It's a cyclical crop," Santa Barbara's Makela explains. This past year resulted in especially low yields for California and Spain. Yields that looked low to begin with became even smaller because of bad weather. He believes this will affect pricing but says plenty of olives will still be available from places such as Greece and South America, where crop yields were high this year.

Olives are available from around the world, including California. Olive growing is attracting interest there just as grape growing did a few decades ago. "Over 250 varieties are growing in California today. Maybe more," Makela says.

"Europe will always stay the core, but there will be more interest in South American olives," Meldrum predicts. Because olives are often grown in one country and packed in another, buyers should ask where they originated and how they were processed.

Some deli olives are pasteurized to increase shelf life. Annie Owens, marketing manager, Plant City, FL-based A. Camacho Inc., a grower, producer and distributor of olives, olive oil and other specialty food products, explains, "Once the olives are packed in either jars, tins or pouches and are taken off the line, they are placed in special racks on rollers and rolled into a retort machine — like a big steam kettle. The jars are heated with steam until the inside temperature of the cans reaches a desired temperature in order to kill the bacteria."

Maurice Penna, owner, M&CP Farms, Orland, CA, olive growers and producers, does not believe the process is necessary with today's vacuum packaging. "With pasteurization, you soften the product a little bit more," he says. Owens says not many stores chose to buy pasteurized olives for the deli.

When buying olives, texture, balance of flavor, scent and appearance are important. "Look for olives that are moist and fresh," Meldrum advises. "Smell is also important. If they're going bad, they'll have a musty smell. They should have a good, clean, fresh olive smell. They should look hydrated, with the exception of a few types of black olives. The coloration is important, but you need to know what they're supposed to look like."

When the olive was picked will impact its flavor. "All olives start off green, then they ripen and turn color, then they turn black,"

Meldrum explains. Unlike canned olives, which are picked green and dyed black, natural olives can range from light or dark green to gray to purple to black, depending on the variety and when was picked. The riper the olive, the stronger it will taste.

Olive Bar Or Pre-Packed Cups?

While both olive bars and cups are growing, opinions about the future differ.

"We're going through a maturation process," says Chloë's Siegel. "The olive bar and its more mature evolution, the Mediterranean bar, are hot concepts. Introducing an olive bar will increase sales 300 percent. But, it is trendy concept that will eventually lose

"With a cup program, they [retailers] can have different types of olives at different price points."

***— Phil Meldrum
FoodMatch Inc.***

momentum as the category matures. Something else will come along that is even trendier and retailers will want to devote their prime locations to a new concept."

Sooner or later olive bars will reach a saturation point, continues Siegel. While the real action in olive bars is in supportive ethnic areas and urban sites where retailers have the space and are looking for focal points, there are still important points to remember. "The huge increase in olive sales has to be balanced against the capital costs for flooring, electrical work, installation costs and remodels as well as the amount of retailing space needed. That does not include additional labor and utility costs."

The cup market is showing strong growth; not every retailer has the extra floor space to devote to a bar concept. Factors such as low customer counts and low volume work against an olive bar that requires high turnover to be successful.

"As the segment moves toward a mature market, the category will mature into a very healthy product line, more dependent on the sales of pre-packed," says Siegel.

While olive bar popularity continues to grow, not everyone favors them, says Meldrum. "Some people like olive bars, and some people aren't comfortable with bars in general." For shoppers not comforted by bulk displays, sealed deli cups will do the trick. The cups also have other advantages. "With

a cup program, they [retailers] can have different types of olives at different price points," he adds.

Labor is a consideration, and pre-sealed containers save work for the retailer. "The advantage of the cups is they don't require the operator to handle the product, and they're still perceived as very fresh by the consumer," says Krinos' Moscahlaidis.

Still, olive bars can be a huge draw. Consumers are not backing away from self-serve concepts. In fact, they are growing, explains DeLallo's DiPietro. Merchandising is becoming more important, and retailers are looking for shopper destinations that will draw customers in. Stores are spending more time and more money and devoting more space to destination marketing.

Retailers are not backing away from olive bars — the opposite is happening. The olive bar has grown into the Mediterranean food bar to the extent that is too large and many retailers are moving away from mobile displays to in-line displays. Another growing trend is creating two destination areas — one for olives and one for a Mediterranean food bar. The category is expanding and sales show very strong growth for retailers that expand the variety and the merchandising footprint, according to DiPietro.

He points out that cup sales are also growing but insists it is a real mistake to back off creative merchandising and building focal points for customers. At this time, DeLallo carries over 75 varieties of olives and salads and over 60 different antipasto/Mediterranean food bar items with the list growing due to customer demand.

If you carry olives in cups and on a bar, you can avoid confusion by placing the two offerings near each other. "Surprisingly, we're finding that most retailers have an olive bar and pre-packaged olives in different locations," says Moscahlaidis. If so, he recommends posting signs telling shoppers where to look for additional olives in the store.

Krinos also makes single-serving packages. "They're small bags of just three olives that go on the deli counter," he says.

Innovative packaging — such as snack cups and individual serving-size bags — has turned olives into a grab-and-go item. "We have single-serving 2.3-ounce packages," says Owens. The packages are designed for use as a stand-alone item near the deli counter and as part of a sandwich tray.

Meldrum believes a cup program plus an olive bar are key to keeping all your olive customers happy. "Some people are comforted by the closed container and like the convenience of it. And some people enjoy scooping them up. If you don't carry both, you're missing out on one consumer or the other." **DB**

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Reader Service No. 206



A New Generation Of Deli Packaging

As the deli becomes a mealtime destination, new packaging will provide greater options for a greater variety of consumers.

By Bob Johnson

An increasing number of deli department suppliers are offering value-added products in a new generation of packaging. Following a European deli trend, these packages make it easier to offer eye appeal, safety and convenience. And that added value may make it possible to increase receipts without increasing the number of customers.

Much of the new generation of packaging is oriented toward offering an unprecedented level of convenience.

"Our latest thing is a plastic bag with a handle for rotisserie chicken," says Ed Sussman, co-owner, Merit Paper Corporation, Melville, NY. "It's reclosable, definitely doesn't leak, is clear and doesn't fog up." An additive that took years to develop has made it possible for Merit to provide a plastic bag that does not fog up or gather condensation.

The advantage is that customers can more clearly see the chicken as they decide whether to make a purchase.

Sahale Snacks, Seattle, WA, also offers versatile convenience packaging for its range of nut mix products. "We have two sizes — a grab-and-go 2-ounce pouch and a re-sealable 5-ounce pouch," says Donna Williams, vice president of marketing. "Our products are exceptionally versatile, which is why they are such a big hit with retailers that cross-merchandise. Sahale is used by consumers as a between-meal snack, a meal replacement, for entertaining, as an

ingredient in stir-fry and salads and in gift baskets. So while some retailers, such as Safeway, have our product specifically in the deli, others will put Sahale on the shelf in the natural section or snacks section and place



COURTESY OF MERIT PAPER CORP.

product at other impulse locations in the store."

Even firms that have offered packaged deli products for a very long time are upgrading the packaging.

"We have been packaging our pickles individually in plastic pouches for over 50 years, and we recently added automated equipment from Spain, which has allowed us to put our pickles in a gusseted-bottom stand-up pouch making it very easy to merchandise," says Steve Byrnes, president, Van Holten's, Waterloo, WI.

The development of higher quality packaging is a result of the demographics representing consumers who are increasingly turning to the deli department as a meal and/or snack alternative to restaurants. These consumers have higher expectations of quality in both food and packaging.

"We have noticed the deli managers upgrading their deli bags from flip-top bags to zipper-lock bags," notes Jonathan Tsui, CEO, Duratech Group, Carlstadt, NJ. "If they are using zipper-lock deli bags already, then they plan to upgrade to slider-lock deli bags. With the carryout bags, more and more deli managers are requesting meal-to-go bags. I think the trend with both spouses working or limited time for meal preparation drives the demand for more prepared meals."

Package manufacturers are working to stay a step ahead in coming up with new products.

"In 2005, Robbie created a flexible packaging solution called the Hot N Handy Pouch for delis looking for something to replace their current packaging that would offer consumers the benefits they were asking for," says Tara Downing, product manager, Robbie Manufacturing, Lenexa, KS. "The Hot N Handy pouch was designed to hold both hot and cold deli products like rotisserie and fried chicken, ribs, roasts, ham, wings,

popcorn chicken and many types of grab-and-go items. Hot N Handy Pouches come with a re-sealable zipper, built-in handle, gusseted bottom for stand-ability, microwave ability and anti-fog characteristics to help keep the pouch crystal clear to help the con-

Another new advance brings cool-to-the-touch packaging and self-venting packaging that can be more easily microwaved.

sumer view the product."

Another new advance brings cool-to-the-touch packaging and self-venting packaging that can be more easily microwaved.

"Flair has recently introduced a couple of new packaging concepts to the market," says Cheryl Miller, operations and marketing manager, Flair Flexible Packaging International, Menasha, WI. "These include a self-

venting microwavable vapor release pouch [VRP] and Cool-to-Touch bowls. The VRPs self-vent in the microwave with reheating, avoiding unnecessary spills and explosions. The new Cool-to-Touch bowls hold their shape and remain cool on the outside after heating, thereby eliminating burns and reducing spills. These along with our Deli Solution line of packaging for rotisserie meats, ribs, stand-up portion pouches, etc., allow delis to continue to provide a great deal of convenience for the consumer by way of packaging."

The Attention Grabbers

The improved packaging provides unprecedented convenience, and it frequently provides unprecedented opportunities to let the customer see what is being offered at the deli.

"Our packaging is considered to be upscale, striking and unique," says Williams. "Sahale also has a mystique that is compelling to consumers. Unlike most other nut manufacturers, we do not package our product in clear pouches. As a result our product stays fresher longer. We use stunning food photography to impress upon the consumer that Sahale is not just a snack — it is a culinary experience. People who shop in the deli

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area are looking for that type of experience."

The package itself can relay the message of convenience.

"Flair uses only high-quality rotogravure printing to capture and help relay the message of freshly prepared, high-quality foods," Miller says. "Rotogravure printing has the ability to produce high-impact, fine-detail, life-like images, and that is the reason it is used exclusively by Flair."

Jim Daskaleas, vice president for product development, Walker's Food Products Company, North Kansas City, MO, believes the real innovation will not be in the materials, since plastics continue to reign supreme. "I would have to say there is a trend toward eye-appealing packaging." He believes eye-appeal describes packages with numerous colors and new and different shapes.

The Merit Paper rotisserie chicken bags are available in up to eight colors, and the ingredients can be printed right on the container rather than on a label that has to be applied.

"Consumers are demanding better taste, more convenient, better-looking packaging and longer shelf-lives. Consumers are smarter," Byrnes says. "This is what drove Van Holten's to make the changes and improvements we have over the last couple of years including automating our production lines, changing to a stand-up pouch and now growing into a new facility that will be completed in May of 2007."

One important additional feature of food packaging is that it should provide — and appear to provide — safety.

"People have associated pre-packs with safety, so I think it's growing more prevalent," Daskaleas says. "It's been looming for a lot of years, but with spinach we went from an item that was just always there to a new fear factor."

Robbie's Downing agrees, noting consumers are looking for three main attributes. "Safety — consumers are seeking packaging that is tamper proof, leak resistant and preferably has cooking and reheating instructions. Convenience — a built-in handle for easy carrying, microwave abilities for reheating and a leak-resistant, re-sealable zipper. And appeal — attention-grabbing designs help to grab the consumer's eye and health-conscious consumers get the ability to read the nutrition information right on the package."

A Growing Trend

The trend toward conveniently packaged deli foods figures to grow as the boomer generation continues to age.

"The days of big-basket shopping will decrease as the boomer generation ages," says Downing. "As the aging baby-boomer

population grows, many driving factors will become more evident — packaging that contains health information, provides portability, is easy to use and has larger print, particularly for the preparation and food safety information. Smaller family units need smaller portions or re-sealable packaging. Our latest addition to the Hot N Handy Pouch line is color-specific pouches with large block letters to help consumers differentiate one product from another."

One important additional feature of food packaging is that it should provide — and appear to provide — safety.

The boomer generation brings its own habits and expectations to food. And those habits figure to set the trend as they are passed down to their children.

"We're living in a different world and there's a different generation," Merit's Sussman notes. "People in their 60s are used to going home to a cooked meal because only one person had to go to work to support the family. The working families of the next generation are willing to settle for a meal that was not cooked by Mom. People are grabbing their lunch from supermarket delis, and it's costing them less than if they went to a restaurant. The deli center is expanding — it is becoming more of a profit center for the supermarket."

The trend toward convenience packaging also figures to accelerate with the influx of immigrants with customs and orientations different from those of native-born Americans. Some of their desire for freshness is bound to affect the marketplace.

"In the United States, we went through a period where everyone wanted to buy in bulk and then divide up or store the bulk item for long period of time," Duratech's Tsui explains. "In Europe and Asia where housing space is smaller, they don't have the luxury of a large pantry closet or a large refrigerator. It's unheard of in other countries to keep an additional freezer in the basement for frozen steaks or seafood. The custom in other countries is to shop frequently and buy everything as fresh as possible. Therefore Europeans will prefer to buy the smaller pre-packaged deli items for the space and freshness reason."

DB

Featuring Ethnic Salami Boosts Sales

This ages-old food is being rediscovered for its versatility and taste.

By Duane Craig

Since its practical beginnings, salami has served as a source of shelf-stable, ready-to-eat energy. As different cultures developed their own versions of salami based on the varying climates in their lands, this method of food preservation blossomed into a diverse ethnic food category. And in today's global village, what used to be some peoples' food is becoming everybody's food.

"You wouldn't only stock certain types of salami just because you have a store that has certain types of clientele," says Dave Brando, director of sales and marketing, corporate foodservice and export, Piller Sausages and Delicatessens Ltd. of Waterloo, Ontario. "With people traveling more and more these days, they taste different things. Consumers are becoming more aware of flavors, and they want to experience them again when they get back home."

William Osanitsch, sales and marketing director, Karl Ehmer Quality Meats, Ridgewood, NY, sees salami being rediscovered to the point of seeming like something entirely new. "I think every market is looking for something new to introduce to their customers in order to keep their menus fresh. The deli has a menu just like a restaurant because people are thinking about what they are going to put on their tables. Everything has cycles, and cervelats and German salamis have not really hit the market in a big way yet. I think they have a lot of potential in being the next new salami option."

Francesca Rivas, marketing manager, Cappola Food Inc., Toronto, Ontario, favors salami to help create a shopping experience that allows the consumer to shop for and taste deli meats without having to travel to their countries of origin. She says it promotes the deli meats from various countries and offers travelers who have experienced the taste of other deli meats the opportunity to buy them at their local supermarkets.

"One item, for example, that has been doing phenomenal in the last year is pancetta," says Simone Bocchini, director of sales, Fratelli Beretta USA, Inc., South Hacken-



sack, NJ. "It was just mainly appealing to ethnic markets like Italian or South American markets that knew the product. Most of the Americans were using bacon as part of their recipes. Now, in the last year, the advertising on the Food Channel, for example, has shown how to use pancetta instead of bacon in a lot of typical American recipes. We noticed that pancetta doubled its sales in the last six months. People are getting more knowledgeable about these products and they are looking for them."

Attached to the experience of food are feelings of home, quaintness and comfort that also imply quality and freshness.

"Where do you go if you really want high-quality products?" asks John Jack, vice president of sales, Fiorucci Foods, Inc., Colonial Heights, VA. "It's typically a place

that has some sort of an ethnic flair or flavor to it. The ethnicity certainly has its role in the overall image that you're going to establish because the connotation you want as a retailer is freshness, variety and quality."

"Salami products can accomplish the ethnic flavor or 'feel' because salamis come in different varieties from around the world," Rivas says. "Not only do they vary by country, but salamis also have regional differences. Italian salamis come in varieties like the round Genoa salami from the northern region and the sopressata salami that is flatter and narrower in size hailing from the southern regions. We manufacture both varieties to cater to the different markets."

In the past two years, Bocchini relates, his company has noticed a big change in consumer preferences as they began to

request more upscale products like prosciutto, dry-cured salami and imported items from Italy.

Supplier Offerings Span The Globe In Ethnic Tastes

For supermarket delis in multicultural communities, salami not only creates an ethnic feel but also satisfies the local palate. Recent immigrants' preferences are often rooted in the foods of their native lands.

"Salami also caters to immigrants of vari-

ous ethnic backgrounds who are searching for products they enjoyed eating when living in their mother country," says Rivas. "It provides the ethnic consumer the convenience to purchase products that are familiar [at the supermarket deli] without having to make that extra trip to their local deli."

Immigrants from Europe are traditionally thought to be prime consumers of salami products. The 2003 Current Population Survey by the Census Bureau showed approximately 4.5 million foreign-born peo-

ple in the United States from European countries. This group has many subgroups, each with its own salami preferences.

"Our products can help the supermarket deli satisfy the new Europeans from the Baltic nations, Soviet bloc countries, Hungary and Western Europe," says Osanitsch of Karl Ehmer. "They are also very popular with people from the Alsace region of France."

Brandow says Piller's products will "take consumers on a flavor trip through Central Europe." Its offerings include the tastes of Germany, Russia, Poland, Hungary and Spain.

Other suppliers produce and sell a variety of products appealing to a wide range of people looking for the European flavors. Jack says that while most of Fiorucci's products have their roots in Italy, some are reminiscent of Hungary, Germany and Spain.

The Census Bureau predicts Hispanics will be 24 percent of the population by 2050, so there is a growing market for the types of salami products preferred by the many Hispanic subgroups, each with its own unique preferences.

Edgar Soto, vice president of sales and marketing, Cibao Meat Products, Inc., Bronx, NY, cites the example of people from the Dominican Republic living in and traveling to and from New York. Cibao has a brand of salami available in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

Cibao's products' textures, flavors and uses appeal to people from the Caribbean, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, he says, noting these ethnicities use salami as an entrée rather than just for sandwiches, with Dominicans in particular using salami as a staple.

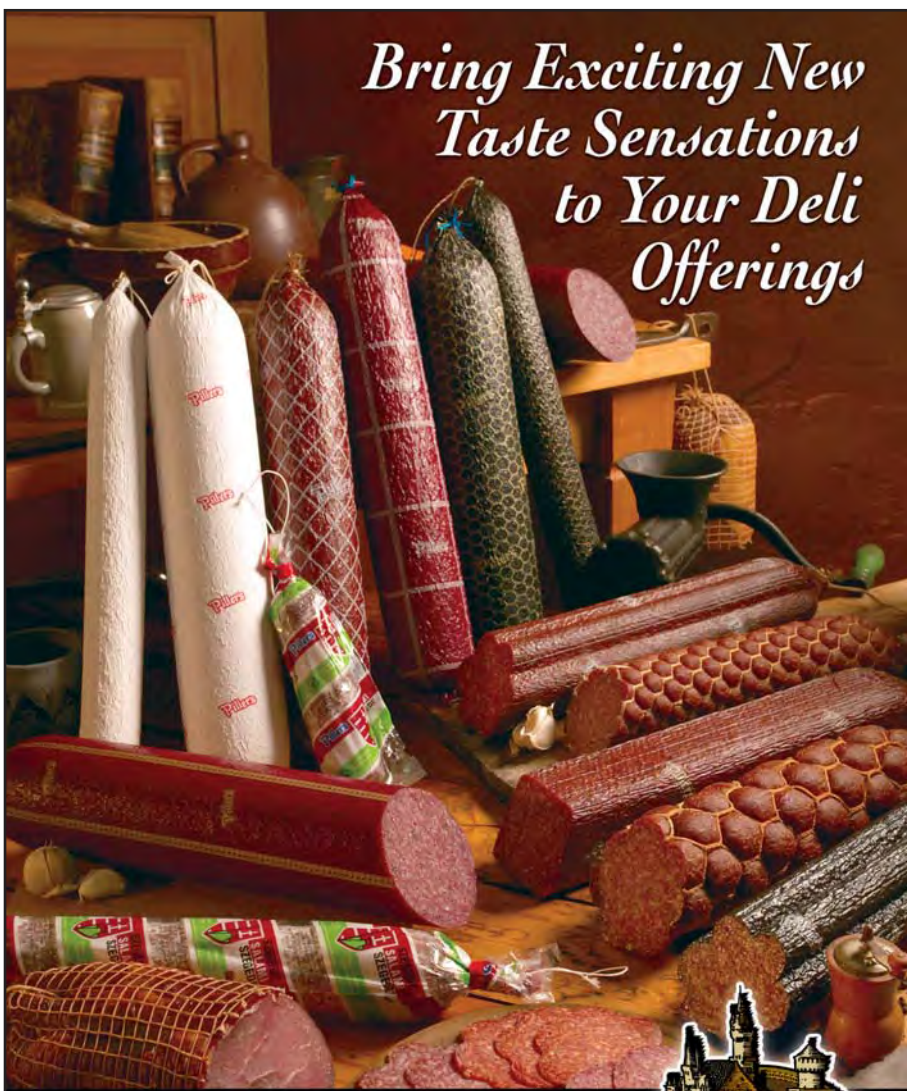
For the population in general, salami offers opportunities to enjoy familiar foods in new ways. Beretta's Bocchini notices it being linked more often with cheese and wine to create new tastes beyond what is available from typical cold cuts.

During the winter holiday season, salami and its close relatives start showing up in end-caps and freestanding displays. Suppliers predict continuing trends toward more upscale sales of these during the season.

"Salami products like ours make wonderful hors d'oeuvres and appetizer selections," Osanitsch says. "It can be the alternative to pepperoni and cheese."

Rivas says salami can be an affordable substitute for prosciutto, which is popular during the holidays. She sees the Italian-style salami her company produces as giving consumers more choices for holiday platters and as an excellent complement to beer or wine.

"It is a simple way do something different



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as an appetizer, compared to what you generally do every year," Beretta's Bocchini says. "I think it is just a different way to show a little bit more international taste."

Brandow touts Piller's different shaped salamis as adding variety and interest to holiday foods along with encouraging the consumer desire to explore different tastes.

Cibao's Soto says that while Hispanics he caters to are year-round, regular consumers of salami, the holidays do account for higher consumption since this group places heavy emphasis on family gatherings.

Making The Product Work For Its Space

Marketing salami comes down to finding ways to strongly suggest it to customers.

According to Fiorucci's Jack, consumers may not automatically consider salami for holiday entertaining, even though many of them would consider it a good fit with their holiday food plans. "So really, that becomes the opportunity gap. It comes down to how you foster that thought process, because in general, salami, with most households, is very elastic, and retailers have the opportunity to sell more or less depending upon how they want to treat it."

"Customers want something different,"

Brandow explains. "They want a flavor hit. They want their mouths to come alive with something. When somebody tastes, he or she understands and will buy it." He says sampling is No. 1 on his company's list of things to do for increasing sales.

Soto recommends catering to Hispanic customers by preparing party packs that use traditional Hispanic cheeses along with salami. For many Hispanics, the holidays extend to Jan. 6 to include Three Kings Day.

When it comes to stocking the deli, Bocchini suggests limiting selections to their five biggest sellers: sopressata, Milano salami and three imports including prosciutto di Parma and cooked ham. He recommends introducing one new item every six months to see if customers acquire a taste for it. He also encourages demos for the more upscale products.

He says sometimes there is a misconception that "customers do not recognize the more expensive products. 'This is not true,'" he says. "Customers are becoming more and more familiar with these products, so down the road keeping more international or higher-quality products in the deli is going to pay off."

As with other specialty meats, salami is finding a wide acceptance in prepackaged and presliced form. Jack cites the recent his-

tory of prosciutto. "Prosciutto is probably the most significant or drastic example of this," he says. "Ten or 12 years ago we didn't sell any product in the presliced package. Now we sell 50 percent of our product in a presliced package and, by the way, we sell nearly four times as much prosciutto as we ever did."

Brandow echoes that, saying, "What drove us to do the presliced and packaged was that our experience in Canada showed those products were the fastest growing." He includes specialty-shaped meats in that assessment, since they were originally used by sausage meisters to further distinguish their products from others. Piller has had such good luck with shapes, such as squares, flowers and beehives, that it is launching a heart-shaped salami this February.

The packaging trend can be seen as creating the opportunity for supermarkets to expand their offerings.

"As prepackaged has become more prevalent, the opportunity to merchandise more varieties has certainly come about," Jack says. He cites the willingness of retailers to offer the products along with the influences of cooking shows and travel as reasons for the increasing availability of salami varieties in the mainstream. **DB**

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Food regulations need more bite

21 December 2006

University of the Sciences in Philadelphia

The *E. coli* outbreaks in October and December 2006 have thrust the importance of food safety regulation into the spotlight, says Dr. Robert Field, chair of the Department of Health Policy and Public Health at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia [Philadelphia, PA].

"We have come to take the safety of what we eat for granted. We know that too much fast food can kill us over time, but how many people realized that on rare occasions, it can do so much more quickly," Field said. "A tremendous amount of effort that we never see goes on in the trenches by regulators every day. It is not glamorous, but our lives can depend on it."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Atlanta, GA], the strain of *E. coli* O157:H7 that was linked to contaminated spinach affected 199 people in 26 states in October. The outbreak tied to Taco Bell restaurants in December involved 71 people spread throughout five states.

"Effective regulation requires a delicate balance of many interests," Field added. "Maintaining it is an ongoing challenge. The *E. coli* outbreaks reflect how important it is to do so."

The average delay before the onset of *E. coli* symptoms is three to four days after eating contaminated food. However, it ranges between as little as one day and as many as 10 according to the CDC.

"We do not want to wait until after the fact to discover that a potentially deadly agent, like *E. coli*, has contaminated our food supply," Field said. "This is an area in which most would agree that vigilant oversight is in everyone's interest."

Field is the author of *Health Care Regulation in America: Complexity, Confrontation and Compromise*, a comprehensive guide to the regulatory maze.

Control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in retail establishments

20 December 2006

PSU Food Safe, Penn State University

Cathy Cutter

The Department of Food Science at Penn State University [PSU], in conjunction with USDA-FSIS and AFDO, is pleased to announce the launch of a new, comprehensive food safety program entitled *Control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in retail establishments*.

The training program includes PowerPoint presentations, booklet pdfs, training materials, brochures, evaluations, break-out ses-

sions, etc. and is accessible FREE through the PSU Food Safety Website. Go to: http://food-safety.psu.edu/retail_Listeria.html

The materials can be used to accommodate a 6- to 8-hour training program for employees and/or supervisors of retail establishments or a 4- to 6-hour training program for inspectors and other health-related professionals.

If you are interested in purchasing the 40-minute DVDs in English for \$35, please contact the College of Agricultural Sciences through Laurie Yearick at (814) 865-6309 or via email at lah1@psu.edu <MAILTO:LAH1@PSU.EDU> payment.

Cloned food

28 December 2006

Associated Press

Libby Quaid

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA] plans, according to this story, to brief industry groups in advance of an announcement Thursday morning that it has decided that food from cloned animals is safe to eat and does not require special labeling. The FDA indicated it would approve cloned livestock in a scientific journal article published online earlier this month.

Consumer groups say labels are a must, because surveys have shown people to be uncomfortable with the idea of cloned livestock.

However, FDA concluded that cloned animals are "virtually indistinguishable" from conventional livestock and that no identification is needed to judge their safety for the food supply.

Barb Glenn of the Biotechnology Industry Organization [Washington, D.C.] was cited as saying labels should only be used if the health characteristics of a food are significantly altered by how it is produced, adding, "The bottom line is, we don't want to misinform consumers with some sort of implied message of difference. There is no difference. These foods are as safe as foods from animals that are raised conventionally."

Joseph Mendelson, legal director of the Center for Food Safety [Washington, D.C.], was quoted as saying, "Consumers are going to be having a product that has potential safety issues and has a whole load of ethical issues tied to it, without any labeling."

Carol Tucker Foreman, director of food policy at the Consumer Federation of America, was cited as saying the FDA is ignoring research that shows cloning results in more deaths and deformed animals than other reproductive technologies.

The consumer federation will ask food

Martin Mitchell, technical director of the Refrigerated Foods Association (RFA) and managing director of Certified Laboratories compiles TechNews.



The information has been compiled from press releases, news articles and government announcements and policy clarifications. Additional information may be obtained by contacting RFA by phone at 770-452-0660 or online at www.refrigeratedfoods.org.

companies and supermarkets to refuse to sell food from clones, she said.

Chicken meat salmonella illness rising in the United States

11 December 2006 10:00:54 GMT

United States Agriculture Department tests show a type of *salmonella* found in eggs is turning up more often in chicken meat. From 2000 through 2005, there was a fourfold increase in positive test results for *Salmonella enteritidis* on chicken carcasses.

Salmonella sickens at least 40,000 people and kills about 600 every year in the United States. Many different *salmonella* bacteria make people sick, but *salmonella enteritidis* is one of the most common. It causes fever, stomach cramps and diarrhea. In vulnerable people, infection become deadly by spreading beyond the intestine to the bloodstream.

At one time, eggs became contaminated with *salmonella* on the outside from contact with fecal bacteria. But in recent years, the *salmonella enteritidis* strain has been found inside intact, disinfected, grade A eggs. This type of germ contaminates eggs inside a hen's ovaries, before shells are even formed.

Now the germ is turning up in broiler chickens, the kind used for meat, according to research by the Agriculture Department published in the December issue of the *Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal* of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cooking poultry to 165° will kill the salmonella germ. The government also strongly recommends that people use food thermometers and follow basic rules for kitchen safety: wash hands often, keep raw poultry and meat separate from cooked food, and refrigerate or freeze food right away.

Source: Xinhuanet

DB

Deli Sandwiches That Load Up On Quality, Variety And Convenience Will Keep 'Em Coming Back For More



Paula Deen
Restaurateur, cookbook author and television personality.

With so many of us constantly on the go these days, it's no wonder deli sandwiches have become so popular. In fact, right here in Savannah, I bet we've got at least 10 sub shops and delis in the downtown area. It sure seems like they just keep popping up all over.

Y'all can't argue with the convenience of grabbing a sandwich and staying on schedule. But I think the popularity of deli sandwiches is more than that. I feel people are thinking that sandwiches are a healthy alternative to eating a half-pound cheeseburger for lunch. Today people are more aware of what's nutritious and they're looking for low-fat, low-carb lunches.

Nothing is better than a good ham and cheese sandwich. In fact, some folks don't even need the bread. Lots of times when I'm home, I'll take a slice of ham and Swiss cheese, roll them up, dip it in mustard and that's a meal for me. But it has to be really good ham and cheese.

I learned a lot of important lessons when I opened up my first business, The Bag Lady. I was a one-woman caterer — I started out by making sandwiches and other lunches in my kitchen for the lunchtime crowd in Savannah. I made chicken salad and tuna-fish salad sandwiches, and my boys would deliver them to my customers.

I made sure the lunches I prepared were absolutely the best I was capable of making. That meant using only good quality, wholesome ingredients. It all starts with your raw ingredients. My customers kept coming back because my food was so good. And we were reliable. They knew we would be there for them every day. And that's still true today for my restaurant, The Lady & Sons.

Deli retailers certainly have a lot of competition from sub shops and such, but the secret to success isn't such a big secret. Just do a better job than your competitors by making delicious sandwiches that keep 'em coming back for more.

If I had to make a checklist of what you need to do to increase the popularity of your deli offerings, these items would be at the very top of my list:

- **Quality.** What you put in a sandwich certainly takes it from being a mediocre sandwich to a great sandwich. And that goes for all of your deli items. Quality ingredients are so important. That's one of the reasons why I decided to partner with Smithfield. When you're using products from Smithfield, you know you're using the very best. Nobody, but nobody, does ham the way Smithfield does. They've

been around for over 70 years, and they keep their products true to their beginnings.

- **Variety.** Offer your customers a great big selection of meats and other ingredients. Stock up on different kinds of meats that have been smoked or flavored in interesting, tasty ways. And offer your customers choices of side dishes besides just the usual bag of chips. Give them a variety of side salads and pastas. You may be surprised by how many people will grab a small pasta dish or salad to go with their sandwich if it's displayed right there.

- **Convenience.** Sure, people grab deli sandwiches or some other prepared dish because they're convenient. It takes only a couple minutes to put one together, after all. But I take a little different view on this for deli retailers. Go into one of those chain sub shops once, and you'll see a lot of folks sitting down and eating their sandwich right there in the store. They'd rather do that than eat in the car or back at the office. So, if you have room in your store, try setting up some tables and chairs in your deli. It adds to the convenience because it gives them a place to eat and relax for a little while before heading out again.

- **Advertise.** Y'all are doing a good job of advertising your specials every week, but what about your deli offerings? The sub shops are out there talking up their sandwiches all the time. You need to do likewise. Folks won't buy your sandwiches and deli dishes if they don't know you're making them. It's not enough to rely on people noticing your deli department, especially if they hardly ever stop there while pushing their carts around on grocery shopping day.

Like I said, there is a lot of competition out there, but I think deli retailers can grab their share of the business by doing the kinds of things that have made their stores so successful. Stick to top-quality ingredients, offer your customers many choices and make it as convenient as possible to enjoy your food. And talk it up — don't hide your light under a bushel.

DB

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Celebrity cook Paula Deen hosts two TV shows — *Paula's Home Cooking* and *Paula's Party* — on the Food Network and is the author of six cookbooks. She also publishes a lifestyle magazine called *Cooking With Paula Deen* and owns and operates a Savannah restaurant with her two sons called The Lady & Sons. Deen recently partnered with Smithfield Foods in a joint marketing venture.)

Blast From The Past

In 1960 Henri Lapuyade — chef/owner of Marcel et Henri — founded America's first and still most distinguished charcuterie at 2000 Hyde Street atop San Francisco's Russian Hill. With ideas from his homeland and skills acquired during a six-year apprenticeship under Lucien Heyraud, the legendary chef at San Francisco's Palace Hotel, Henri began experimenting with the making of pâtés. Soon the store became renowned for its superb meat, imported French cheeses, specialty foods and wines, and Henri's fresh pâtés. He was the first retailer and wholesaler of fresh pâtés in the United States. He began sampling his products at trade shows and markets across the country. To keep up with ever-increasing production demands, in 1984 Marcel et Henri moved to a new, large facility in South San Francisco. Today, still under the close personal supervision of Henri, Marcel et Henri pâtés, French-style sausages and specialty meats are served in the finest hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, and airlines. They can be found in specialty retailers and supermarket delis in the United States, Mexico, Singapore and the Persian Gulf.



Blast From The Past is a regular feature of DELI BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with a brief description of the photo. Please send material to: Editor, DELI BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810217, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0217 or e-mail DeliBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com. For more information contact us at (561) 994-1118

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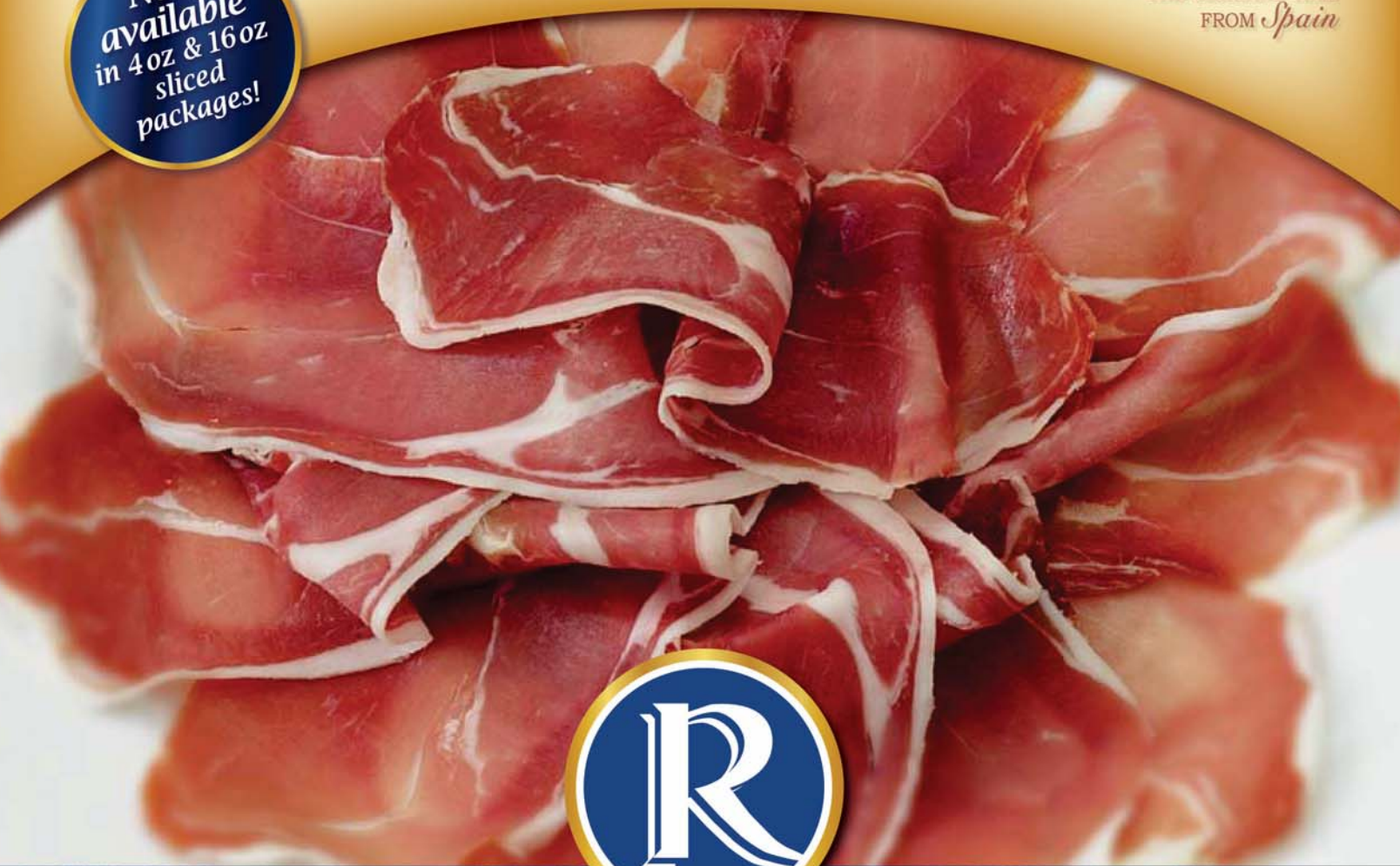
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