

French Comté is a big cheese when it comes to balance, flavor

"One of France's top-selling cheeses, Comté never disappoints [...] I've never had a Comté that was less than good."

Janet Fletcher, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 November 2004. Full article can be read on www.sfgate.com <<http://www.sfgate.com>>.



Edward Behr, *The Art of Eating*, Fall 2005, Comté, No. 70, excerpt:

"Comté distills the pastures and fields of the Jura, capturing and transforming the aromas of the plants of each locality. The big cheese is an artifact of information about a *fruitsière* and its 25-km circle of hay and pasture, the shape of one seeming to echo the other. Though none of us outside the region can make the precise connections, we can appreciate that the flavor of a fine Comté represents exactly what the particular place and the season allow, that it gives the full pleasure of nature in corner of the Jura."

The Art of Eating, 1-800-495-3944

Geographical area of Comté:

Comté cannot be produced outside of the Jura's Mountains, beyond the boundaries of a geographical area called "Franche-Comté" – the Free County. The region owes its name, according to Patrick Rance in *French Cheese*, Macmillan, 1989, to "the independence of its people and character since pre-Roman times". Artisanal cheese has been made there since time immemorial.



Chef Jean-Louis Dumonet loves Comté



After being Executive Chef at the Carlyle hotel, Jean-Louis Dumonet is now revamping the menu at SFA Cafe in the Saks Fifth Avenue. He loves using Comté in his cooking: "I use aged Comté to cook my onion soup at Saks, and also for the Flammenkuche". He particularly appreciates the generosity from the Comté Cheese association: "The Comté Cheese Association gives me every year the Comté I need for the March Of Dimes dinner gala".

Jean-louis Dumonet, Corporate Executive Chef of Saks Fifth Avenue and President of the American Chapter of Association des Maitres Cuisiniers de France.

Comté provides everything you need for a successful selling program: recipe cards, counter-top displays, brochures, aprons, towels... For **free POP** and In-store Demonstration, please contact Claudine Fox: cauguie@aol.com or Aldo Simonini: simone4157@aol.com.

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COMTÉ NEWS



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Cheese consumption in the US is expected to grow by 50% between now and 2013: Per capita consumption will increase from 28lb currently to about 42lb.

The cheese market in the US is currently experiencing an exceptional growth. According to a Mintel survey dated April 2005, this trend will continue in the coming years. In the face of the huge American production and demand of mass market cheese – the US represents 30% of the world cheese production – French imported cheese satisfies a different demand for distinct cheeses with an identity of their own. Thus, France, traditionally a reference country for quality cheeses, is currently the third supplier in volume and the second in value. France is the only supplier that has experienced steady growth in the last few years.

The success of Comté among American cheese professionals and consumers has led the Comté Cheese Association to make greater efforts in the market to help the trade and consolidate the visibility of Comté among consumers. Says Claudine Fox, head of the Comté Cheese Association for the US, "We are convinced that Comté clearly responds to the expectations of today's consumers for a healthy lifestyle and for cheese that not only tastes delicious and unique but is made in a manner that respects the environment, promotes artisanal methods of production, and represents a specific place of origin with its heritage and values."

Above all, the American market has changed. Consumers are becoming more and more demanding and they are showing a growing interest in cheese taste and quality. At the same time, production has also changed and its criteria are becoming more qualitative than quantitative. The French production of Comté fits in squarely with this trend toward greater sophistication. Indeed, Comté was one of the first cheeses to receive AOC designation in 1958 and its production is governed by specific regulations whose purpose is to guarantee quality, true place of origin — the mountains of the Jura in Eastern France — and a centuries-old artisanal *savoir-faire*.

Comté Cheese Association returns solo to the next **Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco January 22-24, 2006**.

Claudine Fox, Comté Cheese Association USA and Aurélia Chimier, Comité Interprofessionnel du Comté, look forward to seeing you at their booth #3421 at the Show!



Comté ("con – TAY") cheese ID
"One of the world's greatest cheese"
Steven Jenkins *

General information:

Origin: Franche-Comté, France Jura Mountain.

Milk type: Cow's milk, unpasteurized.

Cheese style: Pressed, cooked curd with natural brushed rind.

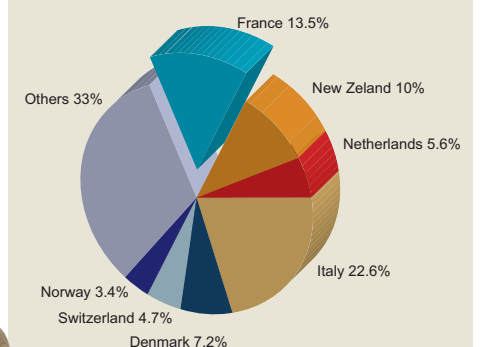
Quality: top-quality, Comté cheese bears the AOC seal granted by the French government, as well as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) certification from the European Union.

Appearance: 4-in thick wheel, 3 ft in diameter and approx. 80 lb, gray-brown rind, ivory-beige-yellow paste with firm creamy texture.

Aromas: fresh nut, dried apricot, soft caramel, often with a tinge of vanilla for young Comté cheese; walnut, chestnut, roasted almond, melted butter and spices, softened by notes of ripened cream or citrus fruit for long-matured Comté cheese.

* *Cheese Primer*, Workman Publishing, 1996

Main cheese suppliers in value in 2004:



Marilyn Harris, Comté Ambassador

"Dear Claudine, I returned from a lovely few days in Charleston, SC to find a very large box of cheese from you and the generous folks at Comté. I already know it is going to take first prize of all of my Christmas presents this year. How much fun! I look so forward to treating my friends and family with scrumptious dishes made with the world's best cheese. I am so pleased and happy that the effects from my last article still reverberate. I taught a class a few days ago at a cooking school in our best wine/deli store and they sell Comté, but ran out of it after the article and are still having to stock it much more frequently than before...I was, needless to say, pleased. Also a lovely young woman in the class told me she made all of the recipes in the article and is now a total Comté fan. I love being your official ambassador in this area of the country. Thank you so much."

Marilyn Harris is a radio and TV personality, a cooking teacher and a consultant for the food industry. She has been acclaimed as the city's "gastronomic guru" by *Cincinnati Magazine*.

Here is one of Marilyn's recipes. It imitates the flavor of the Comté fondue she enjoyed on her trip to Franche-Comté. "This is a tasty and easier substitute and it can be assembled ahead, ready to pop into the oven," says she. Bake it in an attractive serving dish and keep it warm on a warming tray. Serve with thin French baguette slices or toasted pita crisps.

Easy Baked Comté Dip

16 ounces Comté, shredded
1 1/2 cups mayonnaise
2 tablespoon dry white wine
1 cup finely chopped onion
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Stir together all of the ingredients. Put into a 1 1/2 quart ovenproof serving dish and bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until bubbly and hot. Serve hot with slices of crusty French baguette or toasted pita triangles. Serves 12 to 16 as an appetizer.

30 cows = 1 Comté

It takes the yield of 30 cows, or about 152 gallons of raw milk to produce one wheel of Comté.



Comté's healthy virtues:

Comté is an exceptional source of calcium. An average 3-oz serving of Comté contains 880 mgs of calcium, about 30% of the recommended daily intake for an adult. Comté is also a valuable source of protein due to the wide variety of amino acids that it contains. In France, Comté is often recommended by the medical profession for children, for elderly people and for pregnant women as it provides a balanced mineral intake necessary for growth and preventing osteoporosis. It also also rich in vitamins, in particular vitamins A and C.



The production of Comté has been controlled by AOC regulations since it became one of the first cheeses to receive **AOC recognition in 1958**, with full regulations introduced in 1976. To assure the respect of Comté artisanal methods and true place of origin, the French government regulations require that:

- Only cows of the Montbéliard breed are authorised to produce milk used for making Comté.
- Milk must be collected daily straight from the cow and transformed within 24 hours, without additives, preservatives or colouring agents.
- There must be a minimum of 2.5 acres of natural pasture for each animal to graze on. Every effort is made to foster the richness of the local natural flora.
- For transforming the milk into curds, the cheese maker must **only use natural fermentation agents**.
- Cattle feed must be natural and **totally free from fermented products** (no ensilage). **GMO are prohibited**.
- In order to bear the name Comté, the cheese must be matured for at least 4 months in a special cellar. Cheeses are often aged up to 12 months and often more before shipping.

During its production, Comté cheese is subject to analytical tests carried out by technicians from the Comté Technical Committee.

On leaving the cellars, the Comté is assessed by experts who give a mark to the product according to its taste, texture and appearance. Only cheeses awarded a mark over 12 out of 20 are allowed to bear the name "Comté". **Any cheese scoring under 3 marks for taste, or under 12 overall is prohibited from being named Comté.**



The rules and guarantees associated with AOC (label of guaranteeing quality):

There are 43 cheeses in France which are certified as being AOC. The AOC defines the production area and guarantees that traditional methods are employed with regard to cattle rearing, cheese manufacture and maturing, by means of a specifications sheet subject to very strict controls.

De Gustibus Cooking School at Macy's Herald Square



On 3rd December, five different Comtés were tasted along with an array of Champagnes and sparkling wines at the De Gustibus Cooking School in NYC. The event was hosted by Arlene Feltman Sailhac and conducted by Daphne Zepos and Jean-Louis Carbonnier, former director of the Champagne Wines Information Bureau and president of Carbonnier Communications in New York.

Among the many pairings, Champagne Delamotte Rosé and a 15-month Comté were a particularly successful combination: the light fruity aromas of the Champagne underlined the floral qualities of the Comté, while the refreshing effervescence and acidity of the wine contrasted with the creamy texture of the cheese. www.degustibusinc.com

Daphne Zepos, fromager:

In my long and varied career as an international cheese judge, I rarely come across a cheese that I greet as a friend. Comté is the exception. When I judge, I greet the Comté and assess it: how is it today? Is it displaying all its character? Will it reveal to me yet another aspect of its multi-faceted identity? The interaction is alive, unpredictable. And that is all I ask from a friend. Comté has more than one point of



maturation. Unlike, say, a Brie or a Camembert that have only one moment of perfect ripeness, Comté's ripeness crests at 4-6 months, 13-17 months, and sometimes even over 2 years. Each of these different stages gives us a different flavor profile, and a different pleasure. I rarely come across a cheese with such variety.

Fromager Daphne Zepos worked until recently at Artisanal Premium Cheese, where she played a lead role in the selection, affinage (aging) and care of more than 300 cheeses. Daphne now consults with cheesemakers and teaches classes for consumers and professional audiences.

The Magic of Comté

Much can be said about the marriage of Comté and wine. This may explain Jancis Robinson's special interest in Comté. On her internationally respected website, Jancis Robinson, Master of Wine, and editor of Oxford Companion to Wine, describes **The Magic of Comté Cheese**.

In her article originally published in the Financial Times, Jancis Robinson describes her visit to the region with Jason Hinds, 37, export director for Neal's Yard Dairy and Mr. Hinds's excitement at the prospect of another day in the company of cheesemakers, "however not the British cheesemakers who have dominated his working life for the past decade but rather those of the Jura who produce the most distinctive and delicious Comté."

Jancis Robinson also explains how this visit "was to convert her into a Comté fan through the combination of tradition, farsightedness on the part of one particular individual and great attention to detail on the part of many more."

For the entire story of her visit to Comté, including how M. Trotté opened Jason Hinds's eyes to Comté, and her visit of a "cheese castle," please read the entire article on www.jancisrobinson.com

