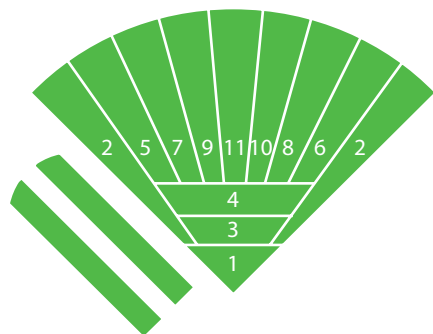


Tips for the Trade: How to Maximize Comté



Comté is easy to store and has an excellent shelf life with a minimum of care and handling. Here are some tips for maximizing the life of your Comté:

- As with any cheese, temperature variations can impact the quality.
 - Store Comté in a refrigerator or cold cellar.
 - For in-store displays, keep cheese away from bright lights and hot vents, which may cause overheating and sweating.
- If possible, it is preferable to cut Comté on demand.
 - Cut only what is needed and leave the rest wrapped (to prevent drying out) and refrigerated.
 - Use fresh wrap each time the cheese is put away at the end of the day.
- For pre-cut Comté (cheese that is cut and wrapped in the store and sold off the shelf), high turnover is very important.
 - Cut and wrap only what is necessary for the day.
 - Pre-cut Comté should be tightly wrapped in butcher paper or in plastic and kept refrigerated.
 - To avoid wasting any Comté (even the heel), follow these cutting instructions: For full wheels or large pieces, use a cheese wire to cut the cheese in quarters. Then, cut the quarter, following the illustration to the right. You will get cleaner cuts by using a two-handled knife. After cut #4, alternate the cuts so that one end does not dry out. In this way, you'll have presentable wedges of cheese, and you won't be left with a less attractive heel.
- Pre-packaged Comté (cheese that is shipped in ready-to-sell sealed packages to be sold off the shelf) should be kept refrigerated at all times.



Cut out the ID card below for your cheese case or tasting board!

Origin: Jura Mountains, France

Type: Artisanal, raw cow's milk, typically aged 6-18 months; AOC (Controlled Appellation of Origin) and PDO (European Union Protected Designation of Origin) designated

Characteristics: Flavors of roasted nuts, dried fruit, herbs, caramel, cooked milk (flavor varies according to season and terroir of production); Dense texture that melts easily; Produced in 80-lb wheels

Food Pairings: Excellent alone with fruit and nuts or melted into fondues, vegetable gratins, polenta, macaroni and cheese, soufflés and paninis

Wine Pairings: Jura Wines, Fruity Reds, Aged Whites, Côtes du Rhone, Beaujolais, Champagne

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The Cheeses of France Campaign

According to Gourmet News, a generic campaign designed to educate American consumers about French cheeses will soon launch in the U.S. More information to come in the Fall/Winter Newsletter.



Comté Cheese Association

provides you with everything you need for a successful selling program, including: recipe cards, counter-top displays, brochures, aprons, towels and more.

For free POP and In-store demonstration material, please contact Claudine Fox: cauguie@aol.com
Jean-Louis Carbonnier: comte@carbonniercommunications.com

Comté Cheese Association
800 Second Avenue, Floor 5,
New York, NY 10017
(212) 896-1203



COMTÉ NEWS



Spring 2007



A Region—and a Cheese—with History

Comté cheese can only be produced in the Jura, Doubs and Ain departments of Eastern France, along the Jura Mountain range. This special region is unique with a rich cultural heritage and diverse landscape that can't be found anywhere else in the world. Likewise, each wheel of Comté is distinctive, reflecting not only the region's diverse terroir, but also its history and culture.

The Comté region's landscape is diverse with mountains, lakes, streams, forests and valleys. Fall brings a glorious spectrum of color to the region, while the snow of winter attracts skiers and adventurers. In fact, it was the long, cold winters of the region that first fueled the production of cheese in the Middle Ages. Perishable milk was transformed into large rounds of shelf-stable cheese to nourish villages during the cold season. These large rounds were also used for export and trade. Cheese production soon became central to village life. Farmers joined together to form co-operatives for milk production, which dairies would then convert into cheese. The system of solidarity and traditional craftsmanship lives on today, as farmers transport the milk from their cows to their local dairy for the production of Comté cheese.

In the warmer months, lush green hills welcome hikers, mountain bikers and sightseers to the region. The fortified city of Besançon, the capital of the region, was once an important Roman town whose remnants

can be found within today's bustling and vibrant streets. The city is the home of Vauban's 17th century citadel, the Musée des Beaux Arts and the Université de Franche-Comté. South of Besançon are the royal salt works of Arc-et-Senans (www.salineroyale.com), a UNESCO World Heritage site. The acclaimed beauty of the salt works—designed by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux—rivals that of its location, situated between the Chaux forests to the west and the Jura Mountains to the east. Salt has been produced from deep springs in the region since the Iron Age and has been critical for food preservation, including that of cheese. In fact, Comté wheels are still today rubbed with salt as they age in the cellar to develop the rind and preserve the cheese.

The cuisine of the region is rich in charcuterie, sausages, fish, game and, of course, cheese. Comté can be found on every cheese platter at home and in restaurants. It is also melted into fondues, baked into gratins or served with platters of meat. Vin jaune, the specialty wine of the region named for its yellow color and distinct tangy flavor, is traditionally paired with meals like Coq au vin Jaune and is an ideal match for Comté.

The Comté region is unique in its history, traditions and environment. Each wheel of Comté cheese is likewise embedded in this distinct culture.

Comté ("con - TAY") cheese ID



General information:

Origin: Jura Mountains, France

Milk type: Raw Cow's Milk

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

French AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) since 1958



Comté Cheese Association

at the next
Summer Fancy Food Show in New York
July 8-10
Booth 1957

A Breed Apart

There are many artisans who participate in the making of Comté cheese. While the cheese-makers, affineurs and farmers are critical for production, the most indispensable artisan of all is a robust creature with a wide girth and a reddish-brown and white hide. This is the Montbéliarde cow, the main breed authorized under Comté's AOC requirements to produce the milk for Comté cheese.

At 2-3 years old (after birthing their first calf), Montbéliarde cows start producing milk, unknowingly entering Comté production. The cows have a 10-month lactation cycle and generally give birth to one calf every year, ensuring continual milk production (this can last for 10 years). During the spring and summer months, about 60,000 Montbéliarde cows tranquilly dot the Comté pastureland, grazing on diverse flora. A study carried out in 1993-95 identified 436 different plants, including 56 aromatic varieties. By law, each cow must have at least 2.5 acres of land to roam and snack. This diverse diet will play a role in the flavor of the milk from day to day and from cow to cow. Milk must be collected each day and transformed within 24 hours in the fruitières.

Fall is the season of the "comices," or rural fairs that celebrate the Montbéliarde and her achievement. Thousands of spectators come to admire hundreds of heads of cattle. As winter sets in and the first snows begin to fall, the cows can no longer feed on fresh grass outdoors. They are brought back to their farms (there are more than 3,200 farmers involved in the rearing of Montbéliarde cows) for the cold season. During this time, their diet consists of hay that was harvested locally in the summertime, and fodder, which must be natural and free of fermented products and GMO's. No ensilage can be used. Like in the warm season, fresh milk—stored at room temperature to preserve its aromatic qualities—is collected and delivered daily to the cheese dairy, where it is transformed into wheels of Comté. Only after being aged in special cellars, then being graded according to flavor, paste quality, opening and presentation, can the wheels acquire the Comté seal and be sold (see Grading Scale below).

The Montbéliarde's diverse diet, varying from terroir to terroir and from warm season to cold season, has a large impact on the aromas, flavors and appearance of the final Comté wheels. For instance, summer Comté is much more yellow in color than winter Comté, due to the higher levels of carotene in the fresh grass compared to the hay diet of the winter months. Each wheel reveals a distinct aromatic composition that varies according to the season in which it was made, the unique style of the cheesemaker, the time spent in the aging cellar, and, of course, the micro-region and diet of its original artisan—the Montbéliarde cow.

Grading Scale

Before labeling, each wheel of Comté is tested and given a mark out of 20 points. The wheels that score over 15 points are given a green band and those that score between 12-15 are given a brown band (although this might be due to a small fault in the appearance of an otherwise excellent cheese). Wheels that score less than 12 points are excluded from carrying the name Comté.

Factors	Optimum Conditions	Highest Grade
Flavor	Well defined, with characteristic flavors and aromas.	9
Paste Quality (The non-rind portion of the cheese)	Homogeneous color and texture without excess moisture.	5
Opening (The eyes and cracks that form in the paste)	Spherical, well-defined and regular opening. Opening size ranges from a pea to a cherry. Opening can be rare, and the maximum note for one massive wheel is 2.	3.5
Presentation	Wheels must have regular form and a rind of gilded yellow to brown without spots.	2.5
		Total 20

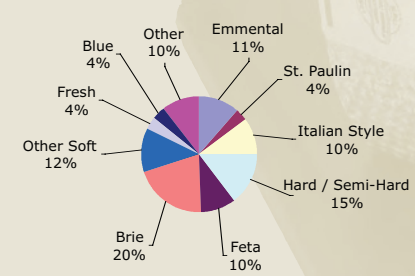
French Cheese Exports Growing 2006 Statistics

In 2006, the total exports of cheese from France grew by 7% in volume (21,300 tons) and 13.7% in value (\$153 million). The USA is France's 8th most important export market.

Of this total, French specialty cheeses – AOC and non-AOC – represented approximately 12,400 tons, including Blue cheeses, Semi- and Hard-pressed cheeses, Soft cheeses, Fresh and Goat-milk cheeses.

As for AOC Comté, the main affineurs reported 409 tons of Comté, a shipment increase of 42% compared to 2005. Comté represents about 25% of all French AOC cheeses shipped to the US market. Other important AOC's in the US include Roquefort, Ossau Iraty, Morbier, Cantal, Pont l'Evêque, Chaource and Valençay. AOC cheeses are considered the *couture* of cheese. They are prominently displayed by the best cheesemongers and gourmet markets around the nation and benefit from the fast growing interest of cheese lovers for artisanal and farmstead cheeses in the U.S.

2006 French Cheese Exports to the U.S.



With Comté, learn to savor centuries of artisanal cheesemaking

The Cheese Course



More and more food lovers enjoy a cheese course at home or in restaurants. To take advantage of this trend, here are simple tips from Chef Brennan:

- Choose 3 to 6 cheeses (don't forget Comté!)
- Mix the textures, milk types and provenances, e.g. Comté, Roquefort and Valençay
- Start the plate at six o'clock for the first cheese
- Start with the mildest cheese and work your way around the plate to the strongest flavored cheeses

In addition, offer suggestions about how to cut each cheese, portion size, accompaniments and wine or beer pairings.

Comté around the Country

Fifteen years ago Comté could only be found in a few pioneering specialty stores in the U.S. Today, thanks to greater interest in cheese and artisanal products, an increase in the number of cheese stores and widespread education and literature about specialty cheeses have created a demand for Comté in virtually every region of the country. Comté can now be found in the best food-markets around the country, as well as in specialty food stores big and small from coast to coast. We want to thank all for their support and enthusiasm for Comté.

Chef Terrance Brennan, Cheese Connoisseur

Terrance Brennan is the Chef-Proprietor of the highly acclaimed restaurants Artisanal and Picholine in New York City. In addition, he is the owner of Artisanal Premium Cheese—a 10,000 square foot facility dedicated to the selection, maturation and distribution of the world's finest artisanal cheeses. Chef Brennan has appeared on a number of television programs, including The Today Show and The Food Network. He also is a three-time nominee for Best New York Chef by the James Beard Foundation and is the author of Artisanal Cooking: A Chef Shares his Passion for Handcrafting Great Meals at Home.



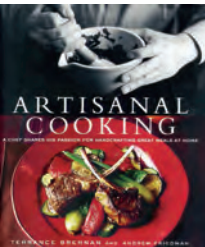
How did your passion for cheese begin?
When I was a young Chef working and living in Europe, I was fascinated by the local hand-made cheeses. Each region had a specialty that was hand crafted by local Artisans. The flavors were like no other. In Europe, cheese is served for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I was hooked.

More and more people are serving cheese at home and cooking with cheese. What are some considerations when creating dishes around cheese?
It is mostly seasonal—what foods and cheeses are in season. I also look at how much time I have and how [the cheese] will hold up in a recipe. Each cheese is different so I have to look at melting capabilities, fat content and how heat sensitive each variety is.

What are some of your favorite ways to cook with Comté?
I have a great Comté-Scallion Polenta with Chicken, which I love. A galette with potatoes and Comté is also a favorite. My absolute passion is for an 18-month-old Comté on its own. My children adore it as a snack with fruit.

Have you noticed any consumer cheese trends in the past couple of years?
My patrons are very knowledgeable about cheese. They are usually very excited to try anything that is small batch and special. We work hard to promote the small batch artisans.

What are some tips for storing cheese?
First of all, cheese is a living organism and should be eaten at peak maturity. Second, shrink-wrapping is terrible for storage. Cheese needs to breathe. A damp, dark environment is ideal for storage. If this isn't possible at home, use the lower drawers in the fridge.



Chef Brennan features homespun yet creative recipes in his acclaimed cookbook Artisanal. In his Comté-Scallion Polenta below, Comté adds nuance and depth to an otherwise ordinary polenta. He recommends serving it with roast poultry or meats for a succulent side dish.

Comté-Scallion Polenta

Adapted from Artisanal Cooking
by Terrance Brennan and Andrew Friedman
Serves 4



Ingredients:	Method:
4 cups white chicken stock or low sodium, store bought chicken broth or water 1/2 cup cornmeal 1/4 cup coarsely grated Comté 1/3 cup scallions, white and light green portions, thinly sliced on the bias 1 tablespoon unsalted butter 1 teaspoon Kosher salt black pepper in a mill	Pour the stock into a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat to low and slowly whisk in the cornmeal, a little at a time. The polenta will thicken as you work in the cornmeal. Continue to simmer, stirring occasionally, for 25 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and whisk in the Comté, scallions, butter and salt. Season with pepper to taste.