

# **QUESO DIEGO**

**THE SAN DIEGO CHEESE CLUB**

## What Happened to Irish Cheese?

A wee tale of the near annihilation of  
cheese on the Emerald Isle  
Presented by Jeffree Itrich  
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**Once upon a time....**



There was this leprechaun named Seamus, who, like all leprechauns liked to play tricks on humans. Leprechauns do that, ya know. Well, one day all the gold disappeared, not a pot o' gold to be found and Seamus was sure that the humans were responsible. Seamus decided to get back at them and stole all their cheese and their desire to make cheese. Not a curd was left in the land for generations. Can you imagine?

Naw, not really. But cheese did pretty much vanish from Ireland. Was it the work of a leprechaun? Maybe. Either way, cheesemaking nearly died out. Who knows why, maybe it was Seamus's fault.

# The Real Story

- **At one time cheesemaking and consumption proliferated in Ireland. References to cheesemaking can be found in early Irish literature.**
- **In a 12th century document entitled Aisling Mhic Chonglinne (Vision of the Son of Conglinne) the author referred to and gave descriptions of a number of cheeses, including the ‘sweet soft smooth cheese Maothal’ and ‘a firm, dry Tanach’.**
- **When Irish monks, such as St. Gall, traveled across Europe reintroducing many lost skills during the medieval period, they also brought along their cheesemaking skills so we know that some people (the monks) still knew how to make cheese.**

- **A. T. Lucas in his study of Irish Foodways found that as far back as the Early Christian period down to the close of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland produced an array of soft and hard cheeses.**
- **Author Arthur Young found ‘specialized dairies’ producing cheese during the late 1770s in Cork, Offaly and Wexford.**
- **And then cheesemaking all but disappears**

# Can You Say “Butter”?



- **Oddly, agriculture continued to develop after the late 1700s, though cheesemaking was not part of it. Lush, green fields. Well-fed cows. Wonder why?**
- **It was because farms were focusing more on the production of butter as a way to trade excess milk.**

# The Farmers Finally Realize They're Missing Out

**In the early 1900s Irish farmers started rethinking the whole cheese thing. They knew that their cows produced great milk, why not give it a try?**



# Farmers Coop Begins...

**The Irish farmers' co-operative movement emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but their goal focused on supplying Ireland and the Isles with large scale production cheddars; which ultimately became the renown creamery cheddars. Few if any farmers were making their own cheese for sale.**



# Irish Farmhouse Cheese Emerges

In the 1970s a farmhouse cheesemaking revival began on family farms. Some pinpoint the revival to 1976, when Veronica Steele took her first tentative steps toward cheesemaking. At the suggestion of a friend, Steele switched her experimentation to soft cheese and by 1978 had developed Milleens, considered the first Irish Farmhouse Cheese. Though it might be available in other parts of the U.S., it isn't available here in SD County.



**Today, many consider Irish cheeses as good as anyone's. Take Coolea for example.**



# The Irish Become a Major Cheese Player

Coolea is one of the most popular, a cow's milk hard cheese made in the mountains of County Cork, quite fitting given Cork's traditional status as a producer and marketing center for milk and butter. It tastes much like a fresh Gouda. (1<sup>st</sup> TASTE)

# BLUE CHEESE IN THE LAND OF GREEN



# Move over Roquefort and Gorgonzola

Cashel Blue is considered the first Irish blue cheese, modeled after French Fourme d'Ambert. A semi-soft farmhouse cheese, Cashel Blue is an award-winning cow's milk product made on the Grubb family's Beechmount Farm in Tipperary, Ireland. It's creamy and tangy with a pale buttery interior streaked with blue veins. It's a young, somewhat mild and extra creamy cheese that is not too salty. (2<sup>nd</sup> taste)

# What is That?



# A Cheese to Complement Beer

Cahill's Farm Irish Cheddar is an artisan cow's milk cheese made in County Limerick in Ireland.

Starts out as a tangy Irish cheddar, then chopped into bits before aging, blended with a flavoring, then hooped, lightly pressed and aged to perfection, giving it a veined appearance.

Flavors of this Irish Cheddar include Irish Whiskey, Porter Ale (rumor has it that it's actually Guinness but they call it Porter to avoid licensing fees) and Elderberry Wine. (3rd TASTE)

# The Finale: A Lovely Cheese from the Valley of Coomkeen in County Cork





# Who Knew that Cheese with Hay-like Flavors Could Be So Good?

## DURRUS is:

- Round-shaped with a powdery pink-orange, washed rind.
- Semi-soft
- Produced in Jeffa Gill's dairy in West Cork.
- Considered one of the finest artisanal farmhouse cheeses.
- Made with raw, unpasteurized milk -- which may be why Durrus smells of hay and wet soil, yet tastes buttery, mild and slightly acidic.

# Why is Durrus So Special?

**Because only milk from the Friesian herds of two local farmers is used to prepare this deep-flavored cheese. When mature, the rind of Durrus develops blue grey mold that does not affect the flavor the cheese. (4<sup>th</sup> Taste)**

# Want to make your own Irish cheese?

Recipe for beer-infused cheese:

<http://www.cheesemaking.com/beerchs.html#.WMjEDBlrSCw.email>

Recipe for farmhouse cheddar:

<https://shar.es/1UzUJO>

# The End of the Story

The people overcame the leprechaun's trickery and once again cheesemaking proliferated throughout Ireland. Or maybe Seamus mended his ways because he ate some of today's Irish cheeses and decided that modern Irish cheeses are just as good as gold. Many would agree.

