

HOMMAGE À FROMAGE:

THE CHEESES OF FRANCE

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Chèvre...



Speaking of Chèvre.....let's have our first sample:

HOMEMADE FRESH CHÈVRE ~~WITH HOMEGROWN FIGS~~



- French chèvre is thought to have been developed in the Loire Valley during the 8th century but arose at least 1000 years earlier in other regions.
- Goat cheese seems less rich, despite a similar fat content, and is more tart than cow's milk cheese due to the abundance of short chain fatty acids.
- Ubiquitous in France and includes many AOC protected varieties (more later).

There is more to French Cheese than an aged Chèvre!



Blue Cheese

Blooming-Rind Cheese

Washed-Rind Cheese

Goat's Milk Cheese

Mimolette
Extra-Vieille
25€ le kilo
un fromage produit de France

Where will we go from here?

1. The history of French cheese
2. Regionality in French cheese (AOC)
3. French cheese varieties
4. Some examples and recipes
5. Sources for cheese and information

The Beginnings of French Cheese

- The earliest solid evidence of cheesemaking was found in Poland from 5500 BCE but likely originated around 6000 BCE.
- Cheesemaking and dairying was practiced by the Sumerians (2000-1000 BCE) and appears in the writings of the Greek philosopher Etricus (ca. 300 BCE) and Pliny the Elder (ca. 20 CE, well before the development of his namesake IPA).
- The Romans are credited with the spread of commercial cheesemaking throughout Europe and Britain.
- Cheese varieties multiplied dramatically during the middle ages and became a staple in many areas of Europe including France.

What makes French cheese French?



Regionality of French Cheese





The Evolution of French Cheese

- The French government recognized that the distinctive nature of regional cheeses reflects both *technique* and *terroir*.
- Roquefort, a blue cheese from the Midi-Pyrenees, became the first officially recognized cheese in 1411. This status presaged the development of the AOC (more on this later).
- Camembert, a blooming-rind cheese from Normandy, became the first cheese “protected” by the French government in 1791.
- France now has ~2000 distinct cheese products.
- More about regionality in a minute, but in the meantime:

Let's try another cheese...

Let's try a traditional “blooming rind” or “surface-ripened”
cheese:

CAMEMBERT FERMIER

Farmer's Camembert



- A farmstead version of this famous blooming-rind cow's milk cheese.
- After draining in forms the surface is sprayed with *Penicillium camemberti* and allowed to age for at least 3 weeks.
- Rich, pungent, creamy. Tends to be stronger flavored than Brie.
- AOC protected Camembert de Normandy must be made with raw milk.

Regionality and the AOC

AOC:
*Appellation
d'Origine
Contrôlée*

Localities officially certified as the origin of specific products including wine and cheese. This is the French equivalent of EU Protected Designation of Origin, the PDO.





The Wonderful World of the Appellation d'Origne Contrôlée (AOC)

- Translates to “controlled designation of origin”
- Implemented to legally recognize the contribution of terroir and technique to specific products
- Became law in 1905 for wine but only extended to cheese in 1925 with Roquefort (now covers many agricultural products)
- An AOC may be as large as 150 sq. mi., as small as 9 acres.
- Production rules are rigid, requiring production of milk, making of cheese and at least partial aging of cheese within the protected region.
- AOC name cannot be used for any product not made entirely in the protected area (even if the AOC is the name of a village or town)

Let's try an AOC-protected washed-rind or surface-ripened cheese

PONT L'ÉVÊQUE



- An uncooked, unpressed, washed-rind cow's milk cheese.
- Washed in brine, beer, or other liquids that encourage the growth of *Brevibacterium linens*
- The oldest Norman cheese still in production (older than Camembert).
- Majority of milk and production is from four farms in the AOC-protected Pont l'Évêque region.
- One of the most popular cheeses in France.

★ French styles and examples:

- Classic French examples of standard cheese styles:
 - A fresh developed-acid cheese – **Chèvre**
 - Other examples - Fromage Frais
 - A blooming-rind cheese – **Camembert Fermier**
 - Other examples - Brie de Maure, Fromager d’Affinois
 - A washed rind cheese – **Pont l’Évêque**
 - Other examples – Epoisses, Langres



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- A washed rind cheese – **Pont l’Évêque**

- Other examples – Epoisses, Langres



- A blue cheese – **Fourme d’Ambert**

- Other examples – Roquefort, Saint Agur



Let's try a blue cheese:

FOURME D'AMBERT



- A cow's milk cheese made with *Pennicilium glaucum* and aged in caves in the Auvergne region.
- Creamy and sharp with fruity and mushroomy overtones.
- The cylindrical shape of the cheese is so characteristic of this cheese that it is sculpted above the entrance to the cathedral at La Chalmes in Auvergne.
- Protected by the same AOC ruling as Fourme d'Montbrison in 1972 then split in 2002 based upon slight differences in the method of production.

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- An aged traditional rind cheese – **Abbaye de Belloc**

- Other examples – P’tit Basque, Tomme de Savoie, Comté



Let's try a traditional aged semi-hard cheese:

ABBAYE DE BELLOC



- A traditional aged semi-hard cooked curd sheep's milk cheese from the French Pyrenees.
- Made by Benedictine monks at the Abbaye de Notre Dame at Belloc in Aquitaine.
- Made from the milk of red-nosed Manech ewes in the Ossau-Iraty style.
- Nutty complex flavor, creamy texture, hints of brown butter.

Making French Cheese



Recipes: Chèvre - A developed-acid drained soft cheese

From “*Mastering Artisan Cheesemaking*” by Gianaclis Caldwell

Ingredients:

1 gallon Goat’s Milk (Summerhill pasturized, Trader Joe’s)

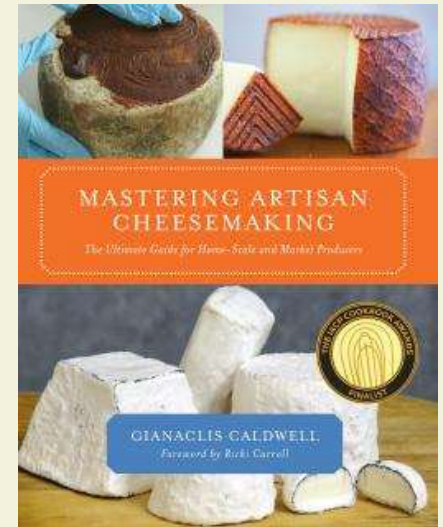
Scant 1/8 tsp of Mesophilic culture (or Flora Danica)

< or = 1/8 tsp CaCl₂ solution (32%) in 2 oz water

2-4 drops Rennet in 2 oz water

Procedure:

- Sanitize all equipment
- Heat milk to 86 F
- Sprinkle culture and allow to bloom on surface for 3-5 minutes followed by 2-5 minutes gentle stirring
- Stir in CaCl₂. Stir in Rennet
- Incubate at 72 F for 12-24 hours until ripened (pH 4.6, curd pulled away from sides of pot ½”). (mine was at about 75 F for 12 hours and reached pH 4.3 but the curd was proper consistency)
- Ladle curd into fine cheesecloth.
- Place in colander over a bowl or hang in cheesecloth and allow the whey to drain for 4-6 hours. Stir half way through..
- Salt curd to approximately 0.8% salt (a bit over 1 tsp).
- Form into logs or other appropriate shapes or just put in container.
- Store with loose lid to age for 1-2 weeks or eat fresh as desired.



Other Recipes:

“Mastering Artisan Cheesemaking” by Gianaclis Caldwell

Camembert:

<http://www.cheesemaking.com/Camembert.html>

Blue cheese:

<http://www.countrybrewer.com.au/pages/how-to-make-blue-cheese.html>

Washed rind cheese:

<https://handyface.wordpress.com/2012/10/07/washed-rind-cheese/>

Semi-hard cooked curd cheese:

http://biology.clc.uc.edu/fankhauser/Cheese/Cheese_5_gallons/CHEESE_5gal_00.htm

French Cheese Resources:

- Cheese
 - Venissimo
 - Wide selection – Multiple locations - Discount
 - Brother's Provisions
 - Wide selection - Discount
 - The Cheese Store
 - Wide selection – Discount?
 - Costco
 - Limited selection – No discount but very good prices – Multiple locations
 - Comté, Brie (Isigny Ste-Mère), P'tit Basque
- Cheesemaking supplies
 - Curds and Wine – San Diego
 - Hawthorne Country Store - Escondido

Questions?

Ask now....

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