

QUESO DIEGO

THE SAN DIEGO CHEESE CLUB

Where Cheese Education Meets Cheese Gastronomy

The March 2018 Newsletter



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An Irish Cheese Story

From the desk of our esteemed President, Curt Wittenberg:

2018 promises to be an eventful year for Queso Diego. On the heels of our Anniversary Party, our February meeting featured a presentation by Peter Zien about the founding of CheeseSmith, the first new creamery in San Diego County in several decades. In addition to that exciting new venture, Peter is the owner and CEO of AleSmith, which hosts our monthly meetings, and a founding member of our club. We are excited to have one of our own taking this giant step and are wishing him success in his new endeavor. We can't wait to sample Peter's creations. A hearty "Thank you!" to Peter and Vicky Zien for their generous support of the club.

At our March meeting, I will be present on Sheep Milk Cheeses. My hope is to have samples of cheeses that are new to most of us and illustrate the range and depth of this diverse group of cheeses. I will also discuss the nuances of working with sheep's milk and what makes it special. After all, mixing cheese education with culinary experiences is what Queso Diego is all about. What could be better than learning through eating? Pairing it with some tasty AleSmith beers, of course!

And, don't forget to plan your grilled cheese recipes for the infamous Grilled Cheese Meeting coming up in April. After all, April is National Grilled Cheese Month. More information and a few delectable ideas will be discussed at the March meeting. We are also excited about upcoming improvements to the Cheesemaking Competition at the San Diego County Fair. Earl Itrich, Marci Richards and Jenny Eastwood have crafted and submitted a proposal for the next stage of Queso Diego sponsorship of the competition, which promises to increase the professionalism and quality of that event. We are hoping all of you participate by entering cheeses, offering to help with logistics, or just coming to the fairgrounds for cheese talks and the awards ceremony on the day of the competition. More details to follow. Kudo's to Earl and his team for their efforts!

These are just a few examples of where we are headed in our effort to make this an enjoyable, educational and delicious 2018. There will be plenty more to come as our schedule solidifies. Make sure to take advantage of the club's offerings and if you have ideas for events or presentations or want to spearhead an event or present to the club on a topic that interests you, be sure to contact Larry Stein or Sabine Walter with your ideas. Remember, YOU are Queso Diego.

Till next time,

Curt

Time to Take Advantage of Our Library of Cheesemaking

Your membership in Queso Diego comes with an opportunity to make wonderful cheeses without a big financial investment. With the help of several of our members, Jack Ford and the Berry Good Food Foundation, we have made available a large collection of reusable cheesemaking tools and expendable cheesemaking supplies to members of the club.

- The tools include more than 100 cheese forms, several cheese presses, and numerous others. Those can be checked out by members for use in their cheesemaking. These are all available for your use upon request with no charge.
- The supplies include more than 20 cheesemaking cultures, sufficient for all of the major styles of cheese, several forms of rennet and lipase, calcium chloride solution, cheese mat, fine weave cheesecloth, and more. These are available for \$1 per item (1 tube of culture sufficient for 2-4 gallons of milk; 1 cheese mat; 1 tube of annatto or of calcium chloride).
- A library of cheesemaking books is being developed and should be available soon. Books can be checked out free of charge for a limited period.

To use the library, access the spreadsheet with list of items here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19fLvqk26dKyUlf1Ay5E_IFhULYZ1rt8nk0SXiR2R720/edit#gid=333222537

When you do so, you will need to request access, which will be granted only if you are a member. After getting access, read the directions, examine the spreadsheet and select the items you need for your next cheese. To request those items send an e-mail to: qd-library-request@quesodiego.org You will need to provide your contact information, the name and number of the item(s) you would like, when you need them (generally the next meeting, unless you make special arrangements). You will receive a message informing you of the availability, the delivery arrangements and the cost to you. Remember to request items from the Library of Cheesemaking at least 5 days before the meeting so we have time to arrange to get them to you.

Once you receive the items you will be ready to make those wonderful cheeses you have been dreaming about. Remember, all tools and books must be returned to the library or passed on to another user once you are finished with it. The success of the library depends upon your responsible use. Happy cheesemaking!

Baby Goats at the Kane-Groce Farm – Oh My!

By Dennise Kane, QD member

Our first year of learning to be goat herders passed uneventfully. We learned to do mani/pedis on the girls, give vaccinations, take temperatures, plan healthy diets, and otherwise enjoy our status as goat owners. As that first year came to a close we were about to embark on a new adventure. Briar had been bred the previous fall and now, one hundred fifty days later, she was about to kid.

For the last several weeks, we immersed ourselves in both print and YouTube videos designed to help the newbie owner through the process of assisting a doe in labor. Our 'birthing kit' was packed, cameras with night vision and audio had been installed in the barn, and we were finally counting down the days till we'd be presented with a lovely little buck or doe, or best case scenario, possibly one of each.

Finally her due date arrived, but no baby. Another day passed, and then another. By this point the only one sleeping well at night was Briar. The rest of us were totally exhausted from running laps out to the barn to confirm what the cameras were showing: she was way more interested in nibbling than delivering.

Saturday morning, April 5, 2014 arrived crisp and clear. She was now several days past her due date, but by this time we were pretty certain Briar wasn't planning on uncrossing her hooves anytime soon. So when a friend called to say her goat was in labor and invited us over to see the process, we all jumped into the car with hardly a backward glance.

Watching the birth of baby goats for the first time was absolutely amazing. Within moments, the twins were struggling to sit up, then stand. Mamma's first job was to wash every single square inch of her kids; thereby stimulating her babies to get up and start nursing. We were mesmerized to the point that none of us realized that our phones, left in car, were ringing off the hook. Yep, when absolutely no one was home to distract, encourage or video tape, Briar decided it was time to shine. It was Jason on the line. He had arrived home from work and had wandered out to the barn to find our landscaper piling fresh hay under a pile of brand new babies. Always an overachiever, Briar had produced not one or two kids, but a set of quads! Two boys, two girls. It couldn't get any better until we did the math and realized that Briar came equipped with only two teats whereas she had four babies that were yelling for dinner! Now we were scrambling for baby bottles and drawing straws to see who would have to take the 3 am feeding.

In the first photo you'll see Briar and her babies, Ivy, Nutmeg, Coriander and Dill, taken a couple hours after they were born. In the second photo you'll see who drew the short straw. Since then, we've been blessed with dozens of beautiful, healthy baby goats. Some births have been easy; others a challenge. But each new baby has brought something special into our lives.

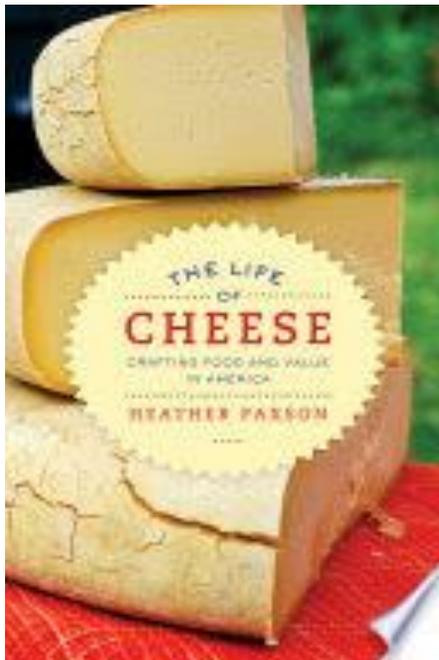
The final photo is our Lavender's baby boy – a single born just last week. He's huge, and beautiful, and coal black. He loves to play, and loves to cuddle. The only problem is that we still haven't settled on a name. Any suggestions?



Book Review

by Lesley Stern, QD member

The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America By Heather Paxson



The title of this book—The Life of Cheese—refers both to the people who make the cheeses, their life styles and working practices, and to the liveliness of cheese itself. Heather Paxson's focus is on modern American artisanal cheese producers, but via this focus she ranges widely, raising many hot issues. An undercurrent through the book is the question of why, so often, the issue of raw versus pasteurized is posed as an either an all-or-nothing issue, just like culture versus nature, tradition versus innovation, standardization versus experimentation. She explains that the issues and

histories are more complicated and demonstrates this by discussing and interviewing many of the now-iconic artisanal cheesemakers. I enjoyed the appearance of figures like Mary Keehn, founder of Cypress Grove Cheese, known for Humboldt Fog; David and Cindy Major of Vermont Shepherd Cheese; Mateo and Andy Kehler of Jasper Hill Farm, Marjorie Susman and Marian Pollack of Orb Weaver Farm, and Sue Conley and Peggy Smith of Cowgirl Creamery (yes, shout out for all these modern women pioneers!)

Paxson is an ethnographer, but her commitment to description (conveying the “feel” of artisanal production) doesn't stop her from elaborating a lively argument. She proposes that contemporary artisanal producers operate in a post-pastoral and post-pasteurian universe. By pasteurian she means a fetishistic preoccupation with hygiene (manifested in a regulatory order bent on taming nature through forceful eradication of microbial contaminants).

By pastoral she means the romantic ideal of shepherds tending sheep and goats and cows in unsullied pre-industrial landscapes. In contrast to the pastoral she argues that post-pastoral thinking (embodied by the producers she highlights) regards scientific knowledge—of milk chemistry, acidification, microbial succession in rind development—as a crucial means of understanding how “nature” behaves in a way that can complement the customary tradition of the cheesemaker's art. These producers are more concerned with collaborating with the non-human species that contribute to the cheesemaking project. And they are concerned with making cheese both safely and artisanally.

For me, the most interesting and spiky aspects of the book had to do with Paxson's attention to the “invention of tradition” in modern American cheesemaking. We know that all modern American cheeses are hybrids (not just the artisanal), but she also raises an eyebrow at the suggestion that European cheeses are invariably authentic and traditional when in fact they too—Camembert, Comte, and Taleggio for instance—are often invented as traditional. Additionally, more and more of Europe's cheeses are made from pasteurized milks and even raw milk is changing; 90 percent of Camembert cheeses are now industrially produced. The resurgence of small scale artisanal production in the U.S. often involves a process of “reverse engineering” or the creation of an association between a particular place and a particular cheese (rather than the belief that place is primary and imprinted on flavor). Bayley Hazen Blue is a great example. Jasper Hill Farm has attempted to involve local farmers in the making of this cheese and have marketed it as a quintessential cheese of northern Vermont. It is also of interest closer to home, and in developments that have occurred since the publication of *The Life of Cheese*: Rachel Dutton, who is busy in her lab at UCSD sampling and sequencing the genetic material embedded in the rinds of naturally ripened cheeses, has taken Bayley Hazen Blue as her prime experimental object. In the next few years this should tell us a lot about whether cheeses are specific to regions, unreproducible elsewhere, or whether they can be “cloned”—not just in the lab, but by you or me or anyone who belongs to Queso Diego and “borrows” from the library.

When a Cheese Looks Like it's Gone Bad

By Jenny Eastwood, ACS CCP and QD member
Smallgoods USA, LLC



I recently received a cheese I was eagerly anticipating. Upon its arrival, as I peered into the shipping box, my heart sank. It looked terrible and I knew it was not fit for sale. From time to time, this happens; cheese is a living thing and continues to develop and ferment after it's made.

Cheese is also amazingly resilient. In transit, from maker - to retailer - to your home, it withstands a lot of jostling, loading and unloading and most importantly, can endure wild temperature and humidity fluctuations. Most of the time, it manages to arrive looking, and tasting, beautifully. Sometimes though, it just can't handle the pressure. So, what are the signs of mistreated cheese, and what should we do about it?

First and foremost, check the packaging. This small format bloomy rind was packaged in a cute little wooden crate, over which it was wrapped in plastic. Looking things over, I saw no packaging defects that would have allowed air – or moisture – to have crept in.

Once unwrapped, I smelled the cheese. Any unpleasant odor – especially ammonia, is a telltale sign of cheese gone bad. But there's a caveat: ammonia is a natural bi-product of proteins breaking down. With most cheeses, a little air is all that's needed for the odor to dissipate. (One reason why it's important to "air" out your cheese aging space daily.) With this cheese, however, there was no odor at all. Not even a trace of ammonia....

As I cut into the cheese, I noticed a lot of breakdown (proteolysis) just under the rind, and yet the center was still very firm and normal looking. After poking around a bit, I decided to give it a taste. Now, I'm not necessarily suggesting you do this at home. BUT, I'm a professional, and, knowing the milk was pasteurized, not displaying heavy odors, and feeling that the rind was not 'slimy', I gave it a go.

So, what happened? Well, obviously this cheese endured temperature and humidity changes along its way. The rind certainly displayed these changes – it was overdeveloped, mottled with various molds and almost 'slip skinned', meaning the rind had developed faster than intended and was almost slipping off the cheese. Upon tasting, I found the rind to be bitter (expected), but the inside paste was fine, though strongly suggestive of the goat milk from which it was made.

Needless to say, we did not sell this cheese. Chances must NEVER be taken with products and customers. However, if you encounter something askew, you must inform the merchant of your experience and you should be refunded. If there is ever a

question of possible contamination, improper treatment, or unwanted mold, this isn't the time to overlook and dive in. A monger's goal is to deliver an outstanding product that you can take home and thoroughly enjoy. Anything less is a sad cheese day.....

A Tip from QD Member, Jessica Voytek

Wanted to give a recommendation for Top O' The Morn Farms cow's milk available at Sprouts. It's pretty much as local as you can get, outside of a farmers market. The milk comes from Tulare, California. It's not organic so seems to be pasteurized at a reasonable temperature that does not mess with the curd. It's also just a little bit cheaper than Strauss. <http://www.farmfreshmilk.com/>

Irish Cheddar and Stout Fondue

Bon Appetit Test Kitchen

INGREDIENTS

2 cups 1- to 1 1/2-inch-diameter red-skinned potatoes, halved
2 cups cauliflower florets
2 cups very small brussels sprouts
2 apples, cored, cut into wedges
1 pound Irish cheddar cheese, grated
2 1/2 tablespoons all purpose flour
3/4 cup (or more) Irish stout (such as Guinness)
6 tablespoons frozen apple juice concentrate, thawed
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

PREPARATION

Steam all vegetables until tender, about 15 minutes. Arrange vegetables and apples around edge of large platter.

Meanwhile, toss cheese with flour in large bowl. Bring 3/4 cup stout, juice concentrate, and mustard to simmer in large saucepan over medium heat. Gradually add cheese mixture, stirring constantly, until cheese is melted and smooth, thinning with more stout, if desired. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer fondue to bowl. Place in center of platter with vegetables.

In honor of St. Patrick's Day.....a bit about an Irish Cheese

Ardrahan is a rich, semisoft cow's-milk disk from County Cork, praised for its silky texture and complex, ripe, salty, nutty flavor. The following article was originally published here: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-34902406>



When Irish farmer Eugene Burns started making a posh French-style, smelly cheese in 1983, he decided to do something either very brave or very foolhardy. So convinced was he of the quality of his cheese that he made the decision to try to sell it in Paris.

Mr Burns wanted to go straight into the lion's den of the cheese world. And instead of putting a few rounds in the post, he vowed to drive to the French capital. Despite having never left Ireland before, the County Cork farmer filled his van with cheeses, and drove to Paris' Rungis food market via the UK and two ferries.

"I don't think he knew a word of French even," says Irish food writer and TV personality Darina Allen. "How he got there is hard to say."

But Mr Burns did manage to find the Rungis market, and the cheese of the determined Irishman was a hit with French wholesalers. Liz Burns says her dad was determined to sell his cheese to the French. "He absolutely knocked it out," says Ms Allen. So much so that Mr Burns returned to the Republic of Ireland with an order for a tonne a week. That didn't initially go down well with his wife, as his daughter Liz Burns, 42, explains: "My mother said, 'A tonne, are you mad?'"

However, they were able to fulfil the orders, and the cheese, called Ardrahan, has never looked back. Still available in France, it is today also sold across Ireland, in the UK, and even in the US.

Like many Irish dairy farmers, Mr Burns decided to start making cheese almost out of necessity, due to the introduction of European Union milk quotas in 1984. Brought in to bolster milk prices, these put strict limits on how much milk could be produced, meaning that farmers had to reduce the size of their herds, or even throw milk away.

Ms Burns, who took over the running of the family farm and production of Ardrahan following her father's death in 2000, says her dad was simply not prepared to see good milk go to waste.

"We had our milk - our milk was really, really good," she says. "We weren't going to throw it down the drain."

May the cheese be with you!!

