

QUESO DIEGO

THE SAN DIEGO CHEESE CLUB

March, 2019

From the desk of Queso Grande, Larry Stein

Hello all Queso Diegans.

We had a busy time this last month and have lots of great stuff coming up. First I'd like to thank all the people that made the Fermentation Festival great fun and a success. Thank you to Sabine, Deborah Y., Deborah F., Daniel, Yoona, and Cindy. There was a lot of interest in what we do. We had a few new members join at the February meeting. Once again we got a little rain, but we've come to expect that now.



I have to thank Marci Richards for the wonderful presentation on "The History of Cheese" at our February meeting. It was informative and tasty. Thank you very much.

We also did our first cheese class of the year. The topic was Brie. We did a classic cow version of this great bloomy rind cheese. There were 11 cheesemakers. My cheese is starting to get furry. I hope to bring some to share at our meeting this month.

Speaking of this month, we have our founder, Chris Banker, presenting on hard cheeses. No, not cheeses hard to make, but generally well pressed and aged cheeses. You know there will be some great cheeses to try. We'll also have a short presentation to prepare for our annual April "Grilled Cheese Meeting". The April meeting is one of the most fun of the year. Be sure to come to our March 19th meeting for the introduction.

If you came to the February meeting you know we had a change of venue. We needed to move to the Barrel Room because they were doing production in the back. It's where we met when we started meeting at AleSmith. After talking with Melissa, from AleSmith, the Barrel Room will be our new meeting space! We're very excited about this. If you don't know where it is you come through the main tasting room and go to the left. It's the room past the stairs in the back. Still bring a chair and maybe a coat since it's a bit open back there. The only catch is that if they have it rented on a meeting night then we'll meet in the back. If we know ahead I'll post the change on the mail list. If you show up and we're not there, we're in the other spot.

HOLD THE DATES:

We've had a little change in our events schedule. The San Diego County Fair finally came through and scheduled us for the competition. The cheese competition will be held on Saturday, June 1st. There will be more information to follow.

If you're astute you're wondering, what happened to the Baja Cheese, Wine & Beer tour? Well, we've re-scheduled it for the following weekend, June 8 & 9. Once again, there will be more information as we get closer.

That's about it. See you all on March 19th. Social time and potluck is at 6:30 and the meeting will start at 7:00.

Stay cheesy my friends.

-Larry

MARCH EVENTS

March 19, 6:30 p.m.

General Meeting @ Ale Smith

Hard Cheeses by Chris Banker

APRIL EVENTS

April 16, 6:30 pm

General Meeting @ Ale Smith

Grilled Cheese!



Save the Date: June 1, 2019

Cheese Competition at San Diego County Fair!

Check upcoming newsletters for more information on the classes of cheese that will be judged and how to enter. Start planning now and enter your best cheese. Many club members have won awards and can give advise on how to plan for this fun event.

Save the Dates: June 8 & 9, 2019 for Baja Tour

Tour starting at the Cave de Marcelo cheese cave and creamery outside of Ensenada. Then Saturday night and Sunday we'll tour and enjoy some the wineries, breweries, food and cheese shops from Ensenada through the Valle Guadalupe and back up to San Diego. Don't forget to check your passports while there's still time.

Check upcoming newsletters for more information.

A few cheese facts from WebMD:

Cheese contains tryptophan, an amino acid that helps your body relax and feel sleepy.

Aged cheese has live cultures like bifidobacteria and lactobacilli. These are the good bacteria that usually live in your gut. They can boost your immune system and overall health.

Cheese can't take the place of a good toothbrush, but its calcium can help your choppers. And chewing it tells your mouth to make more saliva. This prevents acids from attacking your teeth, which cuts back on cavities and gum disease. It also has casein, which helps replace the enamel, or hard outer covering, of your teeth.



It's Membership Renewal Time for 2019!

Queso Diego dues are \$20 per year for individuals or \$30 per household. These dues help us pay for meeting supplies and commercial examples, as well as supplies for pairings and other club expenses. If you haven't already renewed for this year, you can pay your dues at our next meeting, or online from our [membership page](#) of the QuesoDiego website.

The Human Hand in Cheesemaking: From Curd to the Cave

Curt Wittenberg

Finished cheese can take on a broad range of textures, shapes and flavors. The influence of cheese cultures and methods of curd preparation on the finished product have been touched upon in previous articles. Here we will explore the varied roads that curd can take on its way to the cheese cave. The trip from curd to cave may include cooking, washing and draining the curd, cheddaring, shaping the cheese using forms (also called molds), pressing, salting, and drying. Which methods are used and the manner in which they are combined has a profound influence on the texture, shape and flavor of the finished product.

An examination of the various techniques for forming the cheese from the curd quickly reveals that a primary function is expulsion of the whey. The resulting loss of liquid increases the density of the curd. Cooking (heating the curd), draining, salting, pressing and drying all lead to liquid loss. However, things are not so simple. Less obvious is the acidification of the curd that occurs as a consequence of the continued activity of lactic acid bacteria. Both the loss of whey and salting discourage acidification by slowing the bacterial growth as do increased temperature during cooking or decreased lactose that results from washing (dilution of the whey with hot water). The balance between acidification and whey expulsion is a major factor in determining the nature of the finished product.

Because there are so many options for combining these processes, it may be instructive to compare a few very different cheeses to understand the impact on outcome. First, consider a simple acid-developed cheese like a fresh chevre. The milk is allowed to form curd with very little rennet and many hours of acid development (often 12 hours or more). The curd is soft, wet, and tart, pH 4.5 or even lower. The curd is then drained, again for many hours, without pressing and usually without the addition of salt. This allows substantial acid development during draining. The resulting product is creamy, spreadable, and tart and has a relatively simple flavor profile.

Next, we will consider another simple cheese, Bulgarian feta. To make feta, the curd is formed relatively rapidly, in about two hours, and then drained for several hours before putting in a form and pressing under a weight equivalent to the cheese for several hours more. Only then is it soaked in heavy brine overnight at a cool temperature to develop its characteristic salty flavor. The feta paste is relatively sweet and achieves only a slight tartness, being about pH 5.0, due to the short time of acid development and the expulsion of whey by pressing. It is a salty, firm, crumbly but creamy cheese with a slight tangy bite.

Finally, let's consider a traditional semi-hard cheese, Tomme (these styles of cheese are usually referred to as semi-soft but I find semi-hard a better description). The curd for this cheese is typically formed in about an hour under conditions similar to a feta but then it is cut quite small and heated to 100 degrees F with stirring. This results in the expulsion of whey and inactivation of the mesophilic bacteria in the culture. After this point, acid development and flavor development depend upon the remaining thermophilic bacteria, which survive this treatment. The curd is then transferred to a tomme form and pressed under a weight comparable to that of the curd much like the technique used for the feta. However, during that time it achieves a pH of only 5.4. It is then salted in brine for a few hours per pound and aged. Even before aging, the tomme has dense, smooth slightly elastic paste and a mild, sweet flavor. It would not be described as either tart or salty.

This comparison of familiar cheeses illustrates just a few of the effects of the varied processes used in the trip from the curd to the cave. It is by no means exhaustive but provides an introduction to the impact of some of the common procedures we run across in our cheesemaking recipes. It is really quite surprising how similar the recipes are for feta and tomme given the dramatic differences in the nature of the finished product. The important lesson is that relatively subtle differences in the formation and treatment of the curd in the pot and in the form have profound effects and that these effects have much to do with the expulsion of whey and the formation of acid. Take the opportunity to compare the recipes for familiar cheeses to learn to recognize and understand the differences. By understanding the impact of each of these procedures we can learn to control the cheesemaking process and, thereby, become better cheesemakers.

Lemon Ricotta Cookies with Lemon Glaze

RECIPE COURTESY OF GIADA DE LAURENTIIS

Cookies:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 (15-ounce) container whole milk ricotta cheese
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 lemon, zested

Glaze:

- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 lemon, zested



Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Cookies: In a medium bowl combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

In the large bowl combine the butter and the sugar. Using an electric mixer beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating until incorporated. Add the ricotta cheese, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Beat to combine. Stir in the dry ingredients.

Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Spoon the dough (about 2 tablespoons for each cookie) onto the baking sheets. Bake for 15 minutes, until slightly golden at the edges. Remove from the oven and let the cookies rest on the baking sheet for 20 minutes.

Glaze: Combine the powdered sugar, lemon juice, and lemon zest in a small bowl and stir until smooth. Spoon about 1/2-teaspoon onto each cookie and use the back of the spoon to gently spread. Let the glaze harden for about 2 hours.

Two members brought these cookies to the February Meeting. You can see the [recipe and video](#) on Food Network.

Library of Cheesemaking—A unique benefit of this club!

The Club's Library is a great benefit, especially for those of us just starting out. It gives members an opportunity to get going without having to invest a lot of cash up front. You can borrow equipment (draining baskets, forms, presses, spoons, thermometers, etc.) and books on Cheese making. Or order cheese cultures (Flora Danica, feta culture, rennet, etc.) for just \$1.00 a sample good for 2 – 4 gallons of milk. And the books listed below also give you a chance to see what you like.

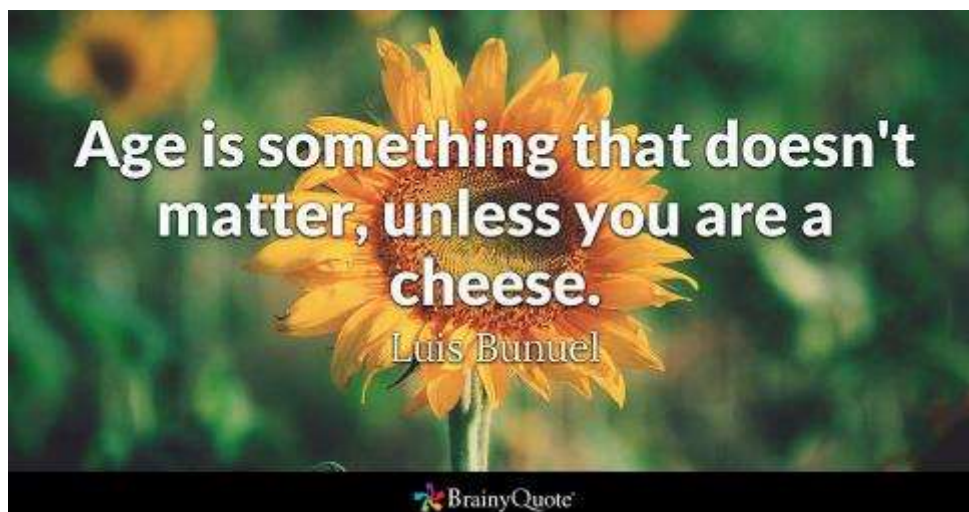
So if you've joined to start making your own cheese the library can really be a way to kick off a project!

Mastering Basic Cheesemaking	Gianaclis Caldwell
Mastering Artisan Cheesemaking	Gianaclis Caldwell
Artisan Cheesemaking at Home	Mary Karlin
Home Cheesemaking	Ricki Carroll
The Cheesemaker's Manual	Margaret Peters-Morris
The Science of Cheese	Michael H. Tunick
Cheesemonger: A life on the wedge	Gordon Edgar
The Complete Encyclopedia of Cheese	Christian Callec

Here is a link to the Library spreadsheet. The tabs at the bottom get you to what you need.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19fLvqk26dKyUlf1Ay5E_IFhULYZ1rt8nk0SXir2R720/edit#gid=1491603828 .

Requests are generally filled at the monthly meetings. Simply request the items you'd like by sending an e-mail a week before the meeting to: qd-library-request@quesodiego.org.



Below are organizations who support Queso Diego. We hope you will support them as well! Click on the logos to get to their websites.

