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One of the best aspects of helping people select a cheese involves telling a story. The story for each cheese is unique and tells not just where it came from but many times who made it, what animal gave the milk for the cheesemaking, and how best to serve and share the cheese. One of the great cheeses I'm lucky to share each day is Comté, in particular the Comté des Fort Rousses made by the artisans of Juraflöre Dairy. The story of this cheese is one of tradition, born of the transformation of a stronghold of war into a library of delight that is enjoyed at world-class restaurants and the kitchen tables of food lovers around the world. As a cheese alone, it's flavor, texture, aroma and versatility are a singular experience and when matched with other examples of fine craftsmanship it can be without comparison.

Comté is not just a place or a cheese, it's an expression. Cheesemakers like M. Arnaud of Fort de Rousses location for Juraflöre Dairy are the curators and sustainers of a cheese tradition that reaches back hundreds of years into the history of the Jura mountains. Montbéliard cattle have their milk made into magic by the fruitières. This region has special designations, protected by law, that safeguard the tradition, knowledge and singular craftsmanship. Comté made by the men and women of the Fort des Rousses is singular but never lonely in this area. Other Protected Denomination of Origin cheeses can join together to make her story ever better.

To begin, a minimum of cheeses for me to offer guests to complement Comté would be a trinity, allow minimum of 2 hours to come to room temperature for all -

Vacherin Mont d'Or- This requires only a spoon to fold back the 'lid', with bread torn from the baguette to be spooned onto, pair with a dry Gewurztraminer. "Mountain of gold", from the Swiss side of the Alps.

Comté des Fort de Rousses-the star of our story, aged for 15 months, use a sharp knife with a long edge. The paste is firm and toothsome, at room temperature the occasional crystal crunches to the tooth. A light aroma of earth, milk, and grass arise when cut. Musty in the good way, makes me think of fresh tilled earth Loves caramelized nuts, cornichon pickles, savory jams like roasted garlic and cippoline onion. Fresh, crusty bread is a natural friend to Comté cheese, especially if the bread is still warm from the oven. Aged hams thinly sliced are almost mandatory...I can put shavings of this cheese into a gratin, onto fresh apples, and of course by herself with a vin de jeaune from where she comes from. Being able to tell my customers how a 19th century hilltop fortress became an aging facility for tens of thousands of wheels of this is a treat unto itself.

Bleu de Gex-not readily available in the US, but a perfect end to the story of Comté. Creamy, briny, white pepper and spice explode here, serve with a thin bladed knife, like a skeleton knife. Like a spice cake dessert to Comté's meal. A wine more sweet such as classic Sauternes or perhaps better a Vin Santo from Italy to complement with a touch of vanilla and alcohol.



Saturday lunch at our house