

# COMTÉ News



COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION | [WWW.COMTE-USA.COM](http://WWW.COMTE-USA.COM)



Summer  
2020

Part 1



Comté Cheese  
Association

## Dear Friends,

We have heard from several of you regarding the challenges they have been experiencing due to the pandemic. Although business on the import, distribution and retail levels seems to have maintained itself with varying degrees, our heart goes out especially to those of you in the restaurant and food service where the business has mostly stopped completely with few exceptions.

On our end, we have had to suspend many projects, including a book tour for the launch of David Lebovitz's new book, *Drinking French*, our participation in Counter Culture and the ACS, our press trip... We hope some of these can take place later this year.

As the summer approaches, this newsletter includes interviews with Fabien Degoulet, 2015 winner of the "Best Cheesemonger in the World" title and David Lebovitz, pastry chef, author and blogger. Both of them address how their lives and businesses have been impacted.

### Comté ("con – TAY") cheese ID General information:

**Origin:** Jura Mountains  
(Massif du Jura), France

**Milk Type:** Raw cow's milk

**Cheese Style:** Artisanal, pressed, cooked,  
with natural brushed rind.

**French AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée)  
since 1958 and European Union Protected  
Designation of Origin (PDO) Certification.**

- Delimited area of production: Doubs, Jura, Ain, elevation 650-5000 ft.
- Milk must be produced by local cows of the Montbéliarde (95%) and Simmental (5%) breeds. There are approximately 150,000 Comté cows.
- Minimum of 2.5 acres of natural pasture for each animal.
- Cattle feed must be natural and free of fermented products and GMOs.
- Each fruitière must collect milk from dairy farms within a 16-mile diameter maximum.
- Milk must be made into cheese within 24 hours maximum of the earliest milking.
- Only natural starters must be used to transform the milk into curds.
- Wheels must be aged on spruce boards. Minimum aging is 4 months, generally 6-18 months and sometimes even longer.



## Q&A with Fabien Degoulet, winner “Best Cheesemonger in the World” for 2015.

**> How has COVID 19 affected the cheese industry in France?**

*Covid 19 has hit many artisanal cheesemakers hard. Outside market weren't allowed to open. Some retailers were closed. So, producers had to stock a lot of cheese. It could be really difficult for the industry if the situation doesn't improve quickly. Customers have to consider that “eating cheese means save livelihoods.” I take stock in the fact that cheese has survived viruses for centuries.*

**> What did it mean to be named the 2015 Winner of the Meilleur Fromager du monde at the Mondial du Fromage (The Best Cheesemonger in the World)?**

*As a cheese sommelier this title is very important. It means I know how to explain how to taste the cheese, to the customer. The next Mondial du Fromage will take place in June 2021.  
<https://www.cheese-tours.com//index.php#>*

**> You have lived in Japan for 10 years. How did this experience influence you?**

*Japan is like America: Cheese is not a part of their culture, the way it is in France. So, my job is to tailor the cheese to the local culture. That is important in Japan because the price of cheese is three times higher than in France. I like to promote the fact that cheese is about the milk producer, the cheesemaker and the affineur. I want to help everybody in the production chain!*

**> How would you describe the title and contest to Americans?**

*It is like any professional sporting match, all competitors start out on equal footing. For example, no one can bring cheese in from different countries. Then there are various*

*elements such as cooking, pairing, blind tasting and creating a big cheese plate with 17 kilos of cheeses. Obviously, there's a time component involved.*

**> Do you have to qualify for this competition?**

*There is an online application and test to qualify. Competitors come from all over the world. With the growth of the American Cheese Society, there have been more contenders coming from the U.S. lately. It's recognized as a very important title to win, especially in Japan. I participated in the contest twice.*

**> What are you doing now?**

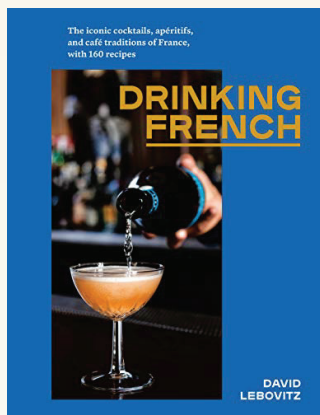
*I returned to France because as a cheese lover, it's very difficult to live in a country without a cheese culture. After 10 years, I needed a new experience. So, I worked at Marcell Petite. Then created my own cheese consulting business. Now, I also create cheese boxes that I promote online. However, recently, I've had to rethink things a bit.*

**> What do you think about Comté?**

*It is one of my favorites. Comté is the easiest cheese to eat and understand. Comté has been made the same way for over 800 years, in the traditional cooperative system with no additives. You can try a lot of different Comtés and have your own favorite. It's not all about the age, it's about the terroir, which influences the aromas, taste and texture of each cheese. I know a particular Comté is great when I can't stop eating it! I love pairing Comté with saké. Especially, Yuki No Bosha saké which has a very long fermentation style called Yamahai. It can be very dry and goes nicely with Comté. Or aged Comté with IPA beer.*



# An interview with professional chef and author, David Lebovitz regarding his new book, *Drinking French*.



## > How did the coronavirus impact your book, and your life?

*When most of us went on lockdown, I had to reassess how I would stay in touch with readers. It happens that the subject of *Drinking French* lent itself very well to the new reality many of us were facing and people on social media began sharing their drinks with each other on Facebook and Instagram, and launching*

*Zoom apéro hours. I started a daily Apéro Hour live on Instagram that became a gathering place for me not only to share drinks and recipes, but I included related topics like preparing appetizers and serving French cheese.*

## > Given you've written so many books, why did you think now was the right time to write *Drinking French*?

*I've enjoyed exploring different aspects of French culture in my books and on my blog, everything from navigating the outdoor markets and exploring chocolate shops, to where to find the best croissants. But I became fascinated with the culture and traditions of French drinks. It's such a rich topic for a book and there wasn't a book out there that had embraced the subject. The drinking culture of France reflects not only their history and customs, it's provided the world with a lot of delicious things to drink; Champagne, Cognac, wine, café drinks, vermouth, herbal tisanes, pastis, and more.*

## > What do you hope readers and fans will take away from this book?

*I wrote *Drinking French* to share the pleasures that the French take in drinking, which anyone can enjoy, no matter where they are. French cuisine and cooking have gotten accolades over the years, but the drinking culture can be baffling for visitors. I'm often asked me about the colorful café drinks, and readers have begged me for recipes to recreate herbal infusions, chocolate drinks, and how to create an authentic café au lait at home.*

*I also wanted to demystify all those bottles lined up behind the café bars, which can be intimidating. The selection of French apéritifs are often flavored with orange peels,*

*spices, mountain herbs and make delicious before-dinner drinks, to stimulate the appetite and provide a moment to linger with friends before dinner. It also surprises people that many classic cocktails were invented in France, when Americans came over to drink during prohibition. The historical aspects of les cocktails because just as interesting as the recipes to me. So, I gave readers both. And, of course, because the French can't imagine drinking without having something to eat, I've included a chapter on Snacks to accompany the drinks in the book, as well.*

## > What is your favorite drink in the book? There are a couple tasty recipes for hot chocolate!

*The Spiced Hot Chocolate was the one beverage that I could not stop drinking.*

## > Why did you think Comté would be a good partner for your book tour in the U.S.?

*Like most people in France, I always have a wedge of Comté on hand. Every time I assemble a cheese platter, Comté invariably has a place on it. It truly is one of my favorite cheeses, and it's easy to understand why it's one of the most popular cheeses in France. It's hard to resist the delicious nutty flavor of the cheese, which is great for snacking and eating on its own, or part of a selection of cheeses.*

*I use Comté in a lot of my recipes, from Gougères (warm cheese puffs) that accompany apéritifs, to more substantial fare like a Croque Monsieur (griddled ham and cheese sandwich) and quiche. The versatility of Comté also makes it appealing and I'm thrilled to be able to share my love of Comté with others during my book tour.*

## > What is your favorite recipe in the book and why?

*I am a big fan of the Boulevardier cocktail. It's often referred to as the "French Negroni," and is the perfect mix of whiskey, red bitters (I use French bitters, but Campari works, too) and sweet vermouth. It's a very easy cocktail to make, and to drink, and is equally delicious served up or on the rocks. Either way...À votre santé!*

*As far as excellent pairings with Comté, David recommends a French Manhattan or a Picon Biere for his Gougere recipe. He also encourages readers to seek out Macvin du Jura, a regional French wine, to accompany comte: "(Macvin) is a true treat to sip chilled, while nibbling on a slab of Comté."*