

COMTÉ

News



COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION | WWW.COMTE-USA.COM



Fall 2020
Part 1



Comté Cheese
Association

ACS Webinar with Alain Mathieu, président of the Comté PDO (CIGC) and milk producer.

As the Comté Scholarship for CCP's had to be suspended this year, two other initiatives were developed to increase Comté knowledge among cheesemongers. A webinar for CCP's was created hosted by Alain Mathieu, Comté Milk Farmer and President of the Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté (CIGC).

In this video, the organisation of the Comté PDO and the production of Comté are presented from the perspective of Alain who lives in a small village of 80, Bief-des-Maisons, in the Jura mountains of France.

At the outset of the video, Alain stands in front of a large wood bicycle built to welcome the cyclists of the Tour De France. As part of the festivities (18th September), a large fresco was created by the local farmers to highlight the PDO. To see the video, go to www.comte-usa.com (or <http://www.comte-usa.com/news/a-day-with-alain-mathieu/>).

Special Comté tote bags were also created to promote the annual Comté Scholarship for CCP's. These bags were awarded to all CCP virtual exam graduates as a token of our congratulations. (Comté is a sponsor of the ACS Foundation.)

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

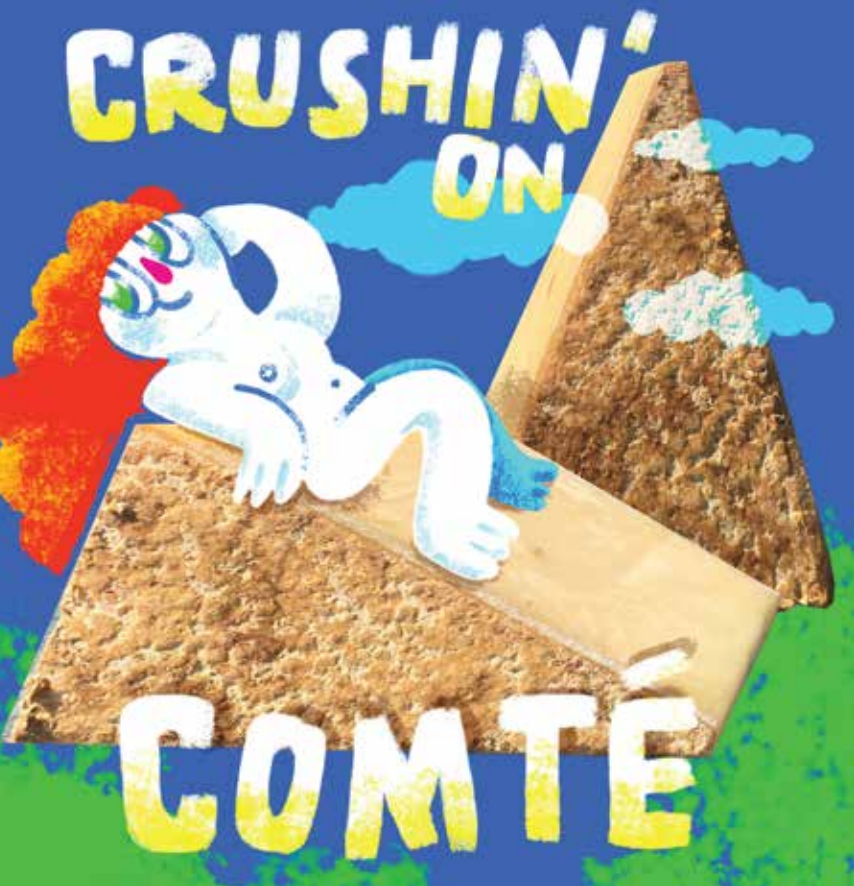
Origin: Jura Mountains
(Massif du Jura), France

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.



I have a serious crush on an older cheese: COMTÉ.

I used to carry a torch for fresh fromage, but these days it's Alpine-style Comté that gives me butterflies.

What can I say?
With age comes nuance.
Tradition.
Terroir.

Speaking of crushes: Montbéliarde cows? ZOMG! These brown-and-white beauties make the milk for Comté and have been doing so for generations. Their milk begins its transformation at the fruitière, where cheesemakers cook it in copper kettles as they have for centuries. The affineur then cave-ages young wheels on spruce slats from 4 to 24 months.

The results are a firm, aged, raw-milk cheese with distinguished notes of browned butter, toasted hazelnuts, pineapple and caramelized onion.

At around 1.6M wheels made yearly, I may not be the only one swooning but that's cool, I can share. Try some!
And don't be surprised if you find yourself craving more once it's gone.

News from the 2020 Cheesemonger Invitational

“Flattening the Curd!”

Cheesemonger Debra Ziss represented Comté at the recent virtual Cheesemonger Invitational. We were thrilled that she shared her original artwork with us for the social media challenge and her pairing. She recently launched KäseBox, which is a grazing box service in the Brooklyn-area.



Debra's Comté pairing idea was inspired by a deconstructed caramel apple dessert. Her idea also takes cues from an apple pie with cheese! Honey crisp apple chips are layered with a slice of Comté. Finally, the dish is topped with homemade shallot confit, a teeny piece of salted caramel and toasted hazelnuts. Debra recommends serving Octoberfest beer or dry cider to compliment her creation.

An interview with the world-renowned authority on the chemistry of foods and cooking and author Harold McGee, regarding his new book, *Nose Dive: A Field Guide to the World's Smells*

> What made you decide to write this book 10 years and when?

Of course, my usual subjects are food and cooking, and I began ten years ago with the intention of writing a book about flavor. I gradually became interested in the aroma echoes among different ingredients—for example, *The rinds of Comté [...] from the Jura Mountains [...] develop a rich aroma with meaty, onions, roasted, earthy, and sweet aspects (Page 567)*. Then I began to think about the echoes among foods and other things—flowers, horse stables—then about why smells in general exist, and what particular smells tell us about the physical world. I found plenty of scientific studies about the molecules that trigger smell, so the scope and the details were enough to keep me busy for a decade.

> What do you hope the reader will take away from this book?

The main thing that I hope the reader will come away with is a greater awareness of and interest in smells, which are sensations that accompany every breath we take through our nose, that can evoke great pleasure as well as deep disgust, and that can inform us about invisible, inaudible, intangible things and processes all around us. I hope readers will come to be convinced that to sniff more attentively is to be more fully alive to the world.

> How would you summarize this book?

It's a guide to the many myriad smells of the world, every day and overlooked sensations that are our most direct and intimate encounter with the materials of our physical environment. It calls attention to those sensations, explains what causes them, and delves into what they reveal about otherwise hidden aspects of the world.

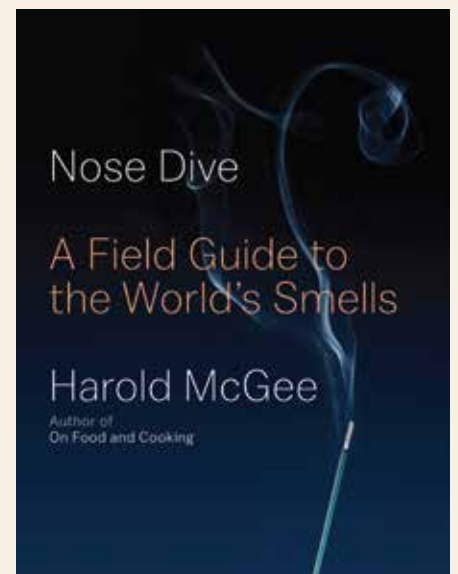
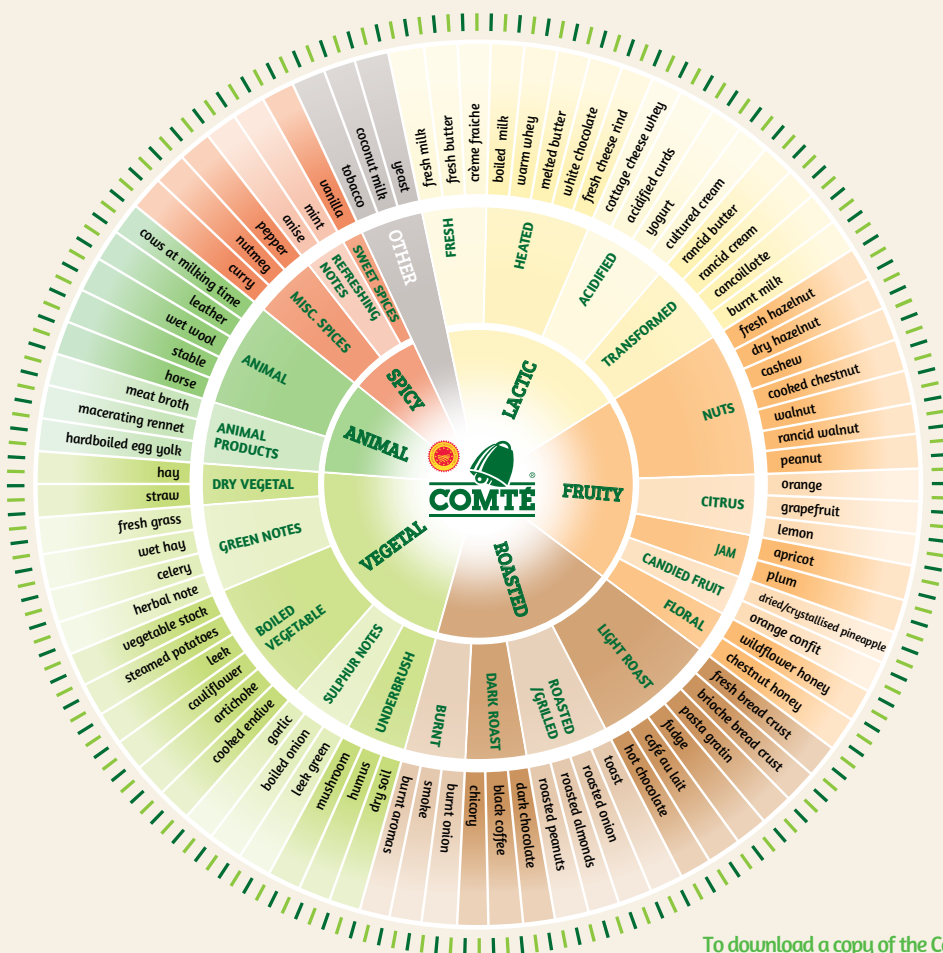
> How would you compare it to others you've written?

Like *On Food & Cooking* it's comprehensive, and for that reason it also took much longer to write than I expected: the second edition of *On Food and Cooking* also took ten years. It was more challenging in the sense that I had to learn about a host of things other than food and drink—perfumes, soils, oceans, living animal bodies and their excretions, petrochemicals—but it was also easier because information is so readily available today. *On Food and Cooking*, Scribner; Revised and Updated (2004)

> How much does it focus on cheese?

There are around a half dozen pages devoted entirely to cheese, out of 600 pages altogether, as well as scattered mentions throughout. The cheese sections include tables that show the main aroma notes in a dozen types, and explanations of where those notes come from in the chapter about the human body, I also speculate about why it is that some cheese aromas are so reminiscent of us.

Nose Dive: A Field Guide to the World's Smells, published by Penguin Random House, is currently available online or at your local independent bookstore.





(C.J. Beinert, owner of The Cheese Shop of Des Moines)

Q&A with C.J. Beinert, owner of Iowa's The Cheese Shop of Des Moines, Iowa.

> How did you get into the cheese business in the first place?

It started when I was working in a restaurant and one of my chefs gave me an issue of Art Culinaire. That's when I got obsessed with food. This was the 90's, so the term "foodie" hadn't yet been coined and the only food TV was late-night on PBS. I read Kitchen Confidential and thought, "I could do that, I don't need a culinary certificate." It turned out I actually did, as no reputable chef would give me the time of day! Then my luck changed at a local wine store — They were looking for a Sous Chef for their comparative wine dinner program, but by the time I got there the position was taken. Lucky for me they had one more opening, but it was more of a utility role. The shop had a small cut-to-order cheese counter, and one day the "cheese lady" gave me a taste of a French cheese, 'Ossau-Iraty,' and my mind was blown! I'd never had anything like it. I've worked behind the counter ever since that taste.

> How is COVID affecting your business in Des Moines?

Our space is a mix of retail, as well as a small dine-in area that we typically would use to do a lot of in-person tastings. We've pivoted from the events and tasting part of the business to making more online sales and more in-store retail business. We sell a lot more wine and our average weights on cheeses sold have gone up too.

> What do you hope people will take away from a visit to your shop?

We have some of the best cheeses in the world and I feel like we do a pretty good job not messing them up.

> You said your favorite cheese is Comté? How do you like to eat it and what is your favorite experience/memory involving Comté?

There's a Comté for every time of the day; young Comté on toast or in an Omelet for breakfast; a slightly more complex and aged Comté with ham on good bread with olive oil for lunch; and a glass of Château-Chalon [a unique wine appellation from the Jura region of France] with some more aged complex Comté after a dinner of Comté Fondue with my favorite smokey Morteau sausage and potatoes. I had the pleasure to visit affineur Marcel Petite in the village of Saint-Antoine and had a very similar meal. I can still hear the cow bells ringing and taste the Absinthe from Pontarlier, the historic Capital of Absinthe.