

# It's time to savour Comté !

Press kit

2018



Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté

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## Contents

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 3 • 4        | <b>&gt; Portrait of a great cheese</b>                 |
|              | <b>&gt; To craft Comté, here is what's needed</b>      |
| 5            | • a specific terroir                                   |
| 6 • 7 • 8    | • milk   |
| 9 • 10 • 11  | • a <i>fruitière</i>                                   |
| 12 • 13 • 14 | • a cellar   |
|              | <b>&gt; A shared heritage</b>                          |
| 15           | • An artisanal tradition                               |
| 16           | • Historical landmarks                                 |
| 17           | • An ancient cheese anchored in its <i>terroir</i>     |
|              | <b>&gt; An organised and solidary production chain</b> |
| 18           | • CIQC   |
| 19           | • Core missions  |
|              | <b>&gt; The Comté market</b>                           |
| 20           | • Key figures  |
| 21           | • Export   |
|              | <b>&gt; Comté, a source of infinite pleasures</b>      |
| 22           | • A wealth of aromas without comparison                |
| 23           | • The Aroma Wheel of Comté                             |
| 24           | • Comté terroirs                                       |
| 25           | • Comté, a nutritious food                             |
| 26 • 27      | • How to choose one's Comté ?                          |
| 28           | • And now, to the table !                              |
|              | <b>&gt; Tourism and discovery in the Land of Comté</b> |
| 29           | • Enjoy time on the <i>Routes du Comté</i>             |
| 30           | • The <i>Maison du Comté</i>                           |

Table of contents is  
interactive : click on titles to  
navigate through the press kit.





# Portrait of a great cheese



Comté is a raw milk cooked pressed cheese. Its terroir is the Jura Massif of France, an area of medium elevation mountains that covers the departments of Jura and Doubs in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region, and the department of Ain in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. Only two breeds of cows are authorised to produce Comté milk : Montbéliarde and French Simmental.

Every day, Comté is crafted in about 150 small facilities known as *fruitières*.

Comté takes its time to develop its taste. It must be aged in a maturing cellar for a minimum of 4 months, but often longer. Comté is defined by its astonishing aromatic palette. It's not a cheese with a uniform taste. Each wheel of Comté reveals a distinct aromatic profile according to its local terroir, its season, the cheesemaker's skill, and the caves where it's been matured. In this respect, Comté is a **UNIQUE** cheese.

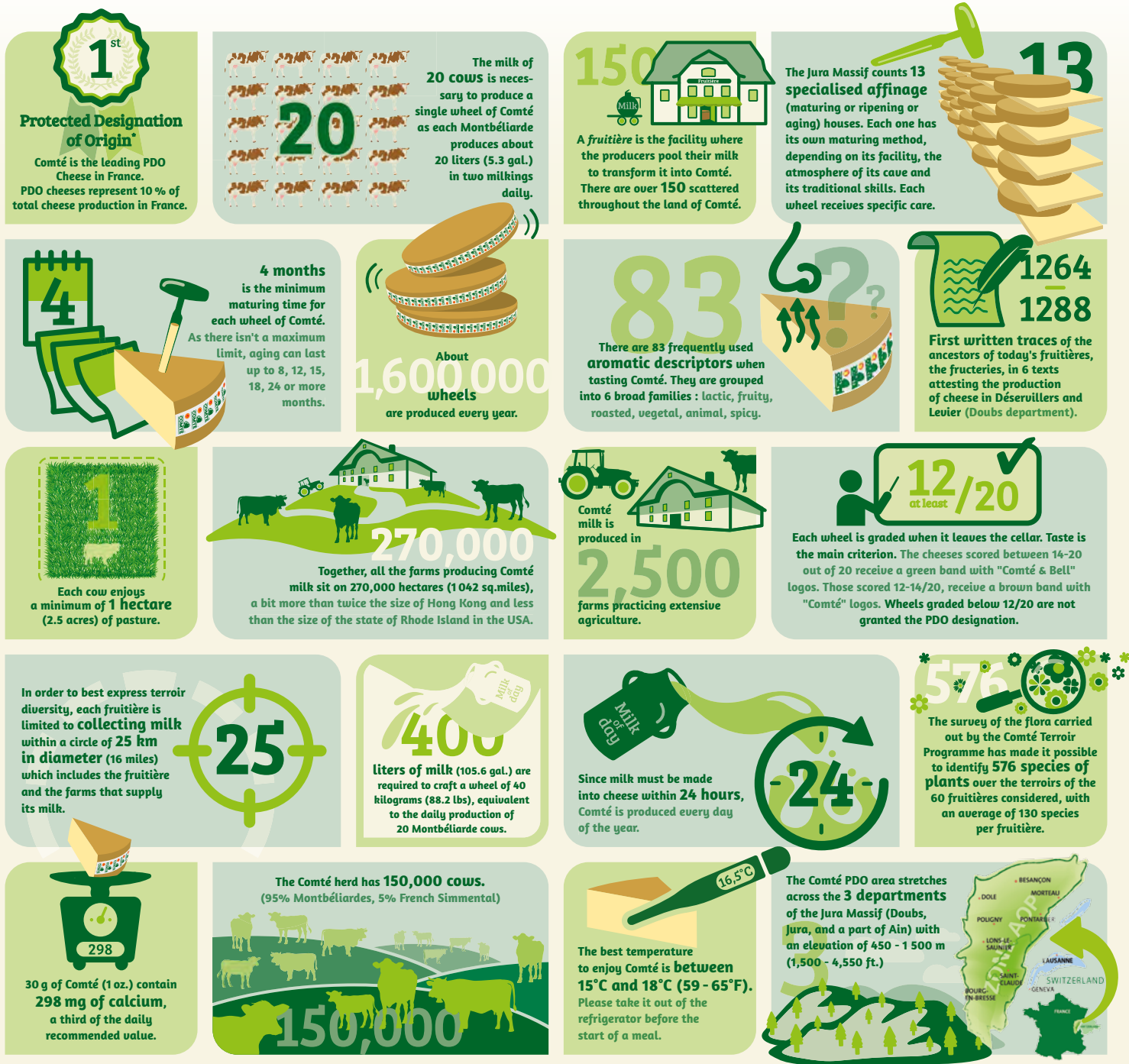
Rich in proteins, calcium, phosphorous, copper, zinc, vitamins A, B2, B12, Comté is a nutritious food that can contribute to a balanced diet. Crafted without any additives or colourings, and controlled at each step of production, Comté is a healthy and natural food.





# Portrait of a great cheese

## Simple facts to remember about Comté...



'PDO : Protected Designation of Origin is a system that protects a cultural and gastronomic heritage. The system guarantees the product's origin and uniqueness. It ensures that its production follows strict specifications established through traditional and ancestral know-how. To be acknowledged as a Protected Designation of Origin, a French food product must :

- Originate from a determined place
- Satisfy specific production rules
- Have an officially established reputation
- Apply for and obtain Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée recognition at the French level and thereafter, apply for a PDO recognition from the European Union.





# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## A specific terroir

The PDO defines a production zone for Comté. It coincides approximately with the Jura Massif, an area in eastern France that stretches over three departments (Jura, Doubs in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region and Ain in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region) along the border with Switzerland.

The Jura Massif encompasses a range of medium elevation mountains, formed during the Jurassic era. Its large plateaus are crowned with pine forests at elevations between 1,500 and 4,500 feet. Green valleys cut through this fractured landscape with rivers especially rich in fish. Here the seasons are very clearly marked and distinct.

Winters are cold and the snow cover gives a majestic appearance to the landscape. This is the realm of cross-country skiing.

Thanks to their floristic diversity, the Jura meadows explode with 1,000 colours at flowering time in the spring. With the return of the cows to the pastures, the ring of the Montbéliardes' bells fill the air again. They happily graze the tender grass from under the last snow banks.

In the heart of summer, rivers flow lazily and their murmur lulls visitors after a picnic. Here, the term "green tourism" takes all its meaning.

In the autumn, the Jura Massif turns the colour of fire before it is reined in by the deep cold. The diversity of trees in the Jura forests then compose a breathtaking symphony in gold. This is often a quiet season ideal for long walks along tracks covered with rustling leaves.





A SPECIFIC TERROIR

MILK

A FRUITIÈRE

A CELLAR

# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## Milk of Montbéliarde or French Simmental cows

Over the past decades, Comté has adopted some of the modern technologies that facilitate human work and improve quality while retaining a tissue of ancestral practices that guarantee the traditional and authentic character of Comté.

Each step of the production must respect the strict rules of the PDO specifications (Cahier des Charges).

First of all, the milk comes from 2,500 family farms within the Comté territory. These farms practice extensive farming, a form of agriculture that doesn't look for the highest yields. Instead, they pursue quality of production while respecting the specificities of the local soils and preserving the diversity of the flora. The average annual production of each farm amounts to about 270,000 liters of milk (71,300 gal.)

Each farmer raises cows of the Montbéliarde breed (95% of total Comté herd) and/or French Simmental breed (5%), nourish them with natural food based on fresh grass in the good season and hay in the winter. All fermented feed, such as ensilage, is forbidden for it is detrimental to the quality of the milk used raw. Since the soils and flora of the Jura Massif are very diverse, the cows transmit to their milk and thus to Comté an equally diversified expression of the terroirs of the PDO.

To produce the fodder necessary to feed their herds, each farmer must crop a minimum of an hectare (2.5 acres) of pasture for each milk cow. Farmers milk their cows morning and evening and the milk must be brought to the fruitière daily. To best express the diversity of terroirs, the milk collection area of each fruitière is limited to a circle of 25 km (16 miles) in diameter that includes the cheesemaking facility and all the farms that supply their milk to it.





# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## ► FOCUS on the Montbéliarde\*

- > A cow weighs 650-800 kg (1,400-1,800 lbs) and can produce milk for over 5 years.
- > An average herd includes 50 milk cows (and 60 heifers), which represents about 150,000 milk cows on the PDO territory.
- > For a herd of 50 cows, a farm requires approximately 90 ha (225 acres) so it can also feed 60 heifers for a good rotation of the herd.

### FEED

- > Daily ration in the summer (cows pasture for 7-9 months of the year depending on elevation) = 60-100 kg (130-220 lbs) grass + 0-3 kg (0-6.5 lbs) cereals-based food + 100 g (3.5 oz) minerals (phosphorus, calcium, vitamin A) + block of salt.
- > Daily ration in the winter = 18 kg (39 lbs) hay (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cutting) + 2-6 kg (4-13 lbs) balanced feed combining cereals and press cakes + 100 g (3.5 oz) minerals (phosphorus, calcium, vitamin A) + block of salt.

- > The use of supplements (cereals in summer, and combination cereals/press cakes in winter) contributes to the cows' balanced diet.
- > Grass and, especially, hay are rich in cellulose, cereals (barley, corn) in starch, and press cakes (rapeseed, sunflower, linseed) in proteins.
- > Fodder (hay and the second cutting of hay) is harvested on the farm. 1 ha (2.5 acres) yields 4 metric tons of dry hay and 2 metric tons of dry second cutting. 2/3 of the farmers crop cereals which are broken or flattened before being fed to the cows.

### LACTATION

- > A cow calves for the first time when she is 2.5-3 years old, generally in the autumn. She'll then give birth to a new calf every year.
- > A cow produces about 20 liters (5,2 gallons) of milk for 305 days of the year.

\* The Montbéliarde breed represents 95% of the Comté herd. The PDO specifications also allows the French Simmental breed (5% of the herd).





# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## > Comté and GMO : the position of the Comté PDO

### A clear principle : PDO and GMO are incompatible

Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté, the PDO's governing body, rejects GMO's and has taken all the necessary steps for the Comté PDO to offer every possible guarantee in this respect. It is easy to understand the contradictions between PDO and the use of GMO's. When consumers buy a PDO product, they expect certain values :

- **Respect of soil and environment**
- **Upkeep of biodiversity, in particular on the levels of flora and microflora**
- **Artisanal cheesemaking**

The respect of "local, loyal and constant practices" is the

time-honoured phrase that best expresses the obligation that dominates a PDO product. And for decades, in spite of pressure to unleash production, Comté has fought to uphold its values. The Specifications ensure an effective and maximum bond between Comté and its territory in order to offer consumers a product that's typical of its terroir and of the highest quality. It is why the Specifications include a large number of precautions at every step in the production of Comté : limit to fertilisers, limit to feed supplements, prohibition of ensilage, limit to the production per hectare, obligation to work with raw milk, prohibition of all additives and colourings, etc.

## > Measures to guarantee the absence of GMO

### 1. At the farm level

- **Animal feed without GMO's**
- **Prohibition against growing crops containing GMO on the farm**

#### Article 5.1.5 of Comté Specifications :

"Only plants, co-products and supplementary feed which come from non-genetically modified products are authorized in the animal diet. Growing genetically modified crops is banned over all the surface areas of a farm that produces milk destined to be transformed into Comté AOC. This prohibition covers all vegetal species that can be used to feed the animals on the farm, and to the cultivation of all species with the potential to contaminate them."

### 2. At the cheesemaking level

- **Establishment of a list of the authorised cheesemaking ingredients (guaranteed without GMO) to avoid any risk of direct contamination to Comté**

#### Article 5.3.3 of Comté Specifications :

"All the ingredients used for cheesemaking (milk, starters, culture substrates, rennet) must come from non-genetically modified products."





A SPECIFIC TERROIR  
MILK  
A **FRUITIÈRE**  
A CELLAR

To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## ► A fruitière

A *fruitière* is the facility where the Comté milk producers gather their milk to transform it into cheese (17 farms per *fruitière* on average). Generally co-operative in nature, this original form of village organisation was born 8 centuries ago. These values of solidarity and sharing have never been abandoned, and neither have the manual skills and artisanal traditions that made Comté into such a exceptional cheese.

Each *fruitière* (there are about 150 scattered throughout the Jura Massif) receives the milk from the surrounding farms daily. Since milk must be transformed into cheese within 24 hours, Comté is thus made every day of the year.





# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...

The method of crafting Comté hasn't changed for centuries. Its goal is to obtain a large size pressed cooked cheese (thus with little moisture), so that it keeps for a long time. During the production, the natural microflora of the raw milk is carefully preserved as it is the source of a wealth of taste. *It includes several steps :*



## RIPENING OF THE MILK

Every morning, in the fruitière, the cheesemaker partially skims the milk, warms it up to about 30°C (85°F) in large copper (mandatory) vats, adds lactic starter, and leaves it to ripen for half an hour. The addition of additives and colourings is strictly prohibited.



## CURDLING

In order to curdle the milk, the cheesemaker adds rennet made with calf stomach and whey from the previous day. The curd then sets into a white mass in which the whey is trapped.



## CUTTING OF THE CURD

With a cheese harp, the cheesemaker cuts the curd into tiny pieces the size of a grain of rice. This separates the curd from the whey. Then the curd is slowly heated up to about 55°C (130°F) in order to dry the grains and extract the liquid part.



## DRAINING OF THE CURD

When the grains have reached the right size and consistency, the contents of the vat are piped into perforated moulds that let the whey run out and retain the curd.



## PRESSING

The cheesemaker places a small green plate\* made of casein on the heel of each cheese. It indicates the month and place of production. Another plate with the day of fabrication is also affixed. Afterwards, the cheesemaker places the moulds into a press. The white cheeses are unmoulded in the evening or the next morning and taken into the fruitière's cellar for the first stage of maturing.

\*The green plates are small oval plates made of casein, the same protein that can be found in all cheeses. They are placed on the heel of each wheel and merge with the crust as it develops. This green plate makes it possible to identify each wheel of Comté with its place and month of fabrication. Traceability is completed by additional casein plates bearing the day of fabrication and the vat number.



## MATURING

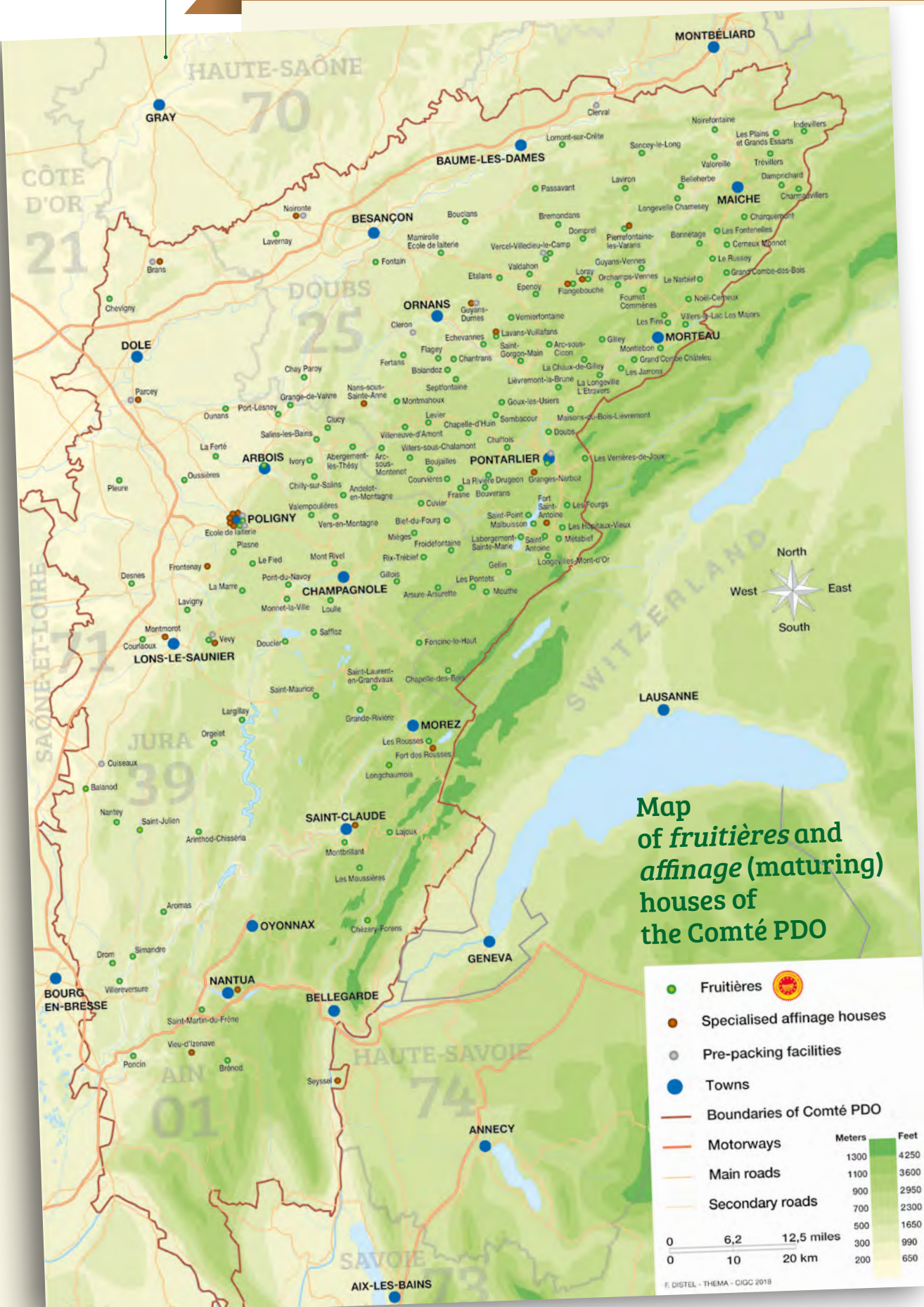
The first stage of maturing is generally carried out in the fruitière's cellar. Its goal is to guarantee the good cohesion of the curd grains.





A SPECIFIC TERROIR  
MILK  
A **FRUITIÈRE**  
A CELLAR

To craft Comté, here is what's needed...





## To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



### ► A maturing cellar

Comté takes time to acquire its flavour. It is in the silence and darkness of the cellars that Comté will undergo its second transformation. With meticulous care, the natural aromatic development of the cheese is encouraged month after month. The art of affinage is to bring a cheese to its optimum maturity.

Sitting on spruce boards, the wheels of cheese are regularly salted, rubbed with a brine solution called “morge”, and turned. Thanks to this attentive care, the crust slowly hardens and the texture of the paste goes from grainy and elastic to fine and supple.

The taste, evocative of whey when the cheese is unmoulded, progressively becomes more and more characterful. At the end of its sojourn in the cellar, from a minimum of 4 months to 18 or 24 months, each Comté has acquired its own personality in terms of texture, colour, and a unique aromatic profile.

Depending on the potential of the cheese and the market for the wheels, the affineur (maturing master) may choose to use different types of cellars in succession : “warm cellars” (14° - 19° C / 57° - 66° F) and “cold cellars” (7° - 14° C / 44° - 57° F).

In “warm cellars”, a kind of fermentation called propionic is stimulated resulting in the occasional appearance of eyes (holes) in the cheese and the development of a certain type of aromas. In “cold cellars”, the ripening of the cheese is slower and the ensuing aromas different.

The natural microflora of the raw milk remains in the cheese while it ages and influences its development. Based on the characteristics of the milk at the outset, different cheeses will be obtained, even if the affinage is exactly the same for all of them.

The Jura Massif has 13 specialised affinage houses : each one gives Comté its own maturing method, depending on its facility, the atmosphere of its cave and its traditional skills. Each wheel receives specific care.





# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...



## Quality control : green band or brown band ?

Each wheel of Comté, upon leaving the cave, is circled with a green or brown “grading band” which indicates its quality. It is affixed by the *affinage* master who grades each wheel based on a set of criteria, the most important of which being taste. The cheeses scored between 14-20 out of 20 receive a green band with “Comté & Bell” logos. Those scored 12-14/20, receive a brown band with “Comté” logos. Wheels graded below 12/20 are not granted the PDO designation. Pre-packed Comté is cut from green band cheese and must carry a “Comté & Bell” logo.

The rating of the Comté wheels covers the taste as well as the physical appearance of the cheese. Thus, a brown band may reflect only a small fault in the appearance of a cheese with an otherwise delicious taste. “Green” or “Brown”, both guarantee an authentic Comté, aged for a minimum of 4 months. The colour of the band has no bearing upon the age of the cheese or the aromatic profile.

A jury made up of professionals regularly meets, tests samples taken from cheeses leaving the maturing cellars, and checks that the bands have been correctly awarded. An incorrect classification on the part of the *affineur* may result in a penalty from the Certifying Body in charge of controls for the Comté PDO.



## KEY REQUIREMENTS OF THE SPECIFICATIONS OF THE COMTÉ PDO

### MILK PRODUCTION

- Delimited zone of production
- Cows of Montbéliarde and French Simmental breeds
- Minimum forage area: 1 ha (2.5 acres) per milk cow
- The milk production of each farm is capped, based on its potential, with a general annual limit of 4,600 liters/ha (486 gal./acre)
- Fermented feed is prohibited (such as ensilage)
- Quantitative and qualitative limits are placed on inputs (feed purchased outside the farm)
- Milking twice a day
- No milking robots

### FABRICATION

- Raw milk
- Cheese crafted within 24 hours after the earliest milking in a copper vat with a maximum capacity of 12 cheeses
- Additives and colourings are forbidden
- Maximum milk collection area limited to a circle with a 25 km (16 miles) diameter

### AFFINAGE

- Minimal duration is 4 months, no maximum
- Cheeses mature on spruce boards
- Regular care
- Cellar with controlled humidity and temperature
- Each wheel is inspected before it departs the cellar and given a green or brown band depending on quality

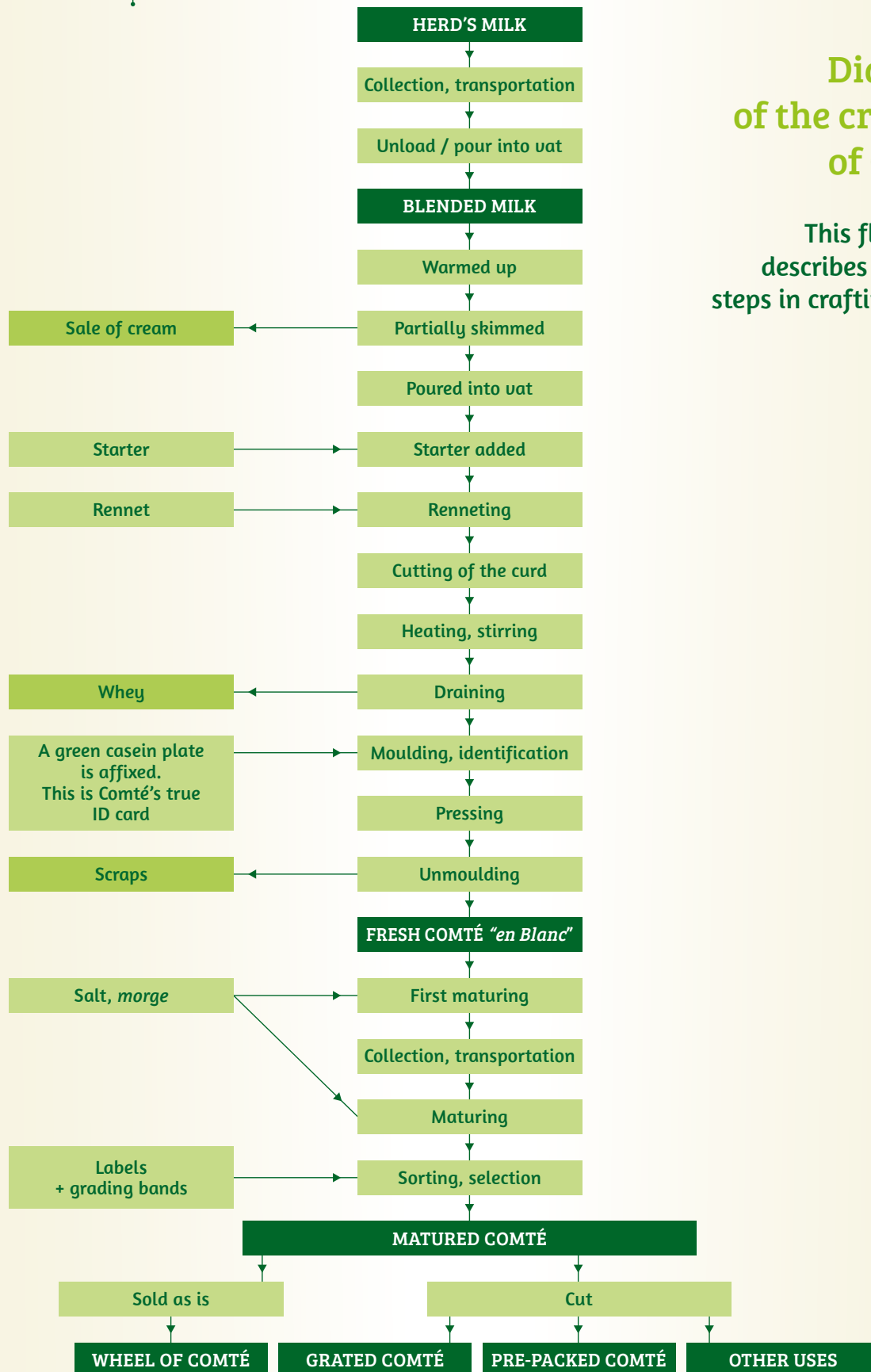




# To craft Comté, here is what's needed...

## Diagram of the crafting of Comté

This flow chart describes the main steps in crafting Comté





AN ARTISANAL TRADITION  
HISTORICAL LANDMARKS  
AN ANCIENT CHEESE  
ANCHORED IN ITS *TERROIR*

## A shared heritage



2014. — Montagnes du Doubs.  
Intérieur d'une Fromagerie.

UNE FROMAGERIE DANS LE JURA. — Dans la Franche-Comté comme en Suisse on fabrique une grande quantité de fromages, surtout de Gruyère. On verse le lait dans de vastes chaudières, on l'y fait chauffer, on le fait cailler avec la présure : puis on le retire du feu et on le verse dans un grand moule. Ensuite on le presse pour en faire sortir toute l'eau ; on le sale, et, après l'avoir laissé quatre ou cinq mois dans la cave, on l'expédie dans tous les pays.



1619. MOUCHARD - J

### ► An artisanal tradition for over 1000 years

Comté expresses the connection of people to their land. Although it's crafted following artisanal practices and traditions shared by all, each wheel tells us about its own *fructière*, micro-region, season and the unique skills of its cheese-maker and *affineur*. Here Comté is an unending topic of conversation. It is the fruit of hard work and everyone can judge it... in the most pleasant way.

Back in medieval times, it was the harshness of the long winters of the Jura Massif that dictated to the farmers they had to transform their milk into a cheese that could keep for a long time. The cheese was called Vachelin in those days. Only a large pressed cooked cheese could keep well enough throughout the entire cold season to sustain an entire family.

The longevity of the cheese and the fact that it got better with time made it possible to export it beyond the boundaries of the region and obtain additional resources through trade.

Since these large wheels required significant quantities of milk (400 liters / 106 gal. on average), the farmers would unite into co-operatives and gather their production at the "fructerie", now called *fructière* (the place where the farmers' milk fructifies). In France, one finds in the Middle-Ages the first written documents mentioning "fructeries" and the operation of these co-operative companies, very much ahead of



their time (1264 and 1267, History of the Communes of Levier and Déservillers).

Because of its uniqueness, cultural value and economic importance to its region, Comté became one of the first cheeses awarded Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) status in 1958. It was also one of the first to be registered as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) by the EU in 1996.

Our millennium definitely promises a future full of new technologies. All those who make Comté will know to select the best elements, but artisanal traditions will always remain a living and well defended heritage.

In this proud terroir, the day will never come when people stop discussing the respective merits of the Comté from Petite Montagne, Monts de Salins, Val de Mièges, or Vallée du Drueon...





# A shared heritage

## A few historical landmarks ...

Latin texts from the beginning of the millennium, attest the production of cheese in the regions of Séquanie (Franche-Comté) and Helvetia (Switzerland) that were appreciated in Rome.

### 1264 / 1288

First written mentions of fructeries in 6 texts attesting the production of cheese in Déservillers and Levier (Deeds of 1319).

### 1380

"Large shape cheese" is mentioned. This implies the need to transform a large quantity of milk that can only be obtained by a cooperative system or a large owner.

### Late XVI<sup>th</sup> Century

The development of the cheese market is fueled by the growth of towns. "Rouliers" (itinerant tradesmen) develop sales in the direction of Lyons. Peasants from the region of Saint-Laurent-en-Grandvaux, known as "Grandvalliers", load carts and criss-cross France in the autumn. Production is no longer limited to self-consumption, but also to trade.

### XVIII<sup>th</sup> Century

Significant increase of the population ; the number of *fruitières* increases. There are about 700 *fruitières* scattered over the mountainous area in 1780.

### 1850

With the development of the railways, commercial exchanges are facilitated. Comté is shipped to new destinations.

div>

### 1880

The appellation "gruyère de Comté" starts being used in official texts to highlight the local origin of the cheese. Comté becomes a defining product of its region. There are 1,800 *fruitières* at this time with a mostly seasonal production.

### 1882-1905

Modernization of equipment (steam engine, electricity), creation of dairy schools, selection of new breeds of milk cows, emergence of specialised affinage houses...

### First half of XX<sup>th</sup> Century

Construction of functional buildings (model chalets) where Comté can be crafted under optimum conditions. They replace the frequent fabrication in the farms of the *fruitière's* members. Development of affinage cellars.

### 1914

About 500 *fruitières* are in existence before the First World War.

### 1924

People start using the sole name "Comté".

### 1945

The Syndicate for the Protection of Gruyère de Comté is formed. First efforts towards a legal protection of Comté.

### 1952

Gruyère de Comté obtains the legal AOC status (Controlled Appellation of Origin). The delimitations of the appellation area follows the boundary of the old province of Franche-Comté.

### 1958

Publication of the decree defining the Comté AOC. First Cahier des Charges of the AOC (Comté Specifications) published.

### 1963

Creation of CIQC (Comité Interprofessionnel du Gruyère de Comté), the governing body of the Comté AOC. In the 1960's and 70's, the number of *fruitières* diminishes due to a large number of mergers among them.

### 1967

Creation of the Comité Technique du Comté (the technical committee of the AOC).

### 1979

Trademark registration of the Comté label.

### 1989

Trademark registration of current "Comté & Cowbell" logo.

### 1996

Comté obtains Protected Designation of Origin registration from the EU.

### 2001

Creation of the touristic itineraries called "Les Routes du Comté".

### 2003

Maison du Comté in Poligny is established.

### 2015

CIQC changes its status and becomes Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté. Updated PDO Specifications are published.

16

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AN ARTISANAL TRADITION  
HISTORICAL LANDMARKS  
AN ANCIENT CHEESE  
ANCHORED IN ITS *TERROIR*

## A shared heritage



### ► A cheese anchored in its *terroir*

**In the Jura Massif, Comté is responsible for the livelihood of :**

- 2 500 farms
- About 150 cheesemaking facilities called *fruitières*
- 13 *affinage* and commerce houses

Altogether, over 10,000 jobs are created by Comté.

Comté is a determining factor for all the economic activity of the Jura Massif. Comté plays an important role in the creation of jobs, the stewardship of the land, the upkeep of the scenery and the protection of the environment.

Comté has always been incompatible with intensive practices on pasture land or in milk production. The constraints and precautions that crafting Comté requires of all involved, have proven to be strong safeguards against the excesses of intensive agriculture.

With about 150 *fruitières* where highly qualified master-cheesemakers deploy their skills daily, Comté contributes to the good stewardship of the land by having these facilities harmoniously spread out over the entire Jura Massif.

By protecting Comté from taste homogenization, the *fruitières* preserve the specificity of Comté's diverse flavours that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for. This premium allows farmers to bear the additional costs deriving from mountain agriculture and the constraints of the PDO specifications.

Thus Comté milk producers strongly contribute to the vitality of the Jura Massif along with other artisanal activities of the area. In so doing, they achieve the PDO's objective of preserving employment over the large geographic area of the Jura Massif.





# An organised and solidary production chain



Not only is Comté a professional universe held together by history and culture, it is also a world bonded by a shared economic destiny. With a production of about 64,000 metric tons (141 million lbs), Comté strongly contributes to the economic development of the Jura Massif.

The indispensable functions of promotion, defense of the interests of those concerned, animating the organisation and research are carried out by **CIGC (Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté)**, the governing body of the Comté PDO. This collective trade organisation is both a spokesperson and a link between its members and their economic, administrative, political and scientific environment.

The Comité Interprofessionnel du Gruyère de Comté, as it was called then, was created by decree on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1963. Later, the name Gruyère was dropped in the PDO's designation, but the acronym CIGC has remained. Since 2018, its president is **Mr. Alain Mathieu**, Comté milk producer in the village of Bief-des-Maisons (Jura). The seat of CIGC is in Poligny.

## ► The raison d'être of CIGC

- Make sure consumers' expectations are met with respect to the preservation of the environment, the non-industrialised artisanal production methods, the natural and authentic character of Comté.
- Allow milk producers, cheesemakers and affineurs who are rooted in a difficult terroir, to perennially perform their economic activities. By so doing, they contribute to the development of the area and the protection of its landscapes.

## ► Resources of CIGC

CIGC's annual budget is about € 7.5 M. Professional dues represent about 95% of the budget. € 4.8 M of the budget are devoted to promotion and protection of the PDO, € .8 to technical matters and research.

## ► The members of CIGC

CIGC is made up of representatives of organisations relevant to Comté. In the departments of Doubs and Jura, these organisations are : Fédérations Départementales des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles (FDSEA), Jeunes Agriculteurs (JA), Confédération Paysanne, Coordination Rurale, Fédérations Départementales des Coopératives Laitières (FDCL), Fédération Nationale des Industries Laitières (FNIL) and Chambre des entreprises de l'Emmental et du Comté (CEC).

These organisations are represented by 4 bodies called Colleges :

- **1<sup>st</sup> college represents "Milk producers"**  
It is made up of delegates from representative farmers' organisations.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> college "Cheesemakers/ first transformers",**  
delegates from cooperative organisations (FDCL...)
- **3<sup>rd</sup> college "First and second transformers",**  
delegates from private enterprises (FNIL, CEC)
- **4<sup>th</sup> college "Affineurs / packagers",**  
delegates from FNIL / CEC.

## ► The General Assembly of Colleges

Each college comprises 6-30 delegates who represent the diversity of their members. For the milk producers' college, the number of delegates allotted to each farmers' organization, is based on the results of the elections to the Chambers of agriculture. Each college sets its own rules of operation. All of them are gathered once a year into the General Assembly of Colleges comprised of 72 delegates.

## ► The General Assembly of CIGC

Every 3 years, each college designates 6 members, representative of the plurality of the organisations, to sit in the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is made up of 24 members (4 colleges x 6 members) with voting powers.

## ► Board of Directors and Bureau

The 24 members of the General Assembly elect the 16 members of the Board of Directors, then the 4 members of the Bureau, including a president, two vice-presidents and a secretary-treasurer, with a representative for each college. The members are elected for 3 years and meet every month.

## ► The Commissions

There are six commissions to examine issues in the following domains : Promotion / Information / Economic / Technical / Research / Quality monitoring / Export

The Commissions welcome input from all members of the production chain.





# An organised and solidary production chain



## ► Core missions of CIQC

- Develop the Comté PDO based on excellence at every level.
- Define the constitutive rules of the PDO (Specifications of the PDO - *Cahier des Charges*).
- Act as the PDO's governing body (*Organisme de Gestion*, ODG) in the definition of the control mechanisms of the PDO under the responsibility of a Certifying Body and organise the implementation of internal controls at the farm and the cheesemaking levels.
- Carry out the legal protection of the PDO to avoid infringement and counterfeiting.
- Insure the renewal and hiring of cheesemakers and the internal cohesion of the production chain.
- Stimulate research.
- Conduct advertising, communication and promotion activities.

To help it accomplish its missions, CIQC relies on several outside organisations.





## KEY FIGURES

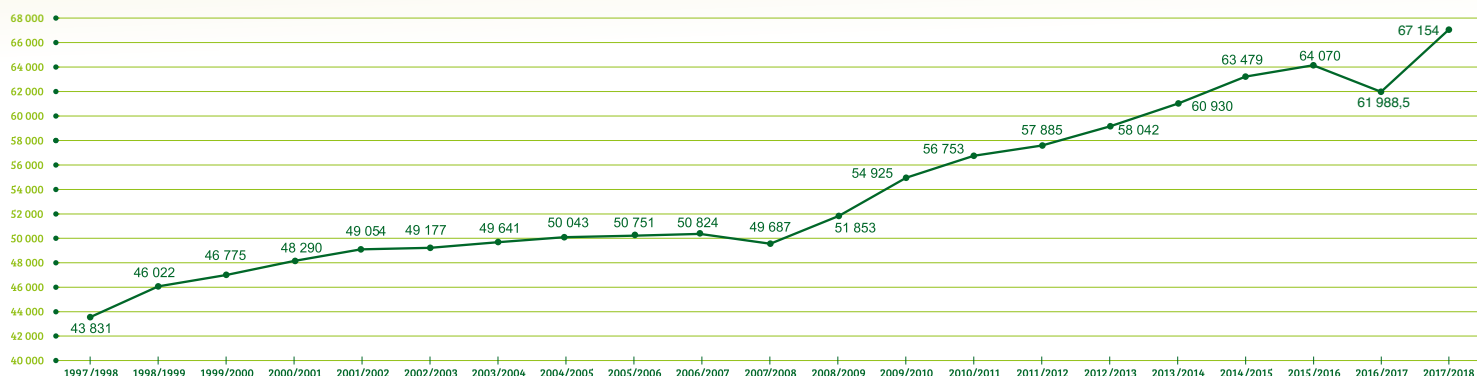
### EXPORT

# The Comté market



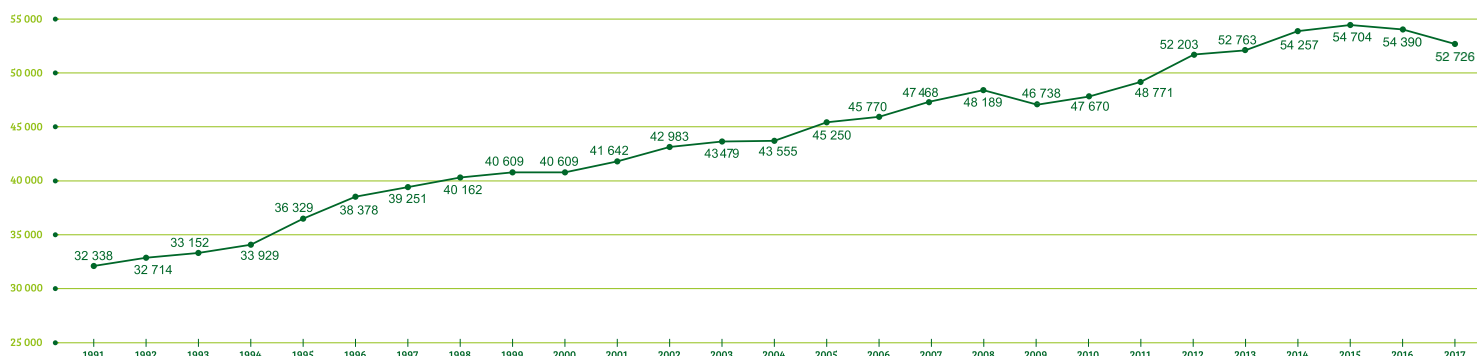
## Comté production increases every year

Production in metric tons (per milk campaign, 1<sup>st</sup> April - 31<sup>st</sup> March following year)



## Continued growth of sales ex-cellars, proof of constant dynamism

Total Tons



**Note :** the volumes of production and sales are different which is quite logical. This difference can be explained by stocks, weight loss during maturing, as well as the selection carried out by the affinage houses. They eliminate the wheels that have not aged satisfactorily.



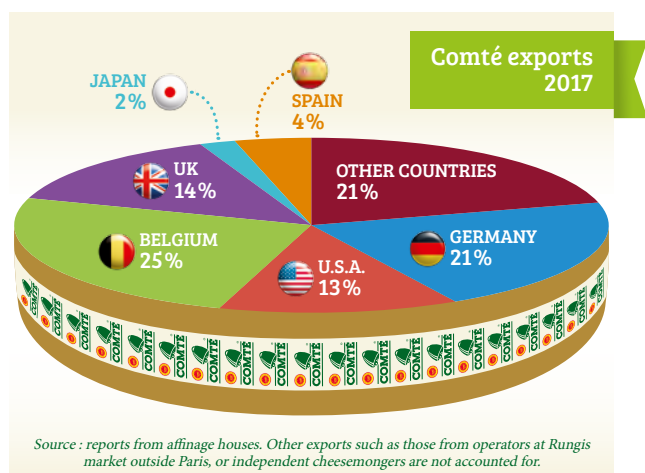


# The Comté market



## EXPORT

In 2016, the affinage houses directly exported 5,193 metric tons of Comté, or about 9,5 % of the total volume of sales. In addition to the quantities reported by the affinage houses, the volumes exported by wholesalers and a few cheesemongers should be added.





# Comté, a source of infinite pleasures



## ► A wealth of aromas without comparison

### *Fruity, flowery, spicy... ?*

Sometimes words seem in short supply so limitless is the variety of flavours and sensations Comté offers. A young Comté evokes the delicate flavour of mashed potatoes with butter. Another, older Comté displays a surprising cascade of lasting fruity, spicy, roasted aromas that slowly develops in the mouth. In fact, Comté reveals memories. Its tastes tell us about the pastures of its birth, of the season when it was crafted, of the skills of its cheese-master, of its time spent resting in cellars... Each Comté wheel is a story... and each story is different.

Thanks to its PDO Specifications, Comté is the opposite of a standardised cheese and is characterised by a very broad aromatic diversity. Here are the main sources of diversity :

#### • Geographic origin

It is expressed through 150 *fruitières*. Each expresses its specific terroir and flora. As part of the "Terroir Programme", a study of the flora on the terroirs of 60 *fruitières* resulted in the identification of 576 species of plants, with an average of 130 species for each *fruitière*.

#### • Time of year

The cows' feed varies throughout the year. In winter, they come back to their stables where they eat hay. With the return of spring, they go back into the pastures to graze grasses and flowers.

From one month to the next, vegetation constantly evolves in each pasture and the cows' forage changes. This diversity of feed influences the colour and the taste of the cheese all along the year.

#### • Know-how

Thanks to their experience and traditional know-how, cheesemakers and affineurs also influence the transformation of the milk and the maturing of the cheese. The cheesemakers must adapt their methods to the milk they receive every day, and similarly the affineurs must adapt the care they give the young wheels in order to bring out their best qualities.

#### • Ripening time

A Comté's taste, aromas and texture keep evolving over the many months it spends in affinage cellars and thanks to the refined artisanal skills of each affineur.

*To conclude, nothing is worth more than the judgment of your own taste buds. Some cheeses guarantee a constant taste. On the other hand, Comté (as nature has decided) will surprise you every time you taste it. If your taste buds are inquisitive, if you enjoy nuances, Comté will satisfy you. It will never tire you. Whenever possible, we recommend that you ask for a taste before buying. Cheesemongers are experts who enjoy sharing their passion for taste.*

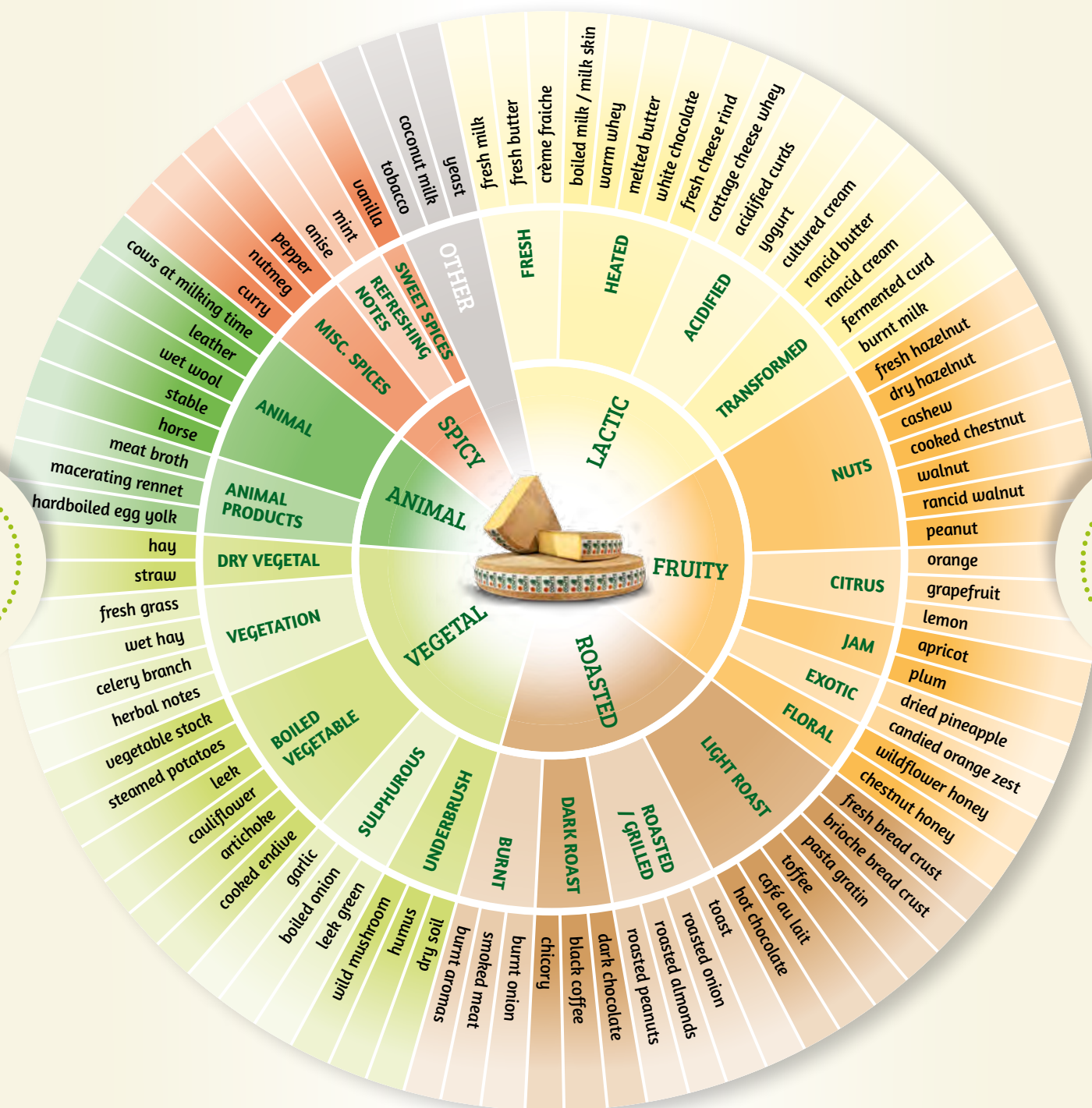




# Comté, a source of infinite pleasures

## The Comté Wheel of Aromas

The aroma descriptors most commonly used when tasting Comté number 83.  
They are grouped into 6 broad aromatic families : lactic, fruity, roasted, vegetal, animal, spicy.





# Comté, a source of infinite pleasures



## ► The terroirs of Comté : soil, flora, microflora... and the skills of those who craft Comté

For about 20 years, Comté has been working on the definition of its terroirs with the "Terroir Programme" project.

A doctoral thesis written in 1996 demonstrated that, based on data collected from 20 *fruitières*, there was a strong correlation between the flavours of each cheese and its place of production, as defined by its soil and unique flora. Hence the relevance of "cru" for Comté. (A cru is a singular terroir, this notion is already well established for wine.)

Recent studies on the role of microflora in raw milk and microbial ecosystems on Comté farms have consolidated these results. The microflora from the soil, the quality of the first and second cuts of hay and the quality of the pastures are key elements of each terroir. The cows bring all of them back to the farms.

The farmer's practices and the decisions made in the *fruitière*, are bridges for all the terroir elements. In turn, affinage will reveal the aromas of each terroir. The "terroir" factor is very complex : the potential comes from the place while human skills are responsible for transmitting these qualities to the cheese when it is crafted.

## ► The taste of the cheeses

To describe the taste of the cheeses, a jury of tasters was established in 1990 and has operated ever since. Named the "Terroir Jury", the panel is made up of about twelve people (including Comté professionals, chefs, wine and food lovers, cheesemongers and technicians) and is conducted by CTFC (Technical Centre for Cheeses of the Jura Massif).

The work of the Terroir Jury has given birth to the Comté Wheel of Aromas as well as to the creation of aromatic profiles for many *fruitières*.

## ► To protect the taste of terroir

The Terroir Jury has relied on passionate and trained individuals to categorize the flavours on the map of the *fruitières*. Thus it was able to put names on sensations and showcase all the aromatic wealth of Comté. Some elders helped develop the awareness among *fruitières* that they would benefit from knowing and recognizing the unique taste of their own cheeses ; that they should preserve the connection to their own villages ; that the producers should not only take an interest in the flavours of their own cheeses, but also taste cheeses made by others to discover how their aromatic profile compared with others.

The farmers who have joined on this experiment have quickly realized that it was necessary to get along within the co-operatives to maintain as many *fruitières* as possible and protect each cru.





# Comté, a source of infinite pleasures

## ► Comté is a nutritious food, healthy, natural and favourable to a balanced diet.

### • Rich in proteins

Comté is rich in proteins, especially the easily absorbed kinds (27 %) that contribute to the upkeep of muscle mass.

### • Minerals and trace elements in large quantities

Because Comté is a cooked pressed cheese, it is especially rich in calcium and phosphorus, two minerals that contribute to building the skeleton and maintaining the bone mass during the entire life. Comté is also rich in 2 indispensable trace elements : zinc (beneficial to hair, nails and skin) and copper (indispensable to the quality of the bones, the cartilage, the skin and good heart function).

### • 3 vitamins

Vitamin A is indispensable at all stages of life. Its role is primary in vision. It also contributes to the metabolism of iron, as well as to the health of the skin and the mucous membranes. Vitamin A in Comté originates in milk : beta carotenes (vitamin A precursors) are especially present when the cows are grazing in the pastures.

Vitamin B12 is especially available in dairy products and Comté contains a large amount of it. It is favourable to the skin, contributes to the formation of nervous cells and to the fabrication of red blood cells. It also has anti-anemia properties. Consumption of Comté is particularly recommended to avoid Vitamin B12 deficiency when following a vegetarian diet.

Finally Vitamin B2 (riboflavin) is indispensable to the renewal of cells and to the maintenance of tissues ; it plays a role in vision and growth. Comté contains large quantities of it.

### • 34.6 % fat, yes but ...

Natural fatty acids are beneficial to health as opposed to the partially hydrogenated fatty acids industrially produced from oil that are common in pastries, candy bars and prepared meals. The fatty acids of dairy products, such as those in Comté, do not have any negative impact on cardiovascular risk.

Moreover, thanks to its high calcium content, resulting from its being a cooked pressed cheese, a portion of Comté's fat is "saponified" in the small intestine and these insoluble "soaps" are naturally eliminated by the body.

### • No lactose in Comté

Lactose (a glucid) is naturally present in milk. Some people cannot digest this form of sugar due to lactose intolerance. Can they eat Comté ? Absolutely, since aged cheeses, such as Comté, no longer contain lactose. It has been consumed by lactic bacteria, i.e. the bacteria that transform lactose into lactic acid from the early stages of cheesemaking.

### • Microflora that strengthens the immune system

Cheese microflora contains a vast diversity of microbial species that are thought to interact favourably with the intestinal microbiota\* producing beneficial modifications. The microflora is all the richer in Comté since it is crafted from raw milk.

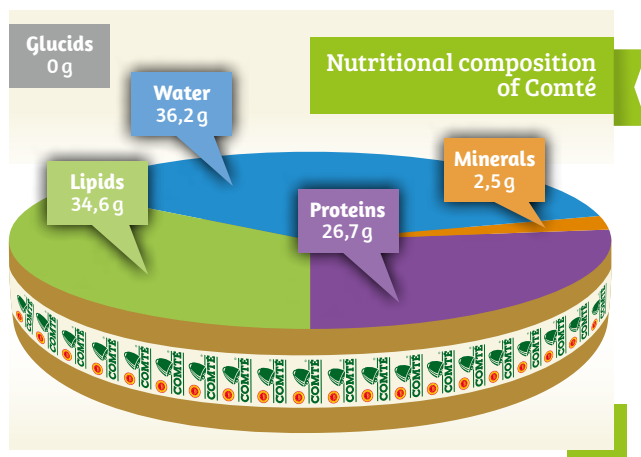
A study carried out by CIQC has shown that consumption of cheese by a healthy human stressed by antibiotics (amoxicillin, clavulanic acid) limits the colonization of the intestines by some microorganisms such as enterococcus that are resistant to antibiotics.

*\*Intestinal microbiota : all the microorganisms inside the intestine. Also called "gut bacteria".*

### • Comté is among the least salty cheeses

An excess of salt in food is recognized as a risk factor for hypertension. On average, Comté only contains .8 g of salt per 100 g of cheese (.8 %), and is among the least salty cheeses.

**Please note :** The small white crystals that can be seen in the paste of older Comtés are not salt. They are made of tyrosin, an amino-acid that develops during the long maturing of Comté and crystallises into small whitish grains. They are clearly visible and crunchy under tooth.





## Comté, a source of infinite pleasures



### ► How to choose one's Comté ? Trust your own taste.

Quite naturally, taste is a very personal notion.

#### • Fruity, salty, mild ?

It is not possible to limit the incredible aromatic diversity of Comté to only a few words. Some are slightly saltier than others, others are very rich in roasted aromas, but a single word can never convey the subtlety of each aromatic bouquet. Two Comtés described as mild may offer you very different sorts of enjoyment. Therefore, one must consider that traditional qualifiers such as fruity, salty, mild, are mostly used by salespeople to distinguish the intensity of the taste of their cheeses. So please do not hesitate to ask for a sample before you buy.

#### • Summer Comté or winter Comté ?

Summer Comté can be recognized thanks to the colour of its paste : it is a deeper yellow than that of a winter Comté whose paste tends to be more ivory. Summer Comté is made

with milk from cows grazing in the pastures. As a result, the colour of the paste reflects the high content of carotene in the fresh grass. Contrary to many cheeses, colouring is banned in Comté.

It is often said that summer Comté has a broader aromatic profile. However it's not all about the season. It's enough to have breathed in the perfume of the hay eaten in winter, to appreciate fully the fine aromatic complexity that comes from a winter Comté.

#### • Cracks in my Comté ?

Sometimes it may happen that a Comté contains horizontal cracks through its paste. These cracks are called "lainures". They are regarded as defects in the look of the cheese, but even the best Comtés can sometimes display small cracks.





WEALTH OF AROMAS  
WHEEL OF AROMAS  
COMTÉ TERROIRS  
A NUTRITIOUS FOOD  
**CHOOSE ONE'S COMTÉ**  
AND NOW, TO THE TABLE !

## Comté, a source of infinite pleasures



### • What kind of Comté do you like ?

If you're looking for aromas of fresh hazelnut, dried apricot, fudge, cooked milk, plus a note of vanilla, then you will probably best enjoy young Comté.

If you're pursuing a softer texture with rich and persistent aromas of walnut, hazelnut, chestnut, roasted almonds, melted butter and spices, tempered by notes of cultured cream or citrus, then your preference will go to a Comté that has been matured for an extended time.

### • To conclude

**Trust your taste buds !** NOTHING can challenge the judgment of your taste buds. Some cheeses promise a constant taste. But Comté (as nature has decided) will astonish you each time you purchase it.

If your taste buds are inquisitive and if you enjoy its subtlety, Comté will make you happy. It will never bore you. Whenever possible, we strongly recommend that you ask for a taste before buying any of the Comtés that are offered to you. Cheesemongers are professionals who enjoy sharing their love of taste.





WEALTH OF AROMAS  
WHEEL OF AROMAS  
COMTÉ TERROIRS  
A NUTRITIOUS FOOD  
CHOOSE ONE'S COMTÉ  
AND NOW, TO THE TABLE !

## Comté, a source of infinite pleasures



### ► To the table !

There are few cheeses like Comté that have their place at every stage of a meal, from breakfast to aperitif time, or on a cheese platter. It is especially well suited to various culinary preparations. Its ability to melt easily or form a golden crust, makes it possible to use in easy and delicious ways for all gratiné dishes.

When used to bind a sauce, Comté contributes its flavours and creamy texture. It goes especially well with white meat and fish. Its use depends on its age : young Comté mostly contributes a creamy quality while more mature Comté impresses its typical character. It often makes sense to combine several Comtés in order to combine both qualities.

Together Comté and Jura white wine (especially the famous Vin Jaune) probably represent the summit of gastronomy in the Jura Massif as this combination brings out aromas of dried fruits and spices. Comté's aromatic diversity is so vast that it pairs surprisingly well, depending on its characteristics, with other types of wine (Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Champagnes, white Alsatian wines, Porto wines), artisanal beers, and even certain whiskies...

Comté tastes best at 15-18°C (59-65°F), so it's preferable to take it out of the refrigerator ahead of eating it.



You can find tasting advice  
and hundreds of delicious recipes  
on [www.comte.com](http://www.comte.com)





# Tourism and discovery in the Land of Comté



## ► Enjoy time on the Routes du Comté !

*Do you like to go to the heart of the matter ? Meet people, talk with them, explore, be surprised ? Do you like nature and the magic of seasons ? Comté milk producers, cheesemakers, and affineurs of the Jura Massif and all those with a passion for their noble terroir look forward to your visit. Welcome to the Routes du Comté !*

The Routes du Comté form a singular network rooted in the bond that unites Comté and tourism in the mountains of the Jura Massif. (The area stretches over the departments of Ain, Doubs and Jura). Along the way, travellers can visit farms, fruitières and affinage cellars, as well as “cheese” museums and “Etapas Gourmandes” where local products can be purchased. There are also many different kinds of restaurants to be enjoyed.

In addition, the Routes du Comté also include a large variety of farms where people can stay for the night or spend their holidays. Yet another example of Comté’s deep connection to its terroir.

Along the Routes, your taste buds will be seduced by local fare : in this region alone, there are six cheeses that carry quality and origin certification (Comté, Morbier, Mont d’Or, Bleu de Gex, Emmental Grand Cru, Gruyère de France) and fifteen

AOC wines with Controlled Designation of Origin (Arbois, Château Chalon, L’Etoile, Côtes du Jura, Macvin, Crémant du Jura, plus another nine designations in the Bugey area of the Ain department.)

*The Routes du Comté truly present an entire range of emotions and experiences that you can discover while travelling through the region and meeting local people. Thanks to them, you’ll encounter the fabulous natural, cultural and human richness of this land.*







## Step into the Comté universe and learn everything about the premier French PDO cheese.

*Come take advantage of the guided  
tours and tastings, organized  
for children and grown-ups.*



**A FUN,  
EDUCATIONAL  
AND SENSORY EXPERIENCE !**



### Discover the terroir and its scenery

The Comté PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) precisely defines the boundaries for the production of Comté. Get acquainted with this land, its medium elevation mountains, its well-defined seasons, its pastures crowned with fir trees, its lively villages...

### From pasture to affinage cellar...

An animated scale model, a video and the tools of daily life in farms and fromageries will tell you the history of the patient crafting of a wheel of Comté...

### The rite of tasting...

At the end of the tour, a tasting of several Comtés will explore the flavours and taste of Comté. Never again will you enjoy Comté in the same way !

### → Opening hours :

- 31<sup>st</sup> March > 7<sup>th</sup> July
  - Tuesday > Sunday : tours at 2 pm, 3:15 pm and 4:30 pm
- 8<sup>th</sup> > 22<sup>nd</sup> July / 27<sup>th</sup> August > 2<sup>nd</sup> September
  - Every day : tours at 10 am, 11:30 am, 2:15 pm, 3:15 pm, 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm
- 23<sup>rd</sup> July > 3<sup>rd</sup> September
  - Monday > Friday : tours at 10 am, 10:45 am, 11:30 am, 12:15 pm, 2 pm, 2:45 pm, 3:30 pm, 4:15 pm and 5 pm
  - Saturday and Sunday : tours at 10 am, 11:30 am, 2:15 pm, 3:15 pm, 4:15 pm and 5:15 pm
- 3<sup>rd</sup> September > 19<sup>th</sup> October
  - Tuesday > Sunday : tours at 2:15 pm and 3:45 pm
- Holidays
  - Tuesday > Sunday : tours at 2 pm, 3:15 pm and 4:30 pm

> All tours are guided, last approximately 1,5 hours and include a tasting of Comté. They are limited to 20 people.

> To verify schedule and availability or make a reservation, please visit : [www.maison-du-comte.com/actualites](http://www.maison-du-comte.com/actualites).

> Reservations are recommended on rainy days.

### → Admission :

Adults : € 5 / Children 6 - 18 years' old : € 3 / Children under 6 : free  
Various reductions available.

**Contact : +1 33 (0)3 84 37 78 40**

Avenue de la Résistance • 39800 POLIGNY

E-mail : [maisonducomte@comte.com](mailto:maisonducomte@comte.com)



[www.maison-du-comte.com](http://www.maison-du-comte.com)

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