

COMTÉ News



COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION | WWW.COMTE-USA.COM



Summer
2019



Comté Cheese
Association



Cheesemonger's Corner - "Best Practices"

With Noreen Mayer, Cheese and Retail Buyer, The Cheese School of San Francisco. Over the years Noreen has been a supporter of Comté. At the Cheese School of San Francisco, they currently have two Comtés and it is cut on demand.

> How did you initially get into the cheese world?

I worked my way through college at Andronico's, a local grocery store. There I was introduced to the

artisan food world. Working in the bakery, I started my cheese obsession by trading smashed cupcakes for bits of cheese from the cheese team. I was so impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of the cheese specialist, Kelly Christensen, that I jumped at the opportunity to transfer departments. I knew very little, but Kelly taught me that all anyone ever needed was a true love for their product to be an effective sales person. After Andronico's, a series of serendipitous events lead me to Cheese Bar in Portland to my current role at The Cheese School. #cheesedreams

> What do you think more people behind the counter need to know or consider when dealing with a cheese, like Comté?

Proper cutting! As with most classic cheeses, there is a proper way of breaking down a wheel of Comté. It BLEW MY MIND to learn this in my early years as a cheesemonger. I love reviewing diagrams, watching videos with my crew and, of course, giving hands-on training on the specific ways to cut cheese. Respect

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

Origin: Jura Mountains
(Massif du Jura), France

Milk Type: Raw cow's milk

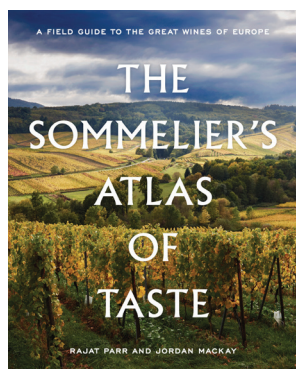
Cheese Style: Artisanal, pressed, cooked,
with natural brushed rind.

**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.

Continued on page 4

A Conversation with author Jordan McKay regarding his book with Rajet Parr entitled, “The Sommelier’s Atlas of Taste.”



> How do you feel about your book being described as “the first definitive reference book to describe, region-by-region, how the great wines of Europe should taste”?

One of our intents was to try in words to describe the classics for a generation that doesn't necessarily come to wine with the same curriculum of the

classics that Raj and I did. Today they may just as easily be introduced to wine through a natural wine from Sardinia or a Malbec from Argentina than through Chablis or Barolo. Nothing wrong with those wines, but in the interest of understanding the classics, we wanted to try to get down how they taste. But this is also in more granular fashion than exists elsewhere—rather than just describing Chablis, we went into differentiating the major Premier Crus. In Barolo, we tried to find the differences between the villages.

And lastly, we didn't just describe the taste, we also went deep into why the wines taste as they do, exploring the origins of their characteristics in terroir, culture, and history. This is because we understand taste better when we also understand context.

> How did you and Rajat work together?

Raj pretty much selected the producers we focused on and planned the itineraries. I deferred to him for that because he has great connections and had his own vision for the way certain producers represent their regions. Then we traveled together for a month at a time—three full trips plus a few shorter ones—simply visiting vineyards and producers. We tasted a lot of wine, but more importantly we walked the vineyards with the vignerons and asked a lot of questions. And we discussed our thoughts over the long hours in the car. I recorded all our interviews, went home and over about 9 months transcribed them and I figured out what we wanted to say. I worked very quickly and very hard to write this, getting up at 4-5:00 a.m. and working until dark. I'd finish a chapter and send it to Raj to read.

> You published *Secrets of the Sommeliers: How to Think and Drink Like the World's Top Wine Professionals* in 2010, what led or inspired you to want to write another book on wine?

*Well, it took us 8 years, so we didn't exactly take the idea lightly. *Secrets* was about a profession and about wine*

service and care. There was a bit about tasting and about wine itself in the first book, but that wasn't exactly the focus. In the time since then, Raj and I have learned a lot more about wine and developed our own sensibilities and areas of interest. The Atlas (a term we loosely appropriate) represents the way we think about wine now and the questions we ask of it.

> In the book you say Comté “is this “golden-colored, nutty, creamy, complex, buttery godsend of a cow's milk cheese [which] is a friend to all wines” and should “be a fixture of every cheese plate, when you are trying to show wine at its best,” why did you want to include this?

In every chapter, we try to add a little content that helps readers to understand a region more—whether it's a restaurant recommendation or a historical note. I wanted to add Comté, because to me it's essential to understanding the Jura. When you go there, Comté is everywhere and comes up at most meals. It represents the terrain and the culture of the region. Comté also helps to make sense of the wines, as it's somewhat of a canvas onto which all the different wines—from Vin Jaune to Chardonnay to Trousseau—express themselves beautifully. Not many cheeses are so versatile with wine or delicious.

I love to pair a 18-24 month Comté with the Arbois Chardonnay “Gravières” from Stéphane Tissot. The wine emphasizes limestone-dominant terroir, and it has a mineral texture that goes wonderfully with the crunchy umami of aged Comté. But the zip of the wine also provides a riveting balance to the richness of the cheese.

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

First, I hope they enjoy reading it. It's not a reference book—it's meant to be read. Second, I hope it inspires them to deepen their approach to understand wine. Through the course of writing it, Raj and I expanded our own views, learning much more about how history and culture form the wines we drink today. We love this expansive way of understanding terroir and think it will excite others too.

> What's next?

I have a book just about steak—Franklin Steak—coming out in April. It's with my co-author and friend Aaron Franklin, who is also a barbecue genius. This book is the most comprehensive on buying, aging, preparing, and cooking steak in existence. After this, I'm working on a cocktail-centric book with the most amazing bar in Brooklyn, Maison Premiere.

“The Sommelier’s Atlas of Taste” is currently available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



The Cheese Truck

Owners, Jason and Tom Sobocinski run The Cheese Truck in New Haven, CT, which specializes in grilled cheese. They had a cheese shop and bistro but saw the need for a lower priced, mobile food option. Following is a Q&A with Tom:

> **Tell us about your Comté and onion jam grilled cheese?**

This is a very popular grilled cheese as the classic flavors work so well with savory and sweet playing off the crispy and melty dual textures achieved with an exceptional grilled cheese!

> **Why do you like using Comté in your grilled cheeses?**

I like Comté in grilled cheese because it is grassy, nutty and very versatile (it also has a great "stretchability"). It is delicious with both sweet and savory sandwiches, and goes well with our signature grainy mustard and cornichons we serve.

> **For those who do not live in New Haven, what are they missing?**

New Haven is the best little city in New England, there is vibrant food scene with lots of restaurants, bars and food trucks.

> **What's next, do you plan on expanding anywhere else?**

We are looking to keep adding more cheese dishes to the truck. We specialize in grilled cheeses but want to expand to more cheese plates, selling retail specialty cheeses and doing dishes like raclette, mac n' cheese and more! We hope you'll visit next time you're in New Haven! For more information on The Cheese Truck and its route, go to www.TheCheeseTruck.com



For more information about Comté, visit: www.comte-usa.com

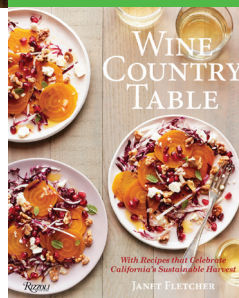


Bar Crenn

While in San Francisco for the 2019 Winter Fancy Food Show, we had the opportunity to stop by Bar Crenn. There we tasted Chef de Cuisine Michael Keogh's Tarte Flambée which featured Comté!

Sponsorship News

We are excited to announce that recently we became sponsors of 'Cutting the Curd' on Heritage Radio. Much to our delight, one of the first interviews we sponsored on the program was with our friend Janet Fletcher about her new book, "Wine Country Table."



As far as wine country pairings with Comté, Janet recommends a Napa Valley Chardonnay that has some age on it. Over time, Napa Valley Chardonnays develop honeyed notes that complement the nutty intensity of Comté. For example, Trefethen Vineyards make Chardonnays that age beautifully. Last year she hosted a class there called "Cheese Meets Chardonnay" and paired their 1997 Chardonnay with a 24-month Comté. Wine Country Table is currently available at amazon.com and you can listen to Janet's interview at <https://heritageradionetwork.org/podcast/book-review-janet-fletcher-latest-wine-country-table/>

Cheeseboards 2019

Our cheeseboard campaign continues to into this year with creations by Carlos Yescas, Katie Quinn and Belinda Chang, just to name a few. See all the 2019 boards on our website at <http://www.comte-usa.com/category/news/cheese-board/>



Exciting News!

**Comté celebrates
the 60th anniversary
of its PDO!**

Continued from page 1

for the product is of utmost importance. It breaks my heart whenever I see cheese that is improperly handled, wrapped or stored. Giving each and every cheese the respect it deserves is a critical component in cheesemonger training. At the school, teaching the team about cheese crimes, and how to avoid them, is an on-going company-wide effort. We believe that it is everybody's duty to showcase cheese in way that exemplifies love and respect.

> What is the number one lesson you would like to share, or that you teach, at the Cheese School?

I think the most helpful is teaching our guests about styles of cheese. It's quite common to have a guest that only wants to buy one specific cheese that they tried while on vacation...where they spent time at a quaint village... during the Spring of 2012... It's impossible to carry every cheese in the world and recreate the zeitgeist of their cheese moment. Instead, I'd rather introduce them to a category as a whole. I'm then able to give them an abundance of delicious options. In turn, they then know more about cheese, which inspires them to share their cheese knowledge with others.

How the “Meilleur Ouvrier de France” are Keeping French Traditions Alive

The MOF, Meilleur Ouvrier de France (Best Workers in France) competition was created in 1924 in an effort to revive the diminishing number of traditional craftsmen in France. It recognizes those who represent the highest quality in the craft, commercial, service, industrial or agricultural arenas. It does so through an exhibition held every three-four years, showcasing different professions including florists, carpenters, butchers, jewelry makers, and of course pastry chefs, etc. Along with the Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF) title, successful candidates receive a medal and state diploma. This title is an honor as it carries the importance of historical legacy and is the height of peer-recognition in these professions. The honor is taken so seriously that falsifying a MOF title is a crime punishable by prison-time.

MOF winners retain their titles for life. Many choose to join the National Society of Meilleur Ouvrier de France, a type of alumni society for winners. The society's mission is to spread awareness for the MOF title, through organizing various regional events, professional exchanges and highlighting the organization's goal of professional excellence. For example, in Franche-Comté, members of Les Mof du Jura host a contest which offers young candidates the chance to become “One of the Best Apprentices of France.”

As of 2017 there were 9,000 MOF's in France. There are now 24 cheese MOF's in France out of about 9000 MOF's.

The Comté Cheese Association

provides you with everything you need for a successful selling program, including: recipe booklets, brochures, aprons, demo toothpicks, training tools and more. Visit www.comte-usa.com for POS materials and free downloads.



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