

COMTÉ News



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COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION | WWW.COMTE-USA.COM



Essay by Zach Berg,

**Winner of the 2021 Comté Scholarship
Zach Berg, ACS CCP, Co-owner/Head
Cheesemonger at Mongers' Provisions
in Detroit and Berkley, MI.**

I have spent over a decade telling customers from San Francisco to Metro Detroit about how special Comté can be—largely due to its impressive history. Now, after returning home from a pilgrimage to the Jura itself, I am humbled and inspired. I am also surprised to find that for all of this time, I somehow had been missing the mark!

I was shocked to find that even a cheese with a history going back to the century is also a product of modern cheesemaking. For instance, I had no idea that Comté had consistent eyes (or holes) in the cheese until the later part of the last century, when the introduction of cooler maturation led to a paste with fewer gas bubbles. It was also fascinating (and beautiful) to observe that this legacy cheese fully utilizes cheese flipping robots, cutting edge cheesemaking equipment, and anaerobic digesters* while preserving traditional gestures and techniques.

Moreover, Comté does all of this while utilizing the village cooperative system. This approach protects farmers' interests and ensures that their voices are heard in a way I have never encountered elsewhere in my twenty-five years in the food industry.

Before I went on this trip, I had a deep appreciation for Comté's history and traditions as I understood them at the time. Now, in addition to all of that, I am impressed by Comté's modern approach to managing the environmental impact of dairy production — as well as its commitment to supporting a diverse constellation of stakeholders. I am proud to be part of Comté's worldwide extended network providing a link between the customer and the place, people, and traditions I met firsthand in the Jura.

*The digester transforms animal manures into gas used for heating and a digestate rich in nutrients which is used as a natural fertilizer [Editor's note]



Cheesemonger's Corner – “Best Practices”

With Chelsea Lowrie, Cheesemonger ACS CCP, Zupan's Markets, Portland, OR



What is your favorite way to enjoy Comté?

I'm a bit of a purist and generally prefer to eat cheese all on its own. Cheese needs no help! That being said, one of my favorite breakfasts is slathering rye bread with good mustard and finishing it off with a generous slice of Comté. I also tend to keep Comté on hand in the way many keep Parmigiano Reggiano on hand, to finish salads, baked entrees, or whatever needs a bit of a pick-me-up.

What is the number one lesson you would like to share?

There's no right or wrong way to enjoy cheese, especially Comté. Cheese "rules" create good material for gourmet magazines, but a delicious cheese doesn't survive 1,000 years if there's only one "right" way to serve it. Eat Comté – or any cheese – in a way that makes you smile, and without apology!

How initially did you get into the cheese world?

Cheese found me. My family has worked in grocery for three generations, but when they sold the business before I came of age, I created new career goals for myself. When the 2008 - 2009 recession hit just as I was finishing college, those aspirations were suddenly put on hold and paying the bills became my sole priority. Grocery was what I knew – and how I had spent my college breaks – so it's what I returned to. Luckily at that time, specialty cheese was really starting to take off in the grocery world, so I got in on the ground floor. After a few years of balancing two careers, my love of cheese won out and I've been a monger ever since.

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

Comté is not just one cheese, and it's important to convey that to our customers. Young Comté offers such a different tasting experience compared to Comté at other ages, and the difference between summer and winter milk Comté is a distinction to be savored every year. While it's true that we cheesemongers still struggle to combat some industry misnomers, we can still successfully start conversations about affinage and pastures that lead to a broader appreciation of Comté.

Get ready ACS CCPs!



The next Comté Scholarship essay contest is going to be announced soon! It's your chance to win a cash award and an all-expenses-paid trip to the Comté region to learn first-hand about the cheese's unique history and production, as well as to discover the know-how and culture of the region.



Comté Recipe ideas!

Any Comté recipes you'd like to share?

Feel free to reach out to us at trade@comte-usa.com.

As we are happy to feature them on our website!

Guy Savoy's Soufflé au Comté

Guy Savoy is a renowned French chef. He is head chef and owner of the Guy Savoy restaurants in Paris and Las Vegas. Both of which have earned multiple Michelin stars. Below is his recipe for Soufflé au Comté, which recently ran in the September 30, 2022, issue of Wine Spectator Magazine. Says Dave Gibbons who wrote the article: "Chef Savoy insists on using Comté for his cheese soufflé!"

For Savoy, Gibbons says, a successful soufflé "depends on following the recipe properly, step by step. [...] A well-developed soufflé should be coloured on the outside and soft inside, but by no means runny. AND it must taste like its featured ingredient - in our case, the Comté."



Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 4 eggs separated
- 7 ounces aged Comté cheese, grated
- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 7 ounces milk
- Fine salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Put kettle of water on the stove to boil
2. Use one tablespoon of butter to coat the insides of four, 8-ounce ramekins, then dust them with flour. Set them aside in a cool spot.
3. Make a béchamel by melting the remaining three tablespoons of butter in a sauce pan over medium heat. Stir in the flour until well-combined and cook for about 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Do not brown; lower heat if necessary. Add the milk and cook, stirring regularly until the sauce thickens.
4. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the egg yolks and cheese. Season with salt and ground pepper. Place the egg whites and a pinch of salt in a well-chilled metal bowl. Whip the whites with a large whisk until they form stiff peaks; this should take 5 to 10 minutes. Gently fold the egg whites into the cheese mixture, one third at a time. Do not overmix.
5. Place equal portions of the batter into each ramekin. To ensure soufflés rise into nice crowns, run a knife blade around the inside of each one to loosen the batter from the sides of the ramekins.
6. Prepare a bain-marie by pouring boiling water into a 9 by 13-inch metal baking pan to a depth of 3/4 inch. Place the ramekins in the pan and then carefully transfer it to the oven, making sure no water spills into the batter. Bake until the soufflés are puffed up and golden brown on the top, 15 to 20 minutes. Serve hot.