

COMTÉ News



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Comté Cheese
Association

Congrats to Sarah Simiele 2023 Winner of the ACS Comté Conference Fund!

Sarah is an ACS CCP and co-founder of the Curd Nerd in Syracuse NY! Sarah started the artisanal cheese and produce shop with her husband in the Eastwood section of Syracuse, NY. To find out how you can enter to win the Comté Conference Fund go to <https://www.cheesefoundation.org/>



Cheesemonger's Corner “Best Practices”

**Samantha Ashley ACS CCP,
Specialty Team Leader Whole Foods
Market, Destin FL**

Q: How initially did you get into cheese?

A: It was a happy accident! After a decade, I left a stressful 911 dispatcher career and was trying to figure out what I would do next. I wanted to find a way to help people, but in a way that wasn't sacrificing so much of myself. I applied at Whole Foods Market on a whim, as I continued strategizing for my new future. I started my first shift cutting cheese -- then after trying all the cheese -- I realized I happened upon something truly special. Those first few weeks processing cheese had shifted my axis. I could affect people's lives, but on a completely different scale. No one is angry or in pain when you give them a piece of cheese to try. I could impact people's lives in a happy, positive way. This was actually going to be fun!

Q: What do you think is the most common perception/misperception that customers have when it comes to Comté?

A: I've noticed when I introduce cheese newbies to Comté for the first time they are sometimes surprised by the complex aromas in the aged wheels. This provides the opportunity for a fun experiment! I will have the customer pinch their nose closed to try their first bite and just ask what they taste at that point. This is a fun trick I picked up at the Center for Dairy Research facility in Wisconsin during my Certified Cheese Professional studies. The sweet, nutty flavor is usually noted. Then we try another bite with our other senses open and keep building on the additional flavors they can taste, with the smell now adding to the wonderful complexity of the cheese.

Q: Are there any best practices or lessons that you'd like to share with other cheesemongers when it comes to the cheese counter?

A: Explore more! If I have a customer come up and ask for a Gruyere, this would be an excellent opportunity to have them sample another similar cheese they may have never tried before. This could lead to their first bite of Comté and create another loyal follower. For the customer who is “just looking” I like to keep a few bites at the ready of a new cheese I may be excited about on hand.

Q: How do you enjoy Comté?

A: My favorite is a pretty simple pairing. I love Comté when it's combined with a savory compliment. Comté and Valencia almonds with rosemary. When I sample these in the store, everyone seems to make their way back for seconds.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

A: What I have learned in my short years in this industry is that cheese is truly an art. I have had the honor of meeting many wonderful cheesemakers. Listening to them talk about what they do and why -- it's all fueled by a passion for cheese. I find it my responsibility behind my store's cheese counter to not let all those efforts go to waste. I want our cheese market to keep booming, and artisan cheeses to be in everyone's house. I feel like I am one of the gatekeepers of this in a small way. I try to pass on my passion to everyone who engages with me, and hope that they share that with others when they leave the store.



(Photo credit: Katie Quinn)

Tas (Jean-François Marmier) arrives in Aspen!

Jean-François Marmier (aka Tas) was in Aspen for the launch of the "Comté & Côtes du Rhône Iconic Terroirs of Europe" campaign.

Tas has been a strong advocate for Comté and for traditional farming and cheesemaking for over 20 years. He has been a member of the PDO's Jury Terroir which regularly meets to analyze and characterize the taste and flavors of Comté from different *frutière*. Because of his infectious passion and excellent command of English, his presence at the 40th annual Aspen Food & Wine Classic (16-18 June) contributed to highlight Comté on the Grand Tasting Exhibitor Booth. He also provided expert knowledge to a special Comté and Côtes du Rhône tasting seminar, along with wine grower Raphaël Pommier and moderator Erik Segelbaum.

Tas and his three associates run a multigenerational family farm in Bouverans (Massif du Jura) where they produce milk for Comté cheese. It has been in his family for over 100 years. Among his experiences in France, he worked as assistant-cheesemaker in a Comté *frutière* and sorter in the cellars of a well-known local *affineur*. Abroad, he worked on a farm in Tasmania — where he gained his nickname! His presence has been sought after at the Salon de l'agriculture in Paris as well as other cheese events in France and abroad for many years.



Comté and Wild Blueberry Cobbler

By Erin Harris www.thecheese poet.ca @thecheese poet

Serves: 8 / Prep time: 20 mins / Cook time: 40 mins / Total time: 1 hour

Comté cheese offers a bouquet of sweet and savory flavors and aromas, which makes it a versatile cheese for use in everything from appetizers to main course dishes, and even desserts! The addition of Comté in this wild blueberry cobbler heightens the flavors of browned butter and provides a richness you might find in the finest of French pastries. While the fresh thyme leaves are an optional ingredient, they add another layer of flavor that will leave you swooning in culinary delight. Serve this cobbler while still warm with a dollop of lightly whipped cream.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup sugar, divided in half
- 4 cups wild blueberries, fresh or frozen
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme leaves, stems discarded (optional)
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1 cup whole milk
- ¼ tsp salt
- 4 ounces 12-month aged Comté cheese, rind removed and diced
- 1 cup whipping cream (35% cream)
- 2 heaping tbsp icing sugar

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Melt the butter in a 11X13-inch baking dish in the oven until the butter is browned – about 5 minutes. Keep a close eye to make sure the butter doesn't burn.
2. Bring the blueberries, ½ cup of sugar, lemon juice, and thyme leaves to a boil in a medium sauce pan for 2-3 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.
3. In a mixing bowl, stir together the flour, ½ cup of sugar, baking powder and salt. Add the milk and mix until fully combined. Stir in the Comté cheese. Distribute the batter evenly into the baking dish on top of the hot butter. Do not stir.
4. Pour the hot blueberry mixture with all of the juice over the cobbler batter, distributing the blueberries evenly around the dish. Do not stir.
5. Bake for about 40 minutes, or until the top of the cobbler is golden brown. Remove from the oven and cool for about 15 minutes before serving.
6. Using an electric whisk, beat together the whipping cream and icing sugar until fluffy.
7. Serve while still warm, and top with a scoop of whipped cream. Enjoy!

