

# COMTÉ News



Winter  
2024

COMTÉ CHEESE ASSOCIATION | [WWW.COMTE-USA.COM](http://WWW.COMTE-USA.COM)



Anna Bates, Hayley Pingree, Alex Jones, Claire Rouger, Jean-Louis Carbonnier, Rosemary Kimani

Comté Cheese  
Association

## 2023 Comté Scholarship Winner Hayley Pingree Shares Her Experience Touring Comté!

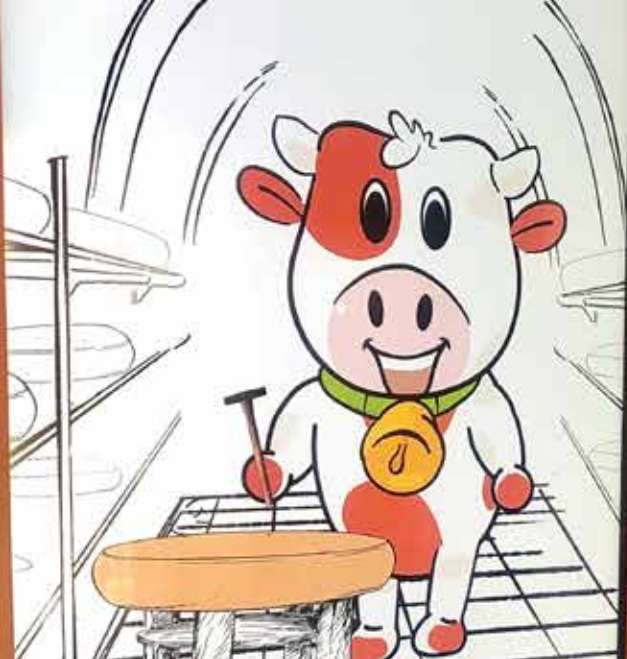
I arrived at sunrise to the Geneva airport the morning of my trip to the Jura region of France with Comté USA. As the 11th annual winner of the Comté scholarship for Certified Cheese Professionals (CCP), I was thrilled to be along for the ride. As we winded along back country roads, we traded naps and oohs and ahs, bouncing back and forth between anticipation and tiredness.

What I would come to find out over the next four days would disprove my initial assumptions that cheesemaking in the Jura is a small pastime of family farmers. My mind opened to the astounding vibrance of a region absolutely buzzing with young artisans, motivated entrepreneurs and cheesemakers, farmers and affineurs working together to create a cheese that is beloved around the world.

It started with a visit to Fruitière 1900, run by husband and wife duo Paco and Amandine, a young couple making Comté in the traditional method over a fire burning copper vat. They took over the ancient fruitière in Thoiria and brought new life to the town with open visits and generous wine tastings.

Our next stop was an affineur. There are only 15, most of them family companies. To my surprise we were greeted by third generation affineur, Corentine, who walked us through the hallowed halls of her family's Comté caves. Both in their 20's, she and her brother have grown up around wheels of aging Comté, yet still are thrilled to be part of the company's daily life and are revitalizing and innovating for generations to come.

Then we visited one of the 2,400 farms that supply milk for Comté. There we met Ashley, a young farmer who was in charge of the twice daily milking of the farm's herd. She imparted some sweet cooing words to the Montbéliardes as she went about doing her job.



Being a cheese professional can be equal parts romantic and daunting— in one breath you love the pastoral nature of cheesemaking— rolling hills dotted with bovine babies grazing on regenerative farmland. While in the next breath, you are painfully aware of the insurmountable hardships farmers and producers face in a world battling industrial dairy, climate change and property prices. Producers in France feel this acutely, but I was undeniably impressed over and over again with the teamwork, innovation and dedication of the Comté PDO to combat these pressing issues, and make cheesemaking sustainable and enticing for young generations.

It comes down to this: there is no way to create Comté alone. As a PDO, or name-protected cheese in France, there are specific regulations that must be met for Comté to be Comté. A large part of these requirements include the cooperation between farmers, fruitières and affineurs. The 4,500 farmers provide milk for the 140 fruitières, who then send their wheels of Comté to the 15 affineurs for aging. Regulations stipulate that you must work in this organized system, with no party able to do the entire line of production alone. During our tour of the finely appointed Maison du Comté, Comté was described as the

“cheese of solidarity.” From its ancient origins, the people of the Jura worked together to create mountain cheeses that could feed villages throughout harsh winters. Today, the camaraderie is the same, though Comté leans more towards pleasurable eating than winter preservation.

My time in the Jura brought endless awe and appreciation for the thousands (truly!) of dedicated people and animals that bring Comté to life.

## You Too Can Experience the Jura! Get Your Entry in Now for The Comté Scholarship at [comte-usa.com](http://comte-usa.com)!

It's your chance win an all-expenses-paid trip to the Comté region of France to learn first-hand about the cheese's history and production, as well as to explore the Comté region and its culture. In addition, the winner will receive a **\$750 cash** stipend, which can be put toward ACS test taking fees and expenses! The deadline is December 6th!! For details on the application process go to [www.comte-usa.com](http://www.comte-usa.com)



**'Tis the season with Comté!**

**You'll find inspired recipes and cheeseboards—  
like this Christmas Cheese Board**

**@curedandcultivated, at [comte-usa.com](http://comte-usa.com)**





Photo credit:  
Michael Anthony



Photo credit:  
Ken Goodman



## Comté Celebrates Jacques Pépin's 90<sup>th</sup>!

On October 6th, we joined The Jacques Pépin Foundation (JPF) in sponsoring the kick-off celebration of Jacques's 90th birthday. This five-course tasting dinner was hosted by proprietor Danny Meyer and Chef Michael Anthony, at Gramercy Tavern in New York City. It is the first in a campaign of 90 events planned over the next year to generate support for Pépin's charitable organization. There, approximately 100 food and wine enthusiasts were treated to a delicious fourth course of Comté cheese, Walnut Sourdough and Concord grape jam, that was created especially for the occasion.

The JPF advances Jacques love of culinary arts and education and supports the teaching of culinary skills through various channels to many communities. To learn more about them go to <https://jp.foundation>. Or see our interview with Jacques in the 2022 Summer issue of Comté News, [https://media.comte-usa.com/newsletters/2022\\_2SpringSummerComteNews.pdf](https://media.comte-usa.com/newsletters/2022_2SpringSummerComteNews.pdf)

## Cheesemonger's Corner: "Best Practices" with Evan Talen, ACS CCP & owner of The Flavor Sherpa, Grand Rapids, MI



### Q: How did you get started in the cheese world?

A: My first cheese job fell into my lap late in 2009 when I was given the opportunity to open a kitchen/bistro space in a little shop called Cheese Louise in South Eastern Washington. I had worked in food service/restaurants and this was an exciting opportunity to create my first full menu and learn a lot about cheese and wine. The passion of Bill and Tamara, the husband and wife who owned the shop, truly started me down the path of a cheese-focused career. At the time, Bill worked full-time in the Arts and Sciences Division at Montana State University and moonlit at the cheese shop. His love of history and the arts made him an incredible storyteller, and he knew every last detail about who made each cheese and its significance in history. Since then, I have worked at Aperitivo and for Spartan Nash, in Michigan.

### Q: What do you think most people need to know or consider when dealing with a cheese like Comté?

A: To cheese folks... This cheese should be a staple of your plate. Do not be afraid to proclaim its greatness loudly. The versatility of Comté should never be overlooked. It will always shine on a cheese tray and is also wonderful on

a sandwich, in a mac and cheese, in soup, and in endless other applications.

To civilians (non-cheese folks)... This cheese is like your stable best friend who is always there for you. They won't be taking you out drinking all night or calling you to be bailed out of jail. They will be there to share a glass of wine and a good conversation on the patio, watching the sunset whenever you need them.

### Q: What is something you wished someone had told you before you became a monger?

A: There is no turning back!! Before my first cheese job, I had no idea what I was missing by not having great cheese. Now, finding great cheese - and quality food in general - has become the focus of every vacation, every date night, and most of my career decisions. It is both the best and worst decision I have ever made. ;)

### Q: What is your favorite way to enjoy Comté?

A: I love to sit down with a glass of Crémant and snack on Comté with slices of fresh pear. The simplicity yet depth of this snack is unmatched.