

COMTÉ News



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(Emilia with teammate Courtney Johnson)

Comté Cheese
Association

Q&A with ACS CCP Emilia D'Albero Meilleure Fromagère du Monde 2025!

Q. How does it feel to win the Mondial du Fromage (as an American)?

A. It feels very surreal to be the first American to win this competition, especially as part of the first ever all-female Team USA, both of whom made it onto the podium. I feel so grateful for the endless support of the US cheese industry over the past year as I trained for this competition.

Q. How did you find yourself in the cheese industry?

A. After college, I got an internship with Eataly NYC Flatiron helping manage their cooking school. And I worked my way up to running the department. After sitting in many different classes, I decided to go into butchery, but I had no knife skills. I was told to start at the cheese counter to gain some knife skills but ended up falling in love with cheese.

Q. What made you decide to enter the Mondial and how did you prepare for it?

A. In order to qualify for the Mondial du Fromage, you have to first win the Cheesemonger Invitational*: Masters competition. CMI Masters brings together previous CMI winners to compete against each other in hopes of earning a spot on Team USA. The two winners then go to France to compete in the Mondial du Fromage. From November 2024 until September 2025, I can say that I spent at least 2 hours a day preparing, whether it was making flashcards or practicing unique cuts. I was in constant contact with Courtney Johnson, the other member of Team USA. As she had competed in Mondial 2023, I would not have done as well without her help.

(*CMI was founded by Adam Moskowitz, owner and operator of Larkin, a leader in reliable, cost-effective logistic solutions for suppliers, importers and distributors based in Long Island City, NY.)

Q. What was the most challenging part of the competition?

A. For me, the most challenging part was the Plateau, a 100cm square display of cheese centered around a theme, which was "Shades of Color" this year. Although it was worth the same number of points as other tests, it was a much larger undertaking because of how large the space for the display was, and the amount of cheese that needed to be cut and placed. The last few tests are timed, so getting the first 4 tests completed was necessary to maximize the time I had to work on the Plateau. For me, having a concrete plan for every part of the plateau was essential, so as to not waste time figuring out what to do with the cheese.

Q. What is your favorite way to enjoy Comté?

A. I love using Comté for any recipe that calls for melted cheese - we had some excellent fondue in France that incorporated Comté, and one of my favorite iterations of grilled cheese calls for a 12-15 months aged profile melted between thick slices of sourdough, and layered with fig jam and onions caramelized with white wine and herbs.

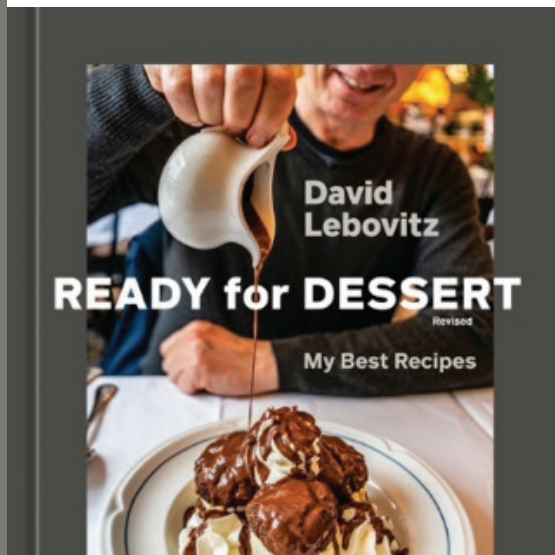
It's one of my favorite decadent lunches, and sometimes I even add some bacon or speck. Of course, it's also the perfect choice for macaroni and cheese as well. Comté is one of the most versatile cheeses out there, with an incredible range of flavor profiles, so you know there is always one piece that is right for your recipe.

Q. Did you use it in the competition?

A. We did! They gave us a large piece of Comté to use for our plateau, which I turned into my first and most impressive show cut in the display. This was a cut that I practiced many times at home in order to get the right angle and number of slices for the twist.

Q. Anything else you'd like to include?

A. This was a win for the entire American cheese community, and especially for women in cheese. Courtney and I would not have made it to this point without the support that the US cheese community has provided us with over the past year, in the form of cheese, accoutrements, monetary donations, specialized tools, and words of encouragement. My hope is that Courtney's and my success at Mondial this year will inspire a new generation of cheesemongers to break down more boundaries and continue to show the world what American mongers are capable of.



David Lebovitz Celebrates READY FOR DESSERT!

David Lebovitz's new book attracted an impressive turnout at his launch party on September 30th at AXS Design in Paris where there was plenty of Comté cheese on hand. Said David: "given the crowd and the fact 'everybody loves the Comté', I only got one bite." This completely revised book contains 170 of his all-time favorite recipes, with photographs taken in his Paris kitchen. Of course, David was also on hand to autograph copies. READY FOR DESSERT is now available at your favorite local or online bookseller!

2024 Comté Scholarship Winner Michael Scott, Cheese Specialist for Whole Foods Market in Wellesley, MA- Shares His Experience!

In July 2025, I traveled to France's Jura Mountains to study Comté at its source. This immersive program offered unparalleled access to every stage of production — from



(Michael Scott with Marc Janin in Fromagerie Janin's cheese shop, Champagne, France)

the cooperative fruitières where raw milk is transformed, to the aging cellars where affineurs guide each wheel to maturity. The experience deepened my technical knowledge of PDO regulations, milk quality, and affinage techniques, while reinforcing the cultural and economic significance of Comté within its region of origin.

Our first stop was the Maison du Comté, where we were welcomed by the professionals who safeguard the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) standards for Comté. This modern facility — part interactive museum, part meeting hall, part retail shop — serves as both an educational hub and a guardian of tradition. Our hosts

answered every question with precision, offering insight into the rigorous standards that protect Comté's authenticity.

What began as a formal introduction quickly became a week-long immersion. On a working farm, we met the Montbéliarde cows whose milk is the foundation of Comté. Farmers shared their expertise in animal husbandry, seasonal feed strategies, and field rotation practices. We participated in milking and tasted fresh, still-warm milk — a sensory connection no classroom can replicate. Meeting a group of ten-day-old calves offered a glimpse into the breed's future.

We visited two contrasting fruitières (cheese making cooperatives owned by farmers): one large-scale operation transforming milk from about twenty farms, and a small husband-and-wife facility producing no more than sixteen wheels per day. Both demonstrated the same commitment to quality, despite their differences in scale.

The next stage took us into the aging caves, where professional affineurs mature Comté to perfection. We toured several facilities, each remarkable for its combination of tradition and innovation. The scale was staggering: one cave held over 200,000 wheels at any given time. Here, precision is paramount — every wheel's origin, age, and projected flavor profile is meticulously tracked. Robotic systems, working in harmony with human expertise, ensure that each cheese is turned, brushed, and monitored according to its unique needs.

In Champagne, we met Marc Janin, a third-generation cheesemonger whose shop includes its own aging cellar. Every cheese in his case is hand-selected, reflecting his personal commitment to excellence. We also visited other retail shops to observe how French fromagers curate selections, present products, and engage with customers — a reminder that Comté is not just a cheese, but a cultural touchstone.

This scholarship was more than professional development — it was a once-in-a-lifetime immersion into the landscape, people, and practices that make Comté the most consumed cheese in France. Experiencing the Jura Mountains forged a lasting connection to a product that is both a national treasure and a living tradition.

I encourage every Certified Cheese Professional to apply for this extraordinary program. The knowledge gained, the relationships formed, and the inspiration drawn from such an experience are invaluable. If given the chance, I would not hesitate to enter again.

**Time is running out!
Enter the Thirteenth
Annual Comté
Scholarship Today!**

If you are a Certified Cheese Professionals™ (ACS CCP™s) this is your chance to 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. The winner will also receive a \$750 cash stipend. Simply go to comte-usa.com to download your entry form by December 7th!

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membership!**

Which includes recognition on their website membership page, inclusion in a Monger Monday Feature on Instagram and Raw Milk Cheese Display Picks to help you spread the word and celebrate International Raw Milk Cheese Appreciation Day, among other benefits! For information contact Ruth Flore at RFlore@oldwayspt.org