

COMTÉ News



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(Photo credit: Pookie Cookie Studio)

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Association

Q&A with Freelance Journalist, Culinary Tour Guide, Author and Co-Host of “Fishwives of Paris” podcast, Emily Monaco. aka “Emily in France”

Q. How did you originally get into blogging about France? and focusing on cheese?

A. I came to France when I was 19 and quickly realized I wanted to stay much longer. I understood that gastronomy was going to be a good way to assimilate with local culture and found the cheese world welcoming! Every time I met a new maker or monger, they were so open to sharing their knowledge and expertise – and introducing me to others.

I began writing professionally while completing my degree in school in Paris. My beat was always food-focused. I write about food from a variety of angles, including restaurant reviews

and trend pieces, but my favorite stories remain those that artisans don't even realize are worth telling. And often, I've found this to be the case with cheesemakers, who perpetuate long-held traditions – often without realizing quite how special their craft is.

Q. What do you like most about French cheese? and about Comté?

A. So many things! I love learning the stories of how French cheeses came to be what they are, and I love the way in which the AOP preserves that history and terroir. Comté specifically is France's best-selling AOP cheese for a reason: It's such a

crowd-pleaser, with its nutty, buttery, fruity flavors. I frequently showcase Comté on my cheese tours, because I know that no matter how stinky or assertive the other options on the platter, Comté will never disappoint. But my reliance on Comté isn't just down to its flavor. I also love using Comté to illustrate the ingenuity of mountain communities in preserving milk for times of lack. Comté, for example, has one of the lowest salt contents of any French cheese, seeing as salt was a scarce resource in the Jura. The innovation of pressing and cooking curds helped locals extend the shelf life of cheeses like Comté, which can then be (deliciously) aged for several years. I also love sharing Comté's production process with guests, which I discovered first-hand since I was a recent guest of the Comté PDO. The cooperation among dairy farmers, cheesemakers, and expert affineurs is the perfect illustration of the meticulous craft that goes into Comté – and all French cheeses.

Q. Do you have any favorite ways you enjoy Comté?

A. When I was in the Jura, I got the chance to try Comté at a variety of ages, but it was eye-opening to hear that most producers prefer, not the coveted, ultra-aged Comtés we see all over Paris, but younger, fruitier, 14- to 18-month-old iterations. I love them all, but I'll admit that since that trip, I gravitate more towards this style, especially seeing as it's just as delicious on its own as cooked. These younger Comtés are my favorites for a super-flavorful mac and cheese or grilled cheese, thanks to their fruity flavors and perfectly melty consistency.



Q. What inspired you to start a podcast?

A. Fishwives of Paris was born after, The Terroir Podcast, which was a pandemic project. My co-host Caroline Fazeli and I are both food and history nerds, and we thought there was space for a fact-driven podcast that exposes some of the myths and legends we tell ourselves about French food. The new podcast explores French food one specialty at a time, which gives us loads more space to dig deep and really combine history, culture, values, and a bit of snark.

You can follow Emily Monaco (aka Emily in France) on Instagram, read her newsletter on Substack and listen to "Fishwives of Paris" on Apple podcasts and Spotify.



(Photo Credit: Ariel Madison)

Dessert Inspiration!! 24 Months Comté, grated, served with Black truffle ice cream, black truffle honey, brioche croutons and chervil created by Chef Nico Abello at Enlō by Table, Greenville, SC.

According to Chef Nico, he was inspired: "I've loved Comté since I was a kid. It's easy to eat when you are a young, picky eater like I was. I like to use it because it's very nice in the mouth and its texture changes depending on how you prepare it. I really like to serve it grated on a microplane to give this aspect of snow and this thin, light feeling when you eat it. It pairs well with savory and sweet accompaniments."



Cheese Monger's Corner "Best Practices" with Lynne Affleck, ACS CPP, Cheesemonger/Buyer, Kustaa Cheese & Wine, Los Angeles, CA

1. How did you initially get into the cheese industry?

I worked in public interest before I got into cheese. Growing up in New York with relatives who traveled to the UK, and a dad who worked internationally, I was fortunate to be exposed to a wide range of cheese and other foods. Cheese was always in the house and frequently on the table. So, in thinking about a business I might like to start, I thought that it might be great to have a small cheese shop. Not having worked in food though, I thought I should work in cheese to see if fantasy and reality were one. A cheese shop was opening in my area, so I applied for a job as a cheesemonger. I had no idea what I was doing, but I loved it.

2. What do you think is the greatest misperception when it comes to raw milk cheese such as Comté?

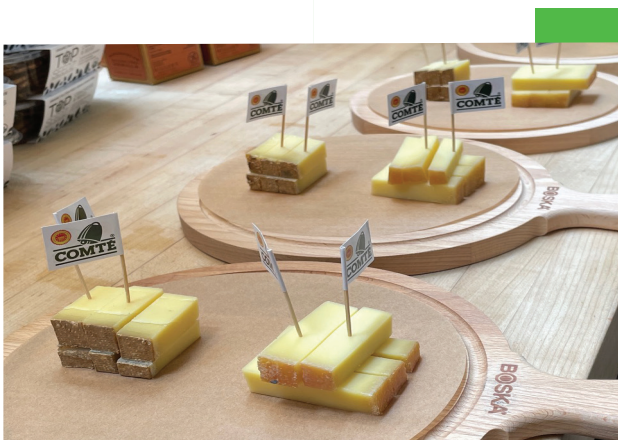
I keep a small case of raw milk and pasteurized cheeses. Sometimes people come in asking specifically for "raw milk cheese" because they've heard that cheese made from raw milk is both good for you and is flavorful. They're often surprised to see that more than half of the case is made up of raw milk cheese. With a cheese like Comté, people often enjoy eating it, without realizing it is made from raw milk. It's easy to illustrate how the complex flavors of the cheese reflect a place and tell a story in a way that only happens because it is made with raw milk.

3. What advice would you give to someone interested in working in cheese?

I'd say go for it. Try working in different parts of the industry and find what you enjoy. The cheese community is filled with amazing people who are happy to answer questions, and who are generous with knowledge. None of us know everything and part of the joy in working in cheese is that there's always more to learn. It's an opportunity, not a limitation. Be willing to try new things and trust yourself. There's always room for people who want to be part of this wonderful industry.

4. What is your favorite way to enjoy Comté cheese? Or favorite experience related to Comté?

I love eating Comté all by itself. Sometimes I just want to sit and savor it as is. The smell, the texture, the taste every wheel is unique, and the flavor profile is so expansive that I may taste something different each time. Which is not to say that I don't love Comté paired with other foods or drinks, because I love Comté, and haven't tried it in a way I didn't like. I mean, have you ever tried Comté melted on baguette with caramelized onions together with a glass of apple cider, or melted in a gratin over potatoes, or baked into little cheese crackers? As for my favorite experience -- Comté is one of my main hiking and travel snacks. I pack it up with apple slices and take it with me when I hike or travel, so I get to enjoy it in different places.



Join Us for Counter Culture this Spring!

March 31st – Miami, FL
April 21st – Washington D.C
May 5th – Detroit, MI

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