

This is the Weekly E-letter of CUESA for February 17, 2006
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Produce Highlights

CUESA Programs

This Week's Feature:
Cheesemaking - Part I

Market Update

Seasonal Recipe: Grated
Carrot and Medjool Date
Salad with Gorgonzola
Dressing

FARMERS MARKET DAYS & HOURS:

Tuesday - 10am - 2pm
Saturday - 8am - 2pm

This Week's Produce Highlights



A shopping list for those who
love the seasonal variety of
the Farmers Market.

1. Moro blood oranges
2. Green garlic
3. Narcissus
4. Lemongrass
5. Broccoli di Cicco
6. Kohlrabi
7. Cilantro
8. Strawberries

Special Events & Announcements

Food Politics Lecture Series at UC Berkeley

Marion Nestle, a visiting professor at UC Berkeley and Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health at New York University, is introducing a series of lectures about food politics on Wednesdays at 4:00 pm at UC Berkeley. Speakers include Ignacio Chapela, Alice Waters, Harold McGee and Michael Pollan. [Click here to visit the CUESA calendar where these events are listed.](#) >

CUESA Programs

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Saturday, February 18

10:00 am - Meet the Farmer

10:30 am - Seasonal Cooking Demonstration
Lulu Yang of Lulu's Kitchen

Saturday, February 25

10:00 am - Meet the Farmer

Lagier Ranches - John Lagier is a fourth generation farmer. His great grandfather began farming in Escalon in 1874, where he raised mules and dry-farmed wheat and barley.

10:30 am - Seasonal Cooking Demonstration
Bibby Gignilliat of Parties that Cook

This Week's Feature: Cheesemaking - Part I

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This and next week's feature articles were written and contributed by CUESA volunteer and Cheese Specialist, Laura Martinez.

At its most basic level, cheese provides the benefits of fresh milk without the need to keep milk fresh. At its most complicated, cheese is the product of an intricate culinary art form dating back to Egyptian times. Every step of its creation can be varied to produce thousands of different types from four main milks: cow, goat, sheep, and water buffalo.

9. Flat iron steak!
10. Fava greens

To find out which farmers have these products, visit the CUESA Information Booth.

This article is the first of a two-part series that will look at cheesemaking as practiced by Ferry Plaza Farmers Market cheesemakers. The first part will focus on farming practices and milk production, raw versus pasteurized milk, and starter cultures. The second will follow the cheesemaking process from curd development to final product.



Farming and Milk Production

Farmstead cheesemaking begins long before milk is produced. The flavor and nutritional components of milk and cheese are directly related to what the animals eat. Farmstead cheesemakers have a true advantage over larger, more commercial cheesemakers because they select and breed their own herds and control what the animals eat, how illnesses are treated, when milking is done, and the transportation of milk to their cheesemaking facilities.

Jim and Donna Pacheco of Achadinha Cheese Company gather milk from approximately 1200 goats of various breeds. The goats feed on fresh pasture and hay while roaming almost 230 acres of ranchland, and on grains and whey. When available, the Pachecos add brewer's grain obtained from local breweries, thereby introducing unique flavors that develop in the aging of Capricious and Broncha cheese. They also use crushed grapes from local winemaking, which cause a small stampede as the goats rush to gobble them down.

Javier Salmon, of Bodega Goat Cheese and Yerba Santa Dairy grazes his herd of 105 goats on twenty acres of organic pastures. They bed down at night with supplements of organic grain grown in the Central Valley, which also augment their diet during dry months.

The Giacomini's 250 Holstein cows of Pt. Reyes Farmstead Cheese spend half of the year feeding on the native grasses of family-owned pastures while enjoying salt air breezes from the Pacific Ocean. When the pastures are dry, the cows eat silage created from local grasses grown on the ranch.

None of these herds is routinely treated with antibiotics or administered hormones, and milk is never gathered from animals that are ill or undergoing treatment. Instead of using antibiotics, Javier Salmon works with an herbalist who uses essential oils and tinctures to treat animal illnesses.

In keeping with healthful breeding and natural cycles, all of these animals take a break from milk production when they are expecting calves and kids. The size of the Pachecos' herd allows them to rotate breeding throughout the season so that milk is always available for cheesemaking. Javier Salmon stops cheese production (and market attendance) for several months during the winter while the goats are pregnant and having babies, while the age of Pt. Reyes Farmstead Blue (6 months minimum) allows the Giacomini's to rely on stocks of cheese for market sale when milk production goes down.

Pasteurization, or Not

In 1908 the United States passed the first compulsory law requiring milk

from cows to be pasteurized. French microbiologist Louis Pasteur had recently discovered that milk bacteria were killed when the milk's temperature was raised to a certain point, then quickly cooled to prevent spoilage. Current U.S. law requires pasteurization of any milk used in cheeses aged fewer than sixty days. Fresh cheeses such as ricotta, cream cheese, and brie must be made from pasteurized milk. Raw milk may be used for cheeses aged over 60 days, as most bacteria cannot survive this long.

Strong cases can be made for both raw and pasteurized milk. Many people find the flavors in cheese made from raw milk more complex or believe the benefits of raw milk bacteria outweigh the risk of infection. Others find little difference in the flavors of cheese made from raw or pasteurized milk, and feel safer eating cheese made with pasteurized milk. There is little evidence to suggest large margins of risk in eating raw milk cheese, especially if aged for 60 days, nor is there much evidence to support increased health benefits from eating raw milk cheese instead of pasteurized cheese. Still, farmstead cheesemakers are strongly invested in making cheese that retains as much complexity and nutrition from the original landscape and animals as possible. When they can control the cheesemaking environment and are producing an aged cheese, they use raw milk.

Because the Pachechos do not have exclusive use of their cheesemaking facilities, all Achadinha cheeses are made from milk pasteurized at 145 degrees for 30 minutes. Javier Salmon uses milk pasteurized at 145-150 degrees for 30 minutes to make Queso Fresco and Cremas; raw milk is used for his aged Manchego and Queso Cabrero. The Giacomini family uses raw milk to create their 6-month-old wheels of Pt. Reyes Farmstead Blue.



Starter Cultures

Left alone, raw milk will spoil and become cheeselike, but the results are uneven and unpredictable. Because pasteurization kills most bacteria, pasteurized milk will not spoil in a way that produces cheese. As a result, starter cultures are used to introduce bacteria that will controllably spoil the milk before it is separated into curds and whey.

Starter cultures are milk-derived, dried bacteria that begin the production of lactic acid. They introduce flavors and contribute to a cheese's finished texture. The Pachechos and Javier Salmon purchase cultures developed from Lactococcus bacteria specially formulated for goat cheese. The Giacomini purchase starter cultures from France formulated to produce blue cheese.

Animal husbandry practices, pasteurization choices, and starter cultures are the foundation upon which each unique cheese is developed. Next week's e-letter will explore the rest of the process: how curd is made, what rennet is, and the final steps in cheesemaking.



This is the most up-to-date information as of Friday morning when the e-letter was sent. Please understand that there are always last minute changes -- it's the nature of farming!

SATURDAY

(8am - 2pm)
February 18

In: Apple Farm, Bernard Ranches

Out: Brooks & Daughters, Cache Creek, Andante Dairy,
Pt Reyes Cheese Co.

TUESDAY

(10am - 2pm)
February 22

Back: Marin Gourmet, St. Benoit Yogurt

Out: K&J