

This is the Weekly E-letter of CUESA for February 24, 2006
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Produce Highlights

CUESA Programs

This Week's Feature:
Cheesemaking - Part II

Market Update

Seasonal Recipe: Fish &
Posole Soup

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. Posole!
2. Cauliflower
3. Dandelion greens
4. Spring onions
5. Crème fraiche
6. Romanesco
7. Sage
8. Breakfast radishes
9. Dried persimmons
10. Parrot tulips

Special Events & Announcements

Preserving in the Seasons ~ Hands-On Classes with June Taylor

On March 25 and April 22, June Taylor of June Taylor Company, will be teaching hands-on classes concentrating on the principles of marmalade preserving and the experiential nature of preserve making.

Topics include:

- * Evaluation and selection of fruit.
- * Stages of preparation.
- * Making natural pectin from the fruit.
- * Cooking and jarring of the marmalade.
- * A discussion of the principles of candying citrus peel and a demonstration of the process.

Each class will include a tasting and evaluation of a variety of winter citrus for marmalade making, as well as a comparative tasting of a variety of commercially made marmalades. Stop by June Taylor's booth at the Saturday Market to pick up a flier with more information, and visit www.junetaylorjams.com to register.

The New Edible San Francisco is Out!

Three farmers in our market are featured in the latest edition of Edible San Francisco, a free quarterly publication celebrating San Francisco foods and food producers. Pick up a copy at CUESA's Information Booth to learn more about Allstar Organics, Olsen Organic Farm, and Mariquita Farm.

CUESA Programs

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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. John now raises almonds, cherries, citrus, pawpaws, and corn.

10:30 am - Seasonal Cooking Demonstration

Bibby Gignilliat of Parties that Cook

Saturday, March 4

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

Seasonal Recipe: Fish & Posole Soup

This week's recipe comes from Steve Sando of [Rancho Gordo!](#)



This easy fish stew is simple enough for a weeknight. You can exchange the mussels for clams or even shrimp.

3 tablespoons of olive oil
3 dried Guajillo chiles, wiped clean, seeded and cut into pieces.

2 cups chopped tomatoes
1 red onion, chopped
2-3 cloves garlic, crushed
6 cups of light chicken broth
1 1/2 tablespoons Mexican oregano
salt

1 1/2 cups posole/hominy, cooked

1 pound mussels, scrubbed cleaned and debearded

1 pound tilapia or cod, cut into 1 inch pieces.

a. Heat the oil in the bottom of the pot. You're only going to use one pot for this meal, but make sure it can hold all the stock and ingredients. When warm, fry the chiles until they just turn colors and smell vibrant, about a minute or so. Remove them and place them in a blender jar. Add the onion and garlic to the oil and sauté until almost soft, about 4 minutes. Transfer the onions, garlic and any remaining oil to the blender jar. Add the tomatoes and blend until

10:00 am - Meet the Farmer

10:30 am - Seasonal Cooking Demonstration
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This Week's Feature: Cheesemaking - Part II

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

This article is the second in a two-part series that looks at cheesemaking as practiced by Ferry Plaza Farmers Market cheesemakers. Last week's e-letter, [Cheesemaking Part I](#), explored farming and milk production, pasteurization, and milk ripening. This week's delves into curds and whey, rennet, working the curd, salting, forming, and aging.

Curds, Whey, and Rennet

Jennifer Bice of Redwood Hill Farm relies on the milk of her own herd of goats, and Larry Peter of Spring Hill Jersey Cheese on the milk of his own Jersey cows to make cheese. Both of these farmstead cheesemakers pasteurize their milk, and then add starter cultures to promote the development of lactic acid. When the temperature and pH balance are right, the water and sugar (which together form the whey), can be separated from the protein and fat (which together form the curd).

The first step in separating curds from whey is to separate casein, the primary milk protein, from water molecules using an enzyme. Once separated, casein molecules surround fat molecules (they coagulate) and turn into a gelatinous curd. Cheesemakers initiate the curdling process by adding rennet to the milk. Traditionally, rennet was obtained from the stomach lining of slaughtered calves, kids, and lambs. Today, many non-animal sources of rennet are available. The cheesemakers highlighted here use vegetarian coagulants.

Working the Curd

After the rennet is added, curds and whey separate quickly (usually within two hours). As soon as a clean separation is achieved (most of the curd grains are clumped together and the whey is relatively free of curd grains), the curd is ready to be worked. Working the curd involves ladling, cutting, and draining to achieve desired textures and levels of moisture for each cheese. Fine-grained, even curds produce smooth textures, and coarse-grained, uneven curds produce coarser, more rustic textures. Curds surrounded by a lot of surface area (small, fine-grained curds) drain quickly, and larger curds drain slowly.

Soft cheeses such as Redwood Hill Farm's Camellia (a goat's milk Camembert), are ladled and drained instead of cut, so that they retain lots of moisture. Some curds, such as those going into Spring Hill Jersey cheeses, are cooked to reduce curd grain size and produce a smoother texture. Screens or stainless steel grids are then passed through the curds to cut them into smaller sizes for draining. Curds intended for cheddar cheese are

smooth.

b. Place a food mill over the pot and pass the ingredients from the blender. You can also push the mixture through a fine sieve with a wooden spoon. Cook on medium heat for about six or seven minutes, then add the broth and when the liquid reaches a soft boil, add the oregano, posole and the fish. Cook four minutes or so until the posole is warmed through and the fish is barely cooked. Add the mussels and cook briefly until the mussels open, about four or five minutes.

c. Serve with chopped onion, chopped cilantro, chili powder and quartered Mexican/Key limes.

cut into blocks with long-handled knives, stacked, drained, then cut, stacked, and drained again – a process known as cheddaring.

Salting

When the curd is ready, salt, other seasonings, and herbs may be added. Salt is critical, as it contributes to the evaporation of moisture, rind formation, texture, and flavor, and inhibits unwanted fermentation and microbes. Redwood Hill Farm and Spring Hill both use natural sea salt and salt the curds by hand. Herbs and seasonings are added to create flavors such as Spring Hill's Garlic Cheddar and Redwood Hill's Garlic-Chive Chevre.

Forming and Applications

Cheese forms are a defining factor in cheesemaking. Different shapes and forms effect the amount of moisture a cheese will retain and the amount of time a cheese has to reach its peak.

Redwood Hill's Camellia and Bucheret are small enough to allow *Penicillium candidum* spores, sprayed on after each cheese is formed, to quickly penetrate the curd. The application of these spores contributes to the development of surface mold and cheese texture and flavor. The taller, mound-shaped Bucherets age a little longer and lose more moisture as they develop drier interiors underneath white bloomy rinds. Crottins have a natural rind and, once their curds are set, are released from their molds to form a natural beige, wrinkled rind. All of these cheeses ripen from the outside in, developing multiple layers of wonderful flavors and textures. At Spring Hill, Jersey Jack cheese curds are hand-tied into 8 lb. cheesecloth rounds, and Cheddar into 40 lb. rounds, then all are pressed for at least 12 hours before being vacuum-sealed and refrigerated for aging.

Aging

As cheeses age, they bloom with the essence of everything that's come before: spring grasses, summer hay, winter grain, crushed grapes, fermented oats, brewer's grain, fresh water, salt air, vitamins and minerals, starter cultures and coagulants.

The humidity of the aging environment greatly affects the end product; harder cheeses are created in drier aging conditions. The young cheeses at Redwood Hill Farm age in a cave-like environment that mimics the traditional technique for aging French cheeses. Spring Hill Jersey cheeses are turned regularly and aged for different amounts of time (from 3 weeks for Breeze to 2-3 years for Cheddars) in rooms with carefully controlled temperature and humidity. At Achadinha Cheese Company, featured in *Cheesemaking - Part I*, Donna Pacheco hand turns and rubs every 6 lb. wheel of Capricious with olive oil as it ages for 4-10 months. Javier Salmon of Bodega Goat Cheese hand-turns and repeatedly dips each wheel of Manchego in his own organic Zinfandel for 2 ½ to 3 months as it comes of age. Pt. Reyes Farmstead Blue wheels are needled to oxygenate the curd and permit the *Penicillium roqueforti* (which creates the blue cheese flavor) to bloom as each wheel ages for 6 months on wooden planks. The longer a cheese is aged, the sharper its flavor, and the more crumbly its texture becomes.

Like other farmstead products, the cheeses that we have explored in this article begin on the land. These mostly small-scale, handmade products

represent seasonality, patience, tradition, and innovation. Bringing cheese to market is the last step in a long process. Each cheese is the product of an ancient art, melding local animal husbandry with traditional techniques that result in the exquisite aromas, textures, and flavors of farmstead cheese.

Market Update

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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 25

In: Hog Island Oyster Co, Pt. Reyes Farmstead Cheese Co., David Little (last week), Rose Pistola, Prather, Della Fattoria, Flatland Flower Farm

Out: Olsen Organics (for the season), The Apple Farm (back next week)

TUESDAY

(10am - 2pm)
February 28

In: Saint Benoit Yogurt!

Out: Donna's Tamales