

AMERICAN CHEESES

The Best Regional, Artisan, and Farmhouse Cheeses,
Who Makes Them, and Where to Find Them

A walk through virtually any supermarket today is proof that the days when our cheese choices boiled down to Kraft or Polly-O are definitively over. As complex and enjoyable as the finest wines, Chevre, Cheddar, Camembert, Gouda, and their thousands of creamy relatives have captured the imaginations and taste buds of Americans, earning their status as an affordable luxury that deserves a place on every table.

Clark Wolf has been there from the start. Beginning as the original cheese department manager at San Francisco's legendary Oakville Grocery, he has amassed a staggering body of cheese knowledge over a distinguished career spanning more than thirty years in the restaurant and gourmet foods businesses. In **AMERICAN CHEESES**, (Simon & Schuster; December 9, 2008; \$25.00), Wolf sets down a milestone for our national cheese heritage—a compendium of the many world-class cheeses crafted painstakingly in the USA, illustrated with more than 60 extraordinary black and white photographs by Scott Mitchell.

Before embarking on a region-by-region tour of America's best cheese producers, Wolf presents a thorough primer beginning with how cheese is made—and how anyone can easily make a simple fresh cheese at home. From there, he enthusiastically expounds upon the mouth-watering differences between

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cheeses made from cow's milk, goat's milk, sheep's milk, and cheeses classified as soft-ripened, semi-soft, semi-firm, and firm, as well as everything you need to know about rinds.

AMERICAN CHEESES also walks readers through the often-confusing terrain of a fine cheese counter, detailing the visual and olfactory clues one must observe to select the best cheese—including an oft-overlooked but instant giveaway that you may be in the wrong shop altogether. Once the cheese is home, Wolf explains how best to wrap it and where (not) to keep it in the refrigerator. Finally, when guests arrive, you'll know how to assemble the perfect cheese platter—where less is often more.

The heart of **AMERICAN CHEESES** is a delectable road trip across the United States, organized by cheesemaking region. Wolf, who counts many of America's best cheesemakers among his friends and acquaintances, brings us inside the best dairies, cheese plants, and small farmstead kitchens in the country. With colorful anecdotes and gorgeous black-and-white photos, **AMERICAN CHEESES** vividly illustrates the procedures and passion of the artisans behind our finest dairy products.

Beginning on the East Coast and traveling west, Wolf visits such cheesemaking icons as Laura Chenel, the cheesemaker credited with introducing goat cheese to America, Paula Lambert of Dallas Mozzarella Company, Scott Fletcher of Vermont's Grafton Village Cheese, and Myron Olson of Wisconsin's Chalet Cheese Cooperative—the last bastion of the misunderstood and potentially delicious Limburger.

Included at each stop are a full list of the cheeses made by the producer and information for acquiring them—and more importantly, windows into the cheesemaking life that bring alive the all-important human element behind the final product. Picture Lazy Lady Farm's Laini Fondiller making cheese with one hand and receiving telephone updates on the search for her escaped cow in another, and somehow you really appreciate how special her cheese is.

Finally, for kitchen-savvy readers not content to merely slice and serve cheese alongside crackers and fruit, **AMERICAN CHEESES** contains dozens of recipes contributed by top chefs and cheesemakers that utilize the cheeses Wolf introduces. Recipes include:

- **Oven-Roasted Raclette with Sausage, Potatoes, and Pickled Green Tomatoes** (Chef Jan Birnbaum)
- **Green Chicken Chilaquiles Casserole** (Chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger, AKA America's Too Hot Tamales)
- **Baked Goat Cheese Salad** (Cheesemaker Laura Chenel)
- **Black Pepper Cheesecake** (Chef Marcus Samuelsson, Aquavit)

- **Pleasant Ridge Reserve Farmstead Cheese with Crispy Serrano Ham, Frisée, and Candied Hazelnuts** (Chef Paul Kahan, Blackbird)
- **Lemon-Goat Cheese Tart** (Cheesemaker Paula Lambert)
- **Crisp Sweetbreads on a Fondue of Young Leeks and Triple Cream Brie** (Chef Hubert Keller, Fleur de Lys)

As cheese consumption continues to rise and Americans become ever more curious about the endless potential of “milk’s leap towards immortality”, Clark Wolf’s love letter to the finest America has to offer is destined to be an essential resource for every cook, entertainer, and gourmand in the fifty states.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clark Wolf has more than thirty years’ experience in the restaurant industry and is the founder and president of one of the country’s most well-respected food consulting firms. He lives in New York City, L, and in a 100-year-old cabin in the Sonoma County Redwoods.

ABOUT THE BOOK

AMERICAN CHEESES

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