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## Cook's Books: 'American Cheeses'

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It wasn't too long ago that "American cheese" meant rubbery single slices, wrapped in plastic. But recent years have seen a revolution in regional, artisan and farmstead cheeses throughout the United States. These days, grateful cheese lovers no longer have to look across the pond for a fine clothbound cheddar or richly veined blue.

Keeping track of it all has been Clark Wolf, a cheesemonger who managed the San Francisco branch of the gourmet haven Oakville Grocery in the 1980s. Wolf was there when the revolution began with early pioneers like Laura Chenel. Now he's poured his 30-plus years of experience into "American Cheeses: The Best Regional, Artisan and Farmhouse Cheeses, Who Makes Them and Where to Find Them."

Wolf's guide opens with the basics of cheese making, including a quick - and surprisingly simple - lesson on how to make fresh cheese at home. He explains the distinctions among specialty, artisan and farmstead cheeses; and offers serving suggestions, accompaniments and storing tips. The chapters that follow tour America's cheese-producing regions: Northeast and New England, the South, Middle West and Wild West - profiling the often quirky personalities and their wares and providing contact information. Each ends with tempting regional recipes, such as Hudson Valley Camembert Crisp and Marion Cunningham's Empty Plate Mac & Cheese, a recipe that truly lives up to its name.

*"American Cheeses: The Best Regional, Artisan and Farmhouse Cheeses, Who Makes Them and Where to Find Them," by Clark Wolf (\$25; Simon and Schuster; 274 pages).*

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A promotional advertisement for Raley's. The top left features a red box with the text "buy 1 get 2 free" in white and black. To the right, it says "Fresh Express Salad Blend or Kit". Below this, it states "SATURDAY &amp; SUNDAY ONLY! (Jan. 30 &amp; 31)" and "Only with coupon". The Raley's logo and "NOB HILL FOODS" are at the bottom left. The right side of the ad shows two bags of Fresh Express salad: one labeled "American" and another labeled "Hearts-Romaine".