



British Farmhouse Cheeses

A Tradition Worth Fighting For!

We love these cheeses. We respect the traditions of their production and are mindful of their history. And, as much as we love to taste and share them, we love the story. Today, just as they were historically, farmhouse cheeses are associated with real live human beings who are proud to put their name on every wheel they produce.

It wasn't always so. For a variety of economic, political and societal reasons following World War I, most of the fine traditional cheeses of Britain were usurped by factory production. The resulting product was a shameful imitation of the originals. Then thirty or so years ago, and in concert with the Real Ale and Real Bread movements, a small group of farmers decided they would not let the tradition die. Just as if they were preserving a treasured family heirloom, they began to reintroduce Real Cheese to Britain and the world.

Gradually both the availability and demand for authentic farmhouse cheeses has increased. The Real Cheese movement is now associated with the international and ever-growing Slow Food movement. The purpose of all these organizations is to protect the heritage of "real" traditional food, while at the same time protecting the environment.

We are the lucky ones. These revolutionary foodies laid the groundwork and we're reaping the benefits.

What is Farmhouse Cheese and why is it so good?

Farmhouse Cheese is a start to finish hands-on product. The type and breed of animal, the pasture and feed, even the regional soil and climate differences all play out (often dramatically) in the flavor and texture of the cheese. Most are made with raw milk which adds tremendously to the complexity of taste. While most of our favorites are farmstead products, there are also great cheeses being made by creameries and artisan cheese-making specialists

What is Raw Milk?

Raw milk is unpasteurized, allowing the millions of microbes to change and evolve which makes the flavor of the cheese more interesting and distinguished. Do not fear Raw Milk cheese (millions of Europeans eat it regularly)! If cheese is made in scrupulously hygienic conditions –and the ones that Katzinger's carry are- they will not form "bad" bacteria.

Traditional foods are far more difficult to make (or grow as with heritage vegetables). But, as the British say, "the proof is in the pudding". Try it. You'll see.

Here are a few of Katzinger's favorite British farmhouse cheeses:

Montgomery Cheddar

Made by the third generation of Montgomery's of Somerset, this award-winning cheddar is buttery and crumbly with a lush texture, an extreme complexity and great flavor development. Made from raw milk, it keeps getting better and better with tastes that are not just different from wheel to wheel but from day to day.

Keen's Cheddar

What Montgomery's has in subtlety and roundness, Keen's has in sheer explosive power. The flavor starts out pleasantly and then gradually delivers its payload when it reaches the back of your tongue. George and Stephen Keen, also of Somerset, control every aspect of the production from what the cows eat to how long the cheese is aged before leaving the farm.

Stilton

Stilton is a classic. It is rich and creamy with an intoxicating bluing throughout. Though not a farmhouse cheese, Stilton is made from a difficult and detailed recipe involving blending morning and evening milk. There are many imposters of Stilton out there, so taste before you buy. Katzinger's carries Colton Basset Stilton, considered by many to be the best.

Appleby's Cheshire

We have Liz and Lance Appleby to thank for saving farmhouse Cheshire from extinction. With its flakey texture, crisp flavor and lingering tangy finish, Cheshire is a treasure. Eat it slowly at room temperature, paying particular attention to that lovely tinge of citrus.