

TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

VOLUME V, ISSUE IV FALL 2010 FOOD NEWS FROM TAILORED TASTE PERSONAL CHEF SERVICE

Milk's Leap Toward Immortality (aka Cheese!)

Seattle in late August is pretty fantastic – cool, no mist, no rain (at least the 4 days I was there), occasional bright sun and 1,435 different cheeses to taste during the American Cheese Society annual conference and competition. Those 1,435 cheeses were all vying to be named Best in Show 2010. After the big announcement (see column at right), all cheeses were available for sampling. Wow – overwhelming.

Among the classes I took, a stand-out was taught by a North Carolina State University PhD who scientifically isolates flavors. In one study she applied that flavor knowledge to 12 different bandage-wrapped aged cheddars. By the end of the class we were able to tell a raw milk cheddar from one that started as pasteurized milk just by smelling the cheese. Fascinating. Those raw milk cheeses had a phenolic scent which is best described as barny. The pasteurized ones were sweeter smelling with



Photo courtesy of PDPhoto.org

some caramel undertones, perhaps from the heating of the milk. Both raw and pasteurized cheeses ultimately develop similar flavors through aging but the speed with which they do varies a bit with the pasteurized taking slightly longer.

The attendees ran the gamut from farmstead cheesemakers to cheesemongers to cheese lovers like me who dream of opening a cheese store in my next life. Conversations over breakfast ranged from the plethora of rattlesnakes biting goats in Texas this year to how to best display cheese in a refrigerated case. I learned that baby rattlesnakes are more deadly than adults as they don't know how to regulate the amount of venom they release – it's all or nothing. And the prettiest cheeses, of course, go up front in the case.

Tip: Now's the time to enjoy the best cheeses of the year as what is released to market now is generally made from summer milk produced during the height of the growing season.

Award Winning Cheeses

The competition is run like a dog show with the winners in the various categories competing for Best in Show. Thirty judges rate the entries on technical merit as well as aesthetics.

Best in Show: Uplands Cheese Co., Wisconsin for its *Extra-Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve*. This cheese producer only creates one cheese and this is its third Best in Show in the last 10 years.

Second Place: Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery, VT for *Bonne Bouche*

Third Place: Farms for City Kids Foundation, VT for *Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise*

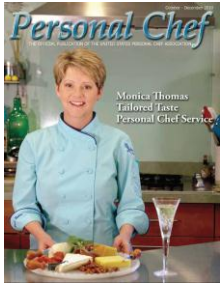
Closer to home, Cherry Glen Goat Cheese in Boyds, MD won a first place ribbon in the *Farmstead Cheese with Flavorings* category for its *Monocacy Chipotle* (found at many Whole Foods and My Organic Markets). During a recent field trip to Cherry Glen I saw the goats and tasted the various cheeses including their aged crottin which can be grated like parmesan. The *Monocacy Chipotle* is fabulous, but the *Monocacy Ash* is the most photogenic.



Monocacy Ash; photo by Terri Abblett

On the Cover

The October issue of *Personal Chef Magazine*, a publication of the US Personal Chef Association, highlighted someone you know – me! I was the featured chef and if you go to my



website you can see the online version of the article.

Note that I was photographed with a cheese platter in my hands ;-)

BOKA Bar Balsamic Jelly

BOKA Bar Restaurant in downtown Seattle serves this jelly along with its crusty bread and whipped butter before dinner.

I like this as an accompaniment for cheese. The sweet acid of the balsamic vinegar plus the honey cut the salt and fat in most cheeses.

1 cup balsamic vinegar
1 ½ teaspoons unflavored gelatin
6 Tablespoons honey

Pour vinegar into small saucepan and sprinkle gelatin over it. Let stand until gelatin softens, about 10 min.

Place over medium heat and stir until gelatin dissolves and mixture is hot (do not bring to simmer). Remove from heat. Stir in honey. Divide among 6 small ramekins or bowls.

Chill until gelatin sets, about 8 hours. Can be made 1 week ahead. Cover & keep chilled.

Cheese for Parties

Don't forget to include a cheese platter at your holiday gatherings. Three to five different cheeses make a lovely start to any festivity. Include cheeses of various milks such as a Manchego (sheep), a Honey Goat, and an aged Cheddar (cow). An American blue such as Point Reyes is a great addition as well.

Books

It's that time of year when I write about some of the books I've read (in no particular order).

The Geography of Bliss: One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places in the World by Eric Weiner

A self-described grump and NPR correspondent seeks the happiest spots on the planet from Iceland to Bhutan where Gross National Happiness is a government priority. Along the way he stumbles upon the virtues of boredom, eats moldering shark, and studies the science of happiness. This is funny, fun, and worth a second read.

A Homemade Life by Molly Wizenburg

A surprisingly wonderful book written by a young woman who authors an equally wonderful blog called *Orangette*. This book explores food and the memories it evokes, from her mother's cakes to what she fed her father as he was dying of cancer. As a bonus there are some really delicious recipes included.

The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake by Aimee Bender

An odd one to be sure, but I enjoyed it all the same. A fictional tale of a child who discovers she can "taste" the emotions of those who cook whatever food she eats. To say the least, unusual talents such as this run in her family. Only read if you have a tolerance for the weird.

Amarcord by Marcella Hazan

Marcella Hazan is the godmother of authentic Italian cooking education in America and to that we owe her great credit. Her story is one of hardship, war, happiness and a little professional jealousy. Though interesting, it was a bit disappointing to read her criticize her former publisher and other well-known culinary personalities.

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

This is an extraordinary book especially considering it's NOT fiction but rather an autobiography. Her childhood featured near homelessness and, one would argue, a pair of certifiable parents who also loved her. Her second book, *Half Broke Horses*, is a prequel and tells the story of her maternal grandmother.

The Toss of a Lemon by Padma Viswanathan

Beginning in 1892 and ending in 1950, this book tells the story of a changing India through the lives of a Brahmin caste family. The main character is a young widow struggling to raise her children to follow what is becoming the "old way" of life. Although a novel, it is based upon the life of the author's grandmother.

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