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SWEET CHEESE
HOW SWEET
IT COULD BE

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EDITORIAL

When someone says “France”, what’s the first thing you think of? I’m sure plenty of homesick French travellers have asked that exact question, of no-one in particular. So what would it be? The Eiffel Tower and the French Revolution? Patricia Kaas and Gerard Depardieu? They’re all good answers. But one answer that always comes up is – cheese. General de Gaulle famously complained about how difficult it was to govern a country with 258 varieties of cheese; but even he was way off the mark. Let’s paraphrase. How can anyone fail to love a country with so many different kinds of cheese? There’s something for everyone: hard cheeses, soft cheeses, mild ones, mature ones, cheeses that are soft and runny inside, or have a sharp, flavourful rind. There’s something intriguing about it, enticing and delicious – and that’s why French dairy products are popular all over the world. Cheese is thousands of years old, yet it’s all about now, about economics, tourism and culture. It’s a world of creativity, lived out by craftsmen and chefs. And that’s why we’ve put together this book. Because we want to touch on all this, and more; because in France, everything that happens, happens around the table. At home, in restaurants, cheese is constantly re-inventing itself, changing to suit today’s lifestyles, habits and trends, without compromising on flavour or authenticity. And here it is again, back on the table, but this time for dessert, in a series of Sweet Cheese recipes that lead us to expect the unexpected. To highlight the gastronomic links between France and the rest of the world, we’ve asked 10 chefs, from 10 different countries across 5 continents, to create a dessert featuring cheese – channelling their roots and their memories of childhood, their love of cuisine, and of course, cheese. Their recipes are full of imagination, and full of flavour. We think that to get along in harmony, the world needs cheese. Are you on board? Bon Voyage!

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CHEESE HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Cheese is an iconic food product, an integral part of the historic, cultural and culinary heritage of France. The extraordinary diversity of cheese varieties stems from variations in “terroir” (that intangible combination of soil, altitude, gradient and microclimate), native vegetation (used for animal fodder), local techniques and cultural traditions. To survive through the ages, cheese has had to change with the times, to re-invent itself constantly. But it all started with fermented milk....

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHEESE

Ten defining moments for a French gastronomy classic

From the milk of the first domestic animals to one of the cornerstones of French gastronomy – 7,000 years of adventure.

ORIGINS

We know that cheese has been part of French everyday life since Neolithic times. Small pieces of finely-perforated terracotta, discovered in Poland and dating back to this period, were found to be fragments of early cheese strainers; chemical analyses of the fat residues coating the pieces show that the vessels were used for cheesemaking.

PRESERVING MILK

In terms of human history, cheese is a relatively recent creation. When it first appeared on the scene 2.5 million years ago, *Homo habilis*' diet comprised mainly plant matter, supplemented with a little meat. Food was acquired by foraging, and later by hunting. However, before man could enjoy milk in his daily diet, he had to invent agriculture – which happened some 15,000 years BC – then animal husbandry. This led to the domestication of goats and sheep, beginning in the Middle East some 10,500 years ago. Domestic cattle were introduced some centuries later – and that was when our Neolithic forefathers started milking their animals. To make sure none of the fragile, valuable milk was wasted, they had to find ways to preserve and store it, which was impossible in its liquid form. However, when kept in a vessel made from animal stomachs (see inset), the milk naturally fermented, making it curdle. The curdled milk was pressed into a mould and formed into cheese. (The French word *fromage* derives from 'formage', meaning the forming process).

AN ODYSSEY OF TRIUMPH

In ancient times, cheese was not a popular food. In his *Odyssey*, written in the 8th century BC, Greek poet Homer describes how it was central to the diet of one particularly unpleasant character – the merciless cyclops Polyphemus, who “sat as always, milking his sheep and bleating goats [...] then letting half the milk curdle, he set it carefully into plaited baskets.” (The *Odyssey*, Book VI).

Things gradually changed, however, and what was once a food for “farmers and peasants” rose to become something of a delicacy.

“In Greek and Roman times, milk was seen as the food of savages, while cheese, having been processed by man, was in a different league – the food of the civilised,” explains Agricultural Engineer, Sociologist and Food Historian Eric Birlouez.

SPIRITUAL FOOD

In the latter half of the Middle Ages, cheese became part of the monastic diet, served in the simple silence of the cloister. Monks were often of noble descent, and by enjoying a little of this popular food, they were better able to keep their vows of poverty and humility – a justifiable touch of self-indulgence. To ensure a constant supply, the monks made cheese themselves, in their monasteries. This played a significant role in improving production techniques and quality – just as it had for Champagne and beer. To provide additional income for their communities, surplus production was sold in local towns, where cheese proved particularly popular with the authorities.

THE ULTIMATE ACCOLADE. IN 2010, CHEESE WAS INCLUDED AS PART OF THE “GASTRONOMIC MEAL OF THE FRENCH” ON UNESCO’S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, cheese struggled to gain a foothold. The aristocracy and urban bourgeoisie rarely ate cheese, and it was not until the latter half of the 19th century that its popularity began to grow – a side-effect of the boom in dairy farming and its corollary, the creation of dairies. These were artisan to start with, but soon became industrial in scale. Transportation, both road and rail, developed rapidly, as did preservation techniques. Cheese was now no longer linked solely to self-sufficiency and local markets; it could travel. Prices dropped, and cheese products became more easily accessible and widely available for everyone to enjoy.

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

The 1920s saw the first rulings regarding provenance for certain cheeses, Roquefort being one; these were the forerunners of the AOC (now PDO, the European protected designation of origin,) system. Terroir-driven, local cheeses at last had official recognition, and soon became the icons of French cuisine.

And then – the ultimate accolade. In 2010, cheese was included as part of the “Gastronomic Meal of the French” on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The meal itself is described as starting with an aperitif, finishing with a digestif and comprising multiple courses: starter, main course of fish or meat with vegetables, cheese and dessert. But the story doesn’t stop there. New generations of consumers and chefs continue to drive the development of cheese, with new uses and new recipes. The cheese show must go on!

THE INVENTION OF CHEESE

Once an animal had been milked, that milk had to be stored and transported. In Neolithic times, people used whatever they had to hand – in many cases, animal stomachs, which contained enough enzymes to curdle the milk. And the icing on the cake was that when the curds were drained, the liquid that ran off was whey.

EARLY USES

In his treatise on agriculture written around 60 BC, Roman scientist Columella gave instructions on how to make cheese. First, one had to curdle the milk in the stomach of an unweaned calf or using the sap from a fig tree; then it had to be drained through rush baskets or perforated wooden containers. Lastly, adding salt dried it, preserved it and gave it flavour. *Bon appétit!*

TO BRIE OR NOT TO BRIE?

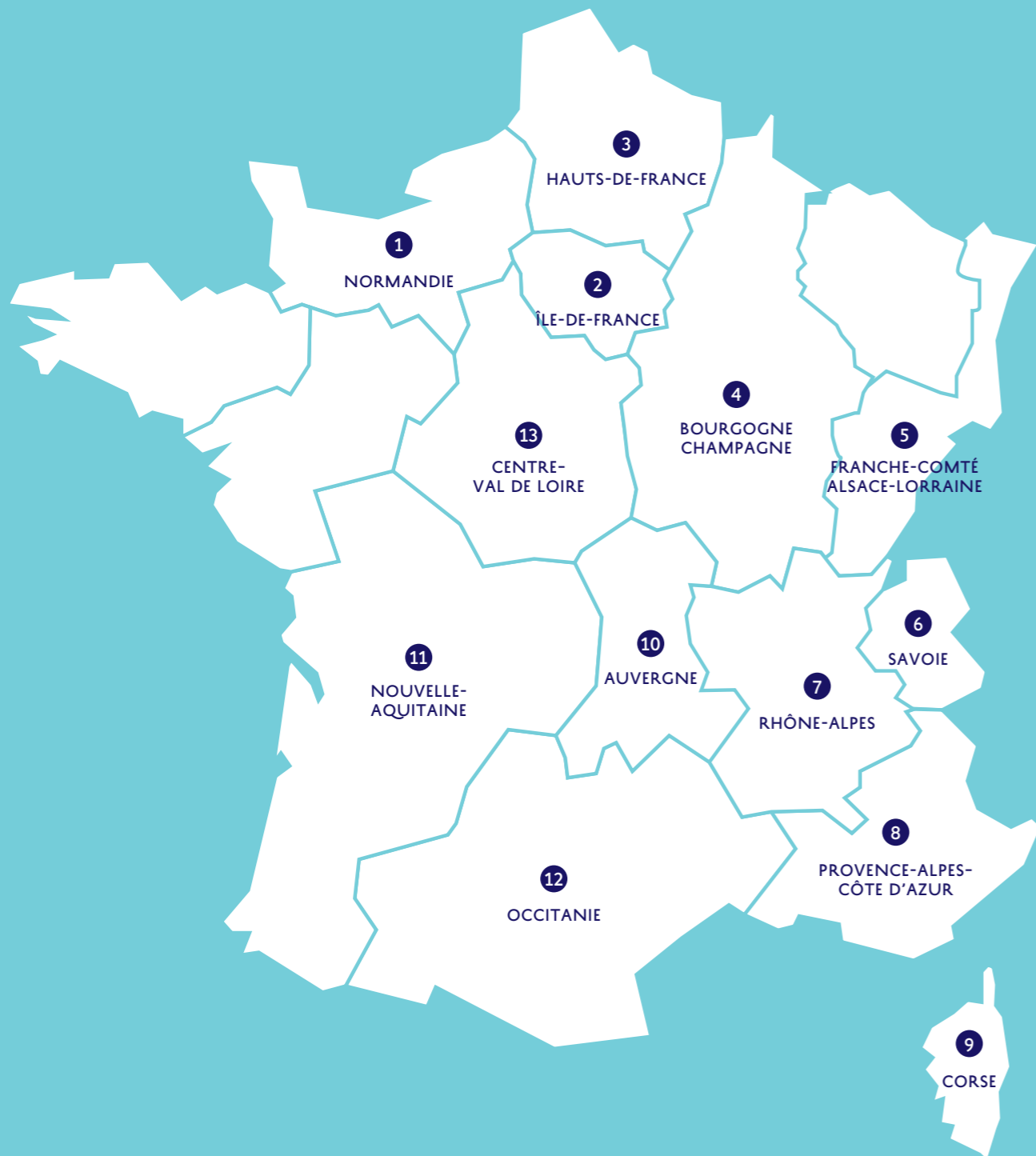
Would the Revolution have turned out differently were it not for Louis XVI’s penchant for cheese? Historians still can’t agree. We know that the fugitive king was recognised in Varennes and subsequently arrested; what is less well known is that he had stopped at Sausse, a famous grocery store, to stock up on Brie and red wine. And those were his last moments of freedom before the reckless, greedy king quite literally lost his head.





MILKING THE SYSTEM

Did you know that Reblochon cheese is said to have come about through tax evasion? The story goes that in the 13th century, a feudal tax law dictated that cattle farmers in the mountain pastures of Thônes, today’s Haute-Savoie, a French region, pay tax on the amount of milk their cows produced in one day. The canny farmers only half-milked the animals while the inspectors were watching, then resumed milking as soon as their backs were turned. This was called ‘re-blocking’ (*reblocher*) – blocking was a term used for squeezing the udder – and the creamy second milk was made into Reblochon.

THE CHEESE ROUTE

Non-exhaustive lists of cheeses by region



1
NORMANDY
A prime site for breeding dairy cattle, with a history of cheesemaking dating back to the 10th century. Leading producer of cow's milk cheeses with 25% of national production.
Camembert de Normandie 
Livarot 
Neuchâtel 
Pont-l'Evêque 

2
ÎLE-DE-FRANCE
A densely populated urban region (12 million inhabitants), comprising 80% farmland. Around 60 cheeses are produced here, from cow's, goat's and sheep's milk.
Brie de Meaux 
Brie de Melun 
Coulommiers

3
HAUTS-DE-FRANCE
Driven by the Nord and Pas-de-Calais *départements*, this region's cheeses range from the very strong to the mild; some are matured, others not. They are largely made from cow's milk.
Maroilles 
Mimolette
Boulette d'Avesnes


4
BOURGOGNE-CHAMPAGNE
Wine and cheese make excellent partners. These two winegrowing regions have plenty of space for livestock farming, and produce 5 PDO cheeses: three from cow's milk, two from goat's milk.
Epoisses 
Chaource 
Langres 
Charolais 

5
FRANCHE-COMTÉ ALSACE-LORRAINE
This is a land full of contrasts, featuring mountains, plains and valleys and a local cuisine known for its cow's milk cheeses, both hard and soft.
Comté 
Morbier 
Mont d'Or 
Munster 



6
SAVOIE
A rugged landscape and a harsh climate, but wonderful plant life, with wild herbs for the cows and goats to feast on, giving its cheeses very distinctive flavours.
Reblochon 
Beaufort 
Abondance 
Tome des Bauges 
Tomme de Savoie 

7
RHÔNE-ALPES
A land of contrasting landscapes and monastic tradition. Between the the Alps and the Ardèche, the Rhône and the Drôme, cows and goats live here in perfect harmony.
Bleu du Vercors Sassenage 
Fourme de Montbrison 
Saint-Marcellin 
Picodon


8
PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR
The weather and the diverse range of pastureland make this a paradise for goats and sheep. Their cheeses pair beautifully with local olive oil and raw honey.
Bleu du Queyras
Banon 

9
CORSE
A mild Mediterranean climate and a turbulent landscape, perfect conditions for producing goat's and sheep's milk cheeses. They can be light or powerful, but are always full of character.
Brocciu 
Tommes corses


10
AUVERGNE
Volcanic soils give meadows rich in plant life and animal biodiversity, producing cow's milk cheeses with unique texture and flavour.
Cantal 
Fourme d'Ambert 
Bleu d'Auvergne 
Saint-Nectaire 


11
NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE
From the farmlands of Poitou to the foothills of the Pyrenees, there are as many cheeses on this Atlantic coast as there are terroirs. The cows make butter; the goats and sheep make cheese.
Chabichou du Poitou 
Ossau-Iraty 
Mothais sur feuille

12
OCCITANIE
Cheese, the main food of the local shepherds, has always been made in this region. Whether from cow's milk, goat's milk, or a mixture of the two, it's as much about comfort as it is about joy.
Roquefort 
Laguiole 
Rocamadour 
Bethmale

13
CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE
The northern part of this region features small herds of cows, and makes cheese with a coating of ash or leaves. The southern part is better known for its goats, and is home to 5 PDOs.
Chavignol 
Poulligny-Saint-Pierre 
Sainte-Maure de Touraine 

Cheeses chosen for Sweet Cheese recipes 2019

 **PDO (AOP in French) : Protected Designation of Origin**
To be awarded PDO status, a product must be produced, processed and prepared within an officially defined area, in keeping with established, recognised traditions. This is the European version of the AOC.

 **PGI (IGP in French) : Protected Geographical Indication**
A PGI product is an agricultural product or foodstuff whose characteristics are closely linked to the geographical area in which it is either produced, processed or prepared.

DON'T HOLD BACK!

Trends and traditions

“Entre la poire et le fromage” – between the pear and the cheese, a well-known French saying with a hidden meaning. It’s that relaxed stage at the end of a meal when we can broach any subject, and by extension, any casual moment between two events. It reminds us of the classic French way of serving cheese - at the end of a meal, after dessert. And that’s what ‘Sweet Cheese’ is all about - going back to our roots, in a world where cheese and the way we consume it is constantly changing.

In France, “cheese” in this context implies a cheeseboard – a well-balanced selection of cheeses served together. We love to have a good choice – soft and hard cheeses, blue cheese, washed rind cheese - to keep those wonderfully savoury flavours going just a little bit longer. It’s like a bridge between the savoury and the sweet: the fat in the cheese helps us move on to the sweetness which will refresh our palates. But these days, cheeseboards have fallen out of favour. Over the years, our eating habits have changed and cheese has a new role in our culinary lives – as an appetiser or snack in exciting new combinations, or as a cooking ingredient in all manner of recipes.

CHANGING HABITS

Staying with France as an example, people are simply eating less cheese at home, and more outside the home. This is in line with eating habits in general. The amount we spent on eating out (as part of the household food budget) rose from 17% in 1960 to 33% in 2010 (INSEE). In 1958, only one meal in twenty was eaten outside the home; fifty years later, that figure had risen to five meals out of every twenty, with the most significant rise occurring over the last 30 years. Lifestyle changes are

broadly similar throughout the developed world. Arguably the most significant shift is that in many households, both partners now work. We spend longer commuting and enjoy more leisure pursuits. Food is geared towards individual consumption, and the tremendous choice of ready meals available in supermarkets has a huge impact on our eating habits. As a result, we spend less time in the kitchen. To prove it, we just need to look at the success of ready-prepared, peeled and frozen foods. Expenditure on these convenience foods as part of total food spend (excl. desserts) has more than doubled in France over the last 45 years.

THE GENERATION GAP

Consumption trends are also generation-driven. Studies by CREDOC, the Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions, show that consumer behaviour around food is primarily driven by age, generational habits and life cycle. Although conducted in France, the research holds true across the world; younger consumers choose modern, international products, while those in the older age brackets opt for traditional, unprocessed foods. The free movement of foodstuffs, increasing efficiency of transportation systems and burgeoning social networks have made it easier for young people in Asia, the Middle East, Australia and the Americas to learn about cheese, and to become familiar with emerging trends and modes of consumption. They may be committed to local products and traditions, but they are shaping a new world. And although cheese producers might see these behaviours as a threat, they are also an opportunity; because along with fruit, yoghurt and fromage frais, cheese is one of the top three foods most frequently eaten between meals.

SNACK ATTACK

One of the emerging trends opening up new horizons for the cheese sector is snacking. A study published by CREDOC in spring 2018 shows that for over a third of French consumers, snacking has become a habit: 38% of the 1,182 respondents said they ate between meals at least once a day, as compared to 20 - 30% in previous studies dating back to 2010. A further 35% say they eat between meals two or three times a week. A new consumption occasion linked to the snacking phenomenon is the rise of the aperitif *dinatoire*, an informal drinks-and-finger-buffet party to replace more formal dinners. Over 42% of French consumers host or attend such occasions, which take place mainly at the weekend, and are popular chiefly with younger, urban consumers. This is where cheese really comes into its own – easy to prepare and delicious to eat.

CHEESE AND DESSERT

And now Sweet Cheese is here - to support the dairy sector, whose flagship product is cheese. CNIEL, the French dairy interbranch organisation, to whom the task has been assigned, has taken the classic choice of “cheese or dessert”, and turned it on its head, transforming it into “cheese and dessert”. All in one. With inspirational input from chefs, this unique style of fare is already gaining ground. Ten chefs from ten different countries give us their own take on it in the pages that follow.

SWEET CHEESE, SO WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Nowadays, we’re discovering a taste for mixing sweet with savoury, and our growing enthusiasm for new flavours encourages chefs to combine cheese with dessert in a variety of new ways. And that is the concept behind ‘Sweet Cheese’. The trend is set to take off further in 2019, with 10 chefs of different nationalities taking on the challenge to see who can devise the most creative recipe, each more imaginative and more delicious than the last.



questions for *Éric Birlouez*
Agricultural Engineer, Sociologist
and Food Historian.

What makes cheese so special?
Milk is man’s first food, and has a symbolic significance; it has become synonymous with life, abundance, fertility and purity. Cheese, as one of its derivatives, has a similar status. Cheese is, in itself, one of the four courses of the traditional French meal, an essential component of a ‘proper’ meal in the eyes of many. The other 3 courses – starter, main and dessert – can include a variety of different foods, but cheese can only be cheese. And as if to prove its greatness, cheese is named as an essential part of the ‘Traditional Gastronomic Meal of the French’, added in 2010 to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.

You talk about the “dessertification” of cheese. What do you mean?
In France, we’ve always enjoyed eating savoury foods alongside sweet ones, and cheese was traditionally eaten with fruit at the end of a meal – until the Renaissance introduced us to Italian pastries. In recent decades, our pace of life has been getting faster, and the

result is that we opt for simpler everyday foods. The traditional meal has changed beyond recognition. Today we want creative, gourmet cuisine that breaks with convention and pushes the boundaries. The trend towards less formal ways of socialising, away from the meal table, is spurring the reintroduction of cheese for dessert.

What signs are there that cheese is beginning to reappear for dessert?
For dessert these days, many chefs serve different cheeses with fruit they have crafted in some way, whether by marinating, reducing or preserving. Some – along with a significant number of food bloggers – have created new recipes which are no longer limited to the traditional, mild cheeses. Think mille-feuille made with Parmesan or Comté crisps, shortbread tart with blackberries and mild French Blue cheese (Pierre Gagnaire), apple, coconut and cheese tart made with goat’s cheese from Valençay (Philippe Conticini), pear and Roquefort ice cream, Maroilles mousse, Camembert with dried fruit and caramel drizzle...

DESIGNER CHEESE

Interview with Claire Griffon
of Fromagerie Griffon, Paris

Throughout its history, cheese has constantly had to reinvent itself, helped along by chefs and their creativity. This still happens, even in the 21st century. Cheese is an ingredient in its own right, and can be used from the main course right through to dessert. It's not just an add-on for some quirky new menu, it's an essential component, one of the highlights of the score, a harmony to the chef's own musical soundtrack.

Some like to serve it portioned up on a plate, or with their own home-made relish; others use it to cook with, making it the star ingredient in an imaginative recipe, but like all the other dishes on the menu. But when it comes to dessert, a chef can really dare to be different. And to prove it, we've teamed up with 10 chefs, each a different nationality, but all working in France, inviting them to dream up a Sweet Cheese recipe to best express their dual culture. (You can find the recipes in the pages that follow). But to have good cheese, we need good cheesemakers, and when it comes to creativity, they just can't be beaten. Claire Griffon is one of the best, so we sought her out. Claire Griffon is originally from Champagne. She fell in love with cheese when she was 80 m underground, visiting a Roquefort cave. In 2012, Claire set up her own shop in Paris – a treasure trove of cheeses, whose producers she knows well. And while she loves cheese in its natural state, she also likes to create bold combinations, which are always lovely to look at, but never lose that all-important cheese flavour.

What would you say makes cheese a product for today?

First and foremost, it's familiar. We've all got our traditional memories of cheese, we've all known farmers, we can picture the fields surrounding our homes; but cheese has changed to suit our modern lifestyles. We're always in a hurry these days, we don't take the time to cook any more, and using cheese makes it possible to produce a nutritious, varied lunch or dinner in very little time. It's absolutely not a has-been! But we're moving away from the traditional cheese board, and eating cheese as an aperitif before a meal, or for brunch. And it's far from elitist: we don't need Haute Couture every day, although it's good to know about it for when we need to raise our game. For every day consumption, we need something we can make easily.

How does cheese encourage creativity?

With cheese, you get different colours, shapes and flavours. The possibilities are endless. It's not some outdated, dusty old product, like Grandma's old Camembert de Normandie with its slight tang -

absolutely not. If you put your mind to it, there are lots of things you can do with cheese – all sorts of combinations you can put together, all sorts of ways to transform it. It's good because you can pair it with sweet or savoury foods. And people are looking for creative hobbies – well, working with cheese could be one of them! A few weeks ago, we posted some videos to show how you can revamp the classic cheeseboard. A couple of days later, a customer came back to thank us: "I had such fun with my daughter – it was brilliant!"

So anything goes?

You have to stay true to the cheese. You can create something visually stunning, but if the flavour's not great, there's no point. I enjoy dreaming up really stylish creations, in the moment – ones which make a good picture. But for the shop, we have to think about whether it's easily transportable, whether it can be stored in the fridge, or sliced easily without falling apart. And if it doesn't look like cheese, it's a failure. Off-the-wall ideas are all very well, but to make it work you have to set limits.

“WITH CHEESE, THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS!”

Claire Griffon

How do you get your ideas?

First of all, I look to the things I like. Some cheeses inspire me more than others. It's the same with other ingredients: I think about them, imagine how they could work. I have a whole library of flavours in my head, it all comes down to experience. I'm also inspired by what I see during the day, the people I meet, the journeys I make. I write it all down in a notebook or on a piece of paper, then throw it all into a big box in my office. And at times, when the ideas just don't flow, I know I'll come back to them; I'll look at them when I have time. I always start with a diagram, a sketch which I keep for its sentimental value. Then we work as a team. We try, we fail, it's good, it's not so good, it holds up, it falls apart. We also have to find the right tools – for our Damier Rose, for example. That's a really unusual combination of Roquefort, my all-time favourite, and Biscuits Roses from Reims, one of my childhood memories. And finally, we have to find the right packaging solution. It's no good starting with a beautifully crafted product if you then end up with a pile of goo! When we find the right balance, we go for it. Most of the time, our customers like it; sometimes they don't. We don't all have the same tastes. You see plenty of failures before you find a best-seller!



What are your favourite combinations?

My absolute favourite is very simple, but I adore it. It's called Cherry Bibi, and it's Fourme d'Ambert with sour cherries. It looks and tastes really good. The acidity in the cherries cuts through the fat in the cheese, giving it a real kick. I also love Cantal with radish, rolled up like sushi. It's got colour and crunch, and it's visually very pleasing. Other combinations I love are Camembert with apple, a real classic, or my little Tome de Brebis and black pepper 'eggs'. I originally made them for Easter, but then I couldn't stop. People buy them as gifts, like they would a box of chocolates.

Do you like to pair cheese with more exotic ingredients?

I really like passion fruit; the tartness goes really well with Fourme d'Ambert. It doesn't mask the blue flavour, it brings it to life. I've also designed little skewers with fresh and dried banana and Sainte-Maure. On the other hand, I find that the

acidity in citrus fruit can spoil the texture of a cheese. It changes the flavour, and I don't like it.

What do you learn from your travels abroad?

France is still definitely the gold standard when it comes to cheese. I collect business cards from any international cheesemakers who visit my shop. In France, we are the only ones with such a wide variety of different milks, such a wealth of terroirs and therefore such a wide range of cheeses. But there are some wonderful things elsewhere. It's fascinating to see how cheese is displayed in shops in other countries, how they unpack it and slice it. There are often things we simply hadn't thought of. But in any case, everywhere I go, I see that cheese is in fashion. It's completely natural, and an excellent product!

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AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD

The French Cheese Sector – Facts and Figures

French milk production currently stands at 24 billion litres, accounting for 15% of total European production and around 3% of the global total. Milk destined for cheese production makes up a significant proportion of this figure, thanks largely to the high-quality image French cheeses enjoy throughout the world.

As we've read, when it comes to cheese, it's all about what you want, when you want it. Once upon a time cheese was just for dessert, then came the cheeseboard; now anything goes – appetisers, snacks, main courses, a 'little something' after a meal – you name it. Whatever it looks like, wherever it's from, cheese is an integral part of our daily diet, not only in France, but across many parts of Europe and beyond. Every country, every culture is different in terms of the types of cheese produced and consumer preferences. In Ireland and Northern Ireland, cheese is enjoyed as a snack or in sandwiches at any time of day, often served after a meal with grapes, chutney and maybe even a glass of port. It's also an essential part of the famous 'ploughman's lunch', a popular pub meal in the UK, comprising bread, cheese (usually Cheddar or Stilton, but it could also be a local speciality cheese), ham, salad and pickle, often washed down with a beer. In Lebanon, Labneh - balls of soft cream cheese made from cow's or goat's milk and preserved in olive oil - is an iconic food, central to many mezze dishes. It's soft and spreadable, and a popular choice for breakfast or dinner. In Argentina meanwhile, cheese is used almost exclusively as a cooking ingredient, for instance in the Argentinean take on grilled bread or crackers (for breakfast or as an afternoon snack), on pizzas, in sandwiches, empanadas, tarts and pasta dishes.

A WORLD OF CHEESE

If we broaden our focus, we can see that all over the world, cheese consumption is closely linked to local conventions, and thus the local economy. Consumption levels vary from country to country. In terms of cow's milk production (by volume) in 2017, Europe came top with 224 million tonnes, followed by Asia with 212 million tonnes, then North and Central America (125), South America (65), Africa (39) and lastly Oceania (31). As for different perceptions of cheese – that very much depends on where you live. In Asia, it's seen as a health food, good for growth and linked to sophisticated eating choices, while in Brazil, Russia and Australia, the main drivers are variety and their suitability as a snack. In the US, speciality cheeses are made to be sandwich-friendly, can be eaten at any time, and are also seen as a sophisticated food choice.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR CHEESE!

So as cheese sees unprecedented growth worldwide, it's clear that the French dairy sector's 'Made in France' campaign has enjoyed success well beyond its own borders. In 2018, 40% of French milk was exported, mostly to the EU, and then to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North America, Oceania and South America, in that order. To be even more specific, France produces over 1,200 varieties of cheese, with a total production of almost 2 million tonnes. Of this, 38% is exported. French cheeses are now firmly established in the US, Middle East, China and Brazil markets, and popularity is growing year by year in Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and India. Whatever the market situation, French cheeses are known throughout the world; in Brazil, the US and Russia, consumers can spontaneously name at least two French cheeses. Brie is popular, as are Camembert and Roquefort. French cheeses are also spontaneously linked with good taste, a wide variety of flavours and a strong character. There's still plenty of scope for French cheese, in all four corners of the globe.

PDO (FRENCH: AOP) PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN

As a country, France has the largest number of official Protected Designations of Origin, and this applies as much to cheese as to any other product. With 45 PDOs (a European accreditation) and 1 AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, a French quality credential recently awarded to Brousse du Rove), 6 PGIs (Protected Geographical Indication) and 6 Label Rouge (red label quality standards), French cheeses are right up there with Italy and its 50 PDO cheeses. The concept of recognising the provenance of a product started in France. Roquefort was the first designated area name to be officially approved for commercial use back in 1925. It wasn't yet an AOC – for Roquefort, that came later in 1979 – but it wasn't far off. It was around this time that the AOC system as we know it first became established, the brainchild of Pierre Le Roy de Boiseaumarié, a Châteauneuf-du-Pape winegrower; he designed it to protect consumers against the type of fraud occasionally perpetrated by his colleagues. He and the then Agriculture Minister Joseph Capus, battled to establish the Comité national des appellations d'origine des vins et des eaux-de-vie (National committee for appellations of origin for Wines and Spirits) in 1935, which became the Institut national des appellations d'origine des vins et des eaux-de-vie in 1947, and subsequently extended its scope to include all French products. Roquefort was not the first to be recognised under the new system; that honour went to Bleu de Gex in 1977. It was just a matter of ratifying a court decision made in... 1935, which had already detailed the exact nature of this particular cheese, defined the area within which it could be made and established a full set of production specifications.



Cheese statistics

57,000

The number of dairy farms in France, for a total 3.7 million dairy cows (an average of 65 cows per farm)

85%

The proportion of exported cheese sold to Europe (EU and non-EU). France is the world's third largest cheese exporter, behind the Netherlands and Germany.

300

The number of companies making up the French dairy industry, with a total turnover of 30 billion Euros.

83%

The proportion of cow's milk cheese as part of total cheese sales turnover in France.

23,900 MILLION

The number of litres of cow's milk produced in France in 2018. (For goat's milk the figure is 480; 288 for sheep's milk). 39% is made into cheese.

40%

The proportion of soft cheeses as part of total cheese spend in France; followed by cooked pressed cheeses (30%), uncooked pressed cheeses (23%) and blue-veined cheeses (6%).

26 KILOS

Annual per capita cheese consumption in France, the highest in the world. It is estimated that 19 kg are consumed as is, either with bread, or cooked in fondue, raclette or gratin, while the remaining 7 kg is eaten as 'fresh' or 'young' cheese, the creamy, soft white cheese often used in desserts.

+13%

The growth in exports of French cheese (worldwide, by volume) between 2007 and 2017.

+320%

The growth in exports of French milk to Asia between 2007 and 2017.

92%

The percentage of French consumers who enjoy cheese at least once a week.

(Sources: CNIEL www.filiere-laitiere.com; Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/fr/home>; Directorate General for Agriculture and rural development https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/agriculture-and-rural-development_fr)

10 CHEFS 10 RECIPES

Our chefs all live in France, but come from all four corners of the globe. Let our 10 chefs - 10 different nationalities from across 5 continents - take you around the world of Sweet Cheese in 10 recipes. Their cultures may be different, but they share the language of good food.

We have set them all a challenge - to create an original dish combining cheese and dessert. And each chef has added a little something of themselves, their roots and their history, while showcasing the delicious versatility of French cheese.



GABON

CHEF ANTO “SWEET CHEESE? TWO CHALLENGES IN ONE!”

Officially, her name is Antompindi Cocagne; but to everyone who knows her, this thirty-year-old mother of a 4-year old son is simply Chef Anto. Anto was born in France and brought up in Gabon, the eldest daughter of an engineer and a nutritionist. After passing her Baccalaureate (in Economics and Social Services), she persuaded her parents to let her return to France to study cookery. She graduated from the Ferrandi school in Paris and found work as a private chef, cooking for individuals, organisations and businesses; she also hosts cookery programmes for Canal+ Afrique.

What are your childhood memories of cooking?

When I was 9, my mother told me that I'd be the one to replace her when she was no longer around. So I learned to cook very early on, in the kitchen with my grandmother, my aunts and my cousins. I always loved that environment. We'd gossip and sing, and the mothers would hand down advice to their daughters – not just cooking tips, but about life in general, especially married life. That's when I decided to become a chef. I knew it would be fun.

Were you a foodie?

I've always had a healthy appetite. My mother used to wonder how I stayed so slim; she'd ask me where I put it all! Mostly, I was curious to understand why we cooked food the way we did, and wanted to learn about combining different flavours. My favourite dish at the time – actually, it's still my favourite – was wild boar with dika. Dika is the kernel of the wild mango tree, which we roast and grind into a sauce. In France they call it 'native chocolate' because it looks and smells like chocolate, although the flavour is totally different. It's perfect with full-flavoured meat like game.

How did you feel about coming to France?

France is the natural place to learn to cook – it's the only place to go. My parents saw cooking as more of a maid's job, but I promised them I'd make them proud, and I couldn't let them down. It was very hard at first. It was cold, it was a completely different culture, and I'd left my roots behind. And the food was different too – there was no little pot of chilli on the table in the college refectory! I was the only black African at college and on my work placements. But I kept going, thanks mainly to my teachers and mentors; I'm thinking particularly of Eric Pras, a 3-star Michelin chef, now at Maison Lameloise, in Bourgogne.

How do you see your culinary identity?

My cooking is Pan-African, but not fusion. My ingredients are all African, but I cook and present them in a gastronomic style. My aim is to take people on a journey around Africa – to reveal its treasures to those who've never been, and to remind those who already know it what they've left behind.

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

We don't make cheese in Gabon. The only cheeses I knew from home were those little cubes of cream cheese spread, and pasteurised Camembert. And as a rule, we're not particularly big on desserts either; we mostly eat fruit. If there are pastries, you know you're celebrating something very special. So to create a dessert made with cheese was really two challenges in one! I thought I'd use that good old cream cheese spread, and combine it with some typically African ingredients – baobab powder with its milky texture and tart flavour is particularly good with dairy products. I made it into a cream to serve with Pain Perdu (a sort of French Toast) soaked in a mixture of eggs, sugar and condensed milk – a Gabon classic which I then coated and cooked in Mbouraké, which is a mixture of breadcrumbs, peanut butter and milk. Every Gabonese child's favourite treat!

www.lechefanto.com
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SPREADING THE LOVE OF CHEESE

Spreadable cheese is exactly what it says. It's made by melting one or more cooked, pressed cheeses – not too mature – and blending with milk, cream or butter. Spices and other flavourings can also be added. The result is a soft, creamy, spreadable cheese with aromas of fresh cream and hazelnuts and a relatively mild flavour. Spreadable cheeses are pasteurised, and available in a variety of formats including triangles, rectangles, cubes and tubs. Everyone has come across them at some time! They're perfect for sandwiches, verrines, rolls, cheese pastries, wraps and samosas. They keep well and are easily transportable, making them especially good for travel. They've made it all the way to Africa, where they are particularly popular – as Chef Anto reminds us in her recipe.



A LITTLE SLICE OF CHILDHOOD

Serves 2

Prep time: 2 hours

Cooking time: 10 mins

Ingredients

For the peanut and caramel sauce

50 g sugar

1 tbsp peanut butter

100 ml double cream

20 g butter

For the ice-cream

120 g spreadable cheese

120 ml evaporated milk

30 ml double cream

1 tbsp baobab powder

30 g icing sugar

1 Madagascan vanilla pod

For the Mbouraké

100 g Panko breadcrumbs

40 g peanut butter

10 g brown sugar

20 ml evaporated milk

For the Pain Perdu

2 slices stale bread (2cm thick)

1 egg

60 ml evaporated milk

20 g butter

1 tbsp sunflower oil

10 g toasted peanuts

Method

Make the caramel sauce

Dissolve the sugar in a frying pan to make a dark caramel. Heat the peanut butter and cream in the microwave for 30 seconds, add the caramel and reduce. Remove from the heat and add chilled butter to halt further cooking. Chill.

Make the ice cream

Split the vanilla pod into two lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds with a knife. In a bowl, whisk the cheese with the sugar and vanilla seeds until soft. Continue to whisk, adding the evaporated milk, cream and baobab powder. Churn in an ice cream maker. When solid, spoon into a freezer-proof container. Add half the caramel and peanut sauce and stir in gently. Freeze for 2 hours.

Make the Pain Perdu

In a food processor, whizz the Mbouraké ingredients - Panko breadcrumbs, brown sugar, peanut butter and evaporated milk - until smooth. Beat the egg and evaporated milk together in a shallow bowl and dunk the slices of bread in the egg-and-milk mixture one by one, making sure both sides are soaked. Coat the bread on both sides with the Mbouraké. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the butter; fry the slices until golden on both sides. Keep warm.

To assemble

Arrange the slices of Pain Perdu on 2 plates. Just before serving, top each slice with a quenelle of cheese and baobab ice-cream. Sprinkle with crushed toasted peanuts and drizzle with the rest of the peanut and caramel sauce.





FRANCE

ELSA MARIE

“FOR ME, CHEESE IS LIKE AN ADDICTION”

From an early age, Elsa Marie loved to eat – her love of cooking came later. With her hastily-assembled bun and youthful looks, Elsa Marie looks as if she’s come home at last.

After a long time spent on the other side of the world, she’s back in Paris, and is now chef at La Vierge, “a warm, relaxed, affordable place to eat, and where you can eat well – because it’s possible to have both” she says. Elsa Marie is fully committed to sustainable agriculture; she chooses her ingredients with care, cooks vibrant lunch-time dishes at very reasonable prices and leaves the evening’s sharing platters and tapas to her husband Julian.

For Sweet Cheese, she steered us back to Abondance – and we’re not complaining!

Where does your love of cooking come from?

I grew up in the countryside. My mother worked, but she also cooked, and we ate very well – always a starter, main course and dessert. I’m sure that had an effect on me, but I didn’t start cooking myself until I was 18. I was studying by then (Elsa Marie read Humanities) and mum didn’t cook for me anymore, so I started making food for myself and my friends. It became a bit of an obsession, and I decided that was what I wanted to do. I spent just a year at the Ferrandi school. I thought of carrying on, but I’d already had 3 years of post-school education, and wanted to get stuck into the real world.

Was it easy to start with?

After 3 weeks, I decided that this was not for me. I had a dreadful job with impossible hours. The pay was poor, and we were treated horribly. But at the same time, I loved the work. It was the only place where time seemed to fly, and I was learning something new every day. I could easily have stopped then though, taken time out and done more writing.

So what made you carry on?

I met Gregory Bach and Florent Ciccoli, who have a number of

restaurants in Paris. They had a very different attitude. They were much more human, they trusted me and gave me more freedom. I worked with them for two years at Pères Populaires, and now I’m at their latest restaurant, La Vierge.

But in between, you jumped ship for a while...

Chefs always end up going around in circles, we always think the grass will be greener somewhere else. I was nearly 30, I wanted to go somewhere far away, somewhere hot, where life would be easy. So, I packed my rucksack and headed for Australia. I did a bit of cooking, but mainly I was interested in permaculture and biodynamics.

So where does cheese come in?

In Australia, I met my husband Julian, who’s also a chef. He had just returned to Australia from France, but wanted to go back to Auvergne for the cuisine and the cheese. He’s always wanted to make cheese, but it’s never worked out all that well. Now whenever Julian and I talk about where we’re going to live, we both agree it’s got to be somewhere where they have cheese!

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

For me, cheese is like an addiction. Abondance is one of my favourites, although I had forgotten it a bit. It’s similar to Comté, but fruitier and creamier, with a more persistent flavour. I’ve used it to create a multi-textured dessert, adding it to whipped cream and ice cream and using it grated. I’ve also used poached pears and rosemary crumble – I love that bitter rosemary taste. I’m in two minds about combining sweet and savoury. There was a time when anything could pass for dessert – foie gras sorbet for example. I wouldn’t normally use cheese other than in its natural state, but this seemed like a really exciting challenge. When I was creating the recipe, there were some excellent pears around, including Louise Bonne, Comice and Conference, and it all came together straight away. I needed fruit to counterbalance the strong flavour of the cheese.

La Vierge

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ABONDANCE IN THE ABBEY

The Monks of Abondance Abbey began making their own cheese in the 11th century. They oversaw every step themselves, from raising the cows to crafting the product. The Abbey cheese quickly became popular, and was even served to Pope Clement VII in Avignon. Centuries later, in 1990, Abondance cheese from Haute-Savoie was granted AOC status, followed by PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) status in 1996. It has retained all the traditional features of its early monastic days. The cheese is made from the milk of Abondance, and comes in flat, cylindrical mill-wheel shapes with a soft, amber-coloured rind. Milk from the evening milking is mixed with the following morning's milk; rennet is added, the resulting curd is cut and the temperature raised to between 45 and 50°C. The whey is then racked off, and the curds transferred to a mould and labelled with a casein identification disc. The band around the mould is tightened with a hammer. The cheese is pressed for 24 hours, plunged into a brine bath and matured for a minimum of 100 days.



GOOD THINGS IN ABONDANCE

Serves 3

Prep time: 1½ hours

Cooking time: 45 min

Ingredients

For the poached pears

250 ml water

1 sprig rosemary

100 g unrefined sugar

Zest of 1 lemon (unwaxed)

2 Bonne Louise pears

*For the Abondance mousse
with rosemary*

40 g Abondance (rind removed)

20 cl double cream

2 - 4 sprigs rosemary

For the frosted Abondance

40 g Abondance (rind removed)

For the crumble

50 g flour

20 g sourdough breadcrumbs

40 g unsalted butter

1 pinch of salt

10 g unrefined sugar

2 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped.

Method

Poach the pears

Place the water, rosemary, sugar and lemon zest in a saucepan. Whisk together and bring to the boil. Peel the pears and lower them gently into the syrup. Turn down the heat. Poach the pears for 15 minutes until tender. Cool in the fridge, in the syrup.

Abondance mousse with rosemary

Finely dice the Abondance. Place in a saucepan with the cream and bring to the boil, whisking until the cheese has melted. Add the rosemary, cover the pan and remove from the heat. Allow to infuse for 10 minutes. Remove the rosemary, and pour the cream and cheese mixture into a whipping siphon. Charge with 2 gas cartridges; shake and place in the fridge to cool.

Frosted Abondance

The night before, place the Abondance in the freezer; this will make it easier to grate.

Crumble

Preheat the oven to 170°C. In a bowl, rub the flour, breadcrumbs, unsalted butter, salt, sugar and rosemary together with your fingers, to the texture of fine sand. When all the butter has been incorporated, spread the crumble over a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake for 10 minutes, turn the crumble with a spatula and return to the oven for another 20 minutes at 160°C. When the crumble is golden-brown all over, remove from the oven. Cool and leave to set on the baking sheet.

To assemble

Place a little of the rosemary crumble in a dessert bowl. Add the Abondance mousse. Cut a slice from the bottom of each pear so it stands up, then place at the centre of the bed of mousse. Grate a generous amount of Abondance over the pear. The pear could also be sliced, arranged on the crumble and covered with Abondance mousse and grated Abondance to give a monochrome effect.





CHINA

SAMUEL LEE SUM

“DO IT ALL WITH PASSION”

Samuel Lee was born in Hong Kong, and very quickly became immersed in a world where traditional Chinese cooking was a top priority. The memory of family gatherings around the table, with all the attendant delicious food aromas, inspired him to seek out a career as a chef. He took the traditional catering college route, later joining the team at the Hong Kong Jockey Club in Beijing under the tutelage of chef Bobby Lo. This turned out to be a memorable encounter, reigniting a burgeoning - and soon to be all-consuming - passion for cooking. In 2014, he was invited to work in Paris alongside executive chef Christophe Moret (2 Michelin stars, earned at l'Abeille) running Shang Palace, the only Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant in Paris. It was an offer he couldn't refuse.

What are your childhood memories of food?

The first picture that comes into my mind is of my mother cooking in the kitchen. I remember the smell of fried rice, and of pan-fried fish with egg and tomato. For Chinese New Year, the whole family used to gather at our house. There would always be 15 or 20 of us around the table, enjoying food cooked by my mother.

Where did you train?

I studied cookery, then at 18 I went out to work. My first job was at the Hong Kong Jockey Club of Beijing, where chef Bobby Lo taught me much more than just technique; he taught me the philosophy of cooking. He showed me that for a chef, attitude is all-important. Stay motivated, always give it your best, and do it all with passion. I went on to work all over China, in Shanghai, Tianjin and Wenzhou. I learned various Chinese cooking styles (there are as many styles in China as there are regions) including Sichuan, Shanghai and Cantonese.

At Shang Palace, the style is Cantonese. What makes it different?

The essence of Cantonese cuisine is to showcase the unique flavours

of the ingredients, choosing them carefully and not over-seasoning them. I'm proud that I can introduce French diners to Cantonese food. Coming to Paris is every chef's dream, and it's been a great opportunity for me.

What's your relationship with cheese?

In China, we really only have cheese in the northern regions. Everywhere else, milk is either used as a liquid, or powdered. When I arrived in France, I discovered blue cheese, Camembert and Comté, and I love them! My wife and I often have cheese at home.

Say "Sweet Cheese"!

When I lived in Hong Kong, I only ever ate one type of cheese, and that was Cheddar. The first time I ate Camembert I found it a bit strong, but after a few tries, I began to see a milder side to it. That's why I chose it for my recipe. The elegant savoury flavour works well with Chinese-style desserts, coming through softly on the finish. I wanted to create an element of surprise, so I went for several layers of flavour - rice flour dough, cream, Camembert, mascarpone and fresh fruit. I don't know any Chinese chefs who would use cheese in their desserts, so this was a good challenge for me. I might add it to my tasting menu.

Shang Palace

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LADLING IT OUT

A statue of Marie Harel stands in the Place de Mackau in Vimoutiers (Orne), but Marie (born Marie Fontaine in Crouttes in 1761) probably owes her moment of glory to refractory priest Father Charles-Jean Bonvoust, who came either from Brie or Pays de Caux, we no longer know which. Following his advice, Marie improved and extended production of a particular speciality cheese from Camembert, which we know already existed in the late 17th century. This soft, bloomy-rind cheese – awarded PDO status in 1996 – is known today as Camembert de Normandie. The cheese is made by heating milk to a maximum temperature of 40°C and adding rennet. The resulting curd is sliced vertically and ladled into moulds; this process is repeated 5 times to drain the curd completely, giving a smooth, supple-textured cheese. Camembert de Normandie is then salted with dry salt and left to mature in an hâloir – a well-ventilated room between 10 and 18°C – for a minimum of 21 days.

NORMANDY RICE BALL

Serves 2
Prep time: 1½ hours
Cooking time: 45 min

Ingredients

For the dough
550 g + 100 g rice flour
150 g cornflour
150 g caster sugar
1 l milk

For the filling
500 g 35% fat cream
130 g icing sugar
50 g mascarpone
1 Camembert
1 mango
1 melon

To cook
100 g rice flour

Method

Make the Dough

Mix 550 g of rice flour with the cornflour and sugar, add the milk and stir until you have a smooth dough. Steam the dough for 40 minutes, then leave to rest at room temperature. Roll the dough into a long sausage shape and slice into pieces of 2-3 cm. Warm the 100 g of rice flour in a frying pan and use to coat your hands. Using your hands or a rolling pin, roll out the pieces of dough.

Make the filling

Combine the cream, sugar and mascarpone, and whisk until stiff. Cube the Camembert, mango and melon.

Fill the balls

Take a piece of dough and place a teaspoonful of the whipped cream in the centre, followed by a mix of Camembert, mango and melon. Holding the dough by the base, press the filling firmly into the circle and close the ball carefully by pinching from above with your thumb and index finger. Using both hands, carefully shape it into a ball.

To assemble

Arrange two balls at room temperature on a plate, and garnish with fruit. The Normandy rice balls should be eaten within 24 hours.





KOREA

YOUNGHOON LEE “EXPRESSING MY PERSONALITY”

Younghoon Lee is originally from Pyeongtaek just south of Seoul, Younghoon's love for all things culinary comes from his grandmother. As a child, Younghoon dreamed of being an architect or designer, but failed his university entrance exam and turned to cooking. He went to catering college, then worked in Seoul for French chef Florent Lescouezec (Café des Arts), where he first heard the name Paul Bocuse. 4 years later, he set off for Ecully, near Lyon, to study at the Institut Paul Bocuse. He learned the basics at L'Auberge du Pont de Collonges, (three Michelin stars), then at Lasserre in Paris, which then had two Michelin stars. And suddenly there he was, ready to start his own venture. In 2014 he opened a small gourmet restaurant, Le Passe Temps. There are three cheeses on the menu, which he chooses himself, having learned that in Lyon a meal without cheese doesn't quite hit the mark!

What are your childhood memories around food?

We ate well at home, but it was the food cooked by my grandmother that I loved most. Then one day, my mother was going out to meet some friends and asked me to make something to eat. I've always had an artistic bent; I wanted to work in the creative industries, to have the chance to express my personality – so I took this opportunity to add my own little touches to the instructions I'd been given. And it was really good. When I was at catering college in Seoul, I felt the same pride when I saw people enjoying the food I had cooked.

How did you feel when you got to France?

It was very hard at first. It was the first time I'd ever left my country, and I didn't speak French. I traded my experience in the French restaurant in Seoul for language lessons. I realised that I knew very little about French cuisine; it wasn't really available to Koreans at the time. I thought it was all about novelty and creativity, but now I see that tradition is an integral part of it all.

How has Lyon treated you?

The early days at Le Passe Temps were difficult. I remember a woman coming in and insisting on ordering sushi. My wife had to explain that I was a Korean chef who cooked French food. Over the years, I've tried to add a touch of Korea to my cooking; one of my signature dishes is foie gras in a soya broth.

And where does cheese come in?

In Korea, we don't use butter, cream or milk at all in our cooking, and we don't eat cheese. I had tried a few Italian cheeses back home, but the first French cheese I tasted was a blue one. What a revelation!

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

When I first came here, I used to eat bread and cheese with a glass of red wine. Then one day, someone served me cheese with honey, white wine and marmalade. It was so good! Later on, I had goat's cheese sorbet in a gourmet restaurant. When Sweet Cheese called, I really wanted to take part, to create something that worked well even in my culture. Korean food uses a lot of spices, so I looked around for a spice that would go well with Comté and came up with cinnamon. Then I needed a Korean recipe that uses cinnamon, and thought of sujeonggwa, a drink we often have in the summer months made with water, ginger, cinnamon, pine nuts and dried persimmon. I added morel mushroom powder to complement the Comté, a hint of sea salt, and meringue to give crunch.

Le Passe Temps

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YOU CAN COMTÉ ON IT!

Comté was granted AOC status in 1952, and upgraded to PDO in 1996. It is the top French cheese in terms of production volume – 65,650 tonnes of it were made in 2017, crafted entirely from the milk of Montbeliarde and French Simmental cows in the 3 départements of Jura, Doubs and Ain. The milk is delivered daily to over 150 fruitières all over the Jura Massif, where it is skimmed, heated to 30°C and left to rest for 30 minutes. Rennet is then added along with the previous day's whey, to coagulate the milk, and the curd is cut into tiny pieces the size of a grain of rice. These are heated to 55°C, and the whey is drawn off. The pressed cheese is turned into moulds and matured, in the fruitière for 3 weeks, then for a longer period in one of the ageing cellars. Young or mature, there's a Comté for every taste.

COMTÉ KOREA

Serves 2

Prep time: 2 hours

Cooking time: 4 hours

Ingredients

For the Comté ice-cream

75 ml milk

22 g cream

1 egg yolk

5 g sugar

1 g salt

40 g Comté

For the sujeonggwa foam

12 g fresh ginger

150 g water

20 g cinnamon

150 g water

Brown sugar

5 cl cream (35% fat content)

For the pine nut crumble

30 g T45 flour (cake flour)

15 g sugar

15 g ground pine nuts

25 g butter

For the French meringue

1 egg white

25 g caster sugar

25 g icing sugar

To finish

1.5 g sea salt

5 g morel powder

Method

Make the Comté ice-cream

Bring the milk and cream to the boil and remove from heat. In a bowl, cream the egg yolk with the sugar and salt until pale and smooth, then pour over the warm milk and cream mixture, little by little, whisking as you go – gently at first, then more vigorously. Tip the mixture into a clean saucepan and heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until you have a smooth custard which coats the spoon. (Be careful not to let the mixture boil; the temperature mustn't rise above 83°C). At this stage, remove the pan from the heat. Add the grated Comté and let it melt completely. Cover with cling film and leave to cool. When the mixture is completely cold, churn in an ice-cream maker.

Make the sujeonggwa foam

Peel the ginger and slice thinly. Place in a saucepan and add 150 g water. Bring to the boil, turn down the heat and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Rinse the cinnamon, place the pieces in a separate saucepan and add 150 g water. Bring to the boil and turn the heat down. Simmer gently for 40 minutes-1 hour. The colour of the water should change. When the time is up, drain the ginger pieces, reserving the liquid in a bowl. Repeat for the cinnamon. Mix the two liquids together, in a saucepan, adding sugar according to taste, and heat for 10 minutes.

When the sugar has dissolved, reduce the sujeonggwa over a medium heat until you have around 30 g. Cool in the fridge. Whisk the cream into the reduced sujeonggwa, pour into a siphon and close. Charge with one or two cartridges depending how full your siphon is; tip upside down, shake and chill in the fridge for at least 3 hours.

Make the pine nut crumble

Place the flour, sugar and ground pine nuts in a bowl. Add the diced, chilled butter. Working quickly before the butter becomes too soft, rub the butter into the other ingredients with your fingers until it has the texture of coarse sand. Set aside in the fridge. Preheat the oven to 170°C and bake for 10 minutes.

Make the French meringue

Preheat the oven to 83°C. Place the egg white in a mixer bowl and whisk to soft peaks, adding a third of the caster sugar. Add the rest of the caster sugar and continue to whisk for 1 minute. Check that all of the sugar has dissolved. When the egg whites are stiff and glossy, gently add the icing sugar and whisk again for 4-5 minutes. The meringue should be smooth, very white and very dense. Arrange the meringues on parchment paper and bake for 1½ hours. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.

To assemble

Release the foam from the siphon into a shallow bowl or plate and arrange a quenelle of ice-cream on top. Sprinkle with pine nut crumble and a pinch of sea salt. Grate the Comté over the ice-cream and top with the meringue. Finish by sprinkling over the morel powder.





AUSTRALIA

MATHEW HEGARTY “BEING IN FRANCE IS A DREAM COME TRUE”

Mathew Hegarty was born in Australia, in a small city about an hour's drive from Sydney. Since 2015, he has been chef at Le P'tit Polyte, Chalet Mounier's gourmet restaurant in the ski resort of Les Deux Alpes (Isère). Just one year after he arrived, Mathew's cooking skills earned him a Michelin star. His style is influenced by his Australian background, and inspired by Asian cuisine. He came to the public eye in 2018 as a contestant in season 9 of Top Chef TV programme (M6).

When he first arrived in the country in 2010, Mathew trained under Yannick Delpech in Toulouse; he then did his own mini Tour de France, taking in Corsica, Brittany and Haute-Savoie before settling here for the duration. Mathew was brought up in the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

For Sweet Cheese, he's cooking Bleu d'Auvergne, at 1,600m above sea level.

A real case of back to his roots!

What are your earliest memories of food?

At home, we didn't really cook much, my father usually brought home pizza or some other take-away. My brother had a job in a restaurant, and when I was 13, he suggested I join him there; but it was really so I could do the washing up while he did the cooking! Ultimately though, although I went to art school, I'm the one who has ended up in the kitchen, while my brother joined the army. My father is always happy when I come home to cook for him. He loves it when we barbecue together and I show him new cooking techniques.

Why did you come to France?

For Australians, France is the land of good food. Everyone knows the French make the best cooks. They don't eat to live, they live to eat, and I love that. Being in France is a dream come true.

What happened the day you arrived?

It was like a comedy show. That first day, I worked from 7am to 3pm, then left, saying I'd see everyone tomorrow. Someone answered "à t'taleur" ("laters"). I didn't know what that meant, and when I realised I had to be back at 5pm, I was totally

shocked. But actually, I quite enjoyed the military strictness of it all; it was a challenge. If I wanted to stay, I just had to do the same as everyone else.

How did you acclimatise to Les Deux-Alpes?

When I arrived, it was as the first time I'd ever seen snow. But I'm from a surfing, skateboarding culture, so I bought myself a snowboard, and now I'm in love with the mountains.

And cheese?

I'm still not that familiar with all the French cheeses, but I love the blue ones. They've got real character.

Say "Sweet Cheese"!

There are a few Australian cheeses, Tasmanian Blue being one of them, but they're quite unusual and very expensive. People don't eat them at the end of a meal, but more as an appetiser, maybe with oysters. When I got the call from Sweet Cheese, I thought it would almost be too easy. I've never been part of that whole French cheese culture, so I've always felt free to do my own thing – and that includes dessert. My tasting menu always features a cooked cheese dish, maybe a crème brûlée made with the local Bleu du Vercors-Sassenage and served with chicory sorbet. For Sweet Cheese, I used Bleu d'Auvergne to make cheesecake and ice-cream, but I added a few touches of home – eucalyptus, Tasmanian pepper, wattle seeds and wood-sorrel leaves. As a dessert, it's both powerful and fresh.

Le P'tit Polyte

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SINGING THE BLUES

Antoine Roussel was a peasant farmer who lived some 40 km outside Clermont-Ferrand. Around 1855, he stumbled on the idea of seeding the milk from his dairy herd with the mould found on rye bread, then piercing the curd with a knitting needle to introduce air. The result was Bleu d'Auvergne, which achieved PDO status in 1996. Bleu d'Auvergne is the most famous of the blue-veined cheeses produced in the Massif Central; the production area extends from Puy-de-Dôme to Cantal, and includes Aveyron, Corrèze, Haute-Loire, Lot and Lozère. It takes 20 to 25 litres of milk to produce a Roquefort which weighs 2 to 3 kg after being aged for a minimum of 4 weeks. Penicillium Roqueforti is added to the milk in the initial stages, but forms its familiar blue veins during maturation, when the salted cheese is pierced by hand using needles. This makes it creamy and full flavoured – the hallmarks of Bleu d'Auvergne.



SWEET AND BLUE

Serves 4
Prep time: 1 hour
Cooking time: 3 hours

Ingredients

For the shortbread base

100 g breadcrumbs
15 g sugar
1 g Tasmanian pepper
40 g white chocolate
60 g butter

For the cheesecake

20 g milk
1 g agar-agar
30 g sugar
120 g Bleu d'Auvergne
1 tbsp wattle seeds
50 g 30% cream

For the eucalyptus jelly

100 ml water
15 g sugar
30 eucalyptus leaves
1 g agar-agar

For the Bleu d'Auvergne ice-cream:

6 egg yolks
100 g sugar
300 ml milk
300 g Bleu d'Auvergne

For the Bleu d'Auvergne chips

150 ml water
100 g sugar
300 g Bleu d'Auvergne

To finish

Wood-sorrel leaves and caviar lime

Method

Make the shortbread

Combine the breadcrumbs, sugar and pepper in a bowl. Melt the chocolate and butter together in a saucepan and add to the dry ingredients to make a smooth dough. Using a 3cm cookie cutter, cut out circles to form the base of the cheesecakes.

Make the cheesecake

Heat the milk, the agar-agar and the sugar in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, and add the Bleu d'Auvergne and wattle seeds. Tip the mixture into a large bowl. Whisk the 50 g of cream to soft peaks and fold into the milk and cheese mixture. Turn into 8 silicon half-sphere moulds, each 3 cm in diameter. Chill.

Make the eucalyptus jelly

Heat the water, sugar and eucalyptus leaves in a saucepan. Remove from the heat, cover with cling film and leave to infuse for 20 minutes. Strain, reserving the liquid only. Boil, stirring in the agar-agar and leave in the fridge to set for 30 minutes. Blend with a stick blender to a smooth, gel-like texture.

Make the Bleu d'Auvergne ice-cream

Mix the egg yolks and sugar together in a bowl. Bring the milk to the boil. Pour the boiling milk into the eggs and sugar, whisking all the time. Pour the mixture back into a saucepan and simmer over a gentle heat, stirring constantly, without going over 83°C. Add the diced Bleu d'Auvergne. Blend, transfer to a Pacojet or ice-cream maker and freeze for a minimum of 4 hours.

Make the Bleu d'Auvergne chips

Preheat the oven to 90°C. Heat the water, sugar and Bleu d'Auvergne in a saucepan. When the cheese has melted, blend in a food processor and spread over a sheet of baking paper. Leave to set for 2-3 hours, then break up to make chips.

To assemble

Remove the half-spheres of cheesecake filling from the fridge. Arrange two discs of shortbread on each plate, and top each with the cheesecake filling. Using a spoon, carefully position a quenelle of Bleu d'Auvergne ice-cream between the two cheesecakes. Sprinkle the cheesecakes with Bleu d'Auvergne chips; decorate with piped eucalyptus jelly and garnish with wood-sorrel leaves and caviar lime.





UNITED STATES

KRISTIN FREDERICK

“I FELLED IN LOVE WITH FRENCH CUISINE”

California-born Kristin Frederick came to France 10 years ago to learn about gastronomy. Now, with her *Camion qui Fume* food truck launched in 2011, she has become a pioneer of Parisian street food, serving gourmet burgers featuring real French cheese. “In the past 7 years, I’ve used so many different cheeses, including Fourme d’Ambert, Gruyère, Saint-Nectaire and Comté,” she tells us. Kristin currently runs 2 food trucks and heads up 3 restaurants, including *Camion qui Fume*, a Chinese street food restaurant named *Huabu*, and *GreenHouse*, a nature-centric bistro-style restaurant modelled on Kristin’s own vision of healthy eating. She also finds time to help larger restaurant chains improve their quality. They’re in good hands.

What is your food and restaurant background?

I was born in Los Angeles. My mother managed a chain of restaurants, and my father was a *maître d’hôtel*. I remember when I was 4 or 5, my mother used to carry me on her back as she showed customers to their tables. Neither of my parents wanted me to work in this business, they were adamant I should go to university. So I studied marketing, and worked as a sales clerk in a bank. But somehow, I couldn’t get cooking out of my system, so off I went to France, just to learn the basics. I never thought I’d end up being a chef, but I fell in love with French cuisine.

How did *Camion qui Fume* come about?

In 2011, food trucks were all the rage in California, and I couldn’t understand why there weren’t any in Paris. It wasn’t easy to start selling hamburgers from the back of a truck, but I felt it could work. The French are relatively easy to please – if it tastes good, they’re happy! It was important, though, to use good, local ingredients – *terroir*-driven produce. The word *terroir* doesn’t even exist in English. I’m stunned by how successful it’s all been. I’m still reeling!

Tell us about *Greenhouse*, your latest venture.

This is my dream project, part of my own personal growth. It’s how I eat, and how I see things, ecologically speaking; it’s about eating less meat and more vegetables. We’ve got a kitchen garden right in front of the restaurant, and that sort of thing is completely new to me. I’ve never got my hands dirty in quite that way before! I’m learning every day. We supply the restaurant, and any surplus we give to the neighbourhood.

Has cheese always been part of your life?

When I was growing up in the US, cheese wasn’t a big thing. My mother worked in an Italian restaurant, and the first cheese I ever came across was Parmesan. I also remember Cheddar, and something we called Munster, but it was nothing like the real thing. I had such fun discovering all the cheeses when I came to France, and now I’ve got lots of favourites. But I still like the cow’s milk ones best.

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

I love cheese, I could eat it all day: in the mornings because I like a savoury breakfast, at lunchtime because I’m happy with a simple grilled cheese, and in the evenings when I eat a piece after dinner. At *Greenhouse*, we often include cheese-based recipes. Last spring, we made an asparagus tempura with Comté, and it was superb. When *Sweet Cheese* contacted me about creating a cheese-based dessert, I was a bit daunted because I’m not really a pastry-chef. But of course, I thought of cheesecake, creating a recipe that was outside the box. I chose *Brillat-Savarin*, which I love. It’s so creamy, and so much better than the American cream cheese normally used. It’s not too strong and not too mild, and the flavour is far more elegant.

Greenhouse
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THE CRÈME DE LA CRÈME

Brillat-Savarin is a relatively recent invention, created in 1930 by pioneering cheesemaker Henri Androuët, who set up his own creamery in 1910. The new cheese was named in tribute to the great 18th century French gourmet Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. It is known as a triple-cream, a cheese enriched by the addition of extra cream, and has been called the 'foie-gras of cheese' for its delicious, unctuous smoothness. Flavours are fresh and milky with a light tang of acidity. Brillat-Savarin was granted PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) status in January 2017. It can be eaten young or well-ripened - matured for 1-4 weeks to give a snowy-white down and a rind with earthy, mushroomy flavours, and is available in a variety of sizes, usually 100 g - 300 g - but up to 500 g for the true aficionado!



PEAR BELLE KRISTIN

Serves 6

Prep time: 2 hours

Cooking time: 1 hour 20 mins

Ingredients

For the base

65 g Fourme d'Ambert
145 g blanched almonds
90 g walnuts
180 g muesli with dried fruit and nuts
130 g brown sugar
120 g butter

For the cheesecake

100 ml full fat cream
4g agar-agar
400 g Brillat Savarin
250 g chestnut puree
330 ml whipped cream

For the pear jelly

1 l pear juice
2 sticks cinnamon
4 g agar-agar

For the poached pears
and fried pear slices

1 l water
250 g sugar
2 vanilla pods
2 pears

Method

Make the base the day before

Preheat the oven to 180°C. Dice the Fourme d'Ambert into small pieces. Mix all the ingredients together (except the butter) to give a smooth, even texture. Melt the butter and add. Mix again, then roll the dough out on a baking sheet. Cut out six circles with a cookie cutter and bake for 5 - 15 minutes until golden.

Make the cheesecake the day before

Heat the cream and agar-agar in a saucepan. Combine the Brillat-Savarin with the chestnut puree, and add the cream and agar-agar mixture. Add the whipped cream little by little. Spoon onto the baked bases which have been placed in individual circular moulds. Chill in the fridge for 24 hours.

Make the pear jelly

In a saucepan, infuse the pear juice with the two sticks of cinnamon for 30 minutes, then add the agar-agar. Top the cheesecakes with the jelly, and chill for a minimum of 6 hours.

Poach the pears

Place the water, sugar and vanilla pods in a saucepan and boil to make a syrup. Peel the pears. Add the pears to the syrup and poach for 10-15 minutes. Cool the pears; dice one and leave the other whole.

Fry the pear slices

Take the whole pear and slice it very thinly with a mandoline. Fry the slices in a deep fat fryer at 180°C, until crisp and golden.

To assemble

Before turning out the cheesecakes, chill on the freezer for an hour. If they don't come out easily, warm the outside of the moulds with a cloth soaked in hot water. Arrange the poached pears and fried pear slices on the cheesecake.





JAPAN

SUGIO YAMAGUCHI

“I LIKE CHEESE WITH CHARACTER”

As a child, Tokyo-born Sugio Yamaguchi didn't eat much.

“My mother was a good cook, but I hated the school canteen, and I'd never finish what was on my plate,” he remembers. “It probably wasn't because I didn't like eating, but because what I was given didn't taste good.” At the age of 16, Sugio found a job with a Korean chef, who taught him how to cut up meat, slice vegetables and make sauces. By now he was becoming more enthusiastic about food; the French variety though, rather than sushi. After Catering College, he worked for two years to earn enough money to take him to France, a country that would change his life.

Sugio opened his restaurant, Botanique, in 2015.

Do you remember arriving in France?

Yes, very well. It was September 2008; definitely autumn. It was very hot in Japan, and very cold here. I arrived wearing just a t-shirt, and carrying two 30-kg suitcases. I left for Jurançon straight away, to work in a 2-Michelin-Star restaurant. The chef there used to go to the market every morning, getting back around 10 o'clock. By 10.30 we'd have a menu. There was a lot of preparation to do and it was hard, but it was fun. I've got good memories and I learned a lot. I realised that in French cuisine, ingredients are key.

How would you describe Botanique, your restaurant?

I opened it together with my associate Alexandre, but we didn't want anything too rigid. And actually, we do as we please. On the ground floor there's a bistro serving traditional French food, while upstairs we've got a Chef's Table where we serve gourmet cuisine, everything bursting with flavour, inspired by my travels.

How did cheese become part of your life?

I know a few Japanese cheeses, but they're not a big thing. Nobody in Japan is really interested in them.

I was introduced to French cheese when I was 20, in one of my classes at college. There were around 10 cheeses, but they weren't particularly good quality, I don't think, and were all at the wrong temperature. The only one I liked was Morbier. That was very nice, and easy to eat. But now I love cheese, and eat a lot of it. When I'm hungry, I'll have a piece of Comté, Salers or Saint-Nectaire. I like a cheese with character.

Does cheese pair well with Japanese ingredients?

Very well. In my sweet cheese recipe, for example, I use yuzu, a fragrant citrus fruit which can be very mild if you only use the zest. In Arbois, I was once served cheese with a citrus marmalade. It was nice, but a bit too acidic. Acidity and cheese don't go well together.

What place does cheese have in your restaurant?

I don't just want to cut it up and serve it – I'm a cook! So, I'll make something like winter root vegetable risotto with Bleu d'Auvergne – for France, that's quite unusual. I like to be a bit different. In Japan, we like our vegetables to have a bit of crunch, but this works well with cheese. It gives more flavour, a richer, tastier feel.

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

For Sweet Cheese, I wanted to make a dessert that wasn't too sweet. Sweet flavours go well with cheese, although for me, serving it with marmalade was a bit much. I call this my 'digestif cake' – you can have it before, with, or after dessert. I used a Morbier AOP aged for 120 days, simply because I love it. It's naturally quite full-flavoured, but can be used for all sorts of things. It works well with aromatic herbs, not surprisingly, because that's one of the things the cows eat. That's what gave me the idea for this recipe. For the filling, I used Tome des Bauges, which I discovered on a trip to the Jura. It melts well, then has a good texture when it cools. I wanted to have the two textures together – cooked and uncooked.

Botanique

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THE TALE OF MORBIER

Once upon a time, all dairy farmers in Franche-Comté produced and supplied milk to support production of Comté cheese. However, those who lived in the outlying areas were vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather, and were sometimes unable to make it to the nearest dairy (fruitière). So they began to manufacture their own cheese, calling it Morbier after the village in which it was first made. Morbier is instantly recognisable by the black band running horizontally through its middle. Nowadays, the band is made from vegetable charcoal, but traditionally the black layer had a practical purpose, protecting the evening curd overnight until it could be covered by curd from the next morning's milking. Farmers originally used soot taken from the pot in which the evening milk was heated. In 2000, Morbier was awarded AOC status, followed by PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) in 2002. Morbier is made from the unpasteurised milk of Montbeliarde and French Simmental cows, and cellar-matured for a minimum of 45 days at 7 - 15°C.

TOME AND THE RISING SUN

Makes 12 tartlets
Prep time: 3 hours
Cooking time: 1½ hours

Ingredients

For the sweet pastry: 100 g butter, 25 g sugar, 25 g icing sugar, 2 egg yolks, 125 g flour, Pinch of salt
For the crème pâtissière: 100 ml milk, 1 egg, 2 egg yolks, 35 g sugar, 5 g cornflour, 25 g single cream, 10 g fresh spinach, 12 g pistachio butter
For the herb crème pâtissière: 150 g cold crème pâtissière (500 ml milk, 120 g sugar, 4 egg yolks, 30 g flour), 45 g chopped mixed herbs (tarragon, lemon balm, dill, coriander, chervil and basil), 60 g fresh spinach.

For the tartlets: 60 g Tome des Bauges
For the coconut mousse: 150 g coconut milk, 2 egg yolks, 15 g sugar, 1 leaf vegetarian gelatine

For the Italian meringue: 3 egg whites, 35 g sugar, 3 tbsp water, 100 ml cream

For the herb jelly: 200 ml water, 2 tbsp yuzu juice, 8 g agar-agar, 20 g sugar, Herbs (lemon balm, basil and mint)

For the lime sauce: 100 ml water, Herbs (lemon, basil and mint), 20 g sugar, 8 g pectin, Juice of 3 limes

For the herb sauce: 5 sprigs sorrel, 10 mint leaves, 2 tbsps salted water, 3 tbsps lime sauce (see above)

To finish: 240 g Morbier, 60 small mint leaves, 60 small basil leaves.

Method

Make the pastry

Combine the butter, sugar, pinch of salt and egg yolks, adding the flour at the end to make a dough. Chill in the fridge for 2 hours, then roll out and use to line individual tartlet tins. Bake blind, with pie weights (rice or lentils), for 18 minutes at 140°C, then a further 12 minutes without the weights.

Make the crème pâtissière

Heat the milk. Meanwhile, cream the sugar with the egg yolks and cornflour. Pour the boiling milk onto the cornflour mixture, return to the heat and stir until thickened. Cook the spinach in boiling salted water, whizz in a food processor and sieve to extract the chlorophyll. With a stick blender, mix the hot crème pâtissière with the spinach and the pistachio butter.

Make the spinach and herb crème pâtissière

Cook the spinach to a purée and strain through a very fine cloth. Mix all the ingredients (crème pâtissière, spinach and herbs) gently with a spatula.

Bake the tartlets

Spread a layer of the herb crème pâtissière in each of the cooked tartlet cases, topped by a layer of plain crème pâtissière. Finish with diced Tome des Bauges. Bake in oven for 12 minutes at 170°C.

Make the coconut mousse

Bring the coconut milk to the boil. Pour the hot liquid onto the creamed sugar and eggs and cook over a low heat. Soften the gelatine in cold water and drain; mix into the warm cream. Strain.

Make the Italian meringue

Make a sugar syrup by heating the water and sugar to 115°C. Beat the egg whites to stiff peaks. Pour the syrup slowly in a steady stream over the egg whites. Cool for 3 minutes. Stir the Italian meringue into the coconut mousse, followed by the cold whipped cream. Transfer to half-sphere moulds and chill in the freezer. After 15 minutes remove, make a hollow in each half-sphere using a spoon, return to the freezer and freeze until set.

Make the herb jelly

Boil the water with the yuzu juice and sugar and remove from heat. Whisk in the agar-agar. Simmer on a low heat for 5 minutes, stirring all the time. Leave to cool. Cover a baking sheet with cling film and spread the chopped herbs on it. Pour on the cooled liquid so it does not scorch the herbs. Chill until set, about 5 mins. Use a cookie cutter to cut 12 rounds, and cut the rest into strips for decoration.

Make the lime sauce

Boil the water with 10 g of sugar and infuse with the herbs (lemon balm, basil and mint) to make an herb syrup. Boil the water with the herb syrup and lime juice. Mix the pectin and the remaining 10 g of sugar, add to the liquids and whisk for two mins.

Make the herb sauce

Chop the sorrel and mint, and blanch for 30 seconds in boiling salted water. Blend to a very smooth consistency in a small food processor. Season with the lime sauce.

To assemble

Fill the half-spheres of coconut mousse with the herb sauce. Place the rounds of herb jelly over the top of the hollows to close. Turn the half-spheres over and decorate with jelly strips, diced Morbier and the small mint and basil leaves. Just before serving, place the decorated half-spheres in the crème pâtissière-filled tartlet cases. Arrange each tartlet on a plate, on a ring of herb sauce.





UNITED KINGDOM

HARRY CUMMINS

“GOOD, FRESH AND SIMPLE”

Harry Cummins grew up in London, moving to Bath in the south-west of England when he was 13 years old. His mother was a single parent, raising her three children by herself. They rarely went out to restaurants, and ate a diet of spaghetti hoops and sausage and mash with frozen peas. But Harry's Italian grandfather introduced him to a different food culture, Harry was to reacquire this early taste for good food when at 15 he took a job in a restaurant, Harry returned to London for a spell at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, where he met Gregory Marchand. In 2011, Harry joined Gregory in Paris for the opening of Frenchie's Wine Bar. From 2013 to 2018, Harry and his partner, sommelier Laura Vidal, travelled the world with their Paris Popup before finally settling in Marseille and opening their own restaurant, La Mercerie. Their food is technically sophisticated, but bistro-inspired and affordable, with cheese as a pivotal ingredient.

What are your earliest memories around food?

I remember meals with my grandparents, and also at a friend's house; his parents had this wonderful place in Camden, not far from our little flat, where they would host dinners. They'd serve roast chicken, and there was always a slice of cucumber and a sprig of mint in the water jug. And that's where I discovered cabbage braised with orange. It was good, fresh and simple, and that's what I've been aiming for ever since.

What cheese did you have as a child?

Cheddar! I grew up in Bath, which is only about 40km from the village of Cheddar and the limestone caves where the cheese is matured.

Did you find restaurant life easy?

I loved the atmosphere in the restaurant where I first worked for a bit of pocket money. I had never been particularly confident, I'd always felt a bit inferior, actually. But in the kitchen, we were equals. I realised that what it took to get ahead was hard work and talent, and that made me grow up. I got tips, and I ate well. My boss ran the local football club. I'd keep my football boots in his car, and he used to pick me up every Sunday. It was like having a second family.

What's the concept behind your Paris Popup?

In London, restaurants open seven days a week. When I came to Paris, I couldn't understand why they had to close for two days, so we asked some of our chef friends if we could cook on their premises when they were closed, maybe once a month. It went down so well! Then when my grandmother died in early 2013, I decided I wanted to travel the world, the way she had done when she was in the Army. So, we took our Popup idea to Montreal, New York, San Francisco, Kyoto and Fez. It was magic. We were made to feel so welcome, it really restores your faith in human nature.

Say "Sweet Cheese"!

English cheese is experiencing a revival, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Neal's Yard Dairy. And here in France, I've seen some amazing cheese shop window displays! In the restaurant, I tend to eat cheese every day. We keep it by the passage way, next to the bread. I love Comté, both the winter and summer variations, both ripe and less ripe. I also adore blue cheese. For Sweet Cheese, I've paired Roquefort with chocolate - they're both fermented products with good acidity and underlying flavours of coffee and black cherries. I was aiming for a multi-textured dessert, with the salty, tannic flavours of Roquefort to give it a kick. Combine it with chocolate mousse and it takes on a creamy texture and a much lighter feel; the beetroot sorbet gives a fresh edge, quince goes well with blue cheese and the tuile adds a bit of crunch.

La Mercerie

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SOLID AS A ROQUE

It's said that Charlemagne (742-814) loved it, and we have reliable evidence that in 1411 Charles VI declared it a rich treasure from a barren land; Roquefort cheese has its roots in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, and is made in caves underneath the Combalou Plateau, in the depths of the rocky scree bordering the Grands Causses. With protected status since 1925 and PDO status since 1996, this famous blue-veined cheese is manufactured in a precisely-defined area which includes the Aude, Aveyron, Gard, Hérault, Lozère and Tarn, from the milk of Lacaune sheep. The unpasteurised whole milk is heated and curdled; after cutting and stirring, the firm curd is seeded with penicillium and turned 5 times a day to drain. It is then salted, pierced with needles and finally matured for a minimum of 3 months, spending at least 14 days unwrapped in the natural caves at Roquefort.

ROQUE AROUND THE CHOC

Serves 2
Prep time: 2 hours
Cooking time: 1 hour

Ingredients

For the sorbet
310 g beetroots
270 g water
30 g dextrose
125 g caster sugar
2 g stabiliser (of vegetable origin)
50 ml beetroot juice
85 ml lime juice

For the chocolate and Roquefort foam

20 ml milk
60 g cream (35% fat content)
10 g chestnut honey
35 g 75% chocolate
20 g Roquefort
1½ egg whites

For the semi-dried beetroot

60 g of the beetroot prepared for the sorbet
5 g Roquefort
15 ml water
15 g caster sugar

For the poached quince

500 g quince
100 g caster sugar
400 ml water

For the cacao tuile

5 g unsalted butter
5 ml water
7½ g cacao nibs
5 g flour
15 g icing sugar

Method

Make the beetroot sorbet

Wipe the beetroot and place in a deep, ovenproof dish. Add water to 1/3 of the way up, then season with salt and sugar, cover tightly with aluminium foil and roast in the oven at 170°C for about an hour, until tender. Cool, and rub off the skins. Setting aside 60 g for the semi-dried beetroot, puree the remaining 250 g and chill. Place the dextrose and caster sugar in a pan with the water, heat to 40°C and sprinkle on the stabiliser, whisking constantly for around 5 mins. Heat to 84°C. As soon as it reaches temperature, remove from the heat and cool. Add the pureed beetroot, beetroot juice and sugar syrup to the lime juice. Freeze.

Make the chocolate and Roquefort foam

Boil the milk, cream and butter. Pour onto the chocolate and whisk until melted and glossy. Add the Roquefort, and continue whisking. Add the egg whites and pour into the siphon. Charge with 2 cartridges. Chill in the fridge for about 1 hour.

Make the dried beetroot

Peel the cooked beetroot and chop into fingers. Place the Roquefort in a bowl. Boil the water with the sugar and pour onto the Roquefort; leave to cool. When cool enough, strain through a sieve or piece of muslin. Once the beetroot has cooled, soak the fingers in the Roquefort syrup, place on a baking tray and dry in the oven at 60°C for 4 hours.

Poach the quince

Peel and core the quince and cut into wedges. Boil up the syrup and add the quince. Poach until tender and leave to cool in the syrup.

Make the cacao tuile

Place the butter and water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Pour over the dry ingredients (cacao nibs, flour and icing sugar). Whisk together until smooth then place teaspoonfuls of the mixture on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 7-8 mins at 200°C.

To assemble

Dice the quince and dried beetroot and place in a small bowl. Add a scoop of beetroot sorbet and top with Chocolate and Roquefort foam. Arrange the cacao tuile on top.





MEXICO

BEATRIZ GONZALEZ

“I LOVE SMOOTH CREAMINESS OF BRIE”

Beatriz Gonzalez has all but lived in kitchens since she was 7 years old. The first was her parents' kitchen on the paradise island of Cozumel off the eastern coast of Mexico, where, after leaving the armed forces, her father gave up his previous life to open a top-flight restaurant. Beatriz also threw herself into the new venture. But everything changed when she was 17 and her father sent her to France to study at the Institut Paul Bocuse. She fell in love not only with French cuisine, but also with Matthieu Marcant, who went on to become her husband. He is also her business associate in the two restaurants she now runs in Paris, Neva Cuisine and Coretta. Having trained under Pierre Orsi in Lyon, Alain Senderens at Lucas Carton and Frédéric Robert at La Grande Cascade, Beatriz favours a gourmet bistro style of cooking. Between services, she often snacks on cheese – a piece of Salers, or Comté. A true Mexican, fashioned by France.

What are your memories of childhood?

My parents' restaurant in Mexico was on two floors, and when you went upstairs, you had to go past the kitchen. I can still see the enormous extractor hood in there, and smell all those delicious smells – meat and fish, the spicy tomato sauce being stirred in huge pots, ready to be poured over fish cooked in banana leaves, and the fried tortillas we call tostadas.

How did your parents react when you told them you wanted to be a chef?

My father was astonished. Why would I want to have the same job as they did, when I never used to see them and I'd have to come down to the restaurant to spend time with them? But he knew I had made up my mind, and that I could be stubborn! Then one day he asked me if I still wanted to be a cook, because apparently a famous chef had opened a cookery school in Lyon – one of the best, he said. He thought that I would come back and take over their restaurant, but I fell in love with France. My father has always supported me in everything, and encouraged me to open my own restaurant when I would have just carried on working for the big names.

What was it like to leave your roots?

In Mexico we have big families, so to be all alone at school, not speaking the language, was very tough. But even in my first placements I realised that when I was told to 'do this, fetch that,' I had to do it. I had to learn and understand, or they would simply replace me.

How would you describe your cooking style?

It's a blend of my background and all the flavours I've encountered in my life so far. People who know me all know my food has a bit of a kick to it. They're not your everyday flavours, but they're very precisely structured.

How is cheese used in Mexican cuisine?

People do eat cheese, but it isn't as tasty as the French product. We have some fairly neutral cheeses, used mainly for garnish or melted; for instance in quesadillas, the Mexican savoury snack of choice.

Say "Sweet Cheese"!

When Sweet Cheese called me, I was thrilled because I love challenges, but it also gave me the chance to work as part of a team. Without a good team behind them, a chef is nothing. We all chipped in, but the pun was my husband's idea. As a child, my two favourite desserts were crème caramel and rice pudding – although in Mexico we don't make it with cinnamon like in France, and we add candied fruit or citrus. Matthieu's play on words gave us the idea of replacing the milk and sugar with Brie. I like all French cheese, but I really love the smooth creaminess of Brie. It coats the rice as it cooks, giving it a lovely sheen. I could have served it in a bowl, just to admire its glossy appearance; but I thought I'd refresh it with apple in three different textures – raw, dried and jellied. Any Mexican would eat this without a second thought!

Coretta

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EASY BRIEZY!

There isn't just one type of Brie – there are plenty of variations. Brie de Meaux (which can be truffled) and Brie de Melun are the best known, and the only two to have PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) status; but there's also Brie de Montereau, Nangis or Provins, not to mention the distinctive Brie Noir (Black Brie), which is aged for 6-12 months. The two PDO Bries are made from whole, unpasteurised cow's milk and manufactured in the eastern part of the Paris basin - Seine-et-Marne and part of Yonne and Aube for Brie de Melun, and part of Marne, Meuse and Haute-Marne for Brie de Meaux. The milk is seeded with rennet, and the resulting curd is cut, sliced or stirred to bring the whey to the surface, then cast into moulds and drained. After draining, the cheese is turned out. The wheels (27-28 cm for Melun and 36-37 cm for Meaux) are salted with dry salt, sprayed with penicillin to give a bloomy rind, and matured for 4-8 weeks (Meaux) or 4-12 weeks (Melun).



EASY BRIEZY!

Serves 4

Prep time: 1½ hours

Cooking time: 45 min

Ingredients

For the apple tuile

1 Granny Smith apple

For the lime powder

1 lime

For the rice pudding

1 l milk

5 tbsps sugar

250 g Brie de Meaux

100 g Arborio rice

For the apple glaze

40 leaves of gelatine

½ litre water

½ litre apple juice

For the tuile batter

2 egg whites

65 g butter

125 g icing sugar

65 g flour

To assemble

(Quantities to taste)

1 Granny Smith apple

Olive oil

1 lime

Salt

Pepper

1 punnet pea shoots

Edible tagette flowers

Method

The day before, make the apple tuile and lime powder

Using a mandoline, slice the apple thinly, place on a baking tray and dry in the oven overnight, at 50°C.

With a peeler, remove the lime zest and dry in the oven overnight at 50°C.

Cook the rice pudding

Boil the milk with the sugar and the Brie. Add the rice and lower the heat. Simmer over a gentle heat until the milk in the pan is level with the rice. Cool.

Apple glaze

Soak the gelatine in cold water for 5 mins to soften. Remove the softened gelatine leaves and drain, gently squeezing out any excess water.

Dissolve over a low heat and set aside to cool. Heat up the water and apple juice and add the dissolved gelatine. Cool.

Make the tuile batter

Blend all the ingredients in a Pacojet (professional grade ice-cream maker/blender), or whisk together in a round-bottomed basin to make a smooth dough. Spread over a non-stick baking mat and with a cookie-cutter, cut out 4 circles, 4 cm in diameter.

Milk foam

Strain the cooked, cooled rice (step 2) through a sieve. Set the rice aside, and place the milk into a siphon. Charge with 1 cartridge to make soft clouds of foam on the plate. Set aside.

Make rice pudding spheres

Use a mould to make spheres of rice pudding. Prick the spheres all over with a cocktail stick and place in the freezer. When frozen, soak each sphere individually with the apple glaze at 23°C.

To assemble

Arrange 3 rice spheres on a plate to make a semicircle.

Add 2 circles of tuile batter, one between the spheres and the other placed against the middle sphere. Slice the apple using a mandoline. Season with olive oil and a few drops of lime; add a pinch of salt and pepper. Top with apple chips and apple slices. To finish, garnish with pea shoots and tagette flowers.





LEBANON

OMAR KOREITEM

“CHEESE IS PART OF WHO I AM”

Omar Koreitem was born in Lebanon, but came to France as a baby. He discovered a passion for cooking at the age of 31 and took his first culinary steps in New York under Daniel Boulud. As a commis chef coordinating canapés, he would often prepare a thousand or more items for each service. It was a case of in at the deep end – but a very good way to learn the basics and to understand the rigour required. Discipline was no more relaxed under Gordon Ramsay in London, where Omar stayed for two years before returning to France with his wife Moko, lawyer-turned-pastry-chef, who had also embarked on her new career relatively late. In 2015, they opened Mokonuts, a high-end lunch destination where the cuisine is spontaneous, combining the influences of both partners. Cheese is a popular ingredient in Lebanese cooking, and has a very special place here.

What are your childhood memories of cooking?

I arrived in France in 1975, when I was one year old. My food memories are a bit of a mixture; my sisters and I ate French food at school and Lebanese food at home. My father loved making traditional Lebanese dishes with plenty of spice.

How did you become a chef?

Even though I was immersed in a culture where food was very important, I came to cooking quite late in life. I was 31, and after studying Political Science, I worked at City Hall in New York. That’s where I met my wife Moko, who’s originally from Japan. She was a lawyer at the time, and it was food that brought us together. At 31, I decided to become a chef; at 36, she became a pâtissier.

Tell us about your restaurant

At Mokonuts it’s just Moko and me with two kitchen assistants. We’re open during the week, from breakfast through to early evening. Our idea was to create a warm, casual environment like you’d have at home, but then add our experiences of fine dining. Ultimately, we cook the things we like to eat. We add something of ourselves, of our own tastes – a touch of Lebanon, a

touch of Japan – but it’s not fusion. It’s more a market-led cuisine; it changes from day to day, according to what’s in season, and to what we like ourselves.

What role does cheese play in your native country?

There aren’t many cheeses in Lebanon. They’re usually imported from Cyprus, Armenia, Turkey or Bulgaria. The cheeses we do have are often used in sweet dishes, like the dessert I’ve re-imagined for Sweet Cheese, or in knefeh, a double layered cheesecake – cheese topped with a semolina crust, baked in the oven and doused with syrup.

Are you a cheese lover?

There’s always cheese in our home. I go to Japan with Moko quite often, and French cheese costs a fortune there. Not many Japanese people eat it. After a week I miss it so much I practically come out in a rash! It’s a deep-down need, it’s part of who I am, and I need to eat it regularly. I love all cheese. Gruyère is my favourite to cook with, but I like strong, runny cheeses with subtle flavours; I love Mont d’Or, Saint-Marcellin and Saint-Félicien.

Say “Sweet Cheese”!

When I was asked to use French cheese to create a dessert reflecting my country, I immediately thought of Halawet El Jibn. It’s even the Arabic for Sweet Cheese! In Lebanon they use Akawi, or the cheese of Saint Jean d’Acre, which looks a bit like mozzarella but is less salty and melts easily on cooking. I’ve replaced it with Mont d’Or, one of my personal favourites. It has a very distinctive flavour when you heat it – which we often do in France, before adding truffles, nuts or honey. I like the texture it has also when it’s cooked. The Lebanese are generally very open to new flavours but don’t like tinkering with tradition, so as long as we don’t call it Halawet El Jibn, they’ll love it!

Mokonuts

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BOXING CLEVER

Mont d'Or has been made in the Haut-Doubs area since the end of the Middle Ages, although the first written evidence of its existence – a letter signed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau – stems from 1764. Originally called “wood,” “cream” or “boxed” cheese, it eventually became known as Vacherin du Haut-Doubs, or Mont d'Or (not to be confused with its Swiss cousin Vacherin Mont d'Or, or simply Vacherin). Mont d'Or is a soft cheese, awarded AOC status in 1981 and PDO in 1996, made from the milk of Montbeliarde and French Simmental cows grazing in mountain pastures some 700m above sea level. It is only made between September 10th and May 10th. Rennet is added to the milk, curds are formed and the temperature is raised to 40°C. The curds are cut and stirred, then filled into cylindrical stainless-steel moulds for pressing. The pressed curd is turned out of its mould, sliced into wheels and bound, by hand, with a strap (sangle) of spruce bark. The straps are harvested by specialists known as sangliers.

A LEVANTINE DESSERT

Serves 2

Prep time: 1 hour

Cooking time: 15 mins

Ingredients

For the grapefruit syrup

Zest of 1 grapefruit
100 g sugar
200 g grapefruit juice

For the dough

200 g sugar
350 ml water
2 g saffron
130 g semolina
250 g Mont d'Or

Method

To assemble

250 g cow's milk curd
1 grapefruit
Ground pistachios
Dried edible rose buds

Make the grapefruit syrup

Peel the zest from the grapefruit and cut into fine strips. Blanch the zest 3 times in boiling water, changing the water each time. Place the sugar and grapefruit juice in a saucepan over a low heat. Add the strips of zest and simmer until candied.

Make the dough

In a saucepan, gently heat the sugar, water and saffron until the sugar is completely dissolved. Without removing from the heat, add the semolina to the syrup, whisking as you go. Add the Mont d'Or and continue to stir, this time with a rubber spatula, until you have a smooth dough similar to choux pastry. Turn the dough out onto non-stick kitchen paper and roll out into a rectangle half a centimetre thick. Set aside to cool.

To assemble

Cut the dough into 8 cm wide strips. Pipe or spoon the curds and diced grapefruit into the centre of each strip. Roll up the dough to make a sausage shape; glaze with the grapefruit syrup, and sprinkle with ground pistachios and edible dried rosebuds.





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8



9



10

1 Kristin Frederick

4 Chef Anto

6 Sugio Yamaguchi

9 Omar Koreitem

2 Harry Cummins

5 Mathew Hegarty

7 Samuel Lee Sum

10 Beatriz Gonzalez

3 Elsa Marie

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