

Antonelli's Cheese Shop brings artisan cheese to Hyde Park

By Addie Broyles | Thursday, February 11, 2010, 04:17 PM

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John and Kendall Antonelli know that **Antonelli's Cheese Shop**, their artisan cheese store at 4220 Duval Street that opened today, won't have the biggest cheese selection in town — after all, the overflowing cheese counters at Central Market and Whole Foods are within five miles of their Hyde Park location — but they are hoping to offer cheese lovers a more intimate cheese-buying experience.

They know exactly how it feels to stand in front of hundreds of exotic-sounding cheeses and not know where to start. Three years ago, John was a certified public accountant and Kendall was working for a nonprofit. They were enamored with cheese, but mainly, they wanted to start a business where they could work together. On their honeymoon, John pitched an idea: What about starting a cheese business? Without hesitation, Kendall agreed.

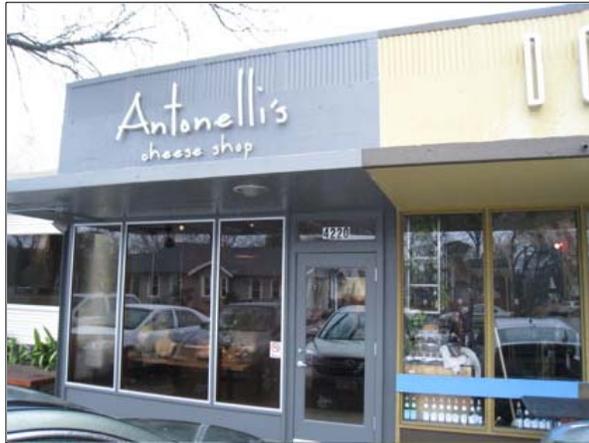


They've spent the last two years learning everything they could about cheese including what it takes to start a small-scale store. They visited Europe and followed the "fromage" signs on the side of the road to find cheesemakers who would become their teachers. John even interned in the caves of rural France to discover how terroir affects aging cheese.

"We cold-called cheesemongers across the country and not one person hung up the phone on us," she said on opening day. "The cheese community has been wonderful to us."



In addition to between 75 and 100 different kinds of cheeses, the Antonellis are also selling wine, charcuterie, crackers, chocolate, olives and other foods that you'd need for a cheese tasting party at your house. You'll also find several Texas cheeses, including those from CKC Farms, Veldhuizen, Brazos Valley and Pola, in the refrigerated case.



After they get their legs under them, the Antonellis hope to start guided tastings and classes on Thursday nights to help customers learn even more about the complex world of cheese. "The thing with cheese is education. Teaching people about cheese and letting them try it before they buy it is so important," John Antonelli said. "Telling people about the story behind the cheese and what makes it so special That's what we wanted to do."

(4220 Duval Street, 531-9610. Open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday.)