



Ain't Nothing Wrong with the Blues...

While we hear a lot of common "likes" and "dislikes" across the cheese case, no category of cheese is more polarizing and divisive than perhaps the blue cheeses. As cheesemongers, we'll be passing out samples and tastings, working our way through the case in order of our seven major styles of cheese (fresh, bloomy&soft-ripened, washed-rind, semi-soft, firm, hard, blue) when all of sudden, we approach that seventh tasting, and our guests clench up, face wrinkled in preemptive disgust, at the mere suggestion of trying a blue cheese. (Of course, many of you are die-hard blue cheese fans - but then you already know the glorious virtues of tasting a decadent blue cheese!) If you're in the former group, fear not!

What exactly makes a blue cheese blue? The most simplified answer is that it has *Penicillium roqueforti* or a derivation of that mold strain in it. Often, this mold strain is introduced into the milk during the initial stages of making cheese. Later, once the cheese is formed, it is pierced (either by hand or mechanically); then those blue lines (or "veins") begin to form and appear inside the cheese where oxygen meets the molds in the paste (meaning that the more piercings there are, the more air gets into the cheese, and the more blue veining there will be present). Some cheeses have naturally-occurring blue mold; others are never pierced but through natural pockets in the cheese may develop blue veining from the ambient environment in the cheese aging facility; lastly, some develop that blue mold on the outside but are never pierced and therefore never develop those blue veins inside it. Just like trying to describe any style of cheese, this is a very generalized description of how blue cheese becomes "blue" (or green, yellow-blue, etc!) and in no way is characteristic of all blue cheeses, nor does it do justice to the amount of labor and love that goes into creating a distinct blue cheese.

Blue Cheeses are not all the same and most definitely do not all taste like those standard, packaged blue cheese crumbles you may be thinking of. Instead, they are as varied and nuanced as any other category of cheese, and assuming they all taste the same would be the same as stating that a clothbound cheddar tastes the same as a mountain-style cheese because they are both firm or that a fresh chevre tastes the same as mozzarella because they both fall in the fresh category. We often get asked, "What's the difference in Gorgonzola, Roquefort, and Blue Cheese?" First and foremost, Gorgonzola and Roquefort are blue cheeses, they just happen to be very specific ones. Gorgonzola, made with cow's milk, comes from the Lombardy region of Italy and the greenish veining is a result of the *Penicillium glaucum* mold strain. Roquefort, made with sheep's milk, is produced in one specific area and aged in the Cambalou caves in France. From creamy to crumbly, lactic to meaty, easy-going to punch-you-in-the-throat salty, and with varying degrees of that tickling peppery feeling, every blue cheese has its own distinctive character.

Featuring Blue Cheeses

Hopelessly Blue, an award-winning cheese made by Pure Luck Farm & Dairy in Dripping Springs, is what we like to call our "gateway" blue because it is a great cheese for those who are hesitant of strong blue cheeses. It is creamy and mild and truly one of the gems of Texas cheese, having received awards in 2010 and 2011 including Best Goat's Milk Blue cheese in America.

Deep Ellum Blue is a surface-laced blue cheese and is one of those unique cheeses which can fall into a variety of cheese styles or families. The outside is rubbed early on with olive oil and scored to allow the blue mold to develop on the outside. Look for a wonderful refreshing tanginess with just a hint of blue in this cheese from the Mozzarella Cheese Company out of Dallas.

Roquefort is a quintessential French blue cheese made for centuries exclusively in the Aveyron district of south central France. The use of sheep's milk makes this a rich, decadent blue. Not all Roquefort cheeses are created equal and we favor Roquefort Carles, a perfectly-balanced, utterly spectacular hand-ladled blue.

So, if you (think you) have an aversion to blue cheese, come taste through our blue selection. Just let your cheesemonger know you'd like to start with one of our "gateway" blues, and let us handle the rest!

Cheesily Yours,
Kendall & John
Kelly, Brad, Courtney, Paul, and Victoria



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