



The Essential Art of Affinage

Before a cheese makes it into our case, it generally (not always the case) must go through a maturation period, which, depending on a particular product is calculated in weeks, months or years. This process is known as Affinage and is an integral component to creating the incredible depth of flavors and varied characteristics that we find throughout the world of artisanal cheese. It is important to note that aging/maturation does not suggest merely the passage of time, but, instead is a dedicated commitment to caring for the needs of each individual wheel of cheese in an effort to reach the perfect ripeness.

Affinage is typically performed by the cheesemaker themselves, who care for their cheese in temperature and humidity controlled environments to encourage the development of molds or the release of moisture and subsequent breakdown of proteins and fats before delivering the product to market. In circumstances where the cheesemaker is unable to perform this role or chooses not to, there are specialized individuals in the cheese world whose primary role is to select wheels that are young or immature and age them in their unique facilities. Affineurs are masters in both art and science and through years of practice and adjustment have developed an approach to each cheese that is in line with the original goals of the cheesemakers. Affineurs aging facilities are designed in such a way as to create the perfect environment, including temperature controls, air flow, humidity, and ambient mold growth for the cheeses they plan to manage. In a way, these facilities, cave or not, become assets for the Affineur that cannot be replicated elsewhere thus giving a distinct difference to the products sold by the ager.

Affineurs have played essential roles in the cheese world for much of history. Affineurs often work directly with small farmers who 1) do not have the financial means to age cheese and require immediately liquidity (think about the financial resources required to hold and tend to an 80lb wheel of cheese for two years!), and 2) do not have the facilities to store cheese for the long term. In addition, Affineurs can develop relationships with markets and cheesemongers to streamline the distribution and marketing efforts required to sell the cheese to consumers at the perfect ripeness. Some Affineurs like Marcel Petit will focus their efforts on one cheese like Comte; others like Rolf Beeler will focus on a larger subset or style like Alpine cheese. The Cellars of Jasper Hill focuses on regional cheeses (Vermont and New Hampshire) and Herve Mons ages cheese from all families of cheese throughout France. We here at Antonelli's Cheese Shop work with many Affineurs throughout the world to find and select the finest cheeses to share with you. Come in and ask us for some samples.

New Cheese

Cutting into a wheel of Gruyere is a spiritual moment for any cheesemonger. Slicing through the middle of seventy pounds of cheese for the first time can be intimidating, especially if the folks helping you continue to call you Mike Tyson (I'll never forget my time in France in Herve's caves and watching the two halves of cheese split apart from the wheel I had just cut). The smell, and subsequent bite, is a beautiful treat. Well, this week was Cheesemonger Brad's chance for the first - and this wasn't just any Gruyere. **Rolf Beeler's Gruyere** is considered one of the finest examples in the world. Each wheel is aged between 16 and 18 months depending on how long the batch takes to develop the intended flavor profile. At this age, the quality of the raw milk that is used really shines through. Rolf is a master cheese Affineur based in Switzerland and selects and finishes a number of incredible Alpine cheeses, some of which he collaborated on to develop the original recipe. We are thrilled to debut this amazing cheese in our case. Come getcha' some while it lasts!

Cheese-y Events & News

The Austin Food & Wine Alliance recently announced that it will award \$20,000 in grants (one at \$10,000 and two at \$5,000) to support chefs, farmers, wine-, beer- and spirit-makers, artisan producers and food-focused nonprofits based on culinary innovation and community giveback. The application process opened September 11 and extends until

midnight on October 19, 2012. Grant applications and more info on the Austin Food & Wine Alliance are available [online](#).

Have an email topic you'd like us to write about or have a cheese-y question that keeps you up at night? Let us know and we'll see if we can put those questions to rest.

Cheesily Yours,

John & Kendall

Kelly, Brad, Courtney, Paul, Victoria, & Dan



ring vs 512 531 9610
visit vs Tues-Sat 11-7 | Sun 12-5 | Closed Mon
4220 Duval St, Austin, TX 78751

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