



## **Antonelli's USA Cheese Tour Part One: Bradley's Recap on Wisconsin**

After a few months of the unrelenting Texas summer, John and I walked out of the airport in Madison and each took a long sniff of the fresh, cool (by Texas standards!), Wisconsin air. A pleasant warmth from a sun that suddenly seemed friendly, and the sweet-scented breeze welcomed us America's Dairyland. Before I knew it, I found myself at a table on the second floor of Madison's The Old Fashioned with a group of veteran cheese professionals and food writers, sitting directly across the table from THE Joe Widmer- the guy whose 10 Year Cheddar is the definition of "sharp" in my mind. You can see how all of this would be a little intimidating for a new cheesemonger. Any anxiety I had floating around was laid to rest, though, after hearing Mr. Widmer talk about being a 3rd generation Wisconsin cheesemaker, and eating a heroic helping of cheese (a common theme at every stop we were to make on our tour).

Though each producer we visited on the trip had their own ideas and ways of doing things, they all shared a seemingly antithetical mix of pride and humility: pride in the work that they do and the cheeses they create, and a down-to-earth, unpretentious attitude. Master Cheesemaker Myron Olson of the Chalet Cheese Cooperative made it clear that cheesemakers in Wisconsin are listening to their customers rather than their critics, and his perfectly pungent Limburger cheese is a testament to that very attitude. Producers like Chris Roelli of Roelli Cheese and Sid Cook of Carr Valley Cheese echo that philosophy while admitting to making certain sacrifices so they can produce precisely the cheese they want. Roelli's minimally-veined blue cheese, Dunbarton Blue, is exactly the way he wants it; whereas Sid Cook's Billy Blue is, in his own words, his favorite blue cheese.

You couldn't help but notice the copious amounts of both creativity and passion amongst the producers we visited. Paraphrasing Andy Hatch at Uplands Cheese, American cheesemakers may not have the same history and tradition as certain European producers of name-controlled cheeses, but neither are they hampered by such a strict atmosphere. Having my olfactory system smacked around (in a very good way) by Tony Hook's washed-rind Stinky Føtene or his hybrid washed-rind/blue, Tilston Point, was proof enough of that; as was Upland's mixed and cross-bred herd of cows (who might just be the happiest cows you'll ever meet).

Finally, and perhaps most dramatically, there is a sense of community and camaraderie here. I wasn't expecting it, but it seemed that every producer we visited was carrying the cheeses of their "competitors." You can find Chalet's Limburger on the shelves of Roelli's shop, and Dunbarton Blue at Hook's Cheese, and Pleasant Ridge Reserve at Cedar Grove, where Master Cheesemaker Bob Wills helps new cheesemakers establish themselves by allowing them to use his facility (including Mike Gingrich, founder of Uplands Cheese). A great deal of thanks is owed to our hosts and hostesses at the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board for their generous hospitality; to Joe and Joey Widmer for taking the time to talk with us; to everyone at Chalet, Roelli, Hook's, Uplands, Cedar Grove, and Carr Valley for welcoming us into their facilities and showing us around; and to the group of all the incredibly interesting and passionate cheese people on the tour with us (Hi guys!

Come visit us in Austin when you get the chance!).

### **New Cheeses**

Keep an eye out as we start to get in some of the Wisconsin cheeses we tasted on the tour. In the meantime, here are some new cheeses (or returns) to the case.

Epoisses is a perennial favorite of fans of strong smelling cheese. This cow's milk cheese hails from Burgundy and has been made in the small town of Epoisses since the late 1700s. Each wheel is washed in a brine for several weeks then finished with wine or brandy, insuring a spoonable paste when eaten.

Julianna is our newest cheese from Capriole and cheesemaker Julianna Sedli out of Indiana. This collaboration cheese is a "sport" - a botanical term describing a part of a plant which shows morphological differences from the rest of the plant- of Old Kentucky Tomme. The result of their experiment is a cheese that is firm and nutty like Tomme de Savoie with an herbed rind like Fleur de Maquis.

Nestled amongst the châteaux of the Loire Valley and the Bordeaux vineyards lies the Poitou-Charentes region of France, the home of Tomme de Chevre, a washed-rind goat cheese. This cheese exhibits only a moderate pungency, and has nutty, sea salty, and bready flavors which will pair perfectly with hard ciders.

### **Cheese Tasting Events!**

Sunday, September 25 (4-6pm): Come join us for a Cheese & Wine Pairing event at Pilot Knob Vineyard. Explore why many refer to this combination as a "match made in heaven!" Cheesemonger John will take you through a selection of artisan cheeses that have been perfectly paired with Pilot Knob Vineyard wines. Learn how to pair textures and flavors of cheese to wine. Come learn, enjoy, and have some "cheesy" fun at Pilot Knob Vineyard! Space is limited, so call early at 512.489.2999 to purchase your \$35 tickets.

Thursday, September 29 (7-8:30pm): We're teaming up with the Conarkos at Con Olio to pair cheese with various balsamic vinegars. The \$40 ticket not only covers your evening of cheese and balsamics, but also a taste of a 50+ year old balsamic, other accoutrements, and complimentary wine samples. Call Con Olio to book your seat to this limited space tasting: 512.342.2344.

Cheesily Yours,  
Bradley  
John, Kendall, Kelly, Shawn, and Courtney

Antonelli's Cheese Shop  
4220 Duval Street  
Austin, TX 78751  
(512)531-9610

Mon: Closed  
Tues - Sat: 11am to 7pm  
Sun: 12pm to 5pm

Web: [www.antonellischeese.com](http://www.antonellischeese.com)  
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