



ACS 2012 WINNING CHEESE PLATE

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St. Petersburg, FL

- ★ [Truffle Tremor](#) from Cypress Grove Chevre
- ★ [Red Hawk](#) from Cowgirl Creamery
- ★ [Harbison](#) from Cellars at Jasper Hill
- ★ [Barely Buzzed](#) from Beehive Cheese Co.
- ★ [Ewe's Blue](#) from Old Chatham Shepherding Co.

★ TRUFFLE TREMOR, CYPRESS GROVE CHEVRE (CA)

On this plate we can skip right past the bland and boring and jump right into big and bold flavors. This goat cheese is sublime. I love the diversity of texture between the rind, its adjacent creamy layer, and the denser inner paste. As a lover of all truffle-flavored cheeses, I think this one shows a great intensity of natural and authentic truffle flavor within the framework of a cheese that would be great in its own right.

Wine Pairing: For this cheese, I like a dry chenin blanc like *L'Ecole #41* (Columbia Valley, WA). It's rich and complex enough to stand up to all that truffle flavor, yet clean enough not to mask the flavors of the cheese. For the mother of all dry chenins, try *N Joly's Savennieres "Clos de la Coulée de Serrant"* (Loire Valley, France).

Beer Pairing: *Schneider Weisse* (Bavaria, Germany). This cheese can handle a bigger beer, but this lightly-hopped classic amber wheat has enough depth of flavor to really enhance and showcase the cheese without getting in its way.

★ RED HAWK, COWGIRL CREAMERY (CA)

The very idea of a triple-cream cheese with a washed rind is a hedonist's dream come true. If only it could also somehow be blue! I'm a big fan of the funk and though it's subtle here, this one delivers a beautiful orange tinge to its rind and just enough barnyard aroma to entice and not offend. Its unctuous center brings forth waves of umami richness and sautéed mushroom flavors. I can't help eating too much of this one!

Wine Pairing: Alsatian Gewurztraminer in an off-dry style like *Albert Mann's*. The richness of the wine matches the richness in the cheese. A touch of sweetness in the wine offsets any bitterness in the rind and tames the saltiness of the cheese.

Beer Pairing: *Brasserie D'Achouffe's "Houblon Chouffe"* is a Belgian Triple/IPA hybrid. The full body and intensity of the beer matches that of the cheese, while the hoppy bitterness cuts through the fat and cleans the palate between bites.

★ HARBISON, CELLARS AT JASPER HILL (VT)

The spruce bark wrapping isn't just for looks. It imparts a wonderful and woodsy smokiness to the cheese, which carries an incredible depth of flavor reminiscent of grilled meat and wild mushrooms. When ripe, this is a spoonable delight that is likely to improve the flavor of just about any food lucky enough to be smeared with it.



Wine pairing: For something to really complement those smoky flavors, I'd choose *Bodegas Volver Tempranillo* (La Mancha, Spain). Its forward fruit and soft tannins will not overwhelm. You can also pair it well with a Grenache-based wine from either France or Spain.

Beer Pairing: American IPA's with piney hop flavors will go well with the woody spruce flavors in this cheese. Try *Weyerbacher's "Double Simcoe IPA"* (PA). This is a full-bodied India Pale Ale with the exact hop characteristics that truly define the above style.

★ BARELY BUZZED, BEEHIVE CHEESE CO. (UT)

I'm usually not one for flavored cheeses, but this one is exceptional. This Irish-style cheddar rubbed with coffee is both unique and delicious. Buttery flavors and a light sweetness in the cheese are contrasted with the bitterness of the coffee rub.

Wine Pairing: *Concha y Toro's "Marques de Casa Concha" Carmenere* (Peumo, Chile). Chilean Carmeñere can display nice tannin structure and some terrific mocha flavors, which meld beautifully with the coffee flavors in the cheese.

Beer Pairing: *Cigar City's "Cubano Espresso" Brown Ale* (FL). Most espresso-flavored beers are based on stout. Because a lighter brown ale is used as its base, it won't overwhelm the subtle flavors of the cheese and really showcases the espresso used (which happens to be roasted at my workplace, Mazzaro's Italian Market!)

★ EWE'S BLUE, OLD CHATHAM SHEEPHERDING CO. (NY)

How can you go wrong with a sheep's milk blue? By definition, it is a tribute to Roquefort. I should tell you that blues are my favorites and that Roquefort is my favorite blue. Get the picture?

Wine Pairing: Let's stay away from the usual suspects and go with one of my Italian favorites: *Donnafugata's "Ben Rye" Passito di Pantelleria*. This is made with dried grapes from a tiny island located off the west coast of Sicily. The wine shows flavors of figs, dates, raisins and beautifully contrasts the sharp and salty flavors of the cheese.

Beer pairing: *Baladin's Xyayu*. This is an extravagant barley wine from a producer that's not only pushing the envelope for Italian beer, but for craft beer in general. Italy is now making some of the most interesting craft beer on the planet, to rival even the U.S. or Belgium. This elixir is viscous, sweet, and port-like, with flavors of dates, molasses, toffee and caramel. With amazingly similar qualities, it pairs with the blue for the same reasons as the above dessert wine. For a more affordable alternative, try *Victory's "Old Horizontal"* (PA).

About the American Cheese Society (ACS): ACS is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of farmstead, artisan and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. At 1,500 members strong, ACS provides advocacy, education, business development, and networking opportunities for cheesemakers, retailers, enthusiasts, and extended industry. ACS strives to continually raise the quality and availability of cheese in the Americas.

Since its founding in 1983, ACS proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned annual cheese judging and competition. The 2013 ACS Conference & Competition will be held in Madison, WI from July 31-August 3, 2013. For more information, visit www.cheesesociety.org.