



Tomme Crayeuse

Savoie, France

Made from pasteurized cow's milk, this cheese is named for its texture: "crayeuse" means "chalky," and that is exactly how it is supposed to be. It is first aged in a humid, warm cave that speeds up the ripening, producing a soft, creamy exterior. Then it is moved to a cool, dry cave for finishing and that preserves its chalky interior. The rind is mottled and intriguing, with spots of grey-white and yellow. The flavor is toasty and mushroomy, varying from center to rind. It is its chalky texture, though, that makes this cheese perfectly suited to this lean, mineral-laden wine.

Wine Pairing: 2008 Luciano Landi Verdicchio, Castelli de Jesi, Marche, Italy



Tomme Haute Savoie

Haute-Savoie, France

The "Upper Savoy" is a distinct region of the French Alps, next to the Savoie (Savoy) which lies directly south. It borders Switzerland and Lake Geneva, and up in those alpine mountains the pastures are lush, which makes for wonderful milk from the cows that feed there. This cheese is deceptively simple. It has a natural rind and a milky, clean flavor, but its flavor profile grows as you try it alongside this wine and as it warms in the mouth. Local cheesemaker Andante Dairy made this particular wheel when she visited the Haute-Savoie in December, which makes it extra-special.

Wine Pairing: 2008 Dominique Cornin Mâcon Chaintré, Burgundy, France



Cantal

Auvergne, France

Named after the mountains of the region where it is produced, this unpasteurized cow's milk cheese is one of the oldest cheeses produced in France, dating back to ancient Roman times. It has strict AOC rules for its production. For Cantal, the milk of Salers cows that are fed on hay (15 November to 15 April) is used; the summer milk of the same cows grazing on mountain meadows makes a different (Salers) cheese. Cantal is dense, buttery and earthy, with a Cheddar-like consistency and flavor.

Wine Pairing: 2007 Luis Pato Casta Baga, Bairrada, Portugal



Barber's Reserve Cheddar

Somerset, England

First made in the early 1800s, this pasteurized cow's milk cheddar is still made in the traditional way by skilled cheddar producers on the 2,500 acres of prime dairy land owned by the Barber family. The milk comes from their own 2,000-plus head of dairy cattle and the operation is managed by the sixth generation of Barbers. The starter culture for this cheese comes from the naturally occurring bacteria in the milk and is carefully guarded. The cheese has a fudge-like consistency and a deep, rich flavor that works beautifully with the Tempranillo.

Wine Pairing: 2008 Robledo "Seven Brothers" Tempranillo, Lake County, California