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cheese-fest,
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HK MAGAZINE NO.948 FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2012 www.hk-magazine.com

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Hong Kong has plenty of shops that carry quality, artisanal cheese—if you know where to look.



Monsieur Chatte is a master stockist of French cheeses.

Homage to Fromage

Brian Yap shows you where to get top European cheeses in Hong Kong.



The Cheese Room at Classified stocks an impressive selection of British cheese.



A block of Gouda from The Dutch Cheese and More.



They go well with wine and crackers, and are an awesome snack on their own or as an after-meal treat—but cheeses come in such a dizzying array of varieties and flavors that sometimes it's hard to keep track. Mostly a European-dominated specialty (although some American and Japanese cheeses are nothing to sniff at), cheeses from each country are as distinct as the region they're produced in. From hard to soft and from mild to strong, no matter what your taste there's a country—and a shop in Hong Kong—that's got what you need.

Go Dutch

The Dutch Cheese and More, selling authentic Dutch cheeses, is the first of its kind in Hong Kong. The simple interior with straightforward layout makes cheese-shopping uncomplicated and hassle-free. The shop offers a wide range of high-quality cheeses from the province of North Holland, from which the internationally acclaimed circular bricks of Gouda cheese originate. Dutch Gouda cheeses (which should be distinguished from imitation Goudas made outside of the Netherlands) are rated in terms of texture, flavor and hardness, and are best paired with wines straight from breweries in South Africa, such as merlot, cabernet sauvignon and chenin blanc. "Unlike other goat cheeses produced in western and southern Europe, the ones sourced from farmhouses in northern Holland are made with natural rennet, a substance used for thickening milk, and thus are suitable for vegetarians," says store manager Fanny Cheung. The shop adds a bit of spice to its cheese collection by introducing two funky flavors: pesto and chili. The pesto cheese is a delicious blend of cheese and herbs, and has a hint of garlic and basil, while the chili cheese contains chili bits that give it a touch of Asian flavor.

Dutch Cheese and More, G/F, 232 Queen's Rd. Central, Sheung Wan, 3543-0081.

Formidable Formaggio

Viva Italia is a local gourmet specialist in Italian food products and wines, and stocks a wide selection of cheeses imported directly from Italy. Open for seven years, the store has gradually expanded its cheese stock beyond the world-famous Parmigiano-Reggiano, or Parmesan cheese, and the Campania-made mozzarella, to incorporate other homegrown brands such as Casilli-made Provolone, Gorgonzola and Pecorino. All of these are hard cheeses that have been fully pasteurized and aged for a period of 18 to 36 months to keep the flavor and freshness locked in. Some of the key



characteristics of Italian cheeses are their relative firmness and purity, as it's an uncommon practice to add extra ingredients to enhance their flavor. "Gorgonzola and Reggiano are some of the favorites among local customers, as they can be served whole or in bits with salads or a glass of red wine," says sales and marketing manager Anthony Wong.

Viva Italia, Shop K3-4, UG/F, Olympian City 1, 11 Hoi Fai Rd., Tai Kok Tsui, 2271-4103.

British Breeds

The Cheese Room at Classified specializes in a worldwide selection of wines and cheeses, but stocks more than 70 farmhouse dairy brands that originate mainly from Britain. Some of its signature cheeses include the Colston Basset Stilton (a blue cheese)—with a rich and mineral flavor and a slick texture that goes well with a tawny glass of port wine. For something chewy and crunchy, adventurous cheese eaters should give the Montgomery's Cheddar a whirl for its unexpectedly nutty and grainy texture.

The Cheese Room, Shop 1, G/F, 108 Hollywood Rd., Sheung Wan, 2525-3454.

French Flavors

Monsieur Chatte has a way of luring just about everyone into its tranquil, retro-style shop. An aromatic selection of top-quality French cheeses lines the display cases, complemented by rows of red and white wines stacked on wooden racks and framed pictures of early 20th-century France on the walls. The shop's cheese stock, comprised entirely of cow, goat, sheep's milk and blue cheeses, is imported directly from Auvergne and Midi-Pyrenees, as well as other regions in France. For both the discerning French cheese lover and the first-time cheese eater, the store has an extensive range of hard and soft cow's milk cheeses with different levels of flavor intensity, as well as a decent selection of mild-tasting goat and sheep's milk cheeses. "Some of the most popular cheeses among [our] customers are the comté, which is aged for 24 months without pasteurization, as well as Langres from the Champagne-Ardenne region, whose crust is washed with white wine and goes exceptionally well with champagne," says shop manager Bonnie Chan. Additionally, Normandy's camembert, which is unpasteurized and rich in flavor, and one of the shop's signature blue cheeses, Bleu d'Auvergne, which has a relatively light flavor, go extremely well with a glass of dessert or white wine.

All Monsieur Chatte outlets, including 121 Bonham Strand, Sheung Wan, 3105-8077.

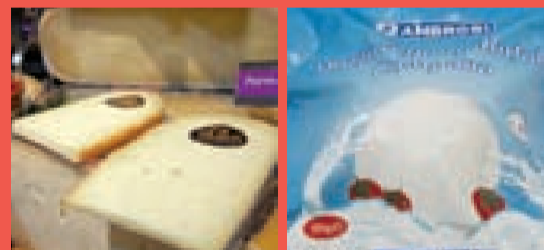
Spanish Flair

Pata Negra House is a cozy store with classic Iberian décor that resembles a quintessential cheese and ham boutique in Spain. It offers an extensive range of Spanish cheeses from Iberico and Manchego to Torta del Casar and Valdeon, which can be served with the shop's selection of dry-cured Spanish hams and wines.

Shop E, G/F, Tung Cheung Building, 1 Second St., Sai Ying Pun, 2527-5181.

Cheese Shopping 101

Hankering for some dairy but afraid to venture beyond the basics? Here's how to find the perfect block for you.



If you are vegetarian but crave some cheese anyway, try a Dutch Gouda (available at The Dutch Cheese and More).

Craving something strong and buttery? Try a Colston Basset Stilton (available at The Cheese Room).

Want something chewy and nutty? Have the Montgomery's Cheddar (available at The Cheese Room).

Looking for a savory, hearty snack? Grab the Parmigiano-Reggiano (available at Viva Italia).

Need something intense to go with a glass of dessert wine? Go for the Gorgonzola (available at Viva Italia).

Need something to pair with your baguette? Why not try some Comte (available at Monsieur Chatte)?

Looking for an easy-breezy introduction to blue cheese? Go for the mild bleu d'Auvergne (available at Monsieur Chatte).

Crackers too dry? Why not have them with some gooey Langres on top (available at Monsieur Chatte).

Learn about French cheese in our online video: www.hk-magazine.com