



'Tis the Season for America's Best Cheeses: ACS 2010 Holiday Pairing Guide

This holiday season, warm the hearts and palates of your loved ones by building a cheese plate featuring the best American cheeses of the year: Uplands Cheese Company's *Extra Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve*, Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery's *Bonne Bouche*, and Farms for City Kids Foundation's *Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise*.

These three cheeses won top honors among 1,462 entries to be named 2010's "Best of Show" by a slate of judges at the American Cheese Society's prestigious Annual Judging & Competition. To pair them with the perfect wines, beers, and accompaniments, we went straight to the experts: author Laura Werlin, brewmaster Garrett Oliver, and the staff at Casellula Wine & Cheese Café in New York City. They've taken the guesswork out of creating the ultimate pairing at home, so that you can sit back, sample, and enjoy!



Photo: Christine Hyatt

The American Cheese Society is the leading organization supporting the understanding, appreciation, and promotion of farmstead, artisan and specialty cheeses produced in the Americas. Since its founding in 1983, the American Cheese Society proudly hosts the foremost annual educational conference and world-renowned cheese judging and competition, which in 2010 included 1,462 entries from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The 28th Annual Conference & Competition will take place in Montréal, Québec, Canada, from August 3-6, 2011: www.cheesesociety.org



Extra Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve (Best of Show)

Uplands Cheese Company, Dodgeville, WI
www.uplandscheese.com

Pleasant Ridge Reserve is a farmstead cheese made from raw milk in the tradition of Alpine cheeses like Gruyere and Beaufort. It is only produced from May through October, when Uplands' cows are grazing on fresh pasture. A small percentage is aged for over a year, and it is called Extra Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve.

Look for Extra Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve at your local cheese shop or specialty food store, or search the Uplands Cheese Company store locator at www.uplandscheese.com/where-to-buy.php. It can also be ordered online, while supplies last, from www.uplandscheese.com. If you can't locate this cheese, try substituting a Gruyere in its place.



Charles Smith "Kung Fu Girl" Riesling 2009

"The fruit in the wine interplays beautifully with the savory and nutty characteristics of this spectacular cheese. The wine also brings out a fruity quality in the cheese, which makes you want to take a bite of the cheese, a sip of the wine, a bite of the cheese, and so on just as you would fruit and nuts. Delicious.

Pair this cheese with fruity white wines such as Riesling or, for a completely different experience, try pairing it with nutty dessert wines such as the Italian wine called Torcolato." –Laura Werlin



Barley Wine (J.W. Lees Harvest Ale, Fuller's Vintage Ale, Anchor Old Foghorn Ale)

"Extra Aged Pleasant Ridge Reserve is a real blockbuster: an explosion of grass, fruit, earth and butter, with a little crunch of crystalline salt thrown in for good measure. It's that rare creature – a crowd-pleaser with wonderful depth. The beer needs to have a big enough character to match, and here we can reach for the British "barley wine" style. These strong beers, originally made by the English aristocracy to be well aged and then served at their own tables, feature a concentration of bready, juicy malt flavors alongside caramel and dark fruit notes. Robust bitterness is balanced against some residual sugar. Here it's possible to achieve some wonderful harmonies – it may be hard for you to tell where the cheese ends and the beer begins. Among the best of the British examples is J.W. Lees vintage-dated Harvest Ale from Manchester, England, a complex classic of the style at nearly 12% ABV. Slightly lighter, but no less delicious are London's Fuller's Vintage Ale and Anchor Old Foghorn from San Francisco." –Garrett Oliver



Pineapple Mostarda*

Recipe from Casellula Cheese & Wine Café

**Plan ahead: this recipe requires 2-3 weeks to prepare*

- 4.5 lbs of fresh pineapple, cored and cubed
- 2.5 lbs of sugar
- Juice from one orange
- 1 cup white wine
- 2 oz. mustard powder

1. Combine pineapple, sugar, and orange juice, and let sit overnight.
2. Strain, put fruit aside, and reduce the liquid by ½ over low heat (be careful not to caramelize the sugars).
3. Pour the liquid back over the fruit and refrigerate overnight.
4. Strain, reduce the liquid by ½ again, and pour back over the fruit. Refrigerate overnight.
5. Cook white wine and mustard powder over low heat, until just about to boil. Add to syrup, then add to fruit.
6. Let sit in refrigerator for 2 weeks, and puree before serving.



Bonne Bouche (First Runner Up)

Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery, Websterville, VT
www.vermontcreamery.com

Bonne Bouche is a hand-ladled, ash-ripened goat cheese made from pasteurized milk and cream sourced from local farms. The expression “Bonne Bouche” literally means “good mouthful” and is an apt description for this delicious morsel of cheese.

Look for Bonne Bouche at your local cheese shop or specialty food store, or see the store locator on the Vermont Butter & Cheese Creamery website: www.vermontcreamery.com/at-the-market. It can also be ordered online from www.vermontcreamery.com. If you can't locate this cheese, substitute a surface-ripened goat cheese in its place.



Joel Gott California Sauvignon Blanc 2009

“The classic match for a mold- and yeast-ripened goat cheese is sauvignon blanc, and this cheese is no exception. The lemony, dried apricot, and grapefruit-like flavors in the wine match similar characteristics in the cheese.

Because the wine is fermented entirely in stainless steel, it retains its refreshing character, which is key to matching the wine with fresh and soft-ripened goat cheese.

Pair this cheese with sauvignon blanc, dry chenin blanc, or rousanne. This last grape is grown primarily in the Rhone region of France but also in California. It is somewhat floral and a bit citrusy in its aromas with a light- to medium-bodied texture – perfect for goat cheese!” –Laura Werlin



Belgian-Style Saison (Saison Dupont, Ommegang Hennepin, Brooklyn Brewery Sorachi Ace)

“Bonne Bouche has everything we love about great goat cheese – a creamy texture and tangy bright acidity along with a rage of fresh citrus flavors and a hint of earth. The Belgian saison style is a natural match here. These are farmhouse ales, bone dry, fruity, spicy, and lifted by high carbonation developed by re-fermentation in the bottle. The technique for bottling Champagne comes from beers like these, but here the yeast is left in the bottle, lending an earthiness that meets the goat's milk nicely. The classic of the style is Saison Dupont, a lemony, peppery firecracker of a beer from Tourpes, near the French border. There are many worthy American saisons too, including the gently spicy Ommegang Hennepin from Cooperstown, New York, and Brooklyn Brewery's Sorachi Ace.” –Garrett Oliver



Rosemary Pomegranate Jelly

Recipe from Casellula Cheese & Wine Café

- 4 cups of fresh pomegranate seeds
- 1 ¾ cups water
- 3 cups sugar
- 3 T rosemary, chopped
- 5 sheets gelatin (powdered gelatin may be substituted; follow the conversions on the package)

1. Simmer all ingredients, except for the gelatin, for about 15 minutes, and then mash them together.
2. Strain, and add the gelatin to the resulting liquid.
3. Let the jelly set in the fridge for 24 hours before serving.



Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise (Second Runner Up)

Farms for City Kids Foundation, Reading, VT

www.farmsforcitykids.org

Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise is a washed rind, semi-hard farmstead cheese produced from the raw milk of a small herd of Jersey cows. The cheese is aged between five months and one year. Its producer, Farms for City Kids Foundation, is a nonprofit organization in Vermont that combines classroom study with hands-on farming and cheesemaking experiences for urban youth.

Look for Spring Brook Farm Tarentaise at a good cheese shop or specialty food store, or purchase it online at www.smallcheese.com. If you can't locate this cheese, try substituting a Gruyere or another Tarentaise in its place.



Flora Springs Napa Valley Chardonnay 2008

"This rich and flavorful cheese calls for a medium- to full-bodied white wine. This chardonnay fits the bill perfectly because it is well-balanced and not excessively oaky (critical to a good cheese pairing). The weight of the wine and the weight of the cheese match beautifully, while the toasted nut flavors in the cheese and the slight oak in the wine come together to create very seductive caramel flavors.

Pair this cheese with full-bodied white wines. Red wines become bitter in the presence of this full-flavored and somewhat sharp cheese." —Laura Werlin



Doppelbock (Spaten Optimator, Tröegs Troegenator, Moretti La Rossa)

"Tarentaise shows a beautiful grassiness alongside almost caramelized nutty flavors, all balanced against judicious salting and a zing of acidity. German-style doppelbocks work perfectly here. Slightly caramelized Munich malts gives these beers rich reddish-brown color and nutty, toffee-like flavors that link up nicely with everything going on at the center of this cheese. A little bit of residual sweetness is a nice counterpoint to the salt. If you see the suffix "-ator" in the name of the beer, you're heading in the right direction, at least for the German versions. Try Optimator from the iconic Spaten brewery in Munich, Troegenator from Tröegs Brewing Company of Pennsylvania, or the surprisingly full-bodied Moretti La Rossa from Udine in Italy's mountainous northeast." —Garrett Oliver



Cashew Brittle

Recipe from Casellula Cheese & Wine Café

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup corn syrup
- 1 t salt
- 3 cups cashew nuts, warmed in an oven
- ½ t baking soda
- 3 T butter

1. Cook sugar, water, and corn syrup until they turn a dark caramel color.
2. Add baking soda and butter.
3. Stir in nuts and salt.
4. Pour onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or a silpat, and allow to cool.
5. After cooling, break into pieces.



About Our Experts:



Laura Werlin

Wine pairings are provided by Laura Werlin, the author of four books on cheese including the James Beard Foundation award-winning *The All American Cheese and Wine Book* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang 2003). Werlin's fifth book, *Grilled Cheese, Please* (Andrews McMeel), will be released in March 2011. Having also written the book *Great Grilled Cheese* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang 2004), her new book will be her second one on the subject of America's favorite sandwich (and hers!): www.laurawerlin.com



Garrett Oliver

Beer pairings are provided by Garrett Oliver, Brewmaster for The Brooklyn Brewery in Brooklyn, NY. Oliver is author of *The Brewmaster's Table* (HarperCollins, 2003), which won the IACP Book Award and was a finalist for the James Beard Foundation Award. A three-time Beard finalist, he has hosted hundreds of beer tastings and dinners, and writes regularly for beer and food-related periodicals. His latest project is as editor-in-chief of *The Oxford Companion to Beer*, which will be published in 2011 by Oxford University Press: www.garrettoliver.com



Casellula Cheese & Wine Café

Food pairings are provided by Fromager Dimitri Saad and Pastry Chef Leigh Friend at Casellula Cheese & Wine Café in New York City. All recipes are courtesy of Casellula. Casellula's menu features a changing selection of cheeses from throughout the world each day. Cheeses are paired alongside the perfect accompaniments, such as honeys, nuts, compotes, pickles, herbs, pastes, candies, cookies, and cakes: www.casellula.com