

CELEBRATING ROGUE RIVER BLUE: AMERICA'S BEST CHEESE OF 2011

Rogue Creamery's Rogue River Blue was honored with the "Best of Show" award at the American Cheese Society's 2011 Conference & Competition - quite a distinction among 1,676 entries! This holiday season, incorporate America's best cheese into your celebration with pairing tips and a recipe from leading experts. You can find Rogue River Blue in limited supply at specialty cheese shops and at www.roguecreamery.com.

BLUE MEETS WINE



Rogue Creamery's Rogue River Blue may be on the cusp of celebrating its 10th birthday, but its extraordinary flavors are worthy of celebrating all year long. Pair it with a wine that carries the cheese's *umami*-ness to new heights of deliciousness, and you've got the makings of a heavenly match.

Happily, such a union can be had with a bottle of fizzy, off-dry red wine like the NV Wyndham Estate Bin 555 or 2008 Paringa Sparkling Shiraz. The dark-veined majesty of the Rogue sets the stage for a match based on the contrast between the rich, creamy cheese and the light-hearted sparkling wine. Fold in the Shiraz's gentle tannins, crisp acidity and scrubbing bubbles, and the cheese will disappear on first sip into a storm cloud of red and black fruit flavors, only to re-emerge at the wine's finish expressing textures and tastes not previously acknowledged by the tongue.

Mmmm, good!

-Joshua Wesson, former sommelier, co-founder of Best Cellars, and author of 'William Sonoma Wine & Food - A New Look at Flavor'

REFLECTIONS ON AN AWARD-WINNER

When considering Rogue River Blue, I find myself in the precarious position of trying to define a cheese which has been crafted by hand, by cheesemakers who have a passion for what they do, a respect for the process of creation and production, and, most importantly, have shown great care in the development of a unique, genre-defying American blue cheese.

I know this because I know the Rogue Creamery family. Owners David Gremmels and Cary Bryant have not only created an updated catalog of thoughtfully-crafted artisan cheeses, but they have paid respect to the history and tradition of great American cheesemaking by breathing new life and energy into a cheesemaking plant in Central Point, OR that has been an influential centerpiece of the American cheese landscape since 1956.

Rogue Creamery's cheeses have garnered national and international attention. In 2003, the creamery was awarded with the prestigious 'World's Best Blue Cheese' title at the World Cheese Awards in London - a first for any American producer. Many awards and trophies later, Rogue River Blue has been awarded two "Best of Show" honors at the American Cheese Society's Judging & Competition, in 2009 and 2011.

Rogue River Blue is everything a quality blue cheese should be. Aged in custom temperature and humidity-controlled rooms, the cheese is hand-turned daily for up to a year and develops a slightly mottled, natural rind. This aging process imparts into the cheese necessary and naturally-occurring molds that reflect what the cheesemakers at Rogue Creamery consider to be their signature Rogue River Valley *terroir*. The flavors of this *terroir* include hints of sweet woody pine, wild-ripened berries, hazelnuts, morels, and pears. Each wheel is wrapped in local Syrah grape leaves macerated in Clear Creek's Pear Brandy - bringing more local flavor to this unique Oregon cheese.

-Matt Jennings, James Beard Foundation Award-nominated Chef, Cheesemonger, Co-Owner of Farmstead and La Laiterie, Providence, RI

CAN'T FIND ROGUE RIVER BLUE? Try another 2011 first place-winning blue cheese: Saputo USA's *Blue Cheese* (IL), Hook's Cheese Company's *Little Boy Blue* (WI), Firefly Farms' *Mountain Top Bleu* (MD), La Maison d'affinage Maurice Dufour's *Le Bleu de Brebis de Charlevoix* (QC), or Westfield Farm's *Classic Blue Log* (MA).



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ROGUE RIVER BLUE, BACON & LITTLE POTATO TARTLETS

Recipe by Matt Jennings, Farmstead and La Laiterie, Providence, RI

FOR PASTRY:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup cold unsalted butter
- 3 to 4 tablespoons water

MAKE THE PASTRY:

Blend together flour, salt, and butter with your fingertips or a pastry blender (or pulse in a food processor) just until mixture resembles coarse meal with some small (roughly pea-size) butter lumps. Drizzle evenly with 3 tablespoons water and gently stir with a fork (or pulse in food processor) until incorporated. Squeeze a small handful of dough. If it doesn't hold together, add up to 1 tablespoon more water, stirring (or pulsing) until just incorporated, then test again. (Be careful not to overwork dough, or pastry will be tough.)

Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide into 6 portions. With heel of your hand, smear each portion once or twice in a forward motion to help distribute fat. Gather dough portions together with scraper and press into a ball, then flatten into a 6" disk. Chill, wrapped in plastic wrap, until firm, at least 30 minutes.

FILL & BAKE TARTLETS:

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Cut potatoes into 1/4-inch-thick slices and cover with cold water by 2 inches in a 1-quart saucepan. Simmer, uncovered, until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and pat dry with paper towels.

Whisk together cream and yolk until combined.

Divide dough into 6 equal pieces. Roll out each piece into a 5" round with a floured rolling pin on a lightly floured surface, then fit each into a tartlet pan. Trim excess dough, leaving 1/4" overhang, then fold overhang inward and press against side of pans to reinforce edge. Chill shells until pastry is firm, at least 10 minutes.

Arrange about 4 potato slices, overlapping slightly, in each tart shell and crumble 2 tablespoons cheese into each. Next, crumble the bacon into the tartlets. Divide cream mixture among tartlets, filling to 1/8 inch from top. Sprinkle each tartlet with 1/4 tsp each of thyme and rosemary and season lightly with fleur de sel. (If your sea salt is very coarse, lightly crush before sprinkling.)

Bake tartlets on a baking sheet until bubbling and golden brown, 45 to 50 minutes. Cool in pans on a rack 10 minutes, then remove from pans and serve warm with a simple side salad.

BLUE MEETS BEER

I really enjoy blue cow's milk cheese with beer, because of the cheese's rich and complex flavors and textures. There are so many pairing options for blue cheese, but three beer styles that I really enjoy - Barley Wine, Double IPA, and Imperial Stout - are great matches. The creamy, earthy, bitter, and sometimes sweet flavors in blue cheese make an ideal match for these rich, high alcohol, and often bitter beer styles. The alcohol and carbonation in these beer styles help to counter the richness and creaminess of the cheese, while the bitterness of these beers helps to balance the cheese's sweet earthiness. All of these contrasts bring harmony to the pairing, and allow both the beer and the cheese to really shine. Allow my suggestions to be a starting point, and try experimenting with different pairings. Just remember to have fun!

Suggested Pairing: Great Divide Brewing Company's Oak Aged Yeti Imperial Stout

There are many reasons why this pairing really sings. First, the earthiness of Oak Aged Yeti, from the beer's oak aging, really connects with the earthiness in Rogue River Blue. Second, the slight bitterness of the Oak Aged Yeti counters the sweetness of the cheese. Finally, the slight fruity and nutty characteristics of Rogue River Blue pair well with dark, rich beers like this one.

-Ryan Conklin, Certified Cicerone and Beer Manager at Euclid Hall, Denver, CO



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