



November 2004 issue. By Jean S. Runner

... Finally I got my drink, but before I did, I just had to grab a container of Caviar cheese. I tried it at a party and here it was! But I won't even attempt to describe it here – it was too amazing to put into words. Trust me and try it for yourself. But I still wasn't finished. On the way to the cahier, my eyes was caught by the cheese store. A lot of grocery stores have a cheese counter, but believe me, this is a true store with-in-a-store. Laurent, Monsieur Marcel's cheesemaster had me to try a unique Italian brie that just came in. He answered my questions, and basically opened up a whole world (literally, since there are cheeses from around the world) of artisanal cheeses.

I felt like I had traveled around the world, excited my palate, and learned a ton of new stuff that opened up whole vistas of flavors and ideas...

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... I overheard Laurent, behind the cheese counter, giving some advice to another customer about which cheese to serve as a dessert course for her dinner party. I had always thought cheese was, well, pretty much just cheese: there's white and yellow, but other than that, what's the difference? Well, it turns out that there is a whole world of difference.

Laurent Bonjour, the cheesemaster is the perfect guide to this world. He has introduced me to an entire spectrum of flavors and textures that I didn't even know existed. But where's the key: don't be intimidated by the unknown, and trust your own judgment. Laurent will make this easy for you by asking you questions and using language to describe their incredible diverse stock of cheeses that is familiar and easy to understand. And if you don't like a particular cheeses, that's perfectly okay too. You don't have to be an expert in all cheeses– just become an expert in the ones you like, and you'll find your life enriched by new flavorful experiences.

Mr Bonjour might also point out the health benefit of cheeses. A density nutritious food (cheese contributes 3% of the energy in the US food supply, but 8% of the protein, 25% of calcium, and 5% of the vitamin A and other essential nutrient activity), cheeses, and particularly aged cheeses, can reduce the risk of dental cavities and reduce plaque acids (imagine, reducing tooth decay with a dessert plate of cheese!); cheese can also help reduce risk of osteoporosis, hypertension, and risk factors for heart disease; and may even help in the fight against cancer. While much of this information is still in its early stage, I think that including fresh foods made with quality ingredients (like gourmet and artisanal cheeses) must be a part of it. So you don't have to feel guilty about diving right into this luxurious world of flavors – in fact, it'll probably make you feel better!

And right now is a great time to try. With the holidays upon us, there is no quicker and easier way to make your feast more elegant and flavorful than with a gorgeous selection of cheeses for hors d'oeuvres, cooking, or dessert....