



## SERIOUS CHEESE »

*Say cheese! We recommend, review, and eat a lot of cheese.*

# 7 Great Goat Cheeses You Should Know

Goat cheese might be the most controversial cheese. If you work at a cheese restaurant or behind a cheese counter (as I have) and ask people "Is there anything you don't like?" you will hear "goat cheese" like a sad refrain.

Why? Is it because people have been inundated with inferior, chalky grocery store goats? Is it the gamy funk? Is it the fault of the goat, the poor humble goat? I love goat cheese with all my heart and tummy, so to me, this doesn't seem fair.

I am a goat cheese evangelist and optimist who believes even the staunchest goat cheese hater may be forever converted with a bite of something ethereal, something that shatters all goat cheese expectations, like the raw milk Tomme de Chevre Aydius, which has the texture of gruyere and a grassy sweetness that departs entirely from the familiar goat lexicon.

Behold, the beautiful, sculptural varieties of French chevres. The logs, the pyramids, the buttons. French cheesemakers have been crafting chevre for a thousand years and counting. Whatever your goat cheese stance, I urge you to open your mind and mouth to some (or all!) of these seven greats.





## Bleu du Bocage

**Region of Origin:** The Vendée, in Western France

**Notes:** A blue goat? Oh, man. My mind was blown when I first tried this one. This cheese is aged for several months, but retains a stunning delicateness. Slice it open and find a bright white, moist paste, laced with a grayish-green blueing. Like ice cream(!): sweet under a bit of earthiness, milky, and fabulously luscious. Bleu du Bocage doesn't just taste like blue; it tastes like meaty, toasty, clean cheese, spiked with a perfect dose of sharp saltiness as a wonderful footnote.

**Serve:** Made for a Riesling with a touch of sweetness, or a great Port, or Moscato. Crazy good with a piece of bittersweet chocolate. Or toss in a salad with candy walnuts and peppery greens.





## Crottin de Chavignol

**Region of Origin:** Berry, in the Loire Valley

**Notes:** Crottin de Chavignol is lovely and rustic. The little package packs a wallop of tangy, sharp flavor. As the little guy ages, he will become drier and increasingly intense, a bit gamy, and terribly delicious.

**Serve:** You can't go wrong with the famous wine from the same place: the flinty, dry Sancerre. Slice in half and use to top an arugula and olive salad; bonus points for warming until just short of melty. Or serve for dessert with fruit and chocolate.





## Tomme de Chevre Aydius

**Region of Origin:** The village of Aydius in the Pyrenees region of France

**Notes:** The southern Pyrenees Mountains are famous for their sweet, smooth sheep's milk wheels. Tomme de Chevre Aydius looks and feels like one of these Pyrenees classics—but behold!—it's made with fresh, raw goat's milk, then aged for about six months for startling complexity. Grassy, fruity, and musty, with a melting, smooth mouthfeel, this is a really *cheesy* cheese. Tomme de Chevre will save the day: I challenge you to find someone who does not swoon.

**Serve:** With a glass of Shiraz, or for dessert with some amaretto with some dried figs and brandied cherries. Or make a remarkable grilled cheese.





## Saint-Maure de Touraine

**Region of Origin:** From Touraine, in France's Loire Valley

**Notes:** The little village of Saint-Maure is famous for its goat cheeses—shaped like logs and pierced with a straw or stick from end to end—a trick for keeping the fragile, young cheese logs from crumbling into oblivion. The texture becomes firmer with age, bridging the crumbly/creamy divide. Balanced, lemony, tangy, and classic. This AOC-protected cheese has been made for some 1000 years and counting.

**Serve:** With Vouvray. Beside a big green salad. Melted into a quiche, or eggs scrambled with leeks.