

NEW CHEESE+ ANNUAL

the word on cheese

culture

SPECIAL EDITION SPRING 2014–SPRING 2015



193 PERFECT PAIRINGS

CRAFT CIDERS **SOUR BEERS** SPICED NUTS **BACON JAMS** AND MORE p. 15



DISPLAY UNTIL
SEPTEMBER 2014

CHEESE+ 2014

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WIDE WORLD OF CRACKERS

From everyday to artisanal, these baked snacks are
the perfect platforms for pairings

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La Panzanella Multigrain Croccantini

Madrona Specialty Foods

Crackers started as a sideline to the artisan breads made at La Panzanella, a Seattle bakery. Now the bakery's croccantini ("crunchy little bite" in Italian) have become a stand-alone business. Ample salted, flax-seeded and wheaty, the multigrain crackers' flavor and sturdy texture makes them a terrific vehicle for firmer, more hearty cheeses.

lapanzanella.com

ON TOP: Consider Bardwell Farm Rupert

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Cabernet Sauvignon Herbs de Provence Wheat Crackers

WholeVine Products

The brainchild of Barbara Banke (of Jackson Family Wines) and Peggy Furth (formerly of Chalk Hill Estate Winery), WholeVine makes the most of the polyphenol-rich grape skins and seeds left over from the winemaking process, turning them into flours and oils. Those ingredients come together in a line of varietal crackers. We're partial to the Cabernet Sauvignon variety sprinkled with herbs. The crackers are so thin and dark they look like strips of tree bark, with a winy character and herbal lift that evokes summer in Sonoma. Play up the winy character with a wine-soaked cheese.

wholevine.com

ON TOP: Mitica Drunken Goat



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Whole Grain Crisps

34°

The line between wafer crackers and Communion wafers is not nearly as firm as it ought to be. Which is why 34° Whole Grain Crisps stand out. Thin as a dime with lacy edges, these crisp rounds have just enough toasty grain flavor to give them character, yet they are so slight they don't get in the way of the topping. Soft cheeses especially shine; the crisp snap of the cracker plays up the luscious texture of the cheese. Oh, and the name? Thirty-four degrees is the latitude of Sydney, Australia, where company founder Craig Lieberman first tasted Australian crispbreads and decided he wanted a life in food.

34-degrees.com

ON TOP: Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy Camembert

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Herb Garden Crackers

Roots & Branches

The all-time favorite in our massive cracker tasting for this issue, Roots & Branches impresses with its crackers' uncanny combination of ethereal lightness and deep flavor. The little squares look like ravioli, with their ruffled edges and puffed middles. In fact, like ravioli, they contain semolina flour, which adds an extra dimension to their crisp texture and flavor. The herbed versions stand out for their clarity and freshness of flavors; Herb Garden, with its combination of basil, oregano, parsley, thyme, garlic, onion, and sea salt, evokes a fistful of fresh-cut herbs.

rootsandbrancheswi.com

ON TOP: Montchevré Bucheron

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Organic Original Oaten Biscuits

Duchy Originals from Waitrose, Walkers Shortbread Ltd.

In 1992, Charles, Prince of Wales, launched Duchy Originals, a brand dedicated to sustainably produced foodstuffs, the proceeds of which he distributed through his charitable foundation. Today the brand is owned by Walkers Shortbread and the crackers are made in conjunction with the Waitrose grocery chain, but the Duchy Home Farm still provides oats for these biscuits, which are stone-ground and blended with sweet butter, wheat flour, sugar, salt, and sodium bicarbonate. The thick rounds are reminiscent of digestive biscuits, but less sweet, with a pleasantly gritty texture and toasted oat flavor that play perfectly off the tang of a blue cheese.

us.walkersshortbread.com

ON TOP: Stichelton

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Six Seed Potter's Crackers

Potter's Fine Foods

Nancy Potter and her son, Peter Potter Weber, launched this company with the goal of producing crackers worthy of Wisconsin's plethora of excellent cheeses. Working with local grain mills and a creamery, they hand-roll rustic, earthy flats and sprinkle them with coarse salt. In the Six Seed there's a mix of brown and golden flax, sunflower, pumpkin, and sesame seeds; and hazelnuts, resulting in a cracker that's robust enough to take on a tangy, funky cheese, yet delicate enough to not overpower it.

potterscrackers.com
ON TOP: Max Schmidhauser Tomme de Crayouse

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Sea Salt Sweet Potato Crackers

Milchap Sweet Potato Co.

Michelle Miller and Jennifer Chapman ran a bakery in Charlotte, N.C., until last year, when they sold the business to focus full time on their cracker and granola venture. Their products highlight one of North Carolina's greatest assets: its sweet potatoes (the state is responsible for nearly half the entire US production). These petite crackers are dense and hearty, snackable on their own, with a deep, true sweet potato flavor that's best showcased with a mild, young cheese.

milchap.com

ON TOP: Coach Farm Fresh Goat Cheese

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Fine English Charcoal Squares

The Fine Cheese Co.

There is no more dramatic-looking cracker than these, each perfect square as dark as a piece of slate. They get their color from a small dose of charcoal powder, which was a popular digestive aid in the early 1900s. Back then it was mixed with water, which tasted bad; baking it into a biscuit made it much more palatable. Case in point: this small square, which tastes like the crispy edges of a baking powder biscuit. It makes a stunning presentation with a bright white goat cheese.

finecheese.co.uk

ON TOP: Fromagerie Jacquin Valencay

