

Hooked on Cheese: The Chèvres of Spring

There's no better time to explore goat cheese than the present.

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The French have goat cheese down to a science.

Ah, spring: when the air is more often warm than cool, the sky slowly reveals more sun than clouds, and - most importantly - French goat's milk cheeses are at their best! I love the early days of spring, and after an all-too-long winter here in New York City, they have finally arrived.

One recent breezy afternoon, I had just picked up a few fresh [French goat's milk cheeses](#) (also known as *chèvres*) to taste when my pal Jordan Laz popped by to say hello. A true beverage aficionado, he happened to have both a Witte ale and a hard cider with him, which are ideal pairings for goat cheese. It must have been fate!

We let the cheeses come to room temperature - a must - while the ale and cider cooled. Then, to commence the tasting we opened the [Ommegang Witte Ale](#), a pleasantly citrusy, light-alcohol wheat ale. Ommegang's motto is, "A drink of the sun, Witte was made to refresh" - just the thing we were seeking for the first three cheeses. We then tried our cheeses in order of strength of flavor (from mildest to most flavorful), which is always the way to taste cheese:

Chabichou du Poitou: A name-controlled, mild cheese from south of the Loire Valley. It is a little tart, slightly sweet, and very lightly goaty with a tan, wrinkly rind. When young, this is the perfect cheese for folks not completely sold on goat cheeses.

Selles-sur-Cher: The particular form we tasted was perfectly ripe, with a nicely ashed, wrinkly rind, a light goat tang and the perfect balance of ripeness. Selles-sur-Cher is the quintessential, iconic French goat cheese.

After tasting the first three cheeses, we opened our bottle of [J.K.'s Scrumpy Orchard Gate Gold Organic Hard Cider](#), which was crisp, a little sweet, and boasted a distinct apple taste. It was perfect with the last two cheeses on our plate:

Bethmale: The version we had was on the young side and had a wonderfully pungent aroma. Made in the *Midi-Pyrénées* region, it is great example of an aged goat cheese; I would say the one we had was no more than three months old. We toasted a chunk of baguette to serve with this pairing to create a well-balanced appetizer.

Bucheron: This is the ideal goat cheese for salads. It has a slight saltiness and creamy texture close to the rind, while the paste of the cheese is denser and crumbles well. We added the Bucheron to a bed of baby arugula dressed with olive oil and lemon juice to complete our light seasonal feast.

The weather that day was perfect, as were the company and the cheese. What more could one ask for in the springtime?