

CHEESE+
SPECIAL ISSUE

the word on cheese

culture

BONUS!
SPRING FORWARD
with fresh recipes

251
CREATIVE,
crazy-delicious
PAIRINGS



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FROM *A*pricots TO *Z*infandel

Wondering what to pair with gouda or Brie? It's as easy as ABC

PHOTOGRAPHED BY **EVI ABELER** STYLED BY **LAURA KNOOP**

Cheese is all about lifelong learning. For **culture's** second annual Cheese+ issue, we not only sampled classic wedge and wheel accompaniments—think honey and tomatoes—but expanded our palates with several unexpected yet deliciously successful companions. (Quail eggs! Lemons! Oysters!) Oh, and did we mention that there are 21 more salty, sweet, creative, and addictive sidekicks for your favorite cheeses in the pages ahead? That's right: We tackled an entire alphabet of pairings, all for your snacking pleasure.

So, please, use our ultimate guide to embark on a culinary journey. Take back the bagged lunch with a crave-worthy nut butter-and-cheese sandwich. Punch up happy hour with a pitcher of watermelon sangria, a glass of Vinho Verde, or some sips of sparkling mead—paired with cheese, of course. Add a jar of pickled jalapeños to your cheese board and—trust us—it will be a conversation topic for parties to come.

No matter how adventurous or tame your tastes may be, remember to savor the moment. Cheers to a tasty education!

GOLDEN RULES FOR CHEESE PAIRING

Keep tasting groups small
—eight people, maximum, is optimal—to facilitate discussion.

Hold tastings in places that aren't filled with extraneous smells, and be mindful of temperature (of both the products and environment).

Drink plenty of still or sparkling water and nibble plain crackers or a baguette to cleanse your palate between tastes.

Start with the mildest
combinations and work up to
the most aggressively flavored.

Use your senses—all of them! Sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound (if the cheese talks back, definitely give it a time-out).

Don't be afraid to try a pairing that's outside the box. Even if it doesn't work, it's a great way to learn.

Have fun with it, but take notes if you want to remember—and use—what you've learned.

Take Your Time.





is for Oysters + Cheese

Believe it: Bivalves and dairy can be the best of friends

WRITTEN BY HEATHER KAPLOW



“**C**heese and seafood? No way!” How many times have you heard that? Oysters and cheese together may sound alien because you’ve rarely seen the two foods in the same place at the same time, but according to basic transitive logic (wine and cheese pair well; wine and oysters pair well; therefore, cheese and oysters will pair well), it should work, right? Taste tests and experts confirm: Though cultured in different brines, cheese and oysters can—quite deliciously—coexist.

Broiled Oysters

Many oyster aficionados feel strongly that the best way to pair cheese and oysters is to cook them with parmesan. (After all, Oysters Rockefeller is a classic dish for a reason.) Both Parmigiano Reggiano and domestic parmesan varieties work well here; the toasted nuttiness complements the delicate oysters. However, the type of oyster will alter the taste of the pairing quite a bit—certain varieties are extra rich (such as Wellfleets from Cape Cod, Mass.), while others are brinier. To pair, grate a

tablespoon of cheese on top of an oyster on the half shell. Broil in the oven until bubbly and lightly browned on top.

Parmigiano Reggiano DOP +
broiled oysters

Sartori SarVecchio Parmesan +
broiled oysters

BelGioioso American Grana +
broiled oysters

Raw Oysters

When pairing cheese with raw oysters, look for curds that can stand up to the ocean-y qualities of the shellfish. Chef Michael Serpa of SELECT Oyster Bar in

Boston recommends sharp, firm Spanish goat cheeses (like those from Andalusia), which “play off the briny, salty oysters.”

Dan Belmont, education manager and pairings expert at Murray’s Cheese in New York City, suggests a similarly tangy Spaniard: Mahon Curado, a salty cow’s milk wedge from Minorca. To taste cheese and raw oysters together, eat the cheese first and allow it to coat your palate, then slurp an oyster to combine the flavors.

Mahon Curado DOP +
raw Tisbury oysters

Villaluenga del Rosario Queso Payoyo + raw Blue Point oysters

Soignon Goat Brie + raw Wellfleet oysters

Smoked Oysters

Smoked oysters are an acquired taste, but cheese (and a well-placed cracker) can bring the most appealing aspects of their flavor and texture to the surface. Stacked on a sourdough crisp, fromage blanc offers a refined take on the old camping staple of smoked oysters, cream cheese, and Ritz rounds. The oyster

almost overshadows the cheese, but the freshness and fluffiness of the fromage blanc mitigates the intensity of the oyster’s smokiness and density. Other tangy, creamy cheeses, particularly those with savory notes, such as goat’s milk bloomy rinds and Double Gloucester, also work well with smoked bivalves.

Vermont Creamery Fromage Blanc +
smoked oysters

Montchevré Bucheron +
smoked oysters

Long Clawson Dairy Cotswold +
smoked oysters

[LEARN MORE]

Find chef Jamie Leed’s cheesy recipe for Hog Island BBQ oysters at culturecheesemag.com/recipes/bbq-oysters.

Heather Kaplow is a freelance journalist, copywriter, and media producer with a fondness for cheese and other fermented things.



is for Vinho Verde + Cheese

This bright wine of Portugal is perfectly suited to chèvres and bloomy rinds

WRITTEN BY TARA Q. THOMAS

The lush, green hills of northwestern Portugal have two things in abundance: grape vines and goats. So it's no surprise that the locals often pair cheese made from area milk with the homegrown wine, Vinho Verde. It's just that no one ever talks about it.

See, Vinho Verde, for the most part, is a simple wine: Its name means "green wine," an allusion to its freshness, as it's typically drunk young, sometimes so much so that it has a little effervescence. It's made in the cool, Atlantic Minho region, mostly from *alvarinho*—the same grape as the *albariño* on the Spanish side of the border, but lighter, crisper, and saltier in this clime—often blended with *loureiro*, another local grape, for a filip of florality, or *trajadura* for

citrus and steel, and *avinto* for minerality. Typically vinified in stainless steel rather than oak barrels, it's one of the most refreshing wines in the world.

Here in the United States, good versions can be had for as little as \$7. Great ones run \$20 or \$30. These days, you can find single-variety ones, too. The *loureiro* versions tend to be the most delicate, made to enjoy immediately, while those crafted entirely from *alvarinho* are bigger and broader, and can even

gain complexity with age. You might even run into a red version, made from the vinhão grape; these tend to be light and bracingly acidic, made for downing with roast suckling pig—or, as it happens, cheese.

Light and Easy

Fresh, young Vinho Verdes go best with fresh, young cheeses, especially the goatly kind. Think farmer's cheese, chèvre, or small bloomy-rind pyramids—with or without a dusting of herbs and spices.

Chapel Hill Creamery Dairyland Farmers Cheese + Casal Garcia Vinho Verde

Capriole Goat Cheese Piper's Pyramid + Quinta da Aveleda 2013 Vinho Verde

Tome Flour Verto Chevrefeuille + Quinta de Gomariz 2012 Loureiro Vinho Verde

Single Vineyard and Reserve

When yields are kept low, whether via farming or simply because the vines are old, wines become more concentrated. Some Vinho Verde from special vineyards or old vines have enough substance to withstand a few years of aging—or to take on a buttery cow's milk cheese. Due to their high acidity and saline flavors, these wines also do well with salty cheeses.

Mystic Cheese Co. Sea Change + Antonio Lopes Ribeiro 2012 Casa de Mouraz Biotite Vinho Verde

Casa Lusa Cabra Raiano + Soalheiro 2012 Alvarinho Vinho Verde

Queijo de Nisa PDO + Anselmo Mendes 2012 Muros Antigos Alvarinho Vinho Verde

Rosé and Red

It's not often that a pink or red Vinho Verde turns up on this side of the Atlantic, but if you find one, snag it. The high acidity of the Portuguese grapes and the cool temperatures of the growing region ensure that even the darkest-color reds are palate-whettingly juicy and bright, perfect for drinking with rich foods and cheeses. Pour a rosé with a watermelon and feta salad, or beets and goat cheese.

Haystack Mountain Goat Dairy Feta + Quinta da Raza 2013 Dom Diogo Padeiro Rosé Vinho Verde

Maros Cheese Factory St. George + Aphros Vinhão Espumante Super Reserva Bruto

[HOW TO TASTE]

Since much of what we consider "tasting" is actually smelling, start the tasting with your nose: If you're tasting several wines, give each of them a swirl and a sniff to get an idea of their differences; then order them by intensity. Taste, adjusting the order as necessary. Then move on to the cheese, tasting each one first without the wine. Once you have a good idea of what you are working with, you can play: Take a bite of cheese, then a sip of wine, and repeat to find the best matches. If everything begins to taste the same (or if one pairing really clashes), take a break with a piece of plain bread or a cracker.

Brooklyn, N.Y.-based **Tara Q. Thomas** is the executive editor of Wine & Spirits Magazine and author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Wine Basics*.

Create Your Own Italian Masterpiece



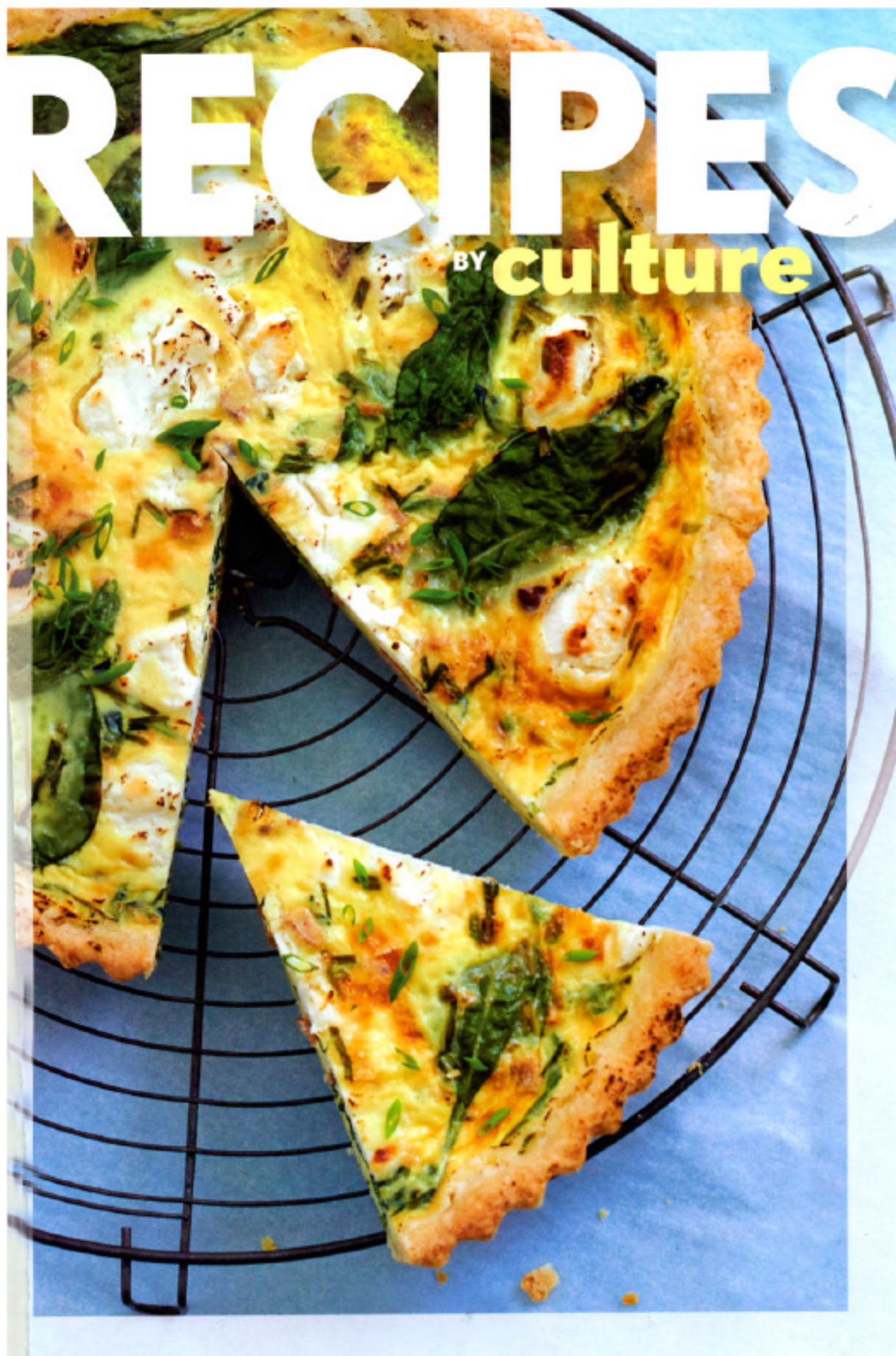
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RECIPES

BY **culture**

GARLICKY AVOCADO TOAST WITH CROTTIN DE CHAVIGNOL

WRITTEN BY REBECCA HALEY-PARK

This flavor-packed avocado toast comes together in a snap. If you can't find Crottin de Chavignol, substitute another small, aged goat cheese such as Vermont Creamery Bijou.

Serves 2

12-inch French-style baguette, cut into
6-inch lengths and sliced open horizontally
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1 Hass avocado
Salt, to taste
Ground black pepper, to taste
1 2-ounce Crottin de Chavignol, cut into
8 equal pieces

1 In an oven or toaster, toast baguette pieces until lightly browned. Cut garlic cloves in half, and rub one half on each piece of toast. Discard any remaining garlic.

2 Halve the avocado, and slice into ½-inch pieces. Top each piece of toast with a quarter of the avocado slices, and mash slightly with a fork to adhere the avocado to the toast. Salt and pepper the avocado toast to taste, top with cheese, and serve.

