

Beyond Chevre: 10 Essential Goat Milk Cheeses to Know and Love

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[Photograph: Vicky Wanik]

Everyone knows about "goat cheese," a.k.a. "chèvre." It's white, it's crumbly, and it's always showing up on beet salad thanks to northern California cooks in the '80s.

Good fresh goat cheese is a special and important thing. It should be moist and creamy, without a hint of graininess. Its flavor should be clean and fresh, mouthwateringly tangy but not astringent, lemony but also milky and balanced. An unaged cheese has nowhere to hide its faults.

Unfortunately there's a lot of faulty, gluey goat cheese out there, metallic and sour without any nuance. And that stuff, I suspect, is what turns people off goat milk cheese entirely. But there are a lot of goat cheeses out there to try besides chèvre.

In some ways, goat milk cheeses are the opposite of cow milk; the longer they're aged, the more approachable they tend to be. Some goat cheeses are buttery and mellow, with hints of lemon. Firm, aged, and rinded varieties offer flavors of nut skins and cooked milk—much more subtle than younger styles, which are more piquant and goaty; fresh chèvre is actually pretty intense.

What goat cheeses should you seek out beyond the fresh kind? In the spirit of my [top 10 introductory cheeses](#) and my survey of [essential sheep milk cheeses](#), here are 10 goat cheeses worth seeking out.

Goat Brie



French Brie-like cheeses made of goat milk never hail from true Brie country (Île-de-France); instead they tend to be made in the Rhône-Alpes and Poitou-Charentes regions. I have no proof, but my gut tells me that the French seized goat brie as an opportunity to create a buttery, rich cheese made with goat milk for an American audience that's always shied away from the piquant, animal flavors associated with traditional French Loire and Poitou goat cheeses.

Goat brie is even milder than its cow milk inspiration. The rind is remarkably thin, the paste inside like cream, and the flavor sweet and delicate with only the slightest undercurrent of citrus tang that betrays the cheese's goaty origin.

Where it's from: France and Canada

Pasteurized

Aroma: Little to none; unbaked tart crust

Flavor: Sweet cream with a hint of lemon

Texture: Sticky to runny

Character: Easy

Recommended: *Chevre D'Argental*, *Woolwich*

Le Chevrot



Europe inspires me for its large-ish-scale "factory" producers that still prioritize tradition and hand-crafted technique. In this case, Sèvre & Belle Cooperative has the 6th largest production of goat cheese in France, but still hand-ladles all its curd into teeny tiny molds, and works only with fresh goat milk (rather than frozen curd). Based with the department of Poitou-Charentes, in the town of Celles-sur-Belle, they make pasteurized cheeses for the American market, but from the same facility produce raw milk versions of the same cheeses. And the flavor and consistency is remarkably high.

Le Chevrot was a door-opening cheese for me, proving that a mold/yeast-ripened goat cheese could be an entirely different animal from a fresh, lactic, lemony chèvre. It's a beautiful little drum, the color of almond milk, and covered in a wrinkly, brain-like rind that is the calling card of the yeast *geotrichum*. Accordingly, its flavor is sweet and mellow, with nutty undertones, while the snow-white center of the cheese has a mouthwatering tang.

The combination becomes compulsive, so you keep going back for more, outer rind, inner paste, until the whole eight-ounce round vanishes. The greatest danger is that as the cheese dries out, its brainy ridges deflate and shrink, and it takes on a piquant, potentially soapy edge. But if that's the worst case scenario you're in pretty good shape.

Where it's from: France

Pasteurized and

Unpasteurized

Aroma: Hay and goat milk

Flavor: Sweet and tart

Texture: Cream leading to velvet

Character: The goat upgrade
